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New Frontiers
in the Social History
of the Middle East



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MODERN MIDDLE EAST HISTORY BEYOND ORIENTAL DESPOTISM, WORLD HISTORY BEYOND HEGEL: AN AGENDA ARTICLE*

PETER GRAN

The field of modern Middle Eastern History has outgrown its dominant paradigm, the Oriental Despotism model, but there is not yet a new one, one that would do justice to the revolution in social analysis of recent years. This is not a major criticism. Other fields of history have analogous problems, but it is a fact, and it affects those carrying out specialized work. What is worth noting, perhaps, is that specialists have been drawing attention to this fact for some time but their views have not been given much weight. Eventually one is driven to ask, why is this the case? What explains the persistence of an old paradigm under such conditions?

Part one of this article suggests that the problems of Middle East history are to a considerable extent problems imposed on it by the larger field of world history of which it is a part, problems stemming from the continuing use of the Rise of the West approach to world history in that field. If this is the case, then, for a revisionist view of Middle East history to be heard, it would need to address both the technical concerns of the Middle East field and, in addition, those of world history as well. Part one surveys the study of world history noting the past effort in that field to challenge the dominant paradigm. Part two of the article attempts to offer a solution through a social history approach, focused on the Middle East, building on these past efforts. In this part, hegemony is played off against counter hegemony, different Middle Eastern cases serving as examples. Such an approach is intended to be a revisionist one for Middle East studies, but it is also intended to serve as a more general way of recasting modern world history, one moving away from the rise of the West toward a rise of the rich, one which would resituate the events of the Middle East in terms of

*I would like to thank Professors Rifa'at abu El-Haj, Thomas C. Patterson, and Robert Vitalis for their comments.

what is happening as opposed to simply *where* they are happening.

Social history encourages us to hypothesize that effective counter hegemonic struggles in modern times shake the world system wherever they occur and that the Middle East, after a century of oil imperialism, would be a logical place to look for such struggle. Obviously it is there. Pieces of this history are well-known but much of it is not. Given the gaps in our knowledge of social history up to now, the article is termed an agenda article.

World History and Its Traditions

The subject of world history has long been taken as the Rise of the West. Following the rise of social history in the 1960s, a growing number of scholars have come to realize that this way of understanding history is rather limiting. Writers using what one could term the 'Hegel model' find historical dynamism only in the West. Articles urging the rewriting of the history to overcome such Eurocentrism, elitism, diffusionism, or simply to attack Hegel began to appear as far back as 1970 and continue until today. These articles are symptomatic, I believe, of a new awareness. Clearly, people make history and they do so where they are. The vast majority of people are not elite and they are not in the West. The problem thus emerges of finding an alternative approach to the Hegelian conceptualization of modern world history, one which could show this. The search for such an alternative is ongoing.

Social history has given the researcher not just new knowledge but the beginning of a new, more powerful way to think about history, one that allows the historian to incorporate more than the older 'elite-mass' approach, one that makes the historian sensitive to the complex web of mutual influence existing throughout human society.¹

The theoretical significance of social history was not initially grasped, even by many of its practitioners. Social history seemed like many other thriving fields, a part of the growth of knowledge in an age in which a large amount of new knowledge was being produced in many fields. It only

¹ Writers who contributed importantly to this development were not just social historians but include theorists such as Marx, Gramsci, and Foucault.

gradually occurred to some that if all people had power and their actions had to be considered as history, that this implied a new logic or methodology, one that would take in the whole of state and society. If this were to be the case, then social history would not be simply a new body of information to be added to the historical knowledge that already exists. In light of this insight, the older framework seemed suddenly out of place. It appeared self-defeating to continue insisting that the state was some kind of antithesis of society as the Subaltern School had been doing. Where was the antithesis of state and society? There was none. Not only was the logic of how one thought about history changing, so too was the way it was written. If the goal of history now emerging is to convey the development of human society in some complexity, the form in which history will be written is likely to change accordingly. It seems likely the new form of history writing will become increasingly structural, the traditional approach to writing history—that of the narrative—will diminish in importance, at least for a while, as being too limited.

The first schools of history-writing, indeed the main ones up to now, which attempt to come to grips with the intuition that social history marks some kind of a break with the past are the Annales School, the Dependency School and, to a degree, Marxism. Writers in these schools have produced works of originality and still do. What I will be proposing in the second part of this essay owes something to their efforts and some acknowledgement of this fact is thus due. Let us begin with a consideration of the Annales School. The Annales School takes a global materialist approach to history, an approach that it calls "total history." It focuses on the long-term cycles of the economy, on the diffusion of technology and culture as well as on trends in demography. From the work of the founding figure, Fernand Braudel, to the contemporary Andre Gunder Frank in his recent *Reorient* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) an attempt is made to turn away from the Western elite to the trends affecting the human totality. And while there is no doubt that the Annales School has enriched the field of history in terms of its formulations and in terms of its introduction of new sources, these advances have come at a fairly steep price. In construing history to be the outcome of various global trends, the Annalists have not been able to valorize the role of particular individuals, or of politics, or of choice in history. Everything is determinacy, or

contingency, or conjunctures. It is not clear how efficiently this confronts the problem of Hegel's legacy.

The Dependency School, by comparison to the Annales School, is closer to traditional history. It is also closer to elite history and to narrative history. It accepts the idea of a modern world market already familiar to scholars and simply builds on the early histories of capitalism in the Non-West to construct the idea of a periphery for world capitalism. In so doing however it introduces some new propositions that bear on the issue of Eurocentrism, and by extension, on Hegel. Modern capitalism in the West, or core of the world market, is postulated as retarding the development of capitalism on the periphery. The struggle of the peripheral economies therefore becomes a part of world history.

To their credit, Dependency School writers were among the first to make use of the idea of a modern world market and of the capitalist mode of production on a world scale. This marked a step over an earlier scholarship that had found capitalism mainly in the West, the larger world market being something rather ill defined. For the Dependency School, the ill-defined nature of the world market in this earlier work indicated mystification. In their view it stemmed from what they understood to be the reluctance of many older theorists to acknowledge the continuing centrality of primitive accumulation to modern capitalism. Whether or not this was a matter of reluctance, certainly most theorizing of modern capitalism begins and ends to this day with an account of wage labor. It is the very exceptional book that gets as far as the dual economy or of the unwaged nature of housework, much less the role of the Third World. Dependency theorists were also among the first to postulate that the development of industrial capitalism in any one or two countries in effect contributed to the formation of the periphery by greatly raising the price of industrialization thereafter for any third or fourth country aspiring to industrialize. While history records a few examples from among the world's ruling classes willing to pay that price, most were not. As a result their countries joined the periphery. Building on these insights, it seems clear that the periphery must be understood as poor and underdeveloped only so far as the masses are concerned. The ruling classes and the wealthy more generally on the periphery are often real powers not only domestically but internationally as well. In studying the power of the periphery ruling classes, Dependency theorists found that sometimes

their power and wealth stemmed from their political role in a given country. Sometimes it came because they were middlemen for international business, sometimes it came from their direct control of surplus value generation, but generally it was a combination of the political and the economic. Regrettably, Dependency theorists have not taken up the issue of whether their insights could produce a new approach to world history as a whole.

While the Dependency School has developed quite a following inside and outside of academia, and rightly so, with readers appreciating the coherence of its line of argument, it has also produced critics. Few works of the Dependency School, the critics point out, succeed in their objective of overcoming Eurocentrism. The vast majority of these works reach the conclusion—or assume from the outset—that all the relevant historical agency in a given situation lies with Western capitalism. The struggles on the periphery are simply reactive and generally futile.

What, then, about Marxism? Marxism too has a checkered history from the perspective of this project. From the very time of Karl Marx himself, Marxism added to the problem of Eurocentrism by introducing the supposedly universal concepts of feudalism and capitalism only to apply them in a way that Hegel might have, mainly to Europe. At the same time, it is important to remember that Marx also recognized the global nature of capitalism. This was a contradictory position to be in; it quickly led to yet other contradictions for Marx himself and for those who followed him in later years. In the 1860s Marx found himself writing about the German working class. At that time Marx was of the opinion that German workers, by virtue of their advanced position, automatically would lead the way to socialism. When this did not happen his followers decided it must be the reverse, that in fact German workers were automatically disqualified from playing this vanguard role as they were the aristocrats of labor. In neither case do political choices, nor the working out of history, seem to outweigh deductive reasoning. Later Marxism, especially western Marxism, carries such features down to the present, as it went from Germany to Russia and then back to Germany.

