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Reading Egypt's Postcolonial State through Frantz Fanon: hegemony, dependency and development

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Abstract

This article looks at how Fanon's work on the postcolonial state can be used to interpret political changes in the postcolonial world, particularly his call to "stretch Marxism". In this article I use his notion of a dependent "native bourgeoisie" created through colonialism to look at the Egyptian capitalist class under British colonial rule, the Nasser era and the Sadat era. I argue that the Nasserist ruling class did not resemble the dependent "native bourgeoisie" Fanon spoke of as emerging right after the end of colonial rule, and that it was the Egyptian bourgeoisie under British colonial rule and the ruling class formed by Sadat that more closely fulfilled this role. Moreover, I argue that Fanon's call to understand capitalist development in postcolonial contexts as tied to colonialism provides a useful lens through which to revisit the evolution of the Egyptian postcolonial state.

Introduction

Frantz Fanon's work has experienced a resurgence over the past two decades. ~~Conferences, books, events, and articles are emerging in all corners of the globe that attempt to reflect on Fanon's work and his relevance for our times (see: Alessandrini 2005; Gordon 2015; Macey 2012).~~ These attempts to reinvigorate and reinterpret Fanon through current events represent a new phase in the elaboration of Fanon's work. Important work has looked at Fanon's articulations of race and racism, most famously laid out in *Black Skin, White Masks*, and applied these to the ~~institutions, structures and experiences of~~ production of racism in Western countries today.¹ Similarly, scholars have looked at his work on the postcolonial state, inspired by his involvement in Algeria, then part of the French Empire, and its national liberation movement.² What interests me is this body of work vis-à-vis the particular context of the Middle East and North Africa. Although Fanon wrote extensively about this period of his life, he has been less prominent in the work that looks at postcolonial African and Middle Eastern states and the legacies colonial rule left in place.³ It is precisely here that I see Fanon's work as providing a unique perspective on some of the historical and current events in the region, in particular processes of state-building, hegemony, and connections to the global capitalist system. I suggest that Fanon's continued relevance today indicates that our contemporary moment is experiencing some of the contradictions of the legacies put in place in the 1950s and 1960s, and that understanding the dramatic political, economic and social changes currently taking place across the region necessitates historicizing contemporary dynamics and situating them within the pre and post-independence periods.

Through a reading of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, I look at Egypt's capitalist class under British colonial rule, as well as the ruling classes formed in 1952 under Gamal Abdel Nasser and in the 1970s under Anwar el Sadat, and suggest that Fanon's interventions are a useful lens through which to conceptualize capitalist expansion in the postcolonial world. I argue that this is because of his [point-argument](#) that a colonial bourgeoisie can never become hegemonic and must instead always be understood through its connections to the transnational ruling class. This discussion thus aims to shed light on the complex ways in which Fanon related to Marxism, as well as theoretical developments on the topic of hegemony from within Subaltern Studies and how these can be read alongside Fanon's notion of dependency. In the conclusion I argue that this discussion can provide a new lens on political changes in Egypt, by both situating them within global economic dynamics as well as by centering the ruling class.

Fanon and Marx: "Stretching" Marxism

Tracing Fanon's position vis-à-vis Marxism is one way of addressing some of the limits of Marxist analysis within the colonial context. While Marx addressed colonialism as linked to capitalist expansion, in particular the role of the Atlantic slave trade and capitalism in the Americas, primarily in his later work (Anderson 2010), this came after Marx's assumption that non-Western countries must first go through a capitalist stage in order to reach socialism. It was mainly interventions by later Marxists that paid sufficient attention to imperialism and colonialism in order for these processes to be properly located vis-à-vis capitalism. Rosa Luxemburg, Vladimir Lenin, and Cedric Robinson are particularly noteworthy within the US/European Marxist canon, but it is crucial to note that non-Western Marxists in particular have debated the question of imperialism and capitalism extensively. The Indian subaltern school, the Latin American dependency school, and Marxists working in Arab and African contexts have all worked to theorize the role of surplus value and capital accumulation outside of the Western core, as well as within it on the basis of internal colonialism.

Returning to the question of Fanon's position vis-à-vis Marxism, I believe that his call to "stretch Marxism" can be seen as an ambiguous response to that question, as Fanon both accepts and rejects the assumptions of Marxism at the same time.^{iv} [For Fanon stretching Marxism was an attempt to contextualize the specificity of capitalism in the colony without completely disregarding the assumptions underpinning Marxism.](#) While it may be tempting to posit that Fanon extended the Marxist project, this somewhat ignores the fact that implicit in his call to stretch Marxism was a critique of the way Marx envisioned capitalism vis-à-vis the colonies. ~~Indeed w~~Where Marx located revolutionary potential within the capitalist core, Fanon instead located it within the colonies themselves—in a sense, he turned Marx's position on its head.^v Fanon's call to stretch Marxism can be understood as a methodology that allowed for a deeper exploration of colonial capitalism:

Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem. Everything up to and including the very nature of pre-capitalist society, so well explained by Marx, must here be thought out again (1963, 40).

