The purpose of this book is to apply concepts from English school theory, and especially from so-called ‘New English School Theory’, to the Middle East. The specific aim is to investigate whether or not significant, distinct international social structures exist at the regional level represented by the Middle East in either or both of the interstate domain or in ‘world’ society forms rooted in civil society within the interhuman and transnational domains. If such social structures do exist, how strong are they, and how distinct from the structures at the global level? How do the interstate and ‘world society’ elements interact with each other at the regional level? And how do such structures at the regional level interplay both with those at the global level and with other regional or subglobal level structures?

**Introduction**

The origins and purpose of the book and an overview of its structure.

**Chapter 1. Theoretical Issues: Applying English School Concepts to the Subglobal Level**

- Challenging the English school’s ignoring of the subglobal level of international social structure
- How to relate the interstate and non-state domains?
- How to relate across and between levels: subglobal-global, and subglobal-subglobal
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**Chapter 2. The Middle East in the Global Social Structures**

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Arab League,
OIC
OAPEC
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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to sketch out the theoretical, and up to a point historical, elements of a research project which would seek to apply social structural concepts from English school theory to the Middle East. The specific aim is to investigate whether or not significant, distinct, international social structures exist at the regional level represented by the Middle East in either or both of the forms identified by the English school: a society of states, or a ‘world’ society rooted in the peoples and non-state actors of the region. If such social structures do exist, how strong are they, and how distinct from the structures at the global level? How do such structures at the regional level interplay both with those at the global level and with other regional or subglobal level structures?

In this paper I aim to do no more than set out the analytical framework and sketch in some initial thoughts about what might be found and how it might be investigated. Section 1 reviews the theoretical issues raised by applying English school concepts at the subglobal level. Section 2 locates the Middle East within the frame of international and world society at the global level.

1. Applying English School Concepts to the Subglobal Level: Theoretical Issues

In the English school literature, whether pluralist or solidarist, subglobal and regional manifestations of international social structure have either been marginalised or resisted, and critics have argued that this position is both theoretically untenable and damaging to English school theory (Zhang, 2002: 6-7; Buzan, 2004: 205-12). The underlying issue is the scale or scales on which it is appropriate to think about interstate, interhuman and transnational societies. In classical English school thinking, the fixation on global scale arose from a combination of the history of the expansion of European international society; the influence of universal normative principles in political theory; a fear, amplified by the Cold War, that subglobal developments would necessarily undermine global ones; and a blindness to empirical developments of international society in the world economy. The argument in this section is that this neglect of the subglobal level of social structure is unnecessary and unhelpful. In the interstate domain, the classic English school definition of international society has as its referent ‘a group of states (or, more generally, a group of independent political communities)…’ and this specification leaves entirely open the question of scale. In the interhuman and transnational domains, Bull’s infrequently cited definition of world
society, unlike his frequently cited one of international society, does make the global requirement explicit:

By a world society we understand not merely a degree of interaction linking all parts of the human community to one another, but a sense of common interest and common values on the basis of which common rules and institutions may be built. The concept of world society, in this sense, stands to the totality of global social interaction as our concept of international society stands to the concept of the international system (Bull 1977: 279 my italics).

Neither of these positions is well thought through, and my argument is that there is every reason to expect that one will find social structures, both interstate and ‘world’ at both global and subglobal levels.

Looking first at the interstate domain, it is perfectly clear that a global scale pluralist interstate society exists on the basis of effectively universal acceptance of basic Westphalian institutions such as sovereignty, territoriarity, diplomacy and international law. But it is just as clear that this global society is unevenly developed to a very marked degree. Moving on from Vincent’s famous eggbox metaphor of international society (in which states were the eggs, and international society the box), one might see this unevenness as a pan of fried eggs. Although nearly all the states in the system belong to a thin, pluralist interstate society (the layer of egg-white), there are subglobal and/or regional clusters sitting on that common substrate that are both much more thickly developed than the global common, and up to a point developed separately and in different ways from each other (the yolks). The EU and North America, for example, both stand out as subglobal interstate societies that are more thickly developed within themselves. Lesser attempts to create thicker, liberal, regional interstate/international societies by cultivating joint economic development can be found in Mercosur, and various other regional economic cooperations. Above some of these regional efforts one can find larger, looser, thinner, versions of the same thing labelled the ‘West’ or the ‘Atlantic Community’ (Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez, 2005) or the ‘Asia-Pacific’. Different forms of relative thickness compared to the global common, reflecting concerns with more political and/or cultural values, can be found by looking at the arrangements of ASEAN, or among the community of Islamic states, or the Arab League. There is thus strong empirical evidence, particularly but not only in the economic sector, that distinctive development of interstate societies is flourishing at the subglobal level.

