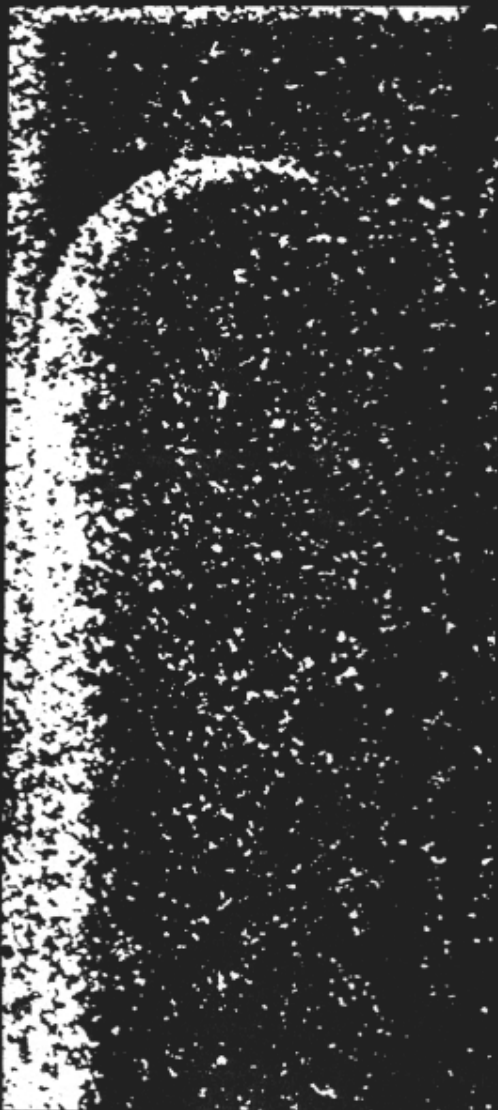


The New Orientalism and the Democracy Debate

Yahya Sadowski



Maath Alousi from *The Visual Diary of an Arab Architect*

The "collapse of communism" in 1989 and the victory over Iraq in 1991 sparked a wave of triumphal declarations by Western pundits and analysts who believed that all "viable systemic alternatives to Western liberalism" had now been exhausted and discredited. Some then tried to sketch a foreign policy appropriate to the "new world order."¹ A consistent theme of this "new thinking" was that the peoples of the developing countries must now acknowledge that liberal democracy is the only plausible form of governance in the modern world. Accordingly, support for democratization should henceforth be a central objective of US diplomacy and foreign assistance.²

This trend was not welcomed by all. Autocrats in the Arab world, particularly the rulers of the Gulf states, were appalled at the thought that Washington might soon be fanning the flames of republican sentiment. "The prevailing democratic system in the world is not suitable for us in this region, for our peoples' composition and traits are different from the traits of that world," declared King Fahd of Saudi Arabia in March 1992.³ The king's stance suits many US policy makers just fine. Former secretary of defense and CIA chief James Schlesinger spoke for more than himself recently when he asked

whether we seriously desire to prescribe democracy as the proper form of government for other societies. Perhaps the issue is most clearly posed in the Islamic world. Do we seriously want to change the institutions in Saudi Arabia? The brief answer is no: over the years we have sought to preserve those institutions, sometimes in preference to more democratic forces coursing throughout the region.

Schlesinger goes on to cite the king's views as endorsement of his own.⁴ For their part, some partisans of Israel feared that US endorsement of democratic trends in the Arab world might abet the rise to power of "Islamic fundamentalist" regimes. (They may also privately worry that Arab democratization might erode Israel's claim to US support as "the only democracy in the Middle East.")

Those who oppose democratization initiatives in the Middle East could, moreover, turn for support to Western academic "experts." "[A]mong Islamic countries, particularly those in the Middle East," wrote Samuel Huntington in a typical dismissal, "the prospects for democratic development seem low."⁵ The thesis that Middle Eastern societies are resistant to democratization had been a standard tenet of Orientalist thought for decades, but in the 1980s a new generation of Orientalists inverted some of the old assumptions and employed a new vocabulary which allowed them to link their work to a wider, international debate about the relationship between "civil society" and democratization. These updated arguments sought to prove not only—as neo-Orientalist Daniel Pipes put it—that "Muslim countries have the most terrorists and the fewest democracies in the world," but that they always would.⁶

Strong State, Weak Society

There are dozens of theories about what factors promote democracy. A country may be more likely to become democratic if it becomes richer, or redistributes its wealth

in an egalitarian manner, or specializes in manufacturing consumer durables, or rapidly converts its peasantry into proletarians, or switches to a nuclear family structure, or gets colonized by England, or converts *en masse* to Protestantism.⁷ Scholars quibble endlessly about which recipes are most effective, but generally concur that democracy thrives in those countries that possess a "civil society."

The term civil society has been bandied about recently with an enthusiasm that has not made its meaning any clearer.⁸ For most scholars, civil society refers to the collection of autonomous social organizations that resist arbitrary exercises of state power. This conception goes back to the 18th century, when thinkers like Montesquieu

curb the powers of the state.