Fanon was thus very much focused on a material analysis of neo-colonialism (as well as a psychic analysis), despite the fact that he has often been read in ways that dilute this (Salem 2015). His work can thus be read alongside Kwame Nkrumah, among others, who clearly pointed to neo-colonialism as a material consequence of colonial rule (1966).

Non-Western Marxists and Black Marxists have often employed the methodology of stretching Marxism. The Black Marxist tradition has argued that racism cannot be theorized as a secondary contradiction that will simply disappear once capitalism is eradicated. Race and racism have been central to capitalist expansion, and the Atlantic Slave Trade in particular—central to the initial expansion of capitalism—was a deeply racialized project that needed the ideology of white supremacy and its resulting structures of racism (Du Bois 1935, Davis 2011, Du Bois 1935, Césaire 2000, Rediker & Linebaugh 2013, Robinson 1983, Rediker & Linebaugh 2013). Marxists working in the Global South have similarly shown the ways in which developments outside of the core require different modes of theorizing, and that colonialism was very much central to the spread of capitalism in Europe and the United States (Amin 1974, Abdel-Malek 1968, Ayubi 1996). I highlight these interventions to show the ways in which Marxism has already been stretched to theorize groups that Marx did not focus on sufficiently, and to bring attention to differences across time and space that Marx did not address. However, Fanon’s methodological proposition suggests more than merely an expansion. Instead, as suggested earlier, it turns Marx on his head when it comes to the colonies, and brings up a whole new set of questions.

In this article I argue that Fanon’s move to trace colonialism’s creation of a “native bourgeoisie” that maintained the relation of structural dependency between colonizer and formerly-colonized provides a deeper theorization of capitalism in postcolonial contexts. This was not simply a natural by-product of capitalism organically evolving in these contexts, but a result of the colonial process itself. Following the assumption that capitalism cannot be understood without looking at how it is racialized, I argue that Fanon’s conception of a native bourgeoisie allows for an analysis of capitalist expansion that connects it to the neo-colonial policies that continue to condition countries like Egypt today (Nkrumah 1966).^v In this sense, Fanon provides a more extensive version of the Marxist notion of a ruling class. For Fanon, these attempts to criticize and deepen Marxist analysis result from his understanding of the different relationship between base and superstructure in the colonial context. He states that race supersedes the economic question in the colony, writing:

In the colonies the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem. (...) (1963, 30).

It is precisely the confluence of the superstructure (race) and the base (economic power) that articulates itself differently in the colonial context.

Hegemony or domination?

Marx, Fanon and Subaltern Studies

In this section I focus on particular on the arguments made surrounding the development of a colonial bourgeoisie. Ranajit Guha has argued in his work *Dominance without Hegemony* that postcolonial societies differ from countries that were former colonial powers because of their position in the global system (1997). Understanding the limitations faced by local bourgeois elites during colonial and neo-colonial times allows us to acknowledge that hegemony was always based more on dominance and coercion than persuasion and consent. While metropolitan

nations—the colonizers—may have constructed hegemony in their own countries through persuasion and consent, in the colonial state hegemony did not exist because consent was outweighed by coercion (ibid, xii). The ramifications of this are immense, particularly because the fact that India was non-hegemonic meant, by extension, that the state could not assimilate civil society to itself. Moreover, the Indian bourgeoisie was incapable of speaking for or representing the Indian nation, and thus their attempted hegemony was never able to incorporate all aspects of social, cultural, political, and economic life. While Guha accepts that there is domination and subordination, he argues that “the organic composition of power is dependent on a host of factors and their combinations, circumstantial as well as structural,” (ibid, 22) and that in the postcolonial context, coercion is key:

It is clear that coercion comes before persuasion and all other elements. ~~This precedence accrues to it by the logic of colonial state formation.~~ For there can be no colonialism without coercion, no subjugation of an entire people in its own homeland by foreigners without the explicit use of force. Coercion prevails in domination as its crucial defining element. ~~For that power had established itself initially by an act of conquest~~ (ibid, 24).

The colonial state could never be hegemonic in the sense of persuasion dominating coercion. Colonial states by definition are first established through coercion and violence, even if institutions are later constructed to create consent among specific segments of the population. Moreover, the indigenous ruling class is always in a complicit relationship with imperialism and thus—through a series of processes—becomes isolated from vast segments of society. This is precisely why, as Guha notes, they are unable to create a fully hegemonic system. This ties into Fanon’s argument that this class can never attain independence. Indeed, as Rahul Rao has noted, Fanon anticipated Guha’s argument in many ways, most notably when he argued: “This bourgeoisie will manage to put away enough money to stiffen its *domination*. But it will always reveal itself as incapable of giving birth to an authentic bourgeois society with all the economic and industrial consequences which this entails,” (2016, 7).