The need to look at the subglobal level is just as obvious if one turns to the interhuman and transnational domains. Interhuman society is largely about collective identity (Buzan, 2004: 118-38). Most national identities are geographically clustered to a substantial degree, as, to a lesser extent, are most religious and civilisational identities. Since individual humans often hold more than one identity simultaneously, the question is how the patterns of distribution overlap, and which takes priority as a mobiliser or legitimator of political action. Some identities will fit inside others, like Russian dolls (e.g. Danish, within Scandinavian, within European, within Western), whereas others may be relatively diffuse, and have complicated patterns of overlap.
(e.g. religious identities in relation to ethno-national ones). Looking at the interhuman domain through this lens what one sees, in a very broad brush picture, is an inverse correlation between scale on the one hand, and the intensity of shared identity on the other. Families, clans, tribes and nations mostly shine strongly, whereas humankind, or members of the planetary ecosystem, are still little more than background glow (albeit up from nothing in the quite recent past). There are exceptions to this pattern. Some national identities embrace huge numbers of people and large territories. A handful of religions, most notably Christianity and Islam, have succeeded in creating vast subsystemic communities of shared identity. Some civilisations (Western, Confucian) hold similarly sized scale, but less intensely. In matters of identity, parochialism still rules. Despite some breakthroughs to larger scale, universal scale identity remains strikingly weak. In matters of identity, the subglobal ‘yolks’ rest on the very thin and very recent substrate of ‘white’ provided by the general acceptance that all human beings are equal. Prior to the onset of general decolonisation after the Second World War, it was normal practice for humans formally and legally to locate each other in hierarchic categories of superior and inferior, whether defined by race, culture, caste, or master-slave relations.

Transnational society is almost by definition less amenable to geographical classification than either interhuman or interstate society. Nevertheless, and again in very broad brush, the view is one in which higher intensities of norms, rules and institutions are found on the smaller scales than on the larger ones. Clubs, firms, lobbies, associations, and suchlike are all for the most part more intensely organised locally than globally. In the transnational realm of society, it is possible to achieve large, even global, scale in an extremely thin way. The network of scholars interested in the English school, for example, amounts to a few hundred people at best, yet having ‘members’ on all continents can plausibly claim to be ‘global’. It is an empirical question whether developments in interaction capacity such as the internet tend more to support thin global developments in the transnational domain, or also boost the development of subglobal/regional nonstate actors (NSAs).

In sum, the subglobal level is firmly occupied in the interstate and interhuman domains and perhaps in the transnational one. Interestingly, echoing the insight of Williams (2001), the global level is reasonably well developed only in the interstate domain. The diplomatic and political structure of global international society, and the regimes and institutions of the global economy, are altogether more substantial than either the faint glow of shared identity as humankind or the distant prospect of a pure transnational society.

By marginalising subglobal developments, the English school has sustained an emaciated conceptualisation of what the whole idea of international/world society is about. Second order society at the global level is almost inevitably thin, but subglobal developments may well be much thicker. The whole framework of interstate, interhuman and transnational societies needs to be understood as the interplay between subglobal and global levels.
If one accepts the validity of applying English school concepts of social structure to both the global and subglobal levels, then three sets of theoretical issues arise. The first concerns the relationship between the interstate and nonstate domains within any particular instance of subglobal/regional level international social structure; the second concerns the interplay between the social structures at the regional or subglobal level and those at the global one; and the third concerns the interplay between and among different social structures at the regional/subglobal level.

The Local Relationship Between the Interstate and Nonstate Domains

There are two parallel arguments about the local relationship between the interstate and nonstate domains. The first is the widespread position in the English school classics that shared culture is an important, perhaps even necessary, underpinning for interstate society. As Wight (1977: 33) puts it: ‘We must assume that a states-system [i.e. an international society] will not come into being without a degree of cultural unity among its members’. Ancient Greece and modern Europe are the key examples of this relationship. In the European case the link generates the whole concern in the English school literature that the expansion of international society from Europe to the world has weakened it by introducing a dose of multiculturalism that is potentially fatal to shared norms, rules and institutions. To the extent that this is true, we might expect to find thicker and more robust interstate societies on subglobal scales defined by shared culture. That is one reason for looking at the Middle East, where both Arabism and Islam provide possible shared-culture foundations.

The second argument linking the interstate and nonstate domains derives from Weller (2000: 64-8), who notes that the relationship between society and community depends significantly on whether their geographical boundaries are the same or different. Bringing the geography of society and community into line has of course been the driving rationale behind the nation-state. Where community and society occupy the same space, as in a classical nation-state, the element of identity (e.g. nationalism) may well play a crucial role in balancing some of the divisive effects of society and politics (e.g. the class antagonism generated by capitalist economies; the need for political parties to play the role of loyal opposition when out of power). But where identity and society are not in the same space, as in the contemporary problematique of globalisation, they might well be antagonistic forces (e.g. nationalist reactions against economic liberalism). Thinking in this vein supports the English school case that the existence of community facilitates the formation of a second order society of states. Whether or not this works the other way around, with a society of states necessarily, or even usually, leading towards the formation of a matching sense of community, is a much more open question, underlining the English school’s concerns about the weakness of shared culture underpinning contemporary global international society. This relationship between shared culture and society of states should be as important at the subglobal scale as at the global one: as, for example, in the problem of how to press on with European integration when the interstate
mechanisms have outrun the rather weak sense of European identity amongst the peoples of the EU. Huntington’s (1996) worrying ‘clash of civilisations’ thesis fits here, made all the more alarming by the escalation of securitisation between the Islamic world and the West that followed on from September 11. Also under this heading are things such as Asian values and the ‘ASEAN way’, pan-Arabism, pan-Islamism, and pan-Africanism and any other attempts to ascribe a political quality to a cultural zone.