If the available theory then from the Annales School on through the Dependency School and Marxism has not been entirely satisfactory in terms of assimilating social history or in finding a way beyond Eurocentrism, there is yet another factor to consider, that is, the factor of interest, or as I

suggested above, lack of interest in theory on the part of professional historians. During the 1990s the situation has changed a bit; more historians appear interested in theory. One can only speculate what this might mean. Perhaps this interest stems from the fact that more historians are working with social history, perhaps because history in general is under fire in the academy. Both might be the case. Certainly the field of history has begun to attract critics of various sorts. Reading the journals today, one finds some of these critics are calling for a return to older forms of history, some are calling for a post-history, some are arguing for change in existing ideas about modernity, and some are calling for the abandonment of history in favor of myth or of individual experience or simply for "histories." For whatever reason, many of the most influential of these critics and reformers are not historians at all but literature teachers. Yet, out of the maelstrom of critical voices of whatever sort, one increasingly hears the term Eurocentrism raised as a matter of concern, and it is this criticism that registers probably more than any other.

Given this political and intellectual crisis of the field, which I have identified here in terms of malaise from within and criticism from without during what appears in any case to be a period of transition, I propose a kind of minimal reconstruction of the basic paradigm for the study of modern world history to begin to achieve the goal of accommodating the logic of social history and of overcoming Eurocentrism as a way to begin to address this crisis.² If at the present time social history supports the intuition of a

² What follows is drawn from *Beyond Eurocentrism: A New View of Modern World History* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996) and from various essays on Middle Eastern themes based on it. The book is an attempt to use the idea of going beyond Eurocentrism within a political economy framework. More commonly, this idea has been used as a weapon against political economy by postmodernists or by the decolonizationists who, appearances to the contrary, want to go on privileging Europe, as for example, one finds with the Cambridge School historians. For a well-known example of the Cambridge School in relation to moving beyond Eurocentrism see, Ronald Robinson, "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration," in Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe (eds.) *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism* (London: Longman, 1972) ch. 5. More recently there appeared another work in the same vein also on the Middle East, Efraim Karsh and Inari Karsh, *Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East 1789-1923* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

wider social totality but cannot clarify the picture beyond that, this should encourage the history profession to take one step beyond the prevailing Rise of the West status quo but no more than one step. This could mean in practical terms not rejecting the idea of the Rise of the West but putting something else first. That something else—from my own experimentation—would logically be the Rise of the Rich, or more precisely put, the rise of capitalistically oriented ruling classes on a global level. From the sixteenth century onward, those who have vast amounts of money or who are rich in power relations in some locale can use their money and power relations to get what they want. In doing so, they in turn impact on not just local but world history as well. The wider inclusiveness of this formulation of history appears to mean three things: (a) that one goes beyond elite to class, (b) one goes beyond Western ruling classes to all ruling classes, and (c) by extension then to all classes and not just to ruling classes as a result of class conflict. In sum, such a change in approach would lead us to assume that all groups are actors making choices within constraints, subject populations included.

While such an approach has not been tried before, small pieces of what might be a part of this approach are already fairly widely accepted. For example, the idea of a Trans Atlantic ruling class, or of a common hegemony among the Western democracies, are ideas floating around. Moreover, there appears to be some acceptance of the idea of a dual role for rulers as national and international actors. Can such insights serve as a platform allowing one eventually to show how the activities of foreign lobbies and influence peddlers in the capital of a reigning great power explain how the world's ruling classes can generally reach consensus?³

An approach, such as the rise of the rich, might also resolve yet another thorny problem for social history, that of how one accounts for science and technology and its distribution without falling into Eurocentrism? The problem is well known and of long standing. From any reasonable examination of military technology, one must acknowledge that a few Western countries have more of such technology than has the rest of the world put together. Undoubtedly this technology has contributed mightily to

³ There does not appear to be a scholarly treatment of the history of influence peddling inside the major powers as practiced by foreign powers. For each country there are a number of books, often more or less written as exposes.

the wealth and power of these countries.⁴ But such an observation examined closely also underscores one particular facet of the subject of technology, that of cost. Much of this technology is not available to the vast majority of people, even those living in the West, because of its cost. In short, where life and death are at stake, such technology is available only to the very wealthy or very powerful. It is they and only they who can afford expensive organ transplants and life-prolonging treatments to give one example or who can afford modern weapons to give another. It is not the West's possession of technology that is decisive, but the access of the wealthy to it.

Was not the possession of the machine gun, the airplane, or chemical weapons—to choose three familiar examples—the decisive factor in various battles, which in turn led to the nineteenth century colonial conquests, which in its turn was fundamental in the creation of the Great Powers, which shaped modern history? No doubt this was so but only at the given moment of the battle. What actually resulted from the above, was not the omnipotence of the West but the emergence of more and more strongly entrenched local ruling classes able to stand on the world stage better than they could earlier, before the fighting had begun. One sees this clearly if one considers the nineteenth century as a whole and not just the moment of conquest. In fact the West might have had more power and fewer constraints in relation to the world at the beginning of the century than it did at the end of the century during the so-called heyday of colonialism. At the beginning of the century capitalism was still primarily a matter of primitive accumulation. By the end of the century it was much more organized. A corollary of this, one sometimes overlooked by scholars, is that as a result of the rise of the rich, the average Westerner had progressively less and less

⁴ Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981). Headrick excels when it comes to details. What is important to note, however, is that if one takes his method as a way to conceptualize history and one looks at the advance of capitalism and at the advance of technology as the motor of history then the people and events do not make much sense. An incredibly advanced country like the U.S. could not push aside Vietnam. The U.S. economy, which is the strongest in the world, seems mortgaged to the continuing prosperity of the world's financial markets. Even in the most generic sense, it is hard to separate corporate logic from the logic of hegemony. Business in one hegemony does not resemble very closely business in another.

power in his or her own society vis-à-vis the state as time progressed, while the Third World ruling classes gained in strength in relation to their populations as well as in relation to the West. To look at it the other way around, the Western ruling classes did not need their fellow citizens as much anymore; they had other options. Another corollary: Few Third World ruling classes ever chose to risk their personal status by endorsing guerilla war against European colonizers to try to stem the course of empire; presumably, few felt they had to. More logical from their point of view, and certainly from their conqueror's point of view, was surrendering to Western power in the expectation of joining it, manipulating it, and thereby gaining even greater wealth than they had had before. Many did just that.

The consequences of such stands have been significant ones. Large regions became colonies or semi-colonies and in the process nation-states. As this transpired European ruling classes discovered that while they often enjoyed the loyalty of their counterparts, other classes had arisen on the periphery, which opposed them and their own ruling classes as well. Worse yet, perhaps, they did so with the occasional complicity of the latter, who used them for leverage. Real control of one country by another requires occupation and the risk of war. Occupations tend to be costly; wars even more so. As the twentieth century progressed, few Western ruling classes were prepared to take such risks. One thinks of Algeria and Israel as the exception. Colonialism no longer benefited the Western ruling classes as much as it did in the nineteenth century. By the twentieth century there were simply too many people on the colonial payroll. By this point, if colonialism benefited anybody, it benefited more the local ruling classes and the European middle classes employed throughout the empire than it did the Western rulers. Gradually the world's ruling classes moved beyond colonialism toward a single global police, in effect pensioning off most of their erstwhile colonial personnel.

Modern history, then, was never just the story of the West or of the Western ruling class. Even looked at in a fairly conservative fashion, one always finds Third World ruling classes. Colonial officials came and went but the Third World ruling classes stayed on and on. The next point is that the power of the world's ruling classes kept evolving and becoming more integrated. If one looks closely at the Age of Queen Victoria what one finds is that the colonial epoch, and then later the post-colonial history, may have

had their fireworks and parades but they also witnessed the steady evolution of an important institution in the imperial metropole, the lobbyist or influence peddler. Before the age of the nation state these did not exist. Thereafter, representatives of the power structures of the colonies predictably seem to find their way into the circles of power of the colonizer and to secure what was vital to them through their lobbies. During the past generation, it was often assumed by historians that this was not the case, that the Third World ruling classes were victims of Western colonialism and like everyone else they were seeking freedom. Subsequently, it became clear that political freedom represented a challenge many scarcely looked forward to. Indeed, many of the individuals involved not only sided with the colonial power but chose to resettle in Europe when the Colonial period came to an end. Others of course stayed on but they did so only because they were propped up by organizations such as the World Bank. In recent years the role of the foreign lobby has started to find its place in scholarship. It is still typically treated, however, as a deviation and not as a part of the normal structure we should study, and it has yet to figure in how we theorize world history. The hypothesis I would propose would be that the lobby is the point of interface between two countries in matters of real importance, especially matters of real importance for the Third World. Embassies are of course also a point of interface but these are increasingly constrained by the formal structural logic of multilateralism while the lobby has a kind of back door informality.