Scholars have addressed this debate about hegemony in the colony by employing Antonio Gramsci’s concept of passive revolution. Partha Chatterjee in particular has looked at bourgeoisie and bourgeois hegemony in postcolonial contexts as something that could not be achieved the way it had been in Europe. The idea of a passive revolution of capital is used to argue that the post-independence states shifted towards neoliberalism because shifts in class formation led to a favoring of finance capital over others forms. Post-independence, there was an autonomous state, a protectionist regime discouraging foreign capital and promoting import substitution, emphasis on industry, infrastructure, and manufacturing, and a powerful lass of industrialists (Chatterjee 2008, 54). Chatterjee goes on to note that the major changes that happened after the 1990s were the dismantling of the license regime, greater entry of foreign capital and foreign consumer goods, and the opening up of sectors such as transport, banking and infrastructure to private capital (ibid). These changes were reflected in changes at the level of the ruling class, as was the case in Egypt, and in particular the ascendance of a corporate class. What is more interesting, however, is the weakening of the class that managed the developmentalist state, a class he terms bureaucratic-managerial. This class did not only manage the state apparatus materially, but also ideologically (ibid, 55). However, in India domestic manufacturing continued to grow, despite these changes. In Egypt this was not the case, as I show further on. Nevertheless, Chatterjee’s conceptualization of a passive revolution as constantly shifting is key: the first instance of a passive revolution was in the 1950s with the emergence of the developmentalist state and a particular ruling class; the second instance he

mentions is the one that has been underway since the 1990s. Interestingly, the first instance of a passive revolution, whether in India or Egypt, contradicts Fanon's prediction that the class that would emerge immediately after independence would be a dependent bourgeoisie; instead, in both countries, this dependent bourgeoisie was to emerge further on with the second instance of passive revolution.

Fanon's conceptualization of the colonial bourgeoisie as dependent on the global system rather than as developing organically from society itself is similar to the argument made by Guha that the indigenous ruling class is always complicit with imperialism, and provides a particularly useful way of understanding contexts such as Egypt. According to Guha, the dependent bourgeoisie must rely on coercion, because the colonial project can never be one of consent; similarly, according to Fanon, the dependent bourgeoisie is never organically dependent on its own people and thus must rely on global actors. In other words, the dependent bourgeoisie is answerable to global capital, not to social forces within its own society. As Rao has written:

[...] dependent bourgeoisies consolidated their power by relying on their external political and economic linkages – first with the colonial power and subsequently, in the circumstances of informal empire that characterized the Cold War, with either of the superpowers – *rather than* by bargaining with their working classes, as was characteristic of state formation in the West (2016, 10).

Many Western welfare states were the result of bargains between capital and labor—in other words, the result of workers' resistance. This attunes us to the fact that this process cannot happen in colonial contexts because the bourgeoisie are not dependent on labor to maintain hegemony; for this they are dependent on global capital, suggesting that resistance in postcolonial contexts must conceptualize capital as both national and transnational. Moreover, following Chatterjee's call to recognize multiple passive revolutions, I argue that this dependent bourgeoisie did not emerge after independence in Egypt, and that its emergence was delayed because of the particular project put in place by Gamal Abdel Nasser and the Free Officers.

A Dependent Bourgeoisie?

Tracing Egypt's Ruling Class

Using the concept of the ruling class to tie into broader debates about capitalist expansion and colonial rule, the first section contextualizes the emergence of the first post-independence national government headed by Nasser and the Free Officers to trace the connections between foreign capital, colonial rule and Egypt's native bourgeoisie. The following section makes the case that the Nasserist ruling class did not resemble the dependent native bourgeoisie Fanon predicted post-independence, because the Nasserist project managed to delay its emergence. The final section looks at the ruling class that emerged in the late 1960s and argues that it was this class that resembled Fanon's native dependent bourgeoisie.

Colonial capital: Egypt pre-1952

The debate about foreign capital and Egyptian capitalists is at the heart of whether Egypt's bourgeoisie was in actual fact dependent, and if so, to what extent. Scholars such as Robert Vitalis have argued that focusing too much on foreign capital and imperialism means losing sight

of the power held by local capital (1995) while others have argued that structural features put in place by the British were determining in the last instance (Ayubi 1996). Vitalis uses the example of Ahmad 'Abboud, one of Egypt's most influential capitalists in the early 20th century, who combined foreign-funded projects with local accumulation. He points out that in the early 20th century, it was local capitalists who began to make use of Egyptian state resources—tax exemptions, coercive force, and subsidies, among others (ibid, 11). This argument, however, raises several questions. How could the state's coercive force, for example, be used in the interest of local capital—at the time Egypt was under occupation—unless the interests of local capital were aligned with the colonial power? Vitalis writes:

The dynamics of industrialization at a key juncture in Egypt's recent history are more usefully understood as the outcome of the war of position among rival investor coalitions than as a representation of enduring structural features of agrarian society and the dominant hierarchies of the international capitalist system. The politics of business and industry building in Egypt can no longer be reduced to the idea of an overarching struggle between imperialism and the nation (ibid).