In a general sense, all of this can be understood as being about how political, economic and cultural geography play into each other. At the macro-level, interest focuses on the relationship between the larger patterns in the interhuman domain, and the subglobal and global social structures in the interstate domain. Do subglobal interstate developments follow the cultural patterns in the interhuman domain, as they appear to do, for example, with ‘the West’, and if so how closely tied are these two factors? Are there international societies at the state level which correspond to other cultural or civilisational zones such as Islam or the Arab world?

Weller’s implicit hypothesis is that identity on the one hand, and the machineries of rational contractual relations on the other, more easily reinforce each other when they occupy the same territorial space, and provide grounds for conflict when they do not. This idea, and its accompanying assumption that the three domains are generally present in any large scale social structure, seems an excellent starting point for almost any enquiry into the social structure of the international system at any level.

The Interregional and Global Interplay of Social Structures

The second and third sets of theoretical issues can be considered together. The second concerns the interplay between the social structures at the regional or subglobal level and those at the global one. The traditional English school position, drawing heavily on the Cold War context of its time, was that subglobal international societies like those represented by East and West would almost inevitably fall into struggle for universal dominion, in the process wrecking international society at the global level until one of them emerged victorious. The third set concerns the interplay between and among social structures at the regional/subglobal level. Because the traditional English school literature did not much consider the subglobal level, focusing almost exclusively on the global/universal level, there is as yet little development in this area.

My starting point is to question the assumption that subglobal international societies must automatically be in rivalry for global status. The evidence from contemporary international society suggests a much more open spectrum of possibilities of how subglobal developments might impact on each other and on global interstate society. As the fried eggs metaphor emphasises, there is no simple ‘either/or’ choice about global and subglobal developments. In the contemporary international system, the thinner global interstate society is shared by all, and the subglobal developments build on top of that. A second-order pluralism is possible when
subglobal interstate societies seek rules of coexistence with each other at the global level. The key to this second order pluralism is the desire to express and maintain zones of cultural and political difference without seeking to expand them to global dominance. Cultural zones driven by universal ideologies, as in the Cold War, might very well fall into rivalry to capture the global level. But there are clearly no grounds (other than an ideological commitment to a machtpolitik view of the world) for any automatic assumption that subglobal developments must fall into such rivalry. Subglobal cultural logics such as ‘Asian values’, Hindutva or Pan-Arabism are almost by definition not universalist, and so might well lend themselves to a pluralist logic of coexistence. Something like Islam, or in earlier times Christendom falls somewhere between with potential to be captured either by universalist or communitarian interpretations.

The fried egg metaphor suggests that subglobal societies would rest on, and share, the common ‘white’ representing the global level. This metaphor carries the implication that there is a substantial degree of compatibility between the societal developments at the subglobal level and those at the global level. If no such compatibility exists, then the global level itself does not exist and the classical English school assumption of rivalry would be in play. To say compatibility must exist is not to imply that harmony must exist amongst the subglobal societies, only that they must agree to share some institutions. In principle, the nature of the relationships both among the subglobal societies, and between them and the global level, remains open and historically contingent. It is even possible for subglobal interstate societies to be strong rivals, as they were during the Cold War, and yet still share adherence to some global level institutions (sovereignty, territoriality, diplomacy). Such second order pluralism could encompass inter-societal relations ranging from friendship through indifference to hostility. Subglobal international societies lose their point if there are no significant differences between them and either their neighbours or the global level. But if the differences become too great then the global level disappears. The hypothesis assumed in some English school writings that subglobal societal developments must necessarily be rivals or necessarily degrade the global level is thus just one of many possibilities. In the contemporary international system one can identify quite a few subglobal international societies, and most are quite well in tune with the institutions at the global level. There are no competing universalisms of the type that so worried Bull and Wight. It can certainly be argued that the West, and particularly the US, sees itself as a universalism, but unlike during the Cold War, the other subglobal interstate societies are broadly concerned with maintaining their distinctiveness at the subglobal level, not trying to remake the global level in their own image.

One thing made possible by identifying a subglobal level of international society, and asking how social structures at that level interact with each other and the global level, is a much more nuanced and useful view of the heated debate about intervention than that offered by the traditional universalist English school view. If it is possible to build distinctive subglobal/regional international societies on the
common foundations provided by global international society, then this arrangement frames the issue of intervention in the form of three questions.

(i) How legitimate/legal is intervention within the global rules and norms: i.e. the lowest common denominator of interstate society?

(ii) How legitimate/legal is intervention within the rules and norms of a given subglobal/regional interstate society such as EU-Europe or the Arab League?

(iii) How legitimate/legal is intervention across the boundary between distinctive subglobal/regional interstate societies: e.g. from the West into Africa, Asia, or the Middle East, or from any of these three latter into each other?

Questions about the legitimacy and legality of intervention relate so intimately to the issue of sovereignty that it is impossible to separate them. But sovereignty means different things at the pluralist and solidarist ends of interstate society. In a pure Westphalian interstate society, virtually all intervention is both illegal and illegitimate (except against forces aiming to disrupt or overthrow the interstate order). In a thick, solidarist international society such as that represented by the EU, the agreed unpacking of sovereignty, and the establishment of agreements about elements of justice, and the rights of individuals and non-state actors makes many more kinds of intervention both legal and legitimate. There may be many in-between cases where legality and legitimacy part company, as in aspects of the recent Western interventions in Iraq and the Balkans (Wheeler 2000). Since interstate society is de facto differentiated quite radically at the regional level, it is absurd to confine a discussion of the de jure aspects of intervention by imposing an assumption that interstate society is a single, global-scale phenomenon. Each intervention has to be considered in relation to the specific characteristics of its location, and whether it is within a subregional society, or crosses boundaries between such societies. If NATO’s intervention in former Yugoslavia had been presented and understood as an affair of European/Western interstate society, it would have triggered much less resistance from China and others who feared it might be setting a global precedent.