Another part of the dominant paradigm also alluded to in the foregoing is the notion, quite a logical one, of history having a center or requiring a center or in any case being best written in reference to that center. In the nineteenth century, here to invoke the standard form of illustration, Britain was the absolutely dominant country while in the twentieth century the United States was. The sheer power of these countries was overwhelming and the historian at home in the narrative style does well to begin from this vantage point. The problem arises for the historian when one finds that power by itself is not enough, as in the case of the British in Afghanistan or of the U.S. in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq. This in turn raises an interesting question. How often is the fact of a power differential between two nations decisive in explaining a particular outcome? There are no doubt instances when it is but also rather commonly, power exercised by a strong country

tends to be constrained by actual or implicit alliances with the wider world capitalist market with which it is bound up. So, because of these multilateral constraints, the power differential is not so decisive. Power, and indeed history itself, could be looked at rather differently.

And one might add, examples of constraint on great powers as a result of multilateralism are in fact quite numerous and quite important. For example, such constraints are clearly reflected in the diplomacy of nineteenth century continental Europe, e.g., in the Concert of Europe and in the role of Bismarck. Twentieth century examples could be drawn from the Pax Americana and from the annals of the atomic diplomacy of that era. Ironically, secondary powers and minor league bullies on the margins of the system in many instances actually seem to have more room to throw their weight around than do the so-called great powers.

A detailed study of the constraints on the exercise of power by Great Powers—which we lack—would definitely contribute to the progress of historical thought. My hypothesis is that such constraints are in effect a part of the structure like class constraints are a part of the structure, but that until now they have not been studied this way. We prefer to study history from a country chosen as a center; and if constraints manifest themselves, this is often taken to be proof of the leadership's ineptitude. This may be the case, but I don't find this theoretically adequate. The rise of social history serves to remind us of this complexity.

An Aside on Constraints

A few examples of how international relations developed in ways that resulted in these constraints may make this clearer. The late eighteenth century is an obvious moment to turn to because of the Industrial Revolution. From that period onward, there is an increase in contacts on the part of the world's rulers, large businessmen, and merchants. The modern capitalist economy and the hegemonies of the nation states would emerge over the next century. From this period, many of the world's rich saw new unheralded possibilities of wealth. The key would be to enter more and more fully into the market; many chose to do just that. This seemed to be true in virtually every conceivable context. Whether it was a slave-raiding empire, a self-sufficient mercantile state, an agrarian hinterland, or a factory town, each

had its calculating individuals who found a way to reach out and make contacts and to integrate with the market. In the period between the 1780's and the 1860's, as the market expanded, relations between dominant groups worldwide steadily increased although they frequently remained informal or indirect. In this period, Masons appear to have played an important role as intermediaries in a number of contexts. And whatever the particular details, the general picture emerging was one showing the wealthy of 1860 incredibly better off than their counterparts a century earlier thanks to these new relationships. Thus was born the shared material basis of modern multilateralism.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the modern state forms were developing and as this took place, we enter the age of more formal relations among nations, here to continue with the issue of constraints.⁵ This was reflected in a growth of treaties among nations. While treaties had long existed among nations on a limited scale, the nineteenth century saw the number of treaties grow exponentially. During this period, dozens of treaties and conventions were signed, and these served to strengthen the position of ruling classes against all kinds of challengers and challenges providing, if need be, for emergency loans and even for military intervention to uphold legally constituted authority. If one looks at the treaty system as a phenomenon arising with the capitalist nation state, one might then conclude that the age of sporadic princely contacts of previous centuries was past; the age of systematic wealth-making and its diplomacy had arrived, this new collusion forcing various constraints.

As we move toward the mature phase of the nation state system in our own century, what catches the eye is yet a further evolution in the structuring of the capitalist world, a new phenomenon arising alongside that of the states and their treaties. This new phenomenon was the emergence of the non-governmental or semi-governmental organizations functioning in the international sphere at the behest of the state system.⁶ Sometimes these organizations were formally an embodiment of the whole world as in the

⁵ Gerald Mangone, *A Short History of International Organization* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1975).

⁶ John Boli and George M. Thomas, (eds.) *Constructing World Culture: International Non-Governmental Organizations since 1875* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

case of the World Court or the League of Nations. Sometimes they were a parastatal organization of a few nations such as some of the missionary groups or other specialty organizations or humanitarian organizations, e.g., the Red Cross. Whatever their form, their existence serves as evidence of the consolidation of the world's ruling classes and thus by extension often enough a constraint on the power of the leading power.

Modern capitalism seen in the mirror of social history—here to return to the issue of the research agenda—is an uncharted phenomenon, the obvious reason being that the subject has long been the province of economists and of virtually no one else. Thus when one tries to insert what is known about capitalism into history, one is on fairly new ground. What one can dimly make out at this point about capitalism is that rather than progressing as a unitary phenomenon from stage to stage, as one reads in business textbooks, it appears to have both linear and cyclical elements and it appears to be closely allied to non-capitalism. Features of capitalism today, such as the sweatshops, child labor, and the dual economy—here to begin with the cyclical dimension—were prominent features of finance capitalism in the nineteenth century; but they largely disappeared during the first half of this century. Then they came back with the onset of neo-liberalism.

Of course, one can and must speak of the growth of capitalism in a linear sense as well but this is complicated. Not only is capitalism growing in a quantitative sense but so too is population, education, and the power of states. Perhaps even the dual economy and non-capitalism are growing too. In relation to what, then, can one speak of capitalist growth taking place? Perhaps the best one can do at the moment as regards that point is to bracket it and to return to the previous point—concerning cycles or oscillations on a global scale and try to find a way to evaluate quantitative growth in terms of these cycles. In any case, there are clearly two main forms of accumulation, forms whose size, weight, and our proximity to them warrant that we accord to them the term modern capitalism.⁷ These two forms are finance capitalism

⁷ Cyclicalism is commonly associated with the business cycle in orthodox economics. Here the meaning is different. It is closer to the more literal idea of cycle or oscillation, e.g. neo-liberalism implying a return of classical liberalism. This point is intended as a challenge to the idea of 'stage' as one finds it in liberalism and in classical Marxism and in such post-modernist ideas

and manufacturing capitalism. Each of these two forms has had its moment or moments of predominance in modern history, each seems likely to return at some point in the future. A third main form of capitalist accumulation, that of primitive accumulation, is reluctantly put aside for want of space.

To be more specific, the period from the middle of the nineteenth century to the 1920s saw the relative predominance on a world scale of finance capitalism, while the years between the 1920s and the 1970s saw the predominance of manufacturing capitalism, and the period thereafter once more saw a reversion to the predominance of finance capitalism.

As social history makes clear, the capitalist ruling classes of the nineteenth century were small and remote in relation to their respective societies. As the nineteenth century came to an end, this distance seemed to be a contributing factor to the social crises that were beginning to threaten the system in that period. During the first third of the twentieth century these social crises worsened. As a result, the ruling classes realized they had to make concessions in order to hold on to their power. In effect, they had to support the development of a middle stratum since they needed it as a buffer. This they did. Nonetheless the crises got worse. Finally, the middle stratum came into the power structure as a junior partner to big capitalism. This took place in several ways. Sometimes it came in the form of a revolution, sometimes as an electoral triumph, sometimes as a national liberation struggle. Russia led the way in 1917 taking the path of revolution, in 1932 with the election of FDR and the New Deal the US fell somewhere in the middle, the colonized countries of the Afro-Asian world brought up the rear in this transition, emerging as independent states in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s in a variety of forms of national liberation struggle. In the Middle East, the Turkish Republic came first, later Israel and the revolutions in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq.

The entrance of the middle strata into ruling alliances resulted in important changes in the political economies of these countries. Their leaders suddenly adopted nationalist ideologies, fought colonialism, introduced welfare, and pursued policies of national development where previously they had been oriented to maintaining the status quo and to pursuing profit. This phase typically saw the expansion of national industry

as New Social Movements.

in many countries.

By the 1960s, capitalists came to believe they were not getting much profit out of their partnership with the middle strata and set out to withdraw from it. Their timing was fortuitous. The revolution in telecommunications and in automation had just arrived; production could be shifted flexibly around the globe to the least expensive work force and to the most efficient technology. In the same time frame, for reasons less clear, privileged segments of the working class and of the middle strata began to criticize the corporatist politics of which they were a part. Many workers around the world actually voted for conservative parties in the 1970's and against the social contract thereby hastening the end of the phase in which they had played a politically influential role. In the years following 1970, capitalism becomes once again embedded in small ruling classes dedicated solely to profit making, mainly through speculative investment and finance capitalism.