Reading this period through Fanon suggests that while rival investor coalitions did exist, the prominent example of Bank Misr indicates these were not detached from Egypt's colonial condition. These structural features were very much a part of the decisions local capitalists were able to make. ~~Indeed here~~ the work of Egyptian Marxists is useful in explaining the relationship between the Egyptian capitalist class and colonialism. Nazih Ayubi points to the ways in which colonial rule created a native class through which it could penetrate Egypt's economy, arguing that the focus on land and export ensured that little surplus went to industry (1996, 92). Trade, often through credit from European banks, became the priority. Importantly, Egypt's "native elite was not the European type of bourgeoisie generated by a capitalist mode of production, but a specific type of class that was characteristic of dependent/peripheral capitalism," (ibid). These insights echo Fanon's focus on the structural disadvantages faced by any native capitalist class:

The national economy of the period of independence is not set on a new footing. ~~It is still concerned with the ground nut harvest, with the cocoa crop and the olive yield.~~ In the same way there is no change in the marketing of basic products, and not a single industry is set up in the country. We go on sending out raw materials; we go on being Europe's small farmers who specialize in unfinished products (1963, 151).

Debates in the literature about Bank Misr reify these competing views and focus specifically on whether the Bank represented nationalistic development or was tied to British interests. Some, such as Anour Abdel-Malek, have argued that the local bourgeoisie and foreign interests belonged in one group (1968, 69), while others point to the fact that Bank Misr was against the British Chamber of Commerce (Deeb 1979).^{vi} Muhammad Tal'at Harb, founder of the Bank, saw it as a means of achieving economic independence for Egypt and believed that in order for Egypt to have its own economic policy, it needed its own bank. Malak Zaalouk has written that the reason for founding the Bank was the Egyptianization of the economy: "The bank, with its policies designed to create a national bourgeoisie, was frowned upon by the British authorities as well as other foreign elements and their local allies who had a vested interest in obstructing such a development," (1989, 18). Although the Bank started out with Egyptian capital and operated that way for the first decade, they soon began to explore expansion into industrial and financial areas of investment. Capital was needed for this, however, and ultimately, the Bank had to turn towards foreign—often British—sources of capital, signaling its failure to achieve national

economic independence.^{viii} Importantly, in an iconic work on British colonial rule in Egypt, Timothy Mitchell approaches the question at a deeper level, showing the effects of new economic processes on the subjectivities of different parts of society (1991). ~~Given these dramatic changes at the subjective level, it becomes even more questionable to argue that an independent Egyptian capitalist class existed.~~

I argue that the reason for the Bank's failure is not one of agency—that the Bank did not really intend to further Egypt's independence—but structure. ~~By the 1930s the Bank was in crisis (Davis 2014; Tignor 2015). Reading this crisis through Fanon suggests that the problems that the Bank faced were tied to Egypt's position vis-à-vis imperial capital.~~ Bank Misr was made up of Egyptian capitalists, and the question of whether capitalist development would benefit Egypt as a nation continues to be paramount. Moreover, even with the intention of industrializing Egypt with Egyptian capital, the reality is that under British colonial occupation the biggest source of capital remained foreign capital. Following Fanon, the bourgeoisie in colonial and postcolonial contexts must be theorized as dependent precisely because of these structural constraints. This does not discount moments of agency, as demonstrated through the founding of Bank Misr; but it does denote a contradiction in calls for national development coming from a small capitalist class that was tied to foreign interests. Indeed the class composition of the Bank was in direct contrast to the class composition of the Free Officers, who arguably pushed for the same goals of national development through industrialization, and who ultimately also failed to achieve their goals of independence. Egyptian Marxists ~~such as Samir Amin, Anwar Abdel-Malek and Nazih Ayubi~~ have shown why analyzing Egypt's capitalist class as comparable to Western capitalist classes is problematic, thus demonstrating, in my view, an attempt to “stretch Marxism” as Fanon would call it.

A dependent native bourgeoisie?

In the third chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon argues that the national middle class that took power in most African countries after independence failed in its task of rejecting neo-colonialism and pursuing independent development. Instead, it sought to connect itself to the capitalist core and further impoverish countries yet to recover from the colonial experience. He argues that by failing to become a bourgeoisie—as happened in Europe—this middle class ended up using nationalism in the worst way possible. Westernized and speaking a different language, this class had become detached from the rest of the country, and was therefore unable to lead it.