Another thing revealed by a layered view of international social structure is the vanguardist potential in such an arrangement. By vanguard I mean the idea common to both military strategy and Leninist thinking that a leading element plays a crucial role in how a social movement unfolds. A vanguard theory of how interstate society expanded is implicit in the way the English school has presented the story of the European/Western interstate society becoming global. The triumph of European power meant that Western norms and values and institutions dominated the whole system. The mixture of coercion and copying and persuasion is inherent in a vanguard model, and runs in close parallel to Waltz’s (1979) idea that anarchy generates ‘like units’ through processes of ‘socialisation and competition’. Outsiders might emulate the core for several reasons other than direct coercion. They might simply be overawed, and copy in order to conform and to obtain the same results. They might be persuaded by normative argument. They might emulate for competitive reasons, fearing loss of relative wealth or power if they fail to adapt, and hoping to outdo the vanguard at its
own game. Whatever the mechanisms and whatever the rationales, the effect is one of a subglobal vanguard leading a global development.

Several of the values that were carried outward by the force of Western military superiority have, over time, become internalised by those peoples on whom they were originally imposed. Nationalism, territorial sovereignty, international law, diplomacy and science are the most obvious examples, joined more recently, and perhaps still controversially, by the market. What starts out as imperial imposition can become internalised and accepted by those on whom it was imposed, though there is nothing inevitable about this, and imposition can just as easily breed rejection (as the demise of the Soviet Union demonstrated). The US occupation of Iraq in 2003, with its aim of promoting democracy in the Arab world, certainly fits in the vanguardist mould (and will be a very interesting test of whether coercion can change values). The neo-imperial qualities inherent in the present condition of interstate society are noticed by Nye (1990: 166-7) when he argues that the US ‘needs to establish international norms consistent with its society’, and get ‘other countries to want what it wants’. Looking at international society in this way begins to offer some leverage on the question arising from Weller’s analysis left open above, as to whether the existence of interstate societies can promote the development of community in the corresponding interhuman domain.

This vanguard aspect is an important element in how the international social structures in the Middle East (a key site of resistance to Westernisation) relate to both the West (as a neighbouring subglobal international society) and to the global level (largely formed by Western values). The English school literature is largely dominated by liberal values, but one has to keep in mind that liberal values are not universally dominant. The international social structures of the classical Islamic world, however one might best describe their mix of interhuman, transnational and interstate, were certainly not liberal. Other sorts of values are still in play worldwide, and at the subglobal level, for example still in the Islamic world and also in much of East Asia, liberal values are not dominant within the local international societies. If we are going to bring the regional and the subglobal levels back into the study of international social structures, then these non-liberal alternatives are of more than historical interest. They are important components in a layered international social structure in which some norms and institutions are shared and some not. Furthering our understanding how these compatible and incompatible elements work together is one good reason for examining the Middle East more closely through an English school lens.

2. The Middle East in the Global Social Structures

We need first to sketch out briefly what the international social structures look like at the global level, and how the states and peoples of the Middle East fit into them.

*Contemporary Global International Society*
The framework to be used in this book builds on the social structural approach to English school theory set out in Buzan (2004: esp. chs. 6-8). The key conceptual elements relevant here are as follows.

- A division of the international social world into three domains each defined by a different type of actor: interstate, transnational and interhuman. This generates two types of society, *first order* (in which the members are individual human beings), and *second order* (in which the members are not individual human beings, but durable collectivities of humans possessed of identities and actor qualities that are more than the sum of their parts). The distinctive contribution of English school theory is to focus on second order societies, particularly interstate societies, and how they relate to first order ones.

- A second contribution of the English school is to focus on institutions as the key to defining and differentiating societies. In common usage, ‘institution’ can be understood either in quite specific terms as ‘an organisation or establishment founded for a specific purpose’, or in more general ones as ‘an established custom, law, or relationship in a society or community’ (Hanks 1986). These different meanings play strongly into what distinguishes English school theory from regime theory. Here the key distinction is between *primary institutions* (those deep, organic, evolved practices talked about by the English school as constitutive of both states and international society in that they define both the basic character and purpose of any such society. For second order societies such institutions define the units that compose the society) and *secondary institutions* (those talked about in regime theory as instrumental, designed regimes or organisations which are the products of a certain types of international society - most obviously liberal, but possibly other types as well - and are for the most part consciously designed by states).