How do these ruling classes manage to rule? Up to now, this essay had mentioned lobbies as the interface for the world's ruling classes leaving aside the social history dimension par excellence: the linkage between local-national history and world history. Shifting our attention to this level, we can observe that particular forms of hegemony are in place, each with their logic, a logic extending from domestic issues to foreign affairs. Hegemonic strategies are thus basically worked out on the national level. Not only do they account for how class struggle is deflected and surplus is extracted on that level, but for the logic of international relations as well. So, while the modern world system depends on the collusion of national ruling classes worldwide, each of these classes is emerging out of and responding to its own hegemonic logic, each helping the others thwart class conflict, be the regime in question more democratic or more dictatorial.⁸

⁸ Post-modernism and globalism are commonly linked by many writers these days to the neo-liberal status quo as, for example, in Frederick Jameson's writings on late capitalism, but less often to Orientalism and to the older traditions of scholarship. A few examples of the connections may thus help make this point clear. The contemporary term, hybridity, could easily be related to the vocabulary of nineteenth century Orientalism. In postmodernist thinking, what its use implies is that not long ago everything was rooted in its culture but was disrupted by the coming of the new global technology that created new mixtures. The assumption that everything was originally rooted in its culture is

Hegemony then is a central element in the study of modern world history. This is well-known and historians, social historians or otherwise, clearly are not the first scholars to be interested in the question of hegemony. Perhaps, however, social historians are among the first to be interested in hegemony from the point of view of the ruled as opposed to the point of view of the ruler. What a social historian might infer from the existing scholarship about hegemony from political philosophy or elsewhere, is that it has not been easy to maintain systems in which a few skim all the benefits of wealth and power while the majority are kept poor and busy, but given the logic of capitalism, that this is a necessity.

an old orientalist assumption. Orientalists reify the idea of culture and then assume that interaction between cultures has great meaning. This explains why orientalists have attached such significance to the world fairs in the nineteenth century. I would counter-pose a social history approach to the idea of hybridity, that is, a sociology of cultural reception rooted in a type of hegemony, cf. "The Political Economy of Aesthetics: Modes of Domination in Modern Nation States seen through Shakespeare Reception," *Dialectical Anthropology* 17 (1992) 271-288. If culture is available, it will be appropriated according to the logic and needs of particular hegemonies. A second example is the connection between the newer postmodernism and the older Orientalism. Today we hear about diasporas. They are often referred to as another part of what is new about our own age. Looked at closely, however, the idea of diaspora implies again that who we are is essentially frozen in culture, that we may migrate but we stay as we were. A person from China in America is not a Chinese-American but a part of a Chinese Diaspora or, let us say, Oriental. A third such term is Subaltern. The postmodernists took it from Gramsci and changed its meaning. Contrary to expectations, the Subaltern are not peasants who struggle and make history through their alliances in the class order. Rather, they are large groups trapped outside of history and inside their own culture without even a New Social Movement. Can the Subaltern speak, various postmodern writers ask rhetorically, volunteering to do their speaking for them if the conclusion is that they cannot speak. Finally, let us consider the most culturalist and orientalist phrase of all, that of globalism. If today the television program reveals people in different cultures wearing blue jeans and eating hamburgers, this is evidence of globalism. What is assumed, as with the notion of hybridity, is that people do not basically share things in common but that they are basically different so that the arrival of the hamburger must represent a moment of rupture with the past allowing for what one is now seeing. Such ideas, however, were all alive and well in Victorian orientalist thought as well. For a postmodernist take on *Beyond Eurocentrism* as an example of this polemic see Timothy Burke, "Review....," *Rethinking History*. 3:1 (1999) 95-8.

Experience suggests that the only way for hegemonic systems to survive is if the poor can be played off against each other, thereby kept too busy to target the rich. A successful hegemony, regardless of other details, seems historically to be one where the majority working class is led to believe—to be persuaded—that the system is not responsible for its hardships but rather some scapegoat is. On some occasions, maintaining such an hegemony has required going to war so that the enemy becomes the scapegoat. Sometime, even more pathetically, the scapegoat becomes the enemy. Social history can potentially contribute much to understanding these processes.

Existing hegemonies, in Europe, the Middle East, or elsewhere, break down into a few basic approaches to maintaining the needed stratification. These basic approaches to deflecting class conflict are: (a) using gender as in the tribal-ethnic state approach to rule, (b) the use of culture, typically regional culture, as in the Italian Road regimes, (c) using caste, as in Russian Road regimes, and finally (d) using race as in the bourgeois democracies. These four types of hegemony are those commonly found across the modern world.

While there is no evidence to suggest that any or all of these strategies of hegemony originated in Europe, they do appear to be best known in scholarship through their association with European countries. Thus, the Italian Road as a model associated with Gramsci is recognizable in scholarship. At the same time, one knows there is nothing normative about the Italian experience per se. The model is as applicable to a range of other countries around the world as it is to Italy. The study of each of these countries thus contributes to the refinement of our understanding of what the Italian Road model implies.

Another point: History and historical sociology having been fairly marginal to the concerns of writers about hegemony in the past, no actually existing country including Italy itself—Gramsci scholars excepted—would recognize itself as Italian Road. Prevailing discourse takes each continental region as a whole to be a given. Each is understood as a civilization. As a result there is Europe and there is the Middle East. Italy is of course European. If Eurocentrism is thus an outcome, there is no immediate solution within the prevailing discourse.

One last concern: Is the idea of historical road akin then to an ideal type of the sort that Max Weber proposed? Clearly it is not. The struggles of the

ruled in each country lead to highly diverse outcomes within what is loosely the same set of dynamics. Ideal types, in contrast, are fixed, being defined by attributes or choices of the elite.

In sum, then, history as social history represents not just a growth in knowledge but an epistemological revolution as well, one that obliges us to go beyond Eurocentrism in the conceptualization of modern world history in order to accommodate what we have learned. Another generation is likely to find the lengthy outline of the rise of social history in the nation state presented here unnecessary. At that point, a more direct approach to understanding movements will exist. Today we are limited to the more modest idea of the Rise of the Rich as a way to go beyond the Rise of the West and to do so within the context of the existing nation states. This is simply a first step.

Modern Middle Eastern History as Social History

This section hypothesizes that the study of the Middle East is constrained by the traditional approach used by scholars to study world history and most notably, by the place accorded the Middle East in modern times in this approach. A re-conceptualization of Middle East history as social history, it is thought, might thus not only be of interest to specialists in Middle East studies but to those seeking to rewrite world history in a fashion congruent with social history, given the wider ramifications of these problems already commented on.

As should by now be clear, for the past century and a half modern world history has flowed along in academia as the story of the Rise of the West. The rest of the world, accordingly, was an appendage of Western history. Basically, this has meant that we have had a West and a Non-West. For the past five hundred years, the West made whatever history was made while the Non-West, divided between Oriental Despotisms and non-state societies, either stagnated or reacted to the history being made by the West.

Oriental Despotism has been the part of the model for the study of world history commonly used for the Asian states including those of the Middle East. Let us begin this section by looking at what Oriental Despotism means to scholars who study the Middle East from one vantage point or another. Looking at representative works of scholarship, one finds

that in political terms, the Oriental Despotism model assumes the existence of a centralized and powerful state. It also assumes the presence of a Pharaoh or Sultan or Emperor, often one with some spiritual attributes. In social terms, the Oriental Despotism model assumes a predominantly slave-like population and a mystery priest caste type intelligentsia, both of which are imbued with long-lasting passivity. In economic terms, the Oriental Despotism model assumes that since the ruler controls the land, the water supply and the technology on which the peasants depend, and since there is no other landed class other than that of the ruling class, there is no social class capable of revolt. Thus one will not find revolutions or even much class conflict. Overall, while the model postulates relative stasis, it does not totally preclude the possibility of revolt, or even of change, but such options are mainly in the hands of foreigners and minorities. While the Oriental Despotism model and by extension the Hegelian model of history have increasingly been criticized for their Eurocentrism, parts of both are now falling increasingly into disrepute, the Oriental Despotism part of the model has nonetheless been able until recently to stand on its own in Asian and Middle Eastern studies worldwide, as well as serving as a prop for the conceptualization of modern European history as the Rise of the West.⁹

Modern Middle East studies could of course be rethought as social history. Let us devote this section then to a consideration of hegemony and counter hegemony in the Middle East, noting their impact on global trends wherever possible. The rationale seems obvious. From Foucault onward, researchers generally accept the idea of studying what is in crisis as a way of shedding light on some larger, supposedly normal subject.

This still leaves the question—why, then, an agenda article, why not a book? A book is needed. However, the answer, I believe most specialists in the field of Middle East studies would give would be that, while there has been development in terms of the social analysis of the Middle East, many

⁹ For more commentary on the role of Oriental Despotism and its roots in the Exodus story, see "Studies of Anglo-American Political Economy: Democracy, Orientalism and the Left," in Hisham Sharabi (ed.) *Theory, Politics and the Arab World* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 228-254; "Egypt 1760-1815, A Period of Enlightenment?" in H. Sakut, B. O'Kane, T. Abdullah and M. Serag (eds.) *Studies in Honor of Marsden Jones* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1997), pp. 73-94.

gaps remain. As for middle level historical analysis making use of a social history approach, this probably does not yet exist. An agenda article is thus possible; a book will be something for the future. It is still too difficult at this point, either to analyze internal dynamics in most of the countries, or to relate a Middle Eastern ruling class to world history or even to a major power. While such difficulties are, of course, partly tied to issues such as multilateralism that would apply anywhere, they are ultimately also a question of the development of the field of social history within the field of Middle East history.