Groups are common enough in all human societies, but those with a level of internal organization and assertiveness that enables them to challenge state power are rare. For several centuries the consensus of Western scholars was that such groups were missing in the Orient. This lack of civil society, they contended, was the primary reason why governments in the region were so prone to despotism.¹⁰

Until recently, Western experts argued that in Islamic societies groups were

strikingly different from their supposed counterparts in Western history. Their leaders were spokesmen, not directors. Entry into such groups was seldom marked by any formal observance, or datable from any specific moment. Men belonged to such groups



An Amsterdam mosque.

Friso Spoelstra

and Thomas Paine argued that the despotic tendencies of Europe's absolute monarchs could be checked if "intermediate powers" such as the nobility, the bourgeoisie, the churches, and the press united to assert their independence.⁹ Today corporations, labor unions, chambers of commerce, professional syndicates, public action groups, local governments, lay religious fraternities, voluntary associations and assorted collectivities would all be considered elements of civil society inasmuch as they help to

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because they identified themselves and others as belonging to certain accepted categories such as "merchant" or "scholar"; and, in general, they rallied to such groups only when the categories with which they identified were threatened.¹¹

Weakly organized and lacking strong corporate identities, social associations in the Middle East tended to be "informal, personalistic, and relatively inefficient as a means of winning support and extracting resources from the populace."¹² They were too feeble to challenge the power of the state and constitute a civil society.¹³

Rather than challenging the ruler's authority, the argument went, groups in Islamic societies tended to be vehi-

cles of supplication and collaboration. The most common form of political organization was the clientage network, whose members traded their loyalty for the patronage and protection of some notable.¹⁴ In this setting, apparently modern organizations such as unions, peasant associations and professional syndicates only provide a patina that disguises the continuing struggle of atomized clients to secure the sponsorship of elite patrons.¹⁵

Why were groups in the Middle East so weak? Western experts offered several distinct answers, but the prevailing one was that proffered by the Orientalists: Islam accounted for this weakness in Middle Eastern society, just as it explained the region's other peculiarities.¹⁶ Despotism was implicit in the very core of Islam. After all, the very name Islam came from the Arabic word for "submission." The image that Islamic doctrine presented of the pious believer—fatalistic, prostrate before God, obeying His every whim—served as a trope for discussing not only religious but also political behavior in societies where rulers acted as "the shadow of God upon earth."¹⁷ In the words of the definitive Orientalist cliché, Islam was not just a religion but a total way of life. The totalistic character of the faith seemed to imply that only a totalitarian state could put its dogmas into practice.¹⁸ Islam, moreover, discouraged the formation of groups that might have resisted despotism, since

Islamic law knows no corporate legal persons; Islamic history shows no councils or communes, no synods or parliaments, nor any other kind of elective or representative assembly. It is interesting that the jurists never accepted the principle of majority decision—there was no point, since the need for a procedure of corporate collective decision never arose.¹⁹

Thus, groups such as the ulama (Islamic jurists), the military and the provincial notables, who might have shared an interest in restraining the authority of the sultan, lacked any practical foundation for organizing to do so. As a result, "the political experience of the Middle East under the caliphs and sultans was one of almost unrelieved autocracy, in which obedience to the sovereign was a religious as well as a political obligation, and disobedience a sin as well as a crime."²⁰

The classical Orientalists argued that orthodox Islam promoted political quietism. Supposedly the great medieval Islamic thinkers, horrified by the periodic rebellions and civil wars that wracked their community, decreed that obedience to any ruler—even an unworthy or despotic one—was a religious duty. "As the great divine Ghazali (d. 1111) declared: 'The tyranny of a sultan for a hundred years causes less damage than one year's tyranny exerted by the subjects against each other.'"²¹ As a result of this blanket prohibition of all dissent,

there could be no question of representative bodies being set up to carry on a dialogue between ruler and subject; neither could there be institutions of local self-government in town or coun-

tryside; nor could craft or professional associations flourish unhindered, since they would always be suspected of limiting the sway of the government over its subjects.²²

The upshot of the suppression of such groups was a despotic regime in which "the state is stronger than society."²³

Among Western experts, the idea that in the Middle East the weakness of society assured the dominion of the state persisted until quite recently, although there had always been a handful of unorthodox scholars who argued that the prevailing consensus underestimated the real strength of society. They insisted that groups, solidarities and classes had been historically influential and that their collective action remained a critical force.²⁴ The size of this minority grew as political scientists found studies of clientage networks increasingly unsatisfying and began to identify authentic interest groups in Islamic societies.²⁵ Historians began to question the idea that the state had always been dominant. Ervand Abrahamian noted, for example, that although a late 18th-century Qajar Shah could execute anyone who attended his court, he probably enjoyed less real control over the countryside surrounding his capital than did a contemporary French monarch.²⁶

The popularity of these dissident ideas exploded after the Iranian revolution of 1979. Until then, most students of Iran shared the Orientalist assumption that Islam had the effect of promoting despotic authority and claimed that Twelver Shi'ism was, if anything, an even more quietistic faith than Sunni Islam.²⁷ After the revolution Western experts quickly reversed their views, and now portrayed Iran as a country where society had traditionally been strong and

After the Iranian revolution, Western experts quickly reversed their views, and now portrayed Iran as a country where society had traditionally been strong and the state weak.