Fanon's theorization of the class structure in the colonial context is characterized by his harsh assessment of this class, a class that was counter-revolutionary in every sense:

The national bourgeoisie, which takes over power at the end of the colonial regime, is an underdeveloped bourgeoisie. The national bourgeoisie is not geared to production, invention, creation, or work. All its energy is channeled into intermediary activities. ~~Networking and scheming seem to be its underlying vocation.~~ The national bourgeoisie has the psychology of a businessman, not that of a captain of industry (1963, 98).

Fanon ~~brings us to the question of production by connecting the lack of engagement in production on the part of this bourgeoisie to the workings of the colonial system itself, and~~ historicizes the reasons for the emergence of this dependent bourgeoisie by connecting them to processes of colonial extraction.⁺

~~Colonialism hardly ever exploits the whole of a country. It contents itself with bringing to light the natural resources, which it extracts, and exports to meet the needs of the mother country's industries, thereby allowing certain sectors of the colony to become relatively rich. But the rest of the colony follows its path of under-development and poverty, or at all events sinks into it more deeply (1963, 159).~~

The extraction of natural resources and the setting up of an entire infrastructure solely geared towards exporting these resources to the colonial metropolis—to meet their industrial needs—is the initial moment when African countries are drawn into the global capitalist system. This infrastructure did not simply disappear at the moment of independence; it continued to structure relations between industrialized and dependent countries. However, attempts to break with this structure were made, and as I have argued, the Nasserist project represents one such attempt. In the Egypt of Abdel Nasser, we see signs of a change in production that is out of line with Fanon's description. The Nasserist project was about industry as the basis of production, and a new fraction of capital was cultivated that was to be a central locus of capital accumulation: the public sector, managed by a new technocratic/bureaucratic class.¹⁵ This fraction was not directly connected to an independent source of capital or wealth, such as land or industry, but they were connected to the state and the Free Officers. While this fraction did not have the material means to organize production according to their own interests, the state did. A major mechanism through which this was attempted was an expansion of the public sector. When the Nasserist ruling class came to power, they addressed the dominance of the private sector by weakening the power of the agrarian fraction that dominated it, and which was tied to foreign capital and institutions. The aim, however, had not been to eliminate private property itself—which would indicate a stronger socialist transition—nor to institute new relations that would bring back a conceptualization of land as communal; but rather to dismantle feudalism and the agrarian fraction that benefitted from it and replace it with new fractions that would develop the new ruling class's drive towards state-led capitalist development through industrialization. The agrarian law of 1952 that limited personal ownership of land not only weakened the agrarian fraction that accumulated capital through the land, but also affected flows of capital by favoring a new industrial fraction (Aoude 1994, 2). There were also restrictions placed on foreign capital.

The claims made by the Nasserist project have been probed extensively, in particular in debates about whether the regime was socialist or capitalist. The authoritarian nature of the regime has overshadowed these types of debates, however, as political space was all but closed down during these years. The expansion of internal security forces as well as the jailing of all types of political opponents created an atmosphere of repression even as the project promised a more liberatory type of politics. Returning to Fanon's condemnation of post-revolutionary regimes as dependent native bourgeoisies, it appears that the Nasserist project departed from this characterization. The Nasser regime did not seek to align itself with the West or to further continue a capitalist project dependent on foreign capital and interests. It fought against many forms of neo-colonialism and was a major force against colonial domination all over the world.

Nevertheless it remains clear that this project, as well as other postcolonial nationalist projects, ultimately failed. The 1960s saw a deepening economic crisis in Egypt, and it is here that the transition to a new era begins. The Nasserist project was ultimately unable to overcome the global capitalist logic of uneven development, a logic that not only set the conditions within which the bloc had to navigate in 1952, but which also created the single event that was to turn the balance of social forces away from nationalist and state-led development: the 1967 Israeli war. By the late 1960s the structural constraints facing Egypt revealed that development along

the lines envisioned by the Nasserist bloc was impossible. A new social force that saw free market capitalism as a solution gained the momentum it needed after the 1967 defeat. This new social force represented the dependent bourgeoisie Fanon had described.

~~Despite the~~ ~~And yet by the 1970s Egypt's bourgeoisie had become precisely what Fanon described.~~ ~~These complexities around anticolonial nationalist projects, are important, and yet the~~ claims to a new form of national development are important to note. As Siba Grovogui has written, "From the middle of the 20th century onward, leaders of the Global South near-uniformly aspired to produce new societies founded upon forms of politics that stressed ethical and political possibilities after colonialism," (2011, 186). He mentions Brazil, where domestic industrialization, nationalization of natural resources, and a modicum of distributive justice were put in place by Getúlio Dornelles Vargas, and South Africa, where the African National Congress defied foreign backers to maintain a broad-based political alliance during the anti-Apartheid struggle (ibid). Mossadegh's calls for nationalization, which rested on a critique of how international mechanisms determine the prices of commodities is yet another example (ibid, 183). ~~"The feeling of responsibility among leaders in the Global South to produce a novel, democratic movement was rooted not only in domestic politics. The ideologies of pan-Africanism, Pan-Arabism, and Pan-Asianism contain a certain sense of responsibility and duty toward others on the basis of larger political, cultural and historical affinities," (ibid, 187).~~ This led Grovogui to argue that the Global South aspired to a different kind of universalism (ibid). I am interested in the ways in which these claims expressed an acute awareness of the structural conditions that reproduced inequality on a global scale, and what some of the mechanisms of countering it were. I am also interested in how these claims, put forward by many countries across the Global South, defied Fanon's prediction that post-revolutionary governments would betray the nationalist cause. Indeed it is worth asking if these projects did not represent a more progressive understanding of nationalism.³