Let us then content ourselves with a rendition of no more than a few pages, and let us begin our account where most writers on the modern Middle East would begin, i.e. with a consideration of Ottoman history. It seems fair to claim that in most histories of the modern Middle East, one finds such a chapter, and that Ottoman history is also coincidentally one of the contexts where the Oriental Despotism model has been strongest. It seems important, therefore, if one is going to have a social history of the region, to begin by proposing an alternative view of Ottoman history, one closer to social history. The specialized reader can make a guess as to which of the two approaches might be more promising, assuming they were equally developed.

Analysis according to the Oriental Despotism model usually begins with an assertion that power is concentrated in the person of the ruler. While it is true enough that the Ottoman Sultan had great power at certain times, such a concentration of power, in and of itself, does not automatically warrant the use of any particular model of interpretation, as this power and the actual reasons for it, no doubt varied appreciably. The reason for the Ottoman Sultan's power in a traditional ideological sense is, of course, well enough known. The Sultanate was the continuation of the Caliphate, i.e. it represented a fusing of the religious and the secular in the person of the ruler. What is at question here is the reality, not the traditional ideological justification. The Ottoman Empire lasted for a long time. Sometimes it seemed strong, sometimes weak and, one might suggest, quite independent of the figure of the Sultan. Historians who specialize in the history of the Empire have generally concluded that the Empire declined in modern history as the West expanded. Whether its sultans at that point were in fact more corrupt or weak may lie, one might suggest, in the eyes of the observer.

If one looks over the life of the empire from the sixteenth century to the twentieth century, what seems most certain is the idea of the rise of the rich. Consider the following. If someone did not pay his taxes in the sixteenth century, Sultan Selim the Grim might have to ride a thousand miles to catch and impale him. In the late nineteenth century, the Sultan's family could send out a provincial detachment supported by foreign mercenaries while remaining in Istanbul to work on their tennis game. This could be variously seen as corruption, decline, bourgeoisification, or strength, as the observer may choose to see it.

One suspects that the liberal use scholars make of ideas, such as Golden Age and Decline, is tied up with the defense of the core proposition of the Rise of the West. The idea of the Rise of the West seems more credible if one has put the Ottomans out of the way through their decline. The problem for the specialist is how to validate what his or her society wants to hear. Attempts to study the eighteenth century in detail, for example, do not reveal such decline in any overall sense although there certainly was change as the economies of the various provinces of the Empire became more integrated into the world market. By the middle of the nineteenth century, one could note in most of the Ottoman provinces that the local ruling classes were better off than their counterparts of the previous century had been. Should not this point alone lend itself to queries about what exactly is meant by decline? Is it not interesting, in addition, that from the late eighteenth century onward one finds a growing linkage of the rich in regions, such as Anatolia, to their counterparts, the rich abroad? Of course, the point has been noted. It has been noted in standard writings numerous times, as for example, under the heading of ethnic intermediaries between the Ottoman Empire and Europe, but the existence of such knowledge has not led to new thought about paradigms. The paradigms seem fixed. I cannot recall in this writing the use of the phrase, 'the rise of the rich' that I am proposing here to re-conceptualize and put in place of decline and Westernizing reform. Even the role of class conflict as a phenomenon has not been pursued very far. It is assumed to occur once in a while in strikes but not to explain anything.

Nineteenth century Ottoman history in standard scholarship is much given over to discussions of change emanating from the West; this change is frequently termed 'reform'. Not surprisingly, such scholarship often tends to

become an account of events deemed to be successful or unsuccessful examples of reform. Other features of the history fall into the background. Furthermore, if one is assuming that the Ottomans were declining then what reforms there were came not just from foreigners but from foreign pressure. An example often presented in standard treatises is that of the Ottoman military defeat at the hands of the Russians, which was a stimulus for creating a more Western style army. Writers treat this as unequivocal evidence for their paradigm: a Westernized army defeated a less-Westernized one, which led to reform. Given the prevailing set of assumptions, less attention is given to other aspects of the same events or of other possible ways of understanding them. For one thing, we know the Ottoman defeats created a large number of Muslim refugees who had to leave their homelands in South Russia and to flee to safety in Anatolia. Is there not a possible benefit for a landlord class from cheap immigrant labor arriving in the wake of the defeats as these poor Turkic peoples streamed out of Russia and the Balkans into Anatolia looking for a refuge? To continue, one might postulate that the loss of the Balkans in some ways strengthened the Anatolian ruling class even more. Is it not likely that many of the refugees from there also wound up as peasants contributing through their work to the creation of the wealth of the large landlord class?¹⁰

Other events that suggest the rise of the rich as an alternative to the Rise of the West no doubt also exist. Should not such events be looked into? Is it not taken for granted—while then obscured by other priorities—that even prior to the Tanzimat period, class conflict was an important phenomenon? Were not the poor Janissaries and Bektashis at that point pitted against the new rich Pasha landed class in very unequal struggles? When the Pashas and their Naqshbandi allies took the wealth of Janissaries and Bektashis, did this not contribute to the emergence of a new rich and a new poor and to a deepening struggle?

Let us now return to our main point. What form of hegemony could one claim existed in Ottoman Anatolia if not that of Oriental Despotism? The apparent answer is rule by caste, i.e., the Russian Road type of hegemony. What is meant by Russian Road hegemony is that caste is used

¹⁰ This is strongly implied in Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995).

by a ruling class to deflect class conflict. As in Russia, an Ottoman ruling class, largely in Istanbul, masters of the so-called Ottoman Way, appear from a distance perched above various caste groups, such as those of the Millets, below which would come other caste structures within which one would find the peasants, peripheral tribes, and groupings at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Ruling caste and ruling class overlap but they are obviously not the same thing. The same was true below. Given this form of social organization, a large number of poor Anatolian Turks felt included to a degree because they were Muslims, or they were from Istanbul, or they spoke Turkish and were not therefore part of the lowest status groups of the Empire. As a result, they tended to be loyal to the state, even against their own class interests, thereby giving the state some considerable social leverage. During the period in which this loyalty was most pronounced, the so-called Golden Age of which the Orientalists are fond, a good deal of struggle took place, but it was channeled into trying to gain inclusion. A century or so later, the more traditional class war came out in the open as the lower classes abandoned the strategy of struggling to try to get included and sought freedom from taxation and forced labor, etc..

Does not such a characterization of hegemony imply some unacknowledged similarity between the newer notion of Russian Road and the older one of Oriental Despotism? The question is a reasonable one; the answer, however, is in the negative. Oriental Despotism is a model encompassing harmony. There is no theory of counter hegemony in it. Russian Road is a conflict model in which there is a counter to hegemony. Let us consider what a theory of counter hegemony would mean in relation to important features of the system, which either model would explain. While both models are likely to identify mysticism as an important component of the hegemonic culture, the Oriental Despotism model would claim that the priest caste worships the ruler because the ruler is a God. How well can this interpretation be sustained? For the Middle East in the Islamic era, this may be difficult. Whatever spirituality might be thought to inhere in the figure of the Sultan, the *'ulama'* upheld Sunni orthodoxy. This was the norm. Even for Japan and China, two other examples of Russian Road regimes, states where one can speak of an emperor cult, it would be an extreme exaggeration to claim that the priests worshiped the emperor. By way of contrast, the Russian Road model would put more emphasis on the

political ambition of the clergy. Sultan Abdul Hamid's close tie to a Syrian sufi *shaykh*, the clerical power in Iran of traditionalists, and Rasputin's influence on the Tsar prior to the Russian Revolution—all stand out in this regard. Claims they made about their own spirituality could be construed as a form of political struggle. It might thus be more correct to look at the religious hierarchy less as a mystery priest caste than as a rival power structure to that of the secular one, a power structure that would seize temporal power, circumstances permitting. Finally, where the oriental despotism model postulates total control of land and regulation of commerce on the part of the ruler, it has been shown from archival research that private property was quite extensive in the Ottoman Empire. Orientalists, nonetheless, have sometimes refused this finding, and point to the transcendent rights of the Sultan over all sources of wealth. While such a right may have existed in the abstract, and therefore technically property ownership by ordinary people would have been de facto ownership, the same could be said in regards to property ownership in virtually any state at any time. All states claim that their right to property supersedes the rights of private citizens to property. In this sense, all claims to private ownership are contingent ones (as American law makes clear) often resting on the fact of possession. Possession, we say, is nine tenths of the law. The Russian Road model, I am hypothesizing, is more precise than the Oriental Despotism one.