the state weak. The Iranian clergy and its supporters among the traditional bourgeoisie of the bazaar and the new urban middle classes formed a genuine civil society capable not only of challenging the state but of toppling it. Shi'ism, with its cult of martyrs and delegitimation of secular authority, was now an ideal revolutionary ideology that had a long history of encouraging insurrections.²⁸

This revisionism was not confined to Iranian studies. During the 1980s, three new trends were discernible in Middle Eastern studies. First, as Islamic or Islamist movements grew more potent and challenged the ruling authorities, a host of studies of "radical Islam" appeared to reveal how Islamic doctrine disposed believers to form militant groups and contest the authority of the state. Second, as oil prices declined and government revenues dried up, scholars came to appreciate that states in the region were less powerful than they had once appeared.²⁹ Finally, as the intellectual foundations for the idea of "weak" Middle Eastern societies collapsed, there was a slow growth of interest in studies of mafias, mobs, interest groups, solidarities, and classes that *might* act as the equivalents of "civil society" in the region.³⁰



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tial of the region, and found intellectual comfort in a new trend, which began even before the Iranian revolution, to reform and update Orientalism. This new generation of Orientalists were uncomfortable with their predecessors' claim that Islam promoted political submission—while sharing the conviction that Islam was incompatible with democracy.

Patricia Crone is probably the most persuasive and rigorous of these younger Orientalists.³⁴ One of her central themes is that Islamic civilization is unique in the way that it forcefully refuses to legitimize political authority. She traces this characteristic back to the eighth century when the Abbasid dynasty seized power from the Umayyads and the *shari'a* (Islamic law) was first codified. The ulama of this period were men of tribal origin, she argues, and the law they drafted reflected their "profound hostility to settled states."³⁵

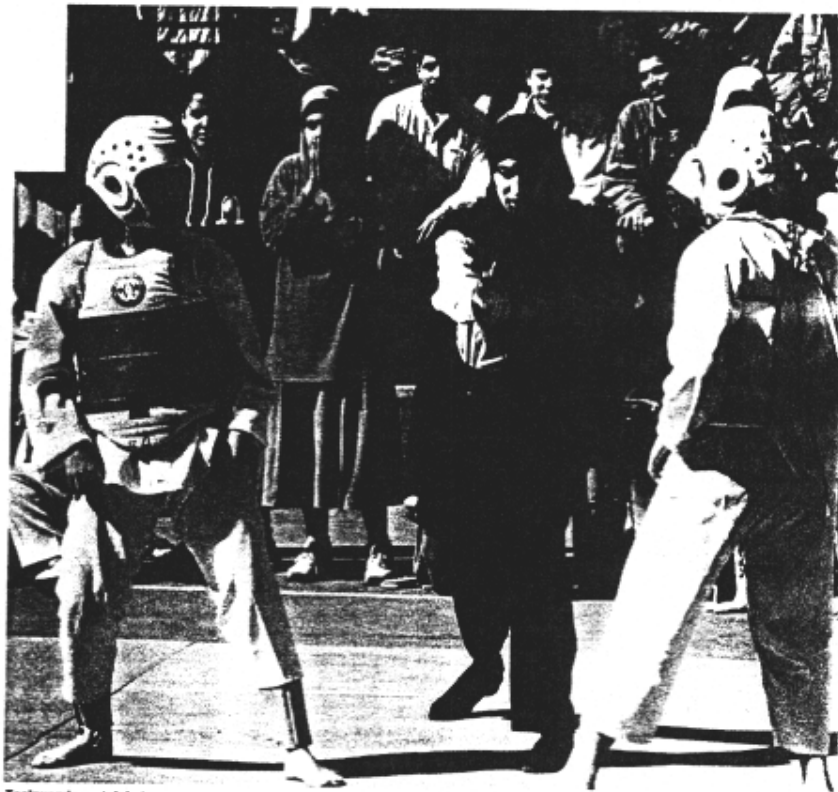
the ulama defined God's law as *haqq al-'arab*, the law of the Arabs, just as they identified his language as the *lisan al-'arab*, the normative language of the bedouins, the consensus being that where God had not explicitly modified tribal law, he had endorsed it. The result was a tribal vision of sacred politics... Kings were rejected as Pharaohs and priests as golden calves, while God's community was envisaged as an egalitarian one unencumbered by profane or religious structures of power below the caliph, who was himself assigned the duty of minimal government.³⁶

The ulama portrayed all secular rulers as prone to corruption and despotism and volunteered to act as guardians

Council launched low-trendy theme Societies" in the se that the grow-rtunities for civil e region.³¹ Today oth intermediate rist in the Middle versity are spon- these questions.³² even prepared to well grounded to t of democracy in

against these excesses. They won enough support for these ideals from the mass of Muslims, urban and tribal alike, to prevent any dynasty from legitimating its empire.³⁷

Conforming to this critique of political power, ordinary Muslims offered only tepid and intermittent support for their rulers. Unable to raise sufficient troops from among their subjects, Muslim rulers were forced to import military slaves, mamluks, to staff their armies. These slaves edged aside civilian dynasties before being replaced themselves by other warrior factions. "[B]etween foreign slaves and alienated secretaries," Crone writes, "politics degenerated into mere intrigues and bickerings for the proceeds of a state apparatus which neither party could permanently control, both parties squandering resources on an impres-



Taekwondo match between women at Cairo University and American University.