While the Nasserist ruling class may have delayed the emergence of a dependent bourgeoisie, and while this project may have ultimately failed, the question remains then of what the Nasserist class did produce. Omnia el Shakry has argued that social welfare became a means through which the Nasserist ruling class extended its hegemony. She writes:

A social welfare mode of regulation is premised upon the state apparatus as arbiter not only of economic development, but also of social welfare. Some of the salient features of this mode of regulation are the rejection of the maximization of economic utility as the sole telos of social life; a view of "the people" as resources of national wealth and as the primary object of governance; the attempt to contain radical social change through piecemeal social reform and amelioration of the conditions of the working poor; the development of an interventionist social policy of social planning and engineering; and a totalizing model of social welfare, meant to encompass economic, social and political factors at the same time (2007, 198).

Here I return to Siba Grovogui's point that post-independence regimes across Africa had a very particular project in mind, based on the welfare of all citizens. While it is true, as el-Shakry notes, that this rested on modern conceptions of the production of citizenship, and while it is also true that these projects did not fulfil their democratic claims, the point remains that there was the development of a new project under the ruling classes that emerged post-independence. The project was based on an alternative imagining of the nation and what it could represent. ~~Nasser wrote:~~

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~~Always there were two great objectives: to check despotism and make the nation itself the source of powers, and to put an end to foreign intervention and usurpation of Egyptian resources (1955, 202).~~

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A key aspect of this new nation was, as had been argued, processes such as nationalization and industrialization. However, these are not to be understood solely in economic terms, although this is key, as Grovogui notes: “Mossadegh’s and others’ moral claims about the propriety of nationalization fed into other issues pertaining to the structures and mechanisms determining the prices of commodities,” (2011, 183). These changes had wider ramifications, and were part of a larger process of creating new nations:

The aim was to promote an ethos of egalitarianism, social justice and solidarity. They (post-independence nations) demonstrated a sense of responsibility and duty toward the citizenry beyond the constitutional mandated and institutional practices inherited from colonial rule,” (ibid, 186).

I have found Vivienne Jabri’s argument here most forceful, as she argues that we need to understand these claims as attempts to access the international (2012, 100). To regain control over the institutions of international political economy—the same institutions that reproduced global inequality—was seen as the path to independence. “In its role in both accumulation and the establishment of legitimacy, the postcolonial state is an interventionist state: it seeks to construct a hegemonic structure that functions to legitimize a political economy of development; it builds a state apparatus geared for planning as well as the mobilization and management of national resources; it negotiates its role as allocator with the demands of a modern sector that seeks its own stakes in the developmental economy,” (ibid, 102). However, this is always done vis-à-vis the international; it is this tension that mediates anything and everything the postcolonial state does. “This is where the postcolonial state comes face to face with the colonial structure of the international. The resistance of the postcolonial state as such must hence be measured in terms of how it fulfils its role in relation to the constraints of the international,” (ibid).

This resistance meant removing Egyptian production from this international sphere that was in and of itself colonial (ibid, 103). Industrialization and nationalization were implemented in order to ensure a regime of distributive justice, addressing a concern and commitment to the poor. But they were also implemented in order to face the constraints of the international. Resources were no longer available to be exploited by colonial rulers, but were to become the means through which the new nation was to be lifted. Postcolonial states thus had two projects: one political and one social. As el Shakry notes, quoting Nasser, the challenge was always to carry out both a political revolution of self-determination, as well as a social revolution (2013). It was the assumptions underpinning the social revolution that show us the type of project the Nasserist ruling class envisioned. As Jabri reminds us, the nationalization of the Suez Canal represents a paradigmatic moment in postcolonial state resistance: “In this moment was contained not simply the desire to reclaim a valuable resource for the nation, but to constitute the nation as a viable political community with a right of access to the realm of the international,” (2012, 103).

From Nasser to Sadat: Neoliberal Dependency

The ruling class that formed around Anwar el Sadat came to be known for a very different set of accomplishments from the Nasserist one: the liberalization of the economy, the peace treaty with

Israel, and a turn towards the United States and foreign capital. A new group of businessmen, working in real estate, finance and speculation, formed the core of the ruling class. There was a clear move towards favoring the private sector, as well as realigning Egypt geopolitically, both in terms of opening the economy to foreign capital as well as shifting away from the Soviets towards the United States. Indeed the ascendancy of the neoliberal project worldwide was central to the connections between this new class and regional and international powers.