This established, it is important to note that luck and skill has never been equally distributed among the rulers of countries following any given type of hegemony. As Russian Road rulers go, the late Ottomans and subsequently the Republican Turks, while perhaps not Sick Men, could well be described as having had their problems. Where Russian and Iranian leaders have been able to impose this kind of hegemony by successfully labeling some castes higher and some lower, the Turks have not. They simply floundered. Perhaps the woes of the regime began with its Armenian policy. Could the Armenians who were agitating for power, be reduced to a racial under caste? The regime set out to do this. It tried to incite animosity toward the Armenians, but instead of achieving a manageable pogrom of what was supposed to be an oppressed caste, an uncontrolled massacre ensued.

Such a result did not necessarily need to happen. Within the same time frame the Russian approach to the Jewish Question and to the Muslim issue

went fairly smoothly. As a result, the Russians were thus relatively successful in building their hegemony. Perhaps the example of the Taiping Rebellion in China might serve as a parallel for the Armenian Massacre as it too got out of hand and it too surprised the state. If the case of the Ottomans and the Chinese are to be paired, it seems logical to reflect on what might have made the state in each case so vulnerable. I would like to encourage such research as a part of the agenda here as there might be some mutual benefit for students of either country. Was it the manner of recruitment to the upper bureaucracy, in the Ottoman case, the Devirshirme, which led to this vulnerability? In Russia and Iran, there was no counterpart to the Devshirme, while in China there was. In the Ottoman empire and China, merit allowed entrance to the career track leading to the upper bureaucracy. Through it, individuals from many different caste backgrounds gained entree into the elite. This fact raises questions. While those raised and educated through the Devirshirme system were all supposedly Ottomanized, one has no way of knowing where their loyalties really were or to what extent they did what they were expected to do. While this would need to be established, it would appear that provincial revolts from within the power structure were so endemic in the Ottoman case, so like Chinese warlordism, one might hypothesize that collusion from within the upper structure was taking place with some of the rebels as happened in China. Could the massacre of the Armenians reflect some kind of deviant alliance of bureaucrats and provincial officials? Was it also tied to the shift in the phase of the hegemony to corporatism, which was taking place at the time of the massacre?

Perhaps what saved the Russian Road form of hegemony in Ottoman Anatolia/ the Republic of Turkey was that the Young Turks were determined to preserve it, doing so by rationalizing it, making entree into the elite a possibility virtually only for Turks. In so doing, the rulers of Republican Turkey succeeded in solidifying power through the years of the Great Depression. Thereafter problems arose again. First came the squatter movements, then the Kurdish Workers movement. Moving on to the more recent period and to the contemporary crisis, it seems safe to claim that the rise of the Kurds as a political force in Turkey came as another major surprise for the state. What the state had assumed was that the Kurds would serve as an ethnographic and touristic under caste in Eastern Anatolia. Caught by surprise by Kurdish militancy and political savvy, the state has

struck back branding the Kurdish movement 'terrorist' and begging INTERPOL for help. Even with such help, the regime appears to be in crisis. The oppressed caste is possibly now the nucleus of a movement seeking to liberate the country, being a good bit more than simply Kurdish.

In the past few years also, as a consequence of various setbacks, the Turkish elite has been redoubling its effort to make connections internationally. Turkish participation in NATO is one such example. Another is the attempt to join the Common Market; reaching out to Israel was a third and a brush with Islamism was a fourth. How far this can go is an open question. There are rampant contradictions. Turkey benefits from its relations with Saddam Husayn, an opponent of Israel, while Islamic sentiment, now on the rise in Turkey, works against Turkey's Euro-Israeli connections.

What then of Iran, Iraq, and other Russian Road regimes? A few words here must suffice. In the case of Iran, the rise of the Qajar state in the nineteenth century centered itself in Tehran, doing so at the expense of other regional communities, e.g., the Azeris centered in Tabriz. What solidified Tehran's position eventually was the coming of the oil age in the twentieth century. Oil wealth fell to the central state. The Azeris got nothing from it, nor for that matter did the tribes, not even the Luti Arabs of South West Iran who lived and worked in the oil fields.

Iran emerged as a strong hegemony as compared to Turkey. Was the reason simply the oil? Probably not. The most likely explanation is that the Iranian ruling class made a much more strategic choice internally in terms of constructing its caste order than did the Ottomans. It also did not attempt bureaucratic meritocracy. The Qajars and subsequently the Pahlavis chose the Iranian gypsies for their lower caste scapegoat. The gypsies destroy morality; the gypsies are prostitutes, etc. Unlike the Turkish Kurds, the Iranian Kurds experienced much less pressure from the state. The Iranian gypsies, on the other hand, suffered a lot. They also lacked the ability to organize and, in fact, had no way to reach out to the Iranian working class or to anyone else except to other gypsies. This made them an ideal target group. Iranian rulers also experimented by using the Baha'is, and here too they had pretty good luck, despite the fact that the Baha'is have shown some capacity to protest their bad treatment in the international media. Still the state was bedeviled by internal migration as mentioned before and by a

working class movement closely wedded to the Soviet Union next door. Successive rulers came increasingly to depend on their international alliances. Iran like Turkey was part of several treaty arrangements. The Shah, for example, had unusually extensive economic and military relations with the U.S., as well as cultural ones, with Europe. The Shah even helped the U.S. define its mission in the Middle East.

Counter hegemonic struggle in Iran took a different form than it did in Turkey and produced different outcomes. In Iran, despite outbursts among all strata and classes, the sustainable opposition movements had difficulty dealing with the hegemonic strategy of playing class against caste. No movement until now has approached the tribes, the Baha'is, or the gypsies, even as a theoretical issue, any more than the latter have approached the working class. In the 1950s and 1960s the Tudeh Party spoke for the workers; but it placed its real hopes for coming to power not so much in the Iranian working class as in its alliance with the Soviet Union. Later, in the 1960s and 1970s, a movement that brought together workers, students, the mercantile artisanal world of the bazaar, and clerics coalesced. Sometimes this movement would veer to the left toward the Mujahhidin, sometimes it veered to the right where it eventually was seized by Khomeini. The causes for the victory of this movement and for a victory tilting to the right invite study. In fact it is not clear whether the events of 1979 were those of a coup or a revolution and, in either case, why either would have happened. When the archives finally open, will we learn that the late Shah was so sure of international help that he had grown careless performing the routine of deflecting internal opponents? Be that as it may, Khomein's victory came as a surprise even to Khomeini, as Lenin's had Lenin. Who could imagine that an American military mission could persuade the Iranian army not to defend the Shah and let Khomeini come to power? Trapped in the rhetoric of social inclusion and human emancipation, Khomeini spent his first decade in power distancing himself from actual social change while trying to retain support from the middle strata. The parallel to the Bolsheviks here has struck several commentators.

Iraq represents a third variant of the Russian Road experience, one mixed with colonialism and anti-colonial militancy, and one also developing as a crisis state as did the other two. The modern Iraqi polity was established in the late nineteenth century. After the First World War, the British moved

into what they incorrectly thought was a power vacuum. Functioning from within the circles of the Baghdad elites, the British did not seem to grasp the fact that a hegemony already existed and they could not just change its form that easily. Failing in their efforts to construct a tribal-ethnic state, which is what they tried, the British eventually came to coexist with the established Russian Road form of hegemony, although this was far from their original intention. Commentary on the 1920s suggests that the arrival of the British and of their protégé a Hashimite king gave the local Iraqi power brokers, the *shaykhs* of the Middle Euphrates, a wider influence in the state than they had had previously, as the British were truly outsiders in a way the Ottomans were not. By the late 1920s, caste was clearly back in place. The Sunni Arabs of the Middle Euphrates were on top; the Marsh Arabs, the Kurds, and the rural Shi'ite poor were on the bottom. Counter hegemonic struggle was also visible. There was of course internal migration, but there was also organized politics. In contrast to the Iranian Tudeh Party with its narrow economism, the Iraqi Communists brought a high level of political awareness to their struggle, as a result on occasion succeeding in integrating elements from diverse communities into their movement in the manner of the Turkish Kurds of recent years. However, as it turned out, the Iraqi Communists did not have the staying power decade after decade to wear down an oil-rich regime backed by the Great Powers. The Party's strategy of multiple alliances was a factor. This strategy could easily collapse into populism and be seized on and used for more conservative ends, and this happened more than once. One such instance of cooptation was the Revolution of 1958 which brought 'Abd al-Karim Qasim and elements of the middle strata to power; other examples of the same could be drawn from the revolutions of the later 1960s when the Baathis outflanked the Communists by combining populism and nationalism.