- The approach through primary institutions generates a spectrum of types of interstate society arranged along a spectrum from pluralist to solidarist. For social structural analysis, this spectrum replaces the traditional English school framing of Hobbesian, Grotian and Kantian:
  a) *Power Political* represents here much the same as Hobbesian does for Wendt (1999) and the traditional English school’s ‘international system’ pillar, namely an international society based largely on enmity and the possibility of war, but where there is also some diplomacy, alliance making and trade. Survival is the main motive for the states, and no values are necessarily shared. Institutions will be minimal, mostly confined to rules of recognition and diplomacy.
  b) *Coexistence* occupies some of the zone taken by Wendt’s (1999: 279-97) uncomfortably broad Lockean category, focusing on the exemplar of modern Europe, and meaning by it the kind of Westphalian system in which the core institutions of international society are the balance of power, sovereignty, territoriality, diplomacy, great power management, war and international law. In
the English school literature this form is labelled pluralist and incorporates the realist side of Grotian.

c) **Cooperative** requires developments that go significantly beyond coexistence, but short of extensive domestic convergence. It incorporates the more solidarist side of what the English school calls Grotian, but might come in many guises, depending on what type of values are shared and how/why they are shared. Probably war gets downgraded as an institution, and other institutions might arise to reflect the solidarist joint project(s).

d) **Convergence** means the development of a substantial enough range of shared values within a set of states to make them adopt similar political, legal and economic forms. The range of shared values has to be wide enough and substantial enough to generate similar forms of government (liberal democracies, Islamic theocracies, communist totalitarianisms) and legal systems based on similar values in respect of such basic issues as property rights, human rights, and the relationship between government and citizens. One would expect quite radical changes in the pattern of institutions of international society. This definition makes clear the divorce of solidarism from cosmopolitanism. In a society of states the Kantian form of solidarism around liberal values identified by the English school and Wendt is one option, but not the only one.

As argued above, contemporary global level international society is found mainly in the interstate domain. In the interhuman domain, there is little of shared identity at the global level except the quite recent acceptance of human equality. There is a lot of activity in the transnational domain, but this hinges mainly on the liberal character of the leading powers. This global level international society was created by the expansion of European international society, and is in many ways a product of the age of Western imperialism and the processes of decolonisation that brought it to an end. Today’s international society is the successor to an earlier colonial world order, and as Keene (2002) points out, still contains many marks of its predecessor.

One of the most obvious colonial legacies is the near universal acceptance of the sovereign territorial state as the fundamental unit of political legitimacy. So successful was the European state in unleashing human potential that it overwhelmed all other forms of political organisation in the system. To escape from European domination it was necessary to adopt European political forms. Some achieved this by copying, others had it imposed on them by the process of decolonisation (Bull and Watson, 1984b: 434-5). The key primary institutions of sovereignty, territoriality, diplomacy, international law and nationalism became internalised more or less worldwide, no longer depending on the coercion that originally delivered them to the non-Western world. Another obvious legacy is that the West still remains the dominant force within and behind this global international society. In one perspective, the West can be seen as one of the subglobal yolks on the eggwhite of global international society, albeit a very large and very thick yolk. But in another perspective the West is still playing the vanguard role which it began with the process of colonisation and decolonisation. It is
still the leading generator and exponent of new institutions for the global level, most obviously human rights, democracy and the market, which it seeks to export from its own sphere to the rest of international society. In its vanguard role the West is both another regional international society and the core of what is still a core-periphery power structure.

Contemporary global international society is a mixture of the essentially Westphalian institutions exported by Europe and broadly accepted everywhere, with more liberal elements pushed by the West. Sovereignty, territoriality, diplomacy, international law, balance of power, war and great power management represent the Westphalian logic of a coexistence international society. Science, human rights, and the market represent the logic of cooperation pushed by the liberal Western core. Because the Western liberal core is such a strong element in global international society, one would expect, and finds, a lot of interplay among the three domains (interstate, interhuman, transnational). With equality of people and the market as strong primary institutions, both individuals, and even moreso TNAs of various kinds, are given substantial rights and standings within the secondary institutions of interstate society. Firms, political lobbying groups and interest groups are allowed, and often encouraged, to operate transnationally, and can acquire legal rights and responsibilities within the framework of interstate society. TNAs and individuals are allowed to accumulate and use huge amounts of capital and organisational resources, and to play openly (and covertly) in the political processes of bilateral diplomacy, conferencing and multilateralism. Powerful TNAs and individual have been important movers of interstate society on human rights, environment and some arms control issues.

Looking at the primary institutions of this global society, sovereignty and territoriality (and therefore the state) still feature strongly as master institutions. Of the derivatives from these, non-intervention is still quite robust, though no longer as absolute as it once was being under pressure both from human rights and US claims to a broad right of preventive action in pursuit of its national security (Bush 2002). International law has become hugely elaborate, supporting many secondary institutions. Diplomacy remains a master institution with multilateralism the most significant derivative (though under threat from US unilateralism), and again a host of secondary institutions. Great power management remains robust as a general principle, but under stress from differences between unipolar and multipolar interpretations. Of its derivatives, alliances are no longer the most salient feature of the political landscape, and war is much hedged about with restrictions and largely ruled out amongst the major powers. Balance of power is somewhat harder to characterise. Certainly it does not operate in the same vigorous way that characterised it up to the end of the Cold War. The increasing adoption of liberal economic values has severely moderated anti-hegemonism, as exemplified inter alia by a quite widespread willingness among the powers to collaborate in big science projects. Nationalism, and its derivatives self-determination and popular sovereignty remain strong, but democracy is not a globally shared value. Equality of people is strong as a master institution, but despite significant advances, its derivatives human rights and
humanitarian intervention remain contested. It it still controversial whether to count them as global level institutions or not. The market has finally triumphed as a master institution, strongly tied into multilateralism, and with trade and financial liberalisation as its major derivatives. Environmental stewardship probably now registers as a master institution, but more with a logic of coexistence than with the force of a joint project. In overview, a snapshot of the institutions of contemporary interstate society looks roughly as in table 1.