To highlight the shift this represented, and to show the ways in which Fanon's dependent bourgeoisie emerged, I focus on the particular case of Osman Ahmed Osman. He is an interesting figure because although he was successful under both Nasser and Sadat, this success was different in each instance. Osman rose to prominence under Nasser, and eventually won the tender to build the Aswan Dam. This happened because of the position the Free Officers took vis-à-vis foreign capital: Nasser had rejected offers from foreign capital to build the Dam because of the conditionalities attached. Instead he turned to Egyptian capitalists and national capital, eventually choosing Osman's company. However it was under *Infitah* that Osman both expanded his economic empire and became involved in overt political life. Sadat's rise to power was supported by Osman, a close friend whose children had intermarried, and soon after Sadat became president Osman became the most prominent businessman in the country, representing the non-agricultural fraction of capital. Altogether, he and his sons founded 26 companies (Baker 1990, 27).

Osman was a strong supporter of free market principles and expanding the private sector. Indeed it was his firm belief in these principles that guided his work as a minister in Sadat's cabinet: "I became convinced that I could serve a useful purpose as a government minister only after I saw [that] Sadat's goals coincided with mine to end the public sector's stranglehold on our economy," (ibid, 25). In a telling paragraph on Osman, Baker writes about his views on freedom and the economy:

Osman argued that freedom in the seventies meant something different from the "bread" of the socialist era or even the political rights of the pre-1952 liberal period. According to Osman, the idea of freedom emphasized the opportunity—whether large or small—open to all citizens to work hard and through individual effort improve their own position. As Osman saw it, individual successes also contributed to the general prosperity of the country. Osman argued that by dismantling the oppressive structures of Nasser's system, Sadat was making this opportunity available to all Egyptians (ibid, 26).

Moreover, Osman saw private property as essential to the "new Egypt" and argued that nationalization had had an extremely negative effect on the country. Although he remained firmly against the idea that foreign capital should dominate Egypt, and was also wary of the increasing consumerism among the new generation who were benefitting from the new economic policies, Osman's case suggests that the line between business and politics became exceedingly thin after *Infitah*. Under Nasser, Osman did not exercise the type of political power he had under Sadat. Even more telling, he did not have the ability to determine economic policies and goals under Nasser, despite his significant investments in the Egyptian economy. This highlights the shift from a strong state-led form of development to development based on the market.

In 1963, Fanon wrote:

A bourgeoisie similar to that which developed in Europe is able to elaborate an ideology and at the same time strengthen its own power. ~~Such a bourgeoisie, dynamic, educated and secular,~~

~~has fully succeeded in its undertaking of the accumulation of capital and has given to the nation a minimum of prosperity.~~ In under-developed countries, we have seen that no true bourgeoisie exists. (...) This get-rich-quick middle class shows itself incapable of great ideas or of inventiveness. It remembers what it has read in European textbooks and imperceptibly it becomes not even the replica of Europe, but its caricature (1963, 175).

What happened under Sadat is that capital was once again redirected from one place to another. Under Nasser, capital had been redirected away from an agrarian fraction of capital towards industrialization and the public sector. Under Sadat, capital was redirected away from the public sector and towards the private sector. Despite the rhetoric, there were not massive amounts of foreign capital coming into Egypt; what changed dramatically was the expansion of imports. The state was still central; indeed it was the state that redirected investments away from social services and the public sector. As Mitchell notes, “The reform program did not remove the state from the market or eliminate profligate public subsidies. Its main impact was to concentrate public funds into different hands, and many fewer. The state turned resources away from agriculture and industry. It now subsidized financiers instead of factories, cement kilns instead of bakeries, speculators instead of schools,” (2002, 276). Moreover, this arrangement encouraged many within the public sector to grasp the new opportunities *Infitah* brought about for individual gain. The 1990s and 2000s were to follow this trajectory, with finance capital eventually dominating productive capital.

This was the bigger shift between the two eras: ~~is~~ the transformation of the economic infrastructure itself, and in particular the role of productive versus financial capital. What Fanon seems to read as a progressive economic project assumes the state and bourgeoisie as relying ultimately on productive capital. Under Nasser, the aim had been to make the public sector the base of the economy, based on industry. Under Sadat, we see a reversal of that, with financial speculation—based primarily on land—becoming the main form of capital generation, as well as import and export. This is not new, however, as it reproduced—or rather, returns to—the arrangement in place pre-independence. Capital as unproductive means that land and money were relied on to generate for money, rather than being invested in industry, trade, or other long-term projects. This has had a dramatic impact, in particular, on the public sector: once the harbinger of development, it has slowly degenerated to its current condition, where it is racked by corruption. Indeed the criticisms of the public sector under Nasser—that it was unproductive, corrupt, and inefficient—ironically became more pronounced after the shift to a free market system. As Fanon noted, the native bourgeoisie would elaborate an ideology that would strengthen its position in power, and this we saw both with Nasser and with Sadat. However, it is only under Sadat that we see the native bourgeoisie as dependent in the Fanonian sense. Indeed the ruling class that emerged during this era has often been portrayed in Egyptian popular culture precisely in the terms Fanon uses above: get-rich-quick, incapable of great ideas or direction, and ultimately nothing more than a caricature of the global Western elite.