Kristie Burns

sive scale while few indeed were reinvested in the state.³⁸

Crone writes mainly about early Islamic history, but another of the young Orientalists—Daniel Pipes—has boldly spelled out the contemporary implications of this research in medieval politics. When Pipes was writing his own doctoral dissertation, also about the mamluks, he read Crone's thesis and concurred with her general argument.³⁹ He claimed that the mamluk institution was a phenomenon unique to Muslim societies and reflected the pernicious influence of the ulama and of Islamic doctrine. "While all religions postulate ideals that human beings cannot consistently maintain," he writes, "Islam alone of the

universalist religions makes *detailed political* ideals part of its basic code, the Shari'a."⁴⁰ By establishing ideals that are impossible to fulfill, Islam ensures that Muslims will view any form of government, sooner or later, as illegitimate.⁴¹ Sincere Muslims consequently tend to withdraw support from their rulers. Since Muslims declined to serve in armies, slave soldiers had to be recruited. This bred both political instability and weakness. This political infirmity of Islamic civilization would eventually allow European civilization to outstrip it.

Pipes' analysis of the contemporary Islamic resurgence argues that the medieval failure to develop stable politics continues to be one of the "difficulties Muslims face in modernizing."⁴² This view has proved congenial to the

out the implications of Crone's work for contemporary Islamic societies. In Hall's apt phrase, Crone has shown that, as a religion, Islam was essentially "monotheism with a tribal face."⁴³ Islamic history was the story of a strong society that consistently withheld its support from political authority. "Government thus has very slim roots in society," he wrote, "and stability came to depend upon such solidarity as the rulers of society could themselves achieve, as is true of most conquest societies."⁴⁶ Hall argues that the strength of society in Islamic civilizations not only made the state unstable; it also obstructed the development of true "civil society" and democracy. Precisely because society remained aloof from the state, and because dynasties tended to be very unstable, no "organic state" could emerge in the Middle East. Europe alone possessed an

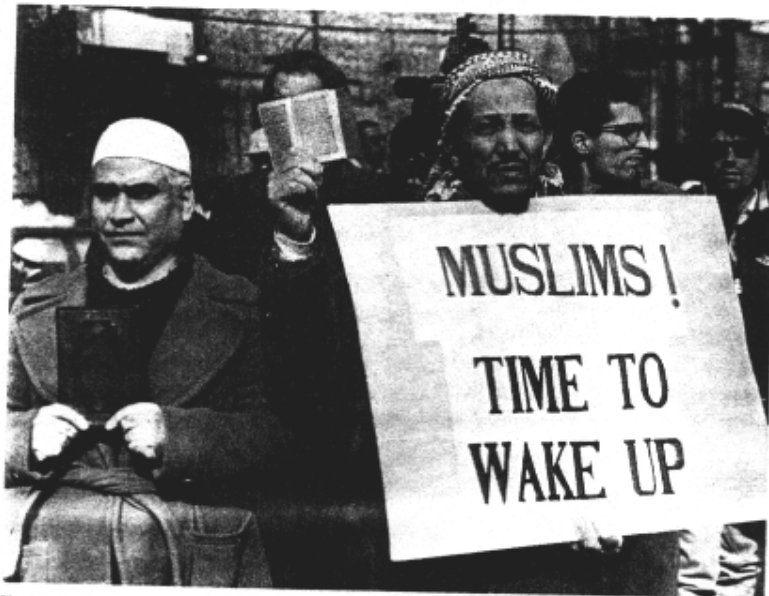
organic state, a *stronger* state, in place over long periods of time, and forced to provide infrastructural services for society, both because of the pre-existence of a civil society and because of the need to raise revenue to compete in war with other similarly stable states. In Islam such stable states did not exist. The fear of tribesmen meant that urban strata could not rule themselves, and a premium was accordingly placed upon military power. The states that resulted were transient and predatory.⁴⁷

"Transient and predatory" states, lacking the cooperation of society, cannot be good candidates for democratization. The development of capitalism and democracy ultimately depends upon a pattern of *collaboration* between state and society.

Hall derived this vision of the origins of democracy from the work of his mentor, Ernest Gellner. The impact of Gellner's vision of histo-

ry is evident in many aspects of neo-Orientalism and particularly in the idea that the cooperation of the state and society is crucial to development.⁴⁸ Gellner has argued that in most agrarian societies the commercial elite was doomed as soon as it began to grow wealthy and powerful enough to tinker with the social order.⁴⁹ Either the ruling military elite reacted to the danger of the rising commercial class by exterminating it, or the commercial elite triumphed and turned itself into a landed aristocracy. Either way, the tendency toward capitalism found among merchants usually snuffed itself out. The Protestant ethic, however, made the rising capitalist elite of Europe in the 16th to the 18th centuries different.

For peculiar ideological reasons, this set of producers continued to be such even when grown rich enough to become powerful and to enjoy the fruits of their previous accumulation. They turned profits neither into swords nor into pleasure nor into ritual display. They had an inner compulsion to carry on, and the modern world was the byproduct of their obsessional drive.⁵⁰



Muslims demonstrating in New Jersey.