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In sum, what one finds at the global level is a modestly cooperative international society whose coexistence elements are quite deep-rooted and stable, but whose cooperative ones as yet have shallower roots, and could more easily (which is not to say easily) be swept away by changes in the distribution of power that reduced Western influence. This argument can be extended to tackle at least some of the concerns raised in the previous section about multiculturalism weakening the cultural foundations of interstate society. Certainly there is less cultural cohesion underpinning contemporary global interstate society than there was behind the European colonial interstate society of the nineteenth century. But the European imperium left behind more than just a global acceptance of the sovereign state and pluralist interstate society. It also embedded nationalism, science, the idea of progress, and more recently the market, as more or less universally accepted ideas about human social organisation. As evidenced by the experience of the Soviet Union and China, without adopting this wider set, almost no state can either compete effectively in power terms or establish a genuine legitimacy with its own population (Buzan and Segal 1998). An argument can be made that the interstate domain at the global level is increasingly supported by a global scale ‘Westernistic’ civilisation, or ‘Mondo culture’ which influences not just state elites, but also TNAs and popular culture (Buzan and Segal 1998). Up to a century ago, relatively few people thought of themselves as members of the human race in any meaningful way. Empire was common, outright slavery only recently pushed to the margins, unequal treatment routine, and the idea of a common humanity very marginal except within some religious traditions. Few people knew much or cared much about what was happening on other parts of the planet. Now many more people do know at least something about what goes on elsewhere, and up to a point care about it, even if very unevenly and in ways heavily shaped by patterns of media attention. In the transnational domain and through the global marketplace, some basic elements of a global culture are evolving from the relatively trivial, such as food, fashion, music and sport, to more serious developments in the emergence of global grassroots politics on issues such as the environment, anti-globalisation, and human rights. These things matter in that they contribute to the stability of a global interstate society by embedding its ideas and symbols not just in state elites, but in the minds of the peoples as well. The existence of this ‘Westernistic’ culture does not eliminate the problems of multiculturalism. But it does represent a substantial transformation in the cultural underpinnings of interstate society that should not be ignored.

The Middle East in Contemporary International Society
How does the Middle East relate to this global international society of which it is by definition a part? First, one has to ask: what is the Middle East? Definitions vary, and often incite controversy. In a general sense, the term covers a region stretching from Morocco to Iran, including all of the Arab states plus Israel and Iran. The region does not have clear edges. To the south it fades away into Africa in the strip of Sahel states running from Mauritania to Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia. To the north it fades into Europe through Turkey, and to the East into South Asia through Afghanistan. The states of the Levant the Gulf are the core of the Middle East, with controversies about inclusion/exclusion increasing in intensity as one moves away. But for the purposes of this book we do not need to try to fix an essential definition of what the Middle East is and is not. Instead, we take the area delimited above as the place in which we want to look for manifestations of subglobal/regional international society. The exact composition of what we find is self-determined by the actions of the actors within the Middle East. It is historically contingent, and in principle open to various compositions. For example, it is generally accepted that Arab nationalism dominated Middle Eastern politics up until the late 60s, but after the Arab defeat in 1967 gave way to radical Islam (Dawisha, 2000; Murden, 2002: 12). Such a transition might well have a profound effect on the regional nexus of international and world society, inter alia because of the tension between Islam and such primary institutions as sovereignty and international law (Mendelsohn, 2005; Hashmi, 1996). The purpose of later chapters in this book is to take a first cut empirical look to see what, if anything, defines the Middle East in terms of international and world society.

Clearly the peoples of the Middle East were among the many non-Western societies that had to endure the onslaught of European expansion, and it is important to appreciate the immensity of this historical process. Hodgson (1993: 44-71, 207-24) argues that a revolution of ‘technicalisation’ occurred in Europe from sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, creating new and more complex economic and political institutions based on rationalism, and marking a shift of power from landed classes to commercial ones. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Europe had not only caught up with the institutions of classical civilisation, but surpassed them. Once this revolution was underway, it accelerated the speed of history in the Occident, and preempted similar developments elsewhere. Other civilisations couldn’t repeat the European development both because they lacked its antecedents and because they were under severe and immediate pressure from its expanded presence and power. As the development gap opened up, especially during the eighteenth and even moreso the nineteenth centuries, it created the power differentials that underpinned an increasingly easy European imperialism. From a Western perspective, the classical world seemed static and stagnant, but the reality was simply a difference in the pace of development, with Europe transforming itself on a scale of decades, compared with change measured at a pace of centuries in the classical world (Chase-Dunn, 1994: 86-92). Many elements in the European development came from the classical world (Hobson, 2004), but that world was unable either to adapt to, or emulate, the modernist revolution in Europe. By the late eighteenth century, many of the Asian polities were becoming
weak compared to the European state. Despite the impressive size and products of its economy, China never developed an efficient tax base. In India, the success of the societal structure (caste system) resulted in shallow state roots and a recurrent inability to defend the area. The Islamic world failed to develop a stable state structure (Hall and Ikenberry, 1989: 22-34).