By the 1970s the Communists had in effect been bypassed. Another group had arisen and was attempting in its turn to use populism for oppositional purposes. This group, for want of a better term, could be called Shi'ite. More precisely, it was a radicalized progressive movement under the leadership of the Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr who enjoyed support from many segments of urban and rural society, including the working class. However, despite this considerable social base, it met the same fate that the Communists had met earlier. Eventually, it too was outflanked by the state.

The Shi'ite challenge appeared to have terrified the Iraqi ruling class, as one can deduce from the fact that, from this period onward, the rulers turned to a war with Iran and to building up their foreign linkages wherever they could to an even greater degree. In fact, over the past generation or two, the Iraqi ruling class has done its best to maintain strong connections with Western ruling circles, especially in England and the United States. While the archives that contain information about these connections are not open, glimpses of what has been going on between these countries have occasionally been possible. For example, Bruce Jentleson, a British journalist, in his book, *With Friends Like These* (1994), found substantial evidence linking the fortunes of the United States and those of Iraq for the 1980s and early 1990s. If one examines where the bombs fell in the Gulf War and who as a result got killed, either then or subsequently during the embargo, or for that matter, earlier during the preceding Iran-Iraq War, one comes to suspect that it was mainly the poor Shi'ites, i.e., regime 'dispensables'. Meanwhile, the Baathis were protected by dispensable Americans. Americans, it seems, were drafted to keep the Iraqi ruling class in power and they certainly suffered in the process. It was they who were afflicted by the Gulf War Syndrome from the depleted uranium. Who were these soldiers? Obviously these were individuals who were not part of any elite. On the other hand, who got special oil exploration concessions in Bahrain from the war? Was it not George Bush's company? Who is getting the war reparations? Is it not the Gulf aristocracy? In sum, history seems to be more the rise of the rich than the rise of the West. The Middle East with its obscene oil wealth is a superb vantage point from which to observe world history and try to make some sense of it.

Israel is the main Middle Eastern example of yet another type of hegemony, that of Bourgeois Democracy or rule by race. While some research exists to show the dynamics of race and class many gaps still exist both for the history of Mandate Palestine and for that of the state of Israel as well. This is especially the case if one wants an understanding of the beginnings of the Mandate or slightly earlier. How did the Zionist settlement in Palestine begin? What were the Ottoman motivations for encouraging Zionist colonization and for permitting land sales to the Zionist movement to take place? What inferences can one draw about the role of the Palestinians in the political economy of that time? Is it possible that the

mass population of Palestinians at that time were a rebellious people, that they were not thought to be a good tax base by the Ottomans, or perhaps even by their own ruling class? Perhaps the Zionists were assumed to be a better tax base. This would explain the relative lack of concern on the part of the Ottomans, Syrians or Palestinian landlords. Assuming market calculations, such a line of thought, however, still does not entirely add up. Why did the landlords in Palestine decide to sell off their holdings to the Zionists as soon as they did, e.g. the 1920's? If the presence of the Zionists would raise land values, would not their land have accrued in value if they had waited?

While the outcome is obvious, the process by which the Zionist movement ultimately found a home in Palestine is not. For whatever reason, this home gradually took on the form of a bourgeois democracy. Should one give more weight to capitalism or to the race war, or to what? Perhaps it was the influence of German Jewish philanthropy that brought about the attraction to democracy. In any case, the British mandate authority in Palestine was not itself responsible for this outcome as British strategy appeared to be premised on playing ethnic communities against each other, following the strategy it used in Jordan and its other tribal-ethnic colonies. Of all these tribal-ethnic states, only Israel emerged as a democracy, an occurrence that has not been explained. Perhaps hegemony sometimes emerges from the bottom up and not from the top down. Perhaps, therefore, one gets democracy directly out of settler colonialism, which would combine race and class factors. If so, then it could be a way to distinguish Israel from Jordan, which was not a settler state.

In any case, as the Jewish polity arose and took the form of a democracy, it is apparent that its culture emerged as democratic culture. Science became a part of the general faith of the society and the idea of race became a part of that science. Under such conditions, the Israeli came to encounter the Palestinian Arab as a racial other.¹¹ By this I mean that as the hegemony solidified during the 1967 War, race became scientifically

¹¹ An example would be Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind* (New York: Charles Scribner's & Sons, 1973). For an attempt to identify the form of racism found in each type of hegemony see my "Race and Racism in the Modern World: How it Works in Different Hegemonies" *Transforming Anthropology* 5:1-2 (1994) 8-14.

supported and not simply culturally constructed as it had been earlier, and as it is in other hegemonies. As late as the 1967 War such an ideology of race was new to the Middle East and probably fairly new to most Israelis as well, unless they came from the West. Thus is the idea of maturation of a hegemony introduced.

From a Palestinian point of view, at least from other than that of the Palestinian elite, the transition from being a member of an intact tribal-ethnic entity prior to the age of nation states to being a member of a racial under caste serving Israeli democracy, on one's own land and yet uprooted from it, stands as one of the unjust and surreal features of modern history. The reader, who has a taste for literature, may be attracted to the Palestinian novel, *The Pessoptimist* by the late Emile Habibi, who tries to make sense of a legal and cultural death that leaves the body still breathing.

As democracies go, Israel cannot be rated a great success. The state's racial strategy was difficult to popularize among poor Israelis, perhaps because Sephardics were too close to the intended victims in certain respects. In addition, the Israeli working class was too combative. It demanded a fairly extensive welfare state in return for the required racial loyalty, not cost-efficient from a ruling class perspective. Furthermore, the Palestinians fought back refusing Israeli expansion both in a literal as well as in a political and moral sense, and they did so quite visibly. Whereas the American state was able to distance itself from Indians or Blacks while land was being seized with the media addressing mainly the dominant race group and its issues, the Israeli media has been forced to hear Palestinian voices from the outset due to the presence of a Green Line Palestinian community inside Israel. As the Israeli hegemony went into crisis in the 1980s, basic identity questions surfaced—was Israel for Jews or for those who lived there? Who is a Jew? Self-assurance plummeted. Clearly, Moshe Dayan and his likes no longer had the same reception they had had in 1967, and this is the case today despite the recent election of Ariel Sharon. In the face of this crisis, Israel's ruling class, like that of its neighbors, reached out through its links to other ruling classes for support, and most would claim in so doing it has met with fair success. The Israeli lobby in Washington has had influence on many issues. Today, Yasir Arafat is more like a chief on an Indian reservation than the revolutionary that he was a few years ago when he was fighting against imperialism and not simply for real estate.

Nonetheless, one notes that some Israelis are not satisfied with the success they have achieved. They want to rebuild the state from scratch, which means a vote for Shas and suggests a preference for the tribal-ethnic form of hegemony.

A third type of hegemony found worldwide as well as in the Middle East is the Italian Road. The main examples are Egypt, and Syria prior to 1966. In these countries, as with others across the world following this type of hegemony, class conflict is deflected by regionalist ideology.¹² Behind this ideology, one finds typically a more capitalist north dominating a less capitalist south and using its workers as a migrant labor force in return for rewards given to the southern elite for their complicity in this arrangement.

In the case of Egypt, the migrant laborer from Upper Egypt has been exploited by the Delta farmer since the middle of the nineteenth century. What perpetuated this inequality over such a long period of time? In the first instance, it was clearly the state. The state offered material inducements for all involved. In the second instance, it was the dominant culture. Egyptian culture provides a rationale for the persistence of these inequalities. And as one might find in cultures elsewhere as well, so one finds in Egypt, that the victim is blamed for what happens to him. Thus one finds until today the Sa'idi joke, a form of humor built on the assumption that the audience—even the Sa'idi—accepts the idea of the stupidity of the poor Upper Egyptian (or Southerner in this model), the one who gets what he deserves, a form of humor seeming to dovetail with the needs of the hegemony to legitimate the exploitation of these people.

Naturally, oppression of whatever kind does not find acceptance among the oppressed. Women, oppressed castes, oppressed races, and people from oppressed regions have often been in the forefront of struggle. What for the Israeli state is Palestinian terrorism or for the Kuwaiti state is un-Islamic female behavior, for the Egyptian state it is Iranian-sponsored Islamist terrorism arising mainly in Upper Egypt. So it is that today we find the Egyptian ruling class in its turn reaching out to others. One example was Camp David. Egypt combined with Israel was able to tie up US foreign

¹² On Egypt, see "The Writing of Egyptian History," *Newsletter of the American Research Center in Egypt* #160 (Winter 1993) 1-6. See also the new introduction to the reissued *Islamic Roots of Capitalism* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998).

policy for some years as well as much of the US foreign aid budget over peace in the Middle East and related issues.