Said Elstah/Middle East Photo

framers of elite opinion in the US, and Pipes has been able to purvey his ideas about "Muslim anomie" to an ever-widening audience—as a consultant to the State Department, as a director of the rightwing Foreign Policy Institute in Philadelphia (and editor of its journal, *Orbis*) and as a contributor to the *Wall Street Journal*, *The New Republic*, *Foreign Affairs* and other outlets.⁴³

While Pipes has had the highest public profile among propagators of neo-Orientalist ideas, others have labored to spread them within the academic community. Patricia Crone is closely associated with a group of neo-Weberian scholars that includes some of the hottest young talents in several disciplines—J.G. Meriquor (political philosophy), Michael Mann (political sociology), and John Hall (political science).⁴⁴ These colleagues propagated Crone's ideas among the wider scholarly community and enriched them by weaving them into a broader argument about the evolution of societies.

John Hall in particular deserves credit for drawing

European capitalists were not inclined to abandon commerce and demand entry to the aristocracy. And, equally important, this class "did not oblige the encompassing state to control and dominate it in sheer self-defence. It did not create a political dilemma in which the new commercial class either had to eat or be eaten by the old power-holders."⁵¹ This permitted the state and the emerging economic powers not merely to tolerate one another but increasingly to collaborate.

Gellner's argument mobilizes Weber's old (and somewhat discredited) Protestant ethic thesis for a new purpose: to explain the origins of the modern state rather than the rise of the modern economy.⁵² This subtle shift has dramatic implications. It suggests that the success of development in the West was a result not of aggressive-assertive societies, but of passive-quiet ones. It implies that capitalist development was most likely not where society constrained the state but where society avoided antagonizing authority. Gellner's argument stands the old ideas about civil society on their head. He portrays "civil" society not as a raucous band of solidarities that check the state's tendency toward despotism, but as a "civilized" assemblage of groups that expand production without threatening state power.⁵³

Gellner's revisionist ideas about Protestantism in the Baroque Era had been prompted by his observations of England in his own time: an epoch of high inflation, stagnant economic growth, and growing political uncertainty. Gellner, like many other scholars, blamed these ills on the excessive growth of demands by special interests: farmers seeking crop subsidies, businessmen seeking tariff protections, and—above all—labor unions demanding wage and benefit increases. These demands triggered stagflation and arrested economic growth, and their increasingly desperate competition for a larger share of a diminishing social surplus was leading to a crisis of "governability."⁵⁴

This anxiety about economic and political paralysis triggered a reassessment of the virtues of democracy. Some scholars claimed that it was precisely because authoritarian regimes (such as Japan and Germany) had suppressed the autonomy of social groups that they seemed especially likely to enjoy economic growth.⁵⁵ While few argued that the West would be better off abandoning democracy, many sought to dampen demands and help the state to resist such pressures.⁵⁶ Students of Germany, Switzerland and other economically successful states wrote warmly of their "corporatist" pattern of organization in which a handful of large industrial cartels and labor federations represented business and labor. By focusing and amalgamating the demands of their constituents, these corporatist bodies could negotiate industrial compromis-

es that neutralized the peril of inflation.⁵⁷ Students of Austria and the Low Countries admired their model of "consociational" democracy, in which strong regional or religious loyalties limited the degree to which parties could compete for broad public support. Under consociation, no single party could hope for an outright majority in elections, so most parties are forced to enter into broad coalitions that dilute special interests and promote corporatist negotiating patterns.⁵⁸

This broad intellectual shift, which emphasized the virtues—even the necessity—of curbing the autonomy of social groups and the growth of their demands on the state, created a receptive audience for the neo-Orientalists. Their argument, that tribes, mullahs and mamluks had demanded too much autonomy and created a crisis of governability in Islam, sounded plausible because Westerners could discern a trend toward the same ills in their own society.

The irony of this conjuncture needs to be savored. When the consensus of social scientists held that democracy and development depended upon the actions of strong, assertive social groups, Orientalists held that such associations were absent in Islam. When the consensus evolved and social scientists thought a quiescent, undemanding society was essential to progress, the neo-Orientalists portrayed Islam as beaming with pushy, anarchic solidarities. Middle Eastern Muslims, it seems, were doomed to be eternally out of step with intellectual fashion.

It is long past time for scholars to abandon the quest for the mysterious "essences" that prevent democratization in the Middle East and turn to the matter-of-fact itemization of the forces that promote or retard this process.

Strong Society or Strong State?

Today there is a broad empirical consensus among Western and Middle Eastern scholars about political conditions in the Middle East. They agree that states are weak and, as their economic crises grow worse, getting weaker. They concur that the weakness of the state partly reflects and partly encourages greater assertiveness by social groups: while the states are paralyzed, movements like the Islamists appear to have seized the initiative. Some think the growing energy of social groups can be harnessed to help forge democracies in the region. The neo-Orientalists, in contrast, assert that the proliferation of social movements will discourage any trend toward power-sharing and greater tolerance in the region, if it does not breed civil war and anarchy.