The Islamic and Chinese civilisations, both of which saw themselves as dominant world cultures, suffered a ‘sense of radical spiritual defeat’ as Western power surged around them (Hodgson, 1993: 224). In the case of Islam, the early period of European expansion corresponds to the height of Islamic power, 1503-1800, when three Islamic empires (Ottoman, Safavid, Timurid) held sway from the Eastern Mediterranean to South Asia. Islam had undergone a tremendous period of expansion from 1258-1503 taking in Anatolia, the Balkans, India, and swaths of Southeast Asia and Africa. But in the eighteenth century, as Europe was reaching its peak, the Islamic world was in decline. Splits between Sunni and Shi’a Islam manifested in, and reinforced, enervating conflict between the Ottoman and Safavid (Persian) empires, and the fundamentally land-based Islamic empires did little to resist European penetration by sea (Hodgson, 1993: 194-204).

Unlike most classical agrarian civilisations, Islam was supportive of merchant culture and became a successful merchant religion based on mobile trading and investment. The Islamic world played a central role in the Eurasian trading system. One reason for this was that the Arab-Islamic system unusually favoured town and trade over country and agriculture, allowing a greater role for tribal and merchant elites, and not just agricultural ones. Despite this inclination, and despite its early development of sophisticated financial instruments such as bills of exchange, the Islamic world failed to develop property rights, a clear legal order, or independent guilds or merchant associations (Anderson, 1974: 496-520). Although the Ottoman Empire had quite vigorous internal production and trade, its finances were crude, and it did not keep up with developments in money, credit and banking in Europe (Braudel, 1985: 467-84). And one cost of the bias towards town and trade was a general failure to advance, or even maintain, the irrigation systems on which the earlier agricultural prosperity of the Middle East had rested (Anderson, 1974: 496-520; Diamond, 1997: 409). The Islamic world’s failure to construct political institutions stable enough to guarantee the fixed investments necessary for industrial investment became a liability once the European modernisation based on such investments had begun. The contradiction between religion and politics in the Islamic world blocked its path to modernisation because while it was socially cohesive it was politically incoherent, lacking both clear boundaries and well-rooted states (Hodgson, 1993: 97-125, 176-94; Ferguson and Mansbach, 1996: 301-23; Hall and Ikenberry, 1989: 22-34). As Murden (2002: 93-161) argues, contemporary Islamic societies have generally failed to find a way of reconciling Islamic values and practices with the efficiency elements of the market, and this failure leaves them in a persistently weak and vulnerable position in the world political economy. Neither Islamists nor secular modernisers, despite the harsh conflict between them, have any idea about how to
solve the intrinsic contradictions between the deep individualism of market culture, and the deep communitarianism and hierarchy of Islamic society.

As a result of this inability to keep pace with the West, almost the whole of the Arab and Islamic world went through the process of colonisation and decolonisation by an alien culture which thought of itself as wholly superior to the local one, and in military and economic terms was unquestionably so. Although Turkey, and up to a point Iran and Saudi Arabia, escaped direct colonisation they were heavily penetrated by Western power and influence. For many, perhaps most, of the people in the region Israel is a living remainder, and reminder, of their colonial subordination, and an affront both to Arab nationalism and Islamic pride and propriety. The tragedy of Zionism is that it reflected a colonial era European assumption about the right to occupy and settle foreign lands, but only managed to implement its project at the point at which those ideas were collapsing and being replaced by decolonisation and the rights of indigenous peoples. The expansionist drive within Israel, its inability to make peace with its neighbours, and its conspicuous and lavish support from the US, combine to keep alive the humiliation of the colonial era for the Middle East, and so to make its place within global international society uncomfortable and volatile.

That said, the general transplant of basic Westphalian structures and institutions to the Middle East, most notably the sovereign state itself, has for better or worse worked reasonably well despite being in tension with both the Islamic Umma and Arab nationalism (Murden, 2000: 185-95). The region is composed of sovereign territorial states which accept the frameworks of diplomacy and international law, play their parts in intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), and in which nationalism as a political legitimiser has taken root. Pan-Islamic and Pan-Arab ideas, which might have supplanted or threatened the state system in the Middle East, failed to do so, although they nonetheless affected powerfully how that state system evolved and operated. The British and French roles in the creation of Israel, and the desire of some Arab governments (notably the Hashemite monarchies in Jordan and Iraq) to maintain close security relations with them, played a role in defining the anti-Western elements of Arabism (Barnett 1998: 108-29). The fact that the state system was largely a creation of disliked colonial powers, and could be understood as a conscious breaking up of Arab unity, exacerbated the difficulty of making the new states legitimate in the eyes of their citizens. Yet the framework of states proved more robust than predicted. Some authors, such as Tibi (1993: 181), argue that the European state form ‘has never really been able to establish stable internal foundations in the Middle East’. That view is supported by the many cases of civil war and repression, and by the effects of Pan-Arab and Pan-Islamic ideologies, both of which offer transnational identities and authorities that can be mobilised against the project to construct national states. It is easy to demonstrate that the achievements of the Arab state are in many ways lacking (in terms of democracy, human rights, justice, and development).