What then about Syria? Between the 1880s and 1966 Syria was Italian Road. By the 1960s, the regime of the late Hafiz al-Asad had become increasingly discomfited by its inability to play the interests of the rural backward region, the Jazirah Province (Syria's Southern Question), off against those of the more capitalist regions of the country. In this period, after unsuccessful attempts at authoritarianism the regime chose to confront its problems by altering the form of hegemony as opposed to adopting religious fascism. As a consequence, Syria suppressed its Muslim Brothers and in the years from 1966-1970 shifted from an Italian Road type system to a Russian Road regime. The defeat in the 1967 War, the increasingly vocal middle class opposition, and the too inclusive nature of Pan-Arabism in Syria may have been contributory factors in influencing the leadership to choose to do this. The exact reasons still need to be researched.¹³

As one moves to 1970, Damascus became the center of a system built around rule by caste. In other words, it came to resemble an Istanbul, or a Moscow on the verge of entering a phase of finance capitalism. The old civil society, especially that outside of Damascus, was now politically dispensable. The Syrian people found this out in the dreadful massacres of the early 1970s in Hims and Hama. From what is known about the period, things might have quickly deteriorated for Asad, but he was fortunate to find external threats that made him seem indispensable to the mass population. Asad here followed practices one associates with a number of other Russian Road regimes, e.g. those of Khumayni, Saddam Husayn, and Stalin but certainly not with Russian Road regimes alone. In Asad's case, Israel was a clear and present danger, or could be portrayed as such, and this helped him. Dabbling in the affairs of Lebanon has helped him as well. For Israel, it was much the same thing. Public opinion could be continuously stirred up by the threat of Arab Terrorism. Was this an accident, or was it orchestrated by ruling classes aware of this structural logic, as I am implying? Research would be useful here as well. One cannot help wondering why Samuel

¹³ On the hegemony transition in Syria, see "The State and the Intellectuals in Modern Syria: The Case of Tib Tizini," in J.A. Allan (ed.) *Politics and the Economy in Syria* (London: Centre of Near and Middle East Studies, 1987), pp. 107-125.

Huntington wrote *Clash of Civilizations*. Was it a contribution to this form of stabilization?

A fourth form of hegemony found in the Middle East, as elsewhere, is that of the tribal-ethnic state, the form of hegemony playing class off against gender. Examples in the Middle East include the states of the Arabian Peninsula, of the North African littoral as well as of Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Greece and the Sudan. In this form of hegemony, class conflict is deflected by gender discrimination. Biology is destiny. Typically, on the surface, one finds clan or ethnic groupings headed by patriarchs or *za'ims* as in Lebanon. Some of these groupings are more important politically, some less so. One can determine their political position by observing which groups occupy which positions in the labor market. The ruling class is a composite of the elites of these ethnic groupings, some of course strongly represented, and some more as tokens only. Conflict among these clans is common and it is visible on the surface of everyday life, giving the impression to many a foreign observer of instability when in fact instability is rarely the case. Typically, the system scarcely ever unravels in the face of conflict. What holds it together is its underpinning, the gender contradiction played off against the class one. One thinks of the Lebanese Civil War. Thousands were killed; there was endless disruption over many years. Today, shortly afterwards, it is as if nothing had happened; the hegemony goes on, little affected. The dialectic of class and gender is as it was. The U.S. is once again being drawn back into Beirut, the 'Paris of the Middle East'.

Appearances to the contrary, however, tribal-ethnic states are anything but static. Lebanon, for example, had an important counter hegemonic movement at one point prior to the Civil War. This was the popular front led by the charismatic figure Kamal Joumblat. This movement appeared to have the potential to bring about fundamental political change. Its membership was amazingly diverse, although to be truthful, it remained a distinctly male-oriented movement. Yet, history records at the same time as Joumblat's Popular Front Movement, there was a feminist cultural movement in Beirut among intellectuals. The two never connected. Did it ever occur to the Front that the gender issue might be the decisive one or to

the feminists to consider class and populism?¹⁴ Next time around, will the popular forces have learned this, or will the rulers once again get away with imposing civil war and triage?

A consideration of the case of Saudi Arabia may serve as a way to begin to illustrate an example of this form of hegemony with enough wealth to try to buy off counter hegemony. Formed through a juxtaposition of the Hijazi and the Nejdi tribes and clans, the Saudi state virtually from the beginning lived off oil revenues. Gradually, as it grew in wealth as a result of this revenue, a small army of servants from various Asian and African countries were hired to perform services and to maintain the infrastructure. As this took place, the Arabian women's struggle became more and more invisible, leading some to term the system one of gender apartheid. Many women must have been bought off by luxury or disheartened by the difficulties of entering into counter hegemonic struggle allied to a migrant labor force of foreign origins. However, this was clearly not the end. The state would scarcely have turned to Wahhabism and Wahhabist imperialism if there were easier ways to maintain their status quo of class and gender. Even the U.S. became involved in this through the CIA, and it is clearly costing the U.S. a lot every time it has to protect another 'terrorist'.

In existing studies of international relations, most authors tend to dismiss the role of these Middle Eastern states as unimportant. Research informed by social history may well suggest that the opposite conclusion would be a more accurate one. What appears to be the case in a number of instances, is that the ruling classes of these states set out to make themselves clients or junior partners of the Great Powers and to benefit thereby. By eschewing developmentalism in favor of elite consumerism and by concentrating on *quid pro quo* relations with the West, often negotiated

¹⁴ The outstanding writers of the era—Mahdi 'Amil and Husayn Muruwah—await a commentator who is comfortable with the logic of a tribal-ethnic state and its Marxism. For the inadequacies of an AMP approach my own early attempt could serve as an example, "Islamic Marxism in Comparative History: The Case of Lebanon, Reflections on the Recent Book of Husayn Muruwah," in Barbara Stowasser (ed.) *The Islamic Impulse* (London: CCAS/Georgetown, 1987), pp.106-120. More accurate was an attempt at linking type of family structure to type of hegemony, "Organization of Culture and Construction of the Family in the Modern Middle East," in Amira Sonbol (ed.) *Women, the Family, and Divorce Laws in Islamic History* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), ch. 4

informally by lobbyists, rulers of such states often gain an entree into the circles of power of the Great Powers that few others on a world scale are capable of getting. Examples include the late King Husayn of Jordan in relation to the U.S. and Israel. The Kuwaiti rulers provide another such example. The Sabbah Family of Kuwait played an important, intimate role in the process of launching America into the Gulf War as did the Sa'udi royal family, in the process overcoming the reservations of the American people about entering that war by penetrating the domestic media and misleading the American public about what was going on. The Sa'udis, in addition, were able to use their connections and their money to define the parameters of the attack on Iraq carried out by our soldiers. Such are, of course, vignettes from the rise of the rich but they appear to me to be much more as well. They point toward a new way of understanding modern history, hence my terming this an agenda article.

Conclusion

The dominant discourse in professional history has long upheld the paradigm of the Rise of the West, of Oriental Despotism, and of non-state societies, in other words of Eurocentrism. Fashions in knowledge change; the paradigm does not. Over the past generation, the Dependency School, the Annales School, and Marxism have been major influences on the discipline of History on the level of high theory. All three, despite their apparent receptivity to social history, upheld the main outlines of the traditional paradigm reducing the new findings in social history to the level of details, eschewing what could have taken them beyond it. Globalism, cultural studies, and postmodernism appear even less ambitious. All basically uphold Hegel's model of world history as well.

The paper has argued that, for whatever reasons, social history (broadly understood) not only has produced much new knowledge, but it has begun to produce a new view of history, as it moves toward middle level analysis. It is a view implicitly in contradiction to the prevailing one. By making what is implicit explicit, one finds that this middle level analysis holds out the promise of a more scientific view of history. The maintenance of the dominant paradigm is therefore a hindrance to the development of the study of history.

Following what is implied by this middle level or logic of social history, it seems reasonable that one would turn to a study of the history of the nation state and to their ruling classes, looked at as national and as international actors. One needs this double level analysis for national history or for world history. The use of Middle Eastern examples was intended to serve as an agenda or a challenge to specialists in the field to encourage them to push forward with this level of social history. It was justified to the wider international audience in Foucauldian terms, crisis being favored as a way to study normality. Could we not downgrade the traditional assumption of the regional cultural unity of the Middle East or of the significance of its Third World location, making primary what the region *is* secondary and what the region *does*? The logic of hegemony tied to world ruling class politics seems more important, especially when there are important counter hegemonic struggles. Is the *Intifada* simply Palestinian or is it a world event?

This article suggests that the form of hegemony used traps the ruling class into certain modes of reaching out to other ruling classes, thus linking social history and world political history. Israel can deal with the U.S. as a fellow democracy, Saudi Arabia has to go in for personal relationships with the ruler, Egypt and Iraq in different ways sell the idea of societal loyalty. American politicians often complain that their hands are tied in the Middle East by these strategies, and from a certain point of view this is correct. Perhaps it is more accurate to suggest that the hands of the rich are tied because the mass populations are beginning to search for some new kind of future.