It is clear that the neo-Orientalist argument is seriously flawed. Crone, Pipes, and Gellner have retained exactly those ideas that vitiated classical Orientalism. They too portray Islam as a social entity whose "essential" core is immune to change by historical influences. Crone describes how the ulama wrote their tribal biases into the structure of Islamic doctrine—and claims that this bias continued long after the Arabs settled down, the ulama grew

sedentary, and Muslim society became largely detribalized. Like the classical Orientalists before them, the neo-Orientalists portray Islam (the religion) as a kind of family curse that lives on, crippling the lives of innocents generations after the original sin that created it. They claim that Muslim efforts to build durable states—from Ibn Khaldun's radical insights in the 14th century to Ottoman tax reformers in the 17th century or Islamist revolutionaries today—have not, and never can, bring about a change in the essential anti-state and therefore anti-modern core of Islamic dogma.⁵⁹

As a corollary of this essentialism, the neo-Orientalists also (like the classical Orientalists) downplay the importance of imperialism. A fairly consistent refrain in Orientalist analyses is that "in the Middle East the impact of European imperialism was late, brief, and for the most part indirect."⁶⁰ For Orientalists of all varieties, there is no point in dwelling on the fact that half the populations of Libya and Algeria died during the course of their colonial occupation. The fact that the Ottoman and Qajar Empires were effectively deindustrialized when European imports wiped out their proto-industrial manufactures during the 19th-century era of "free trade" is irrelevant to issues of economic development.⁶¹ According any weight to these events would tend to undermine the claim that the obstacles to development are overwhelmingly internal and have not changed during the 1400 years of Islamic history. Essentialism and the dismissal of Western colonialism and imperialism are commonly paired together, since each makes the other more plausible.⁶²

Neo-Orientalist analyses do not prove that states in the Middle East must be weak, any more than classical Orientalism proved that states had to be strong. But does this mean that the alternative proposition—that the strong societies of the Middle East provide a groundwork for democratization—is correct? The fact is that both traditional and neo-Orientalist analyses of civil society are deeply flawed. Both claim that the key to building effective states and successful democracies lies in the proper balance of power between state and society. They disagree only over what the proper balance is, over how strong society should be. The traditionalists claim that society must not be too weak; the neo-Orientalists claim it must not be too strong. Perhaps there is a narrow range where society is neither too strong nor too weak but "just right."

How could we determine if the strength of civil society

was "just right?" Studies of state-society relations almost invariably issue sweeping judgments: "In the Arab homeland, the State means everything and it monopolizes almost all facilities, while the society means very little."⁶³ Some critics suggest that there is no way to determine the optimum strength of civil society because there is no fixed balance of power between state and society. Albert Hirschman has argued there is a cyclical pattern in which the public and private sectors alternate in strength.⁶⁴ Periods of expanding state authority are followed by correcting periods of liberalization. (The evolution of the concept of civil society may even reflect these cycles: successive generations tend to emphasize either the independence or the civility of society.)⁶⁵

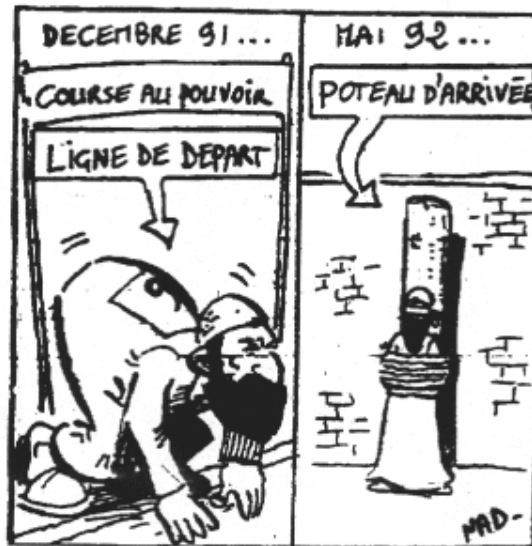
The relationship between state and society may be more complex than the classic models allow. Not only may the relationship evolve over time but the state and society may be antagonistic and collaborative in distinct areas simultaneously. "The British fiscal-military state," noted John Brewer in a brilliant study of the role of taxation in British state formation,

as it emerged from the political and military battles that marked the struggle with Louis XIV, lacked many of the features we normally associate with a "strong state," yet therein lay its effectiveness. The constraints on power meant that when it was exercised, it was exercised fully. As long as the fiscal-military state did not cross the bulwarks erected to protect civil

society from militarization it was given its due. Yet it was watched with perpetual vigilance by those who, no matter how much they lauded its effectiveness against foreign foes, were deeply afraid of its intrusion into civil society.⁶⁶

Perhaps the key to combining state building with democratization is not the Goldilocks solution of finding the "just right" balance, but a more subtle question of finding an optimal "division of labor" between state and society.⁶⁷

Students of the Middle East can be forgiven for not having easy answers to these questions. After all, they study a region where practical experience with democracy is rare. But they should not be excused from attending to these questions. The fact that democracy has not flourished in the Middle East does not mean its development is impossible. If Middle East experts look for models of how to study democratization in the region, they will find some admirable ones without much trouble. It is long past time for serious scholars to abandon the quest for the mysterious "essences" that prevent democratization in the Middle East and turn to the matter-of-fact itemization of the forces that promote or retard this process.⁶⁸ ■



Algeria's race to power: starting line ... arrival post.

Nadjib Berber

Footnotes

1 Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* (Summer 1989), p. 3.

2 See Larry Diamond, *An American Foreign Policy for Democracy* (Washington: Progressive Policy Institute, 1990); and Joshua Muravchik, *Exporting Democracy: Fulfilling America's Destiny* (Washington: The American Enterprise Institute Press, 1992).