But the fact remains that, unlike in Africa, the state system has consolidated itself sufficiently both to contain domestic violence and to dominate regional international relations. Hurst (1999: 8) notes the remarkably long tenure of many
leaders and political systems in the Middle East. Yapp (1991: 35-46, 411-18, 432) argues that despite the decades of war and turbulence, the state structures left behind by decolonisation have nearly all survived. Iran and Iraq outlived their long war with each other, and Iraq even survived its catastrophic defeat in the second Gulf War, though whether it will survive the US invasion of 2003 remains to be seen. Barnett (1998) also argues that the norms and values of sovereignty and national identity have steadily gained ground over Pan-Arab alternatives, notwithstanding the sustained use of Pan-Arab rhetoric by many Arab leaders to undermine each other’s domestic legitimacy by appealing to the Arab ‘street’. Overall, the record suggests that a consolidating, if still primitive, Westphalian state system has steadily pulled most other issues into its framework. Arab and Islamic identities have largely made their accommodation with the state, with Islamists focusing more on opposition to their local governing elites than on wider crusades. Tibi is right that these are not European states when compared to what the modern Western state has become. They are more like the European states as they were a century or more ago (though that parallel should not be pushed too strongly). The point is that the Middle Eastern states are broadly in line with what might be thought of as the basic, ‘primitive’, coexistence, Westphalian elements of contemporary global international society, while being broadly out of line with the Western-driven, liberal, cooperative elements. There are, of course, substantial variations in this picture, with Turkey representing a substantial accommodation with some of the liberal elements, and Saudi Arabia perhaps representing the strongest reaction against them.

It is perhaps fair to say that although the states of the Middle East are, in a basic sense, part of the global international society, their participation in it is marked by deep and enduring contradictions. Aside from the transplant of the state system, most Middle Eastern societies have never accepted the broader Western liberal package, and remain inflamed by their inferior position, both generally and in relation to Israel. The region remains one of the key sites of resistance to Western liberal vanguardism (Murden, 2000: 10-12), yet it also remains materially weak, politically divided and fractious, and is heavily penetrated both by US power and transnational corporate interests. This sense of resistance to the West, and the weakness of the existing state leaderships in that role, has been a key resource for Osama bin Laden (1996a, 1996b, 1998; bin Laden et al. 1998) whose rhetoric is directed against ‘the Zionist-Crusader alliance under the leadership of the USA’ who occupy Jerusalem and especially ‘the land of the two holy places’, i.e. Saudi Arabia with Mecca and Medina. A second track that underpins his analysis is the way the Zionist-Crusader alliance has silenced ‘the scholars (Ulama) and callers (Da'ees) of Islam’: i.e. those speaking the truth have been kept from explaining things, and thus even the failings on the side of the Muslim world are not solely of their own making but due to US manipulations. ‘All these crimes and sins committed by the Americans are a clear declaration of war on God, his messenger, and Muslims … Nothing is more sacred than belief except repulsing an enemy who is attacking religion and life.’ The most important duty is to push American troops out of Saudi Arabia. Whether Islam has, by its very nature, to be anti-Western, as the bin
Laden line suggests, or whether Islamic anti-Westernism is mainly a reaction against Western political interventions in the Middle East (Ayoob, 2004: 11) remains a matter of argument.

In addition to the cultural hostility of much of the Middle East to the liberal aspects of global international society, and to its sense of subordination and its anger over Israel, another problematic aspect of the region’s relationship with the West and global international society is that it contains no great power(s). Great powers play a special role in Westphalian international society, where they are given managerial privileges (Bull, 1977: ch. 5?). This is not just an old fashioned idea, but remains very much alive today in the position of the permanent five members of the UN Security Council, and other clubs such as the G3, G7 and G8, and during the Cold War, ‘the big two’. Recent US claims to special rights because of its role as the sole superpower are also based in this logic. Within this view of global international society, the process of decolonisation can be interpreted, as noted above, as a Western move to break up the unity of the Arab and Islamic (or at least Sunni) world, so as to prevent the emergence of a successor great power to the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East. Lustick (1997) argues this view. He goes on to say that since the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, the global powers have preserved the fragmentation of the post-colonial state system in the Middle East, and prevented countries such as Iraq and Egypt from becoming the cores of a new imperial aggregation. The wars against Iraq in 1991 and 2003 were merely the latest example of this policy. Against that have been persistent, but failed, attempts at reaggregation, whether in the form of Nasser’s attempts at Arab Unions, or Saddam Hussein’s attempts at military empire building. The persistent and quite widespread interest in acquiring weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the region can also be understood in this frame, though much of it has the more immediate objective of balancing against Israel and the US.

In sum, the Middle East is part of global level international society in the most basic Westphalian sense of being part of the global states system. It is, however, in quite severe political and cultural tension both with the history that brought it into international society, and with the liberal Western vanguardism that leads international society. To make matters worse, its lack of a great power, or even a plausible candidate for great power status, excludes it from the top tables of international society. Like several other parts of the non-Western world, many of the states in the Middle East cling to the Westphalian elements of global international society in order to defend themselves against the ongoing liberalising pressures from the West.

3. Conclusion

Since this paper represents the introductory part to the large project sketched out at the beginning, it cannot have conclusions. What it suggests, I hope, is two things. First, that there are very good reasons for examining international social structures within the Middle East. Second, that once the regional social structures of the Middle East have been brought into a clearer perspective, it should be possible to see in more
depth what the differences are between the regional social structures on the one hand, and the global level and Western ones are on the other. Among other things, such insights should cast useful light on both the utility of intervention, and the prospects for constructing a second order pluralism between Western and Middle Eastern international societies.

References