Conclusion

The national bourgeoisie turns its back more and more on the interior and on the real facts of its undeveloped country, and tends to look towards the former mother country and the foreign capitalists who count on its obliging compliance (Fanon 1963, 165).

Returning to the debate on hegemony, Fanon seems to be suggesting that whereas what occurred in European countries was that the bourgeoisie succeeded in establishing hegemony and masking the capitalist accumulation that was only benefitting a small strata, in postcolonial

contexts, on the other hand, the failure to mask this meant a lack of hegemony: the middle class wanted to get rich quickly without inventiveness or leadership, and thus paid little attention to maintaining stability. This was later argued by Guha, who noted that hegemony cannot exist in colonial conditions. Fanon, however, adds another layer: because of the middle class's ties to the former colonial power, it ends up trying to become a replica of Europe, though in the end only managing to become its caricature.

Prior to 1952, the Egyptian bourgeoisie was indeed not involved in production, invention or building. Its wealth came from the land, from the system of private property instituted by the British. Although the Nasser regime attempted to change this by redirecting capital from land and agriculture to industry, it ultimately failed. While the first twenty years can be understood as an attempt to industrialize and divert capital to multiple areas of investment, the 1970s saw a complete turn away from this set of goals towards investment in real estate, land, and the import of luxury goods. A new bourgeoisie emerged, that was Westernized and whose outlook towards the West could not be a better example of what Fanon means by anti-national. A progressive outcome would only have happened if this class had cultivated economic independence, and this was possibly only through immersing itself in the subaltern classes and ensuring it does not become detached from its needs and values.

If, as Vivienne Jabri suggests, the resistance of the postcolonial state should be measured in terms of its relation to the constraints of the international, then there is an ocean of difference between Nasser and Sadat. The nationalization of the Suez Canal marked a moment of resistance, whereas the opening of Egypt's economy marked a moment of convergence. Both moments trace a particular relationship between Egypt and the international; but in both instances, the international remains very much colonial in its articulation of global inequality. For this reason, while what Nasser did can be seen as resistance, this is not the case with Sadat. The national middle class—having benefited from education and access to capital—has the responsibility to put this at the disposal of the people—this is the “just,” “heroic,” and “fruitful” path Fanon speaks of. The 1950s and 1960s in Egypt show a complicated picture: to some extent, much capital and expertise was put at the disposal of the people, in the form of education, employment, and other social benefits. On the other hand, this process was not completed, and the state remained authoritarian. It was not the people who decided how capital and resources were to be used; it was the bourgeoisie and the state. By the 1970s, the picture was much less complicated. Here we see the emergence of what Fanon calls the “traditional bourgeoisie—a bourgeoisie which is stupidly, contemptibly, cynically bourgeois.” In other words, a bourgeoisie that acts for itself and is clearly and vehemently anti-national.

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ⁱ For a sample, see: Gordon (2015), Macey (2000), Cherki (2006), Gibson (2003), Ato Sekyi-Ontu (1996).

ⁱⁱ See: Arif Dirlik (1994), Benita Parry (2004) and Nigel Gibson (2003).

ⁱⁱⁱ A recent exploration of the Palestinian occupation using Fanon can be found here: <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/23126/fanon-in-palestine-a-four-part-essay-series>

^{iv} The stretching of Marxism can be seen in practice in the work of Marxist feminists, who have criticized orthodox Marxist accounts for excluding the notion of reproduction from the theoretical elaboration of the accumulation of capital (James 1975, Federici 2012).

^v A special thanks to Vanessa Eileen-Thomas who put it in precisely these terms.

^{vi} For an elaboration on neo-colonialism, see Nkrumah 1966.

^{vii} For additional work on Bank Misr, see in particular Tignor 2015, Davis 2014.

^{viii} This failure should be read within the limits the Bank operated within, namely the continuing dominance of European and British capital in colonial contexts.

^{ix} Although there are extensive debates about the Nasser era, it remains clear that industrialisation was a key element of his project. See: Abdel-Fadil 1975; Hansen 1975.

^x Fanon also did warn of the “pitfalls of nationalist consciousness”—that nationalism could just as easily lead to exclusion, tribalism, chauvinism, racialized nationalism, and so on. It would be impossible to argue that the Nasserist nationalist project was free of these ideological extremes and, as I argue, it did eventually succumb to a regressive form of nationalism.

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