3 *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, March 30, 1992. Also see A.H. Fahad, "The Arabs and the Just Despot," *Wall Street Journal*, October 9, 1990.

4 "The Quest for a Post-Cold War Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 72, 1, p. 20.

5 Samuel P. Huntington, "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" *Political Science Quarterly* 99 (Summer 1984), p. 216. A survey of the prospects for democracy published volumes on Asia, Africa and Latin America but did not include any studies of the Middle East because "with the exception perhaps of Egypt, Lebanon, and certainly Turkey (which appears in our Asia volume), the Islamic countries of the Middle East and North Africa generally lack much previous democratic experience, and most appear to have little prospect of transition even to semidemocracy." (Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., *Democracy in Developing Countries*, vol. 2, Africa (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1988), pp. xix-xx.)

6 "The Muslims are Coming! The Muslims are Coming!" *National Review*, 42 (November 19, 1990), p. 25.

7 For a tongue-in-cheek list, see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), pp. 37-38.

8 The growing popularity of the concept of civil society is analyzed in John Keane, *Democracy and Civil Society* (London: Verso, 1988); Adam B. Seligman describes its use as a kind of shorthand in Eastern Europe in *The Idea of Civil Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1992). The increasing reliance on this concept in analyses of developing countries is described in Atul Kohli, *India's Democracy: An Analysis of Changing State-Society Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). Its spread among Arab intellectuals is also evident; see the special issue on civil society of *Al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi*, No. 158 (April 1992); *Al-Mujtama' al-Madani fil-Watan al-'Arabi* no. *Dawrah fi Tahqiq al-Dimugratiyya* (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1993); and Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya *al-Madani wal-Tahawuli al-Dimugratiyya fil-Watan al-'Arabi* (Cairo: Dar Sa'ad al-Sahab, 1992).

9 John Keane provides an excellent history of the evolution of the concept in "Despotism and Democracy: The Origins and Development of the Distinction between Civil Society and the State," in John Keane, ed., *Civil Society and the State* (London: Verso, 1988), though Keane slightly misstates Montaigne, who contributed both to the conceptualization of civil society and to the foundation of Orientalism. De Tocqueville did not employ the term "civil society," but his *Democracy in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1945), especially pp. 198-206, may have influenced thinking about how civic associations affect political power more than any other study.

10 The early development of this idea, that civil society does not exist in the Orient, is brilliantly analyzed in Patricia Springborg, *Western Republicanism and the Oriental Problem* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992). Also see Bryan Turner, "Orientalism and the Problem of Civil Society," in Asaf Hussein, ed., *Orientalism, Islam and Islamists* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1994), pp. 23-42.

11 Roy Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 4.

12 Robert Springborg, "Patterns of Association in the Egyptian Political Elite," in George Lenczowski, ed., *Political Elites in the Middle East* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1975), p. 87.

13 An unusually intelligent summary of this thesis is Sherif Mardin, "Power, Civil Society and Culture in the Ottoman Empire," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (June 1969), pp. 258-281.

14 Clement Henry Moore, "Authoritarian Politics in Unincorporated Society: The Case of Nasser's Egypt," *Comparative Politics* 6 (1974), p. 207.

15 Two of the classic studies in this tradition are Clement Henry Moore, *Tunisia Since Independence: The Dynamics of One-Party Government* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965); and John Waterbury, *The Commander of the Faithful: The Moroccan Political Elite. A Study in Segmented Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970). Both

Moore and Waterbury later grew disenchanted with the classical Orientalist vision of civil society and undertook studies that gave greater emphasis to the independence of social forces; see Clement Henry Moore, "Clientelism Ideology and Political Change: Fictitious Networks in Egypt and Tunisia," in Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury, eds., *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies* (London: Duckworth, 1977), pp. 255-273; and John Waterbury, *The Egypt of Nasser and Sadat: The Political Economy of Two Regimes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

16 Another popular explanation was the theory of hydraulic despotism, which attributed the state's power over society to its organization of essential irrigation works. The locus classicus of this concept is Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957). For a history of this concept, see "The 'Asiatic Mode of Production'" in Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: Verso, 1974), pp. 462-550.

17 This became, literally, the textbook description of Islamic political culture; see James A. Bill and Robert Springborg, *Politics in the Middle East*, 3rd ed., (New York: Harper Collins, 1990), pp. 156-7.

18 The idea that Islam requires a totalitarian state is accepted by some modern Muslims, particularly those associated with Mawdudi, but even some Orientalists recognized that this is an historical novelty, appealing only to a minority, rather than something inherent in Islam. See W.M. Watt, *Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968), pp. 120-123.

19 Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East and the West* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), p. 48.

20 *Ibid.*

21 For a concise statement of the traditional Orientalist position, see Elie Kedourie, *Democracy and Arab Political Culture* (Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1992).

22 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

23 *Ibid.* See also P.J. Vatikiotis, *Islam and the State* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), and Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

24 To mention only two of the most prominent, see the essays collected in Claude Cahen, *Les peuples musulmans dans l'histoire médiévale* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1977) (which, unfortunately, does not include his pioneering "Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain dans l'Asie musulmane du Moyen Age," *Arabica*, 4-5 [1958-9]); and S.D. Goitein, *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966).

25 Clement Henry Moore, "Islamic Banks: Financial and Political Intermediation in Arab Countries," *Orient* 29 (1988), pp. 45-57.

26 "Oriental Despotism: the Case of Qajar Iran," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5 (1974), pp. 3-31; and *idem.*, "European Feudalism and Middle Eastern Despotisms," *Science and Society* 39 (Summer 1975), pp. 129-156. An unusually large number of students of Iran were early supporters of the dissident tradition that emphasized the potency of social forces in the Middle East. See, for example, Ervand Abrahamian, "The Crowd in the Persian Revolution," *Iranian Studies* 2 (Autumn 1969), pp. 128-150; Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); and Nikki Keddie, *Iran: Religion, Politics and Society* (London: Frank Cass, 1980).

27 For example, Leonard Binder, while acknowledging the participation of Shi'i religious leaders in insurrections such as the Tobacco Revolt and the Iranian revolution of 1905, dismissed such activism: "while some ulama were prominent in these actions against the Qajar dynasty, they never acted alone nor did they press for unfettered political power on the basis of a religious theory of political legitimacy." See his *Iran: Political Development in a Changing Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), p. 74.

28 See Juan R.I. Cole and Nikki R. Keddie, eds., *Shi'ism and Social Protest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Martin Kramer, ed., *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987).

29 For example, John Waterbury, "The 'Soft State' and the Open Door: Egypt's Experience with Economic Liberalization, 1974-1984," *Comparative Politics* 18 (October 1985), pp. 65-83; and Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). For related studies on other developing countries, see Alfred Stepan, *The State and Society: Peru in Comparative Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978);

Thomas M. Callaghy, *The State-Society Struggle: Zaire in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); and Vivien Shue *The Reach of the State: Sketches of the Chinese Body Politic* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

30 A growing number of works tried to apply the American tradition of "interest group analysis." See Robert Bianchi, *Interest Groups and Political Development in Turkey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); and Samia Sa'ad, *Man Yamluk Misr?* (Cairo: Dar al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi, 1986). Although Arab authors developed a growing interest in the influence of social groups, they tended to concur with the classical Orientalists that these groups lacked the necessary power to press for democratization of the Arab World; see Sa'ad al-Din Ibrahim, *Al-Mujtama' wal-Dawla fil-Watan al-'Arabi* (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1988); and Mustapha K. Al-Sayyid, "Slow Thaw in the Arab World," *World Policy Journal*, Fall 1991, pp. 711-738. For an exception to this generalization, see Richard Antonius and Qusai Samak, "A Civil Society at the Pan-Arab Level? The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations," in Hani Faris, ed., *Arab Nationalism and the Future of the Arab World* (1986), pp. 81-93.

31 See the think-piece written for the project: Peter von Sivers, "Retreating States and Expanding Societies: The State Autonomy/Informal Civil Society Dialectic in the Middle East and North Africa," (unpublished mimeograph, 1987). Similar conclusions are evident in another paper written for the SSRC project: Emanuel Sivan, "The Islamic Resurgence: Civil Society Strikes Back," *Journal of Contemporary History* 25 (1990), pp. 353-364.

32 The NYU project publishes a regular *Bulletin*, which can be obtained by writing to the Civil Society in the Middle East Project, Department of Politics, 715 Broadway, Room 414, NY 10003.

33 Asad AbuKhalil, "A Viable Partnership: Islam, Democracy and the Arab World," *Harvard International Review* 15 (Winter 1992/93), pp. 22-23, 65; Muhammad Muslih and Augustus Richard Norton, "The Need for Arab Democracy," *Foreign Policy*, #83 (Summer 1991), pp. 3-19; and Michael C. Hudson, "After the Gulf War: Prospects for Democratization in the Arab World," *Middle East Journal* 45 (Summer 1991), pp. 407-426.

34 Crone's first book, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), argues that originally Islam was a Jewish heresy dedicated to reclaiming Palestine for the Arabs and that Muhammad was not its major prophet but just a messenger who announced the appearance of the Messiah (Umar ibn al-Khattab). This controversial thesis did not win wide acceptance, but it did gain respect for her erudition and hard analysis. Crone's more recent writings have won much wider support; see R. Steven Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 84-5.

35 *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 62.

36 *Ibid.*, pp. 62-3.

37 For a chronology of these events, see Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the first centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

38 *Slaves on Horses*, p. 84.

39 For criticism of "mamlukism," the idea that the medieval mamluk institution can be hypostatized to serve as a model for contemporary Arab politics, see Haim Gerber, *The Social Origins of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1987), pp. 149-161; and Jean-Claude Garcin, "The Mamluk Military System and the Blocking of Medieval Muslim Society," in Jean Baechler, John A. Hall, and Michael Mann, eds., *Europe and the Rise of Capitalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), pp. 113-130.

40 *Slaves on Horses and Islam: The Genesis of a Military System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 62.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 70. The notion that the gap between ideals and realities was particularly acute in Islam was already a well established theme in Orientalist literature, although Pipes deduced new implications from it; see Gustave E. von Grunebaum, "The Body Politic: Law and the State," in *Medieval Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 142-169.

42 *In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), pp. 157-8. For a critical response see Edward W. Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered," in Francis Barker, et al., *Literature, Politics and Theory* (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 210-229.

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