Transnationalization, Socio-political Disorder, and Ethnicification as Expressions of Declining Global Hegemony

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ABSTRACT. This article deals with the formation of new sodalities and solidarities in an era of increasing disorder in the world system. It attempts to show the way in which declining hegemony is linked to these new phenomena. Transnational movements of people are not, of course, particularly new and migration itself is no explanation for the increasing establishment of diasporas, for ethnicization and ethnic/national conflict. Rather, it might be hypothesized that these phenomena are related to reidentifications that cross national boundaries, to sub- as well as transnational identity formations that challenge national identities and cause them to activate themselves. The result is a serious escalation of identity politics that has risen to alarming proportions. Migration has not led to ethnicization. Rather, migration has become ethnified in a period in which assimilation and weaker forms of integration have failed. This is not, of course, a mere question of identity, but also a reordering of political and economic relations in the world arena.

[Italicized words prefixed by an asterisk (*) are explained in the Glossary at the end of this issue.]

The title of this article may appear somewhat misleading insofar as it uses terms such as ethnicization and transnationalization which would imply, from my standpoint, that it was a question of the modern world system. However, the research perspective for which I shall be arguing would maintain a *transhistorical* global framework while modifying the terms that are related to what have been argued to be essentially modern phenomena. There are good reasons for attempting to maintain such a framework. The most important of these is that many of the problems, conflicts, and tragedies of the contemporary world, or the world that is usually referred to in terms of modernity, in the classical sense of the post-Enlightenment world, are issues that
have a long history of repetition. I would go further and suggest, as many others have done, that a full understanding of what is happening in today's insecure existence, in which "culture wars" and clashes of civilization abound, can only be understood as a phenomenon that has occurred before and whose mechanisms are not part of some recent "evolution."

The analytical frame for this discussion is a global process model of hegemonic expansion and contraction (Friedman, 1994). In periods of expansion a center establishes a dominant position in a larger established realm of control and becomes a focus of identification for the larger arena. The establishment of a global hegemony is thus the establishment of cultural dominance as well, either via homogenization or the ranking of differences. Hall discusses this in detail in his contribution to this issue. Contraction of a hegemonic center which is accompanied by the tangential rise of centers in new geographical areas in the midst of a period of political and economic fragmentation (increasing competition) is also a period of combined cultural renewal and disintegration of the larger cultural whole. The current emergence of postmodernism and *neo-traditionalism are expressions of precisely this kind of breakdown of a formerly hegemonic cultural space. It is accompanied by instability and cultural politics, a competition of identities in an arena in which dominance is no longer exercised. This kind of process can be exemplified as in Figure 1.

The figure is meant to show, as simply as possible, the inverse relation between cycles of hegemony and cycles of cultural identity. In reality, these relations can be very much more complex since such cycles can be distributed within smaller regions of a larger hegemonic order that is in transformation. Thus, while fragmentation is common in the declining imperial structures of Eastern Europe, homogenization, often violent, seems to be occurring in Eastern Indonesia and China. In other words, hegemonic cycles can be relatively local and embedded in larger cycles. A few words about some of the terms is in order here since several different approaches and research traditions are involved in this endeavor. My use of the terms *modernity, modernism, postmodernity, and postmodernism overlap with some of Fred Riggs's usages in this issue, but to avoid confusion I shall try to be more precise. All of these terms

![Figure 1. Cultural and Civilization Cycles. Source: Friedman (1994: 39).](image-url)
are, in my usage, structural rather than historical. That is, they are meant to be useful in transhistorical analysis. This assumes that modernity emerges in the right kind of social conditions that have been replicated several times and in several places in world history. I do not like the use of definitions, since words such as "modernity" are meant to open exploration rather than closing it. Modernity is a kind of identity space or field of alternative identities that is structured by certain parameters such as individualization and *developmentalism*, which are themselves generated by the rise of a hegemonic power or zone in a system based on commercial reproduction. The disintegration of larger kinship or other "holistic" social categories (Dumont, 1983) leads to a number of new cultural tendencies, a particular distinction between public and private, the separations of state from cosmos, of role from individual, of achieved from ascribed, and of notions of personal and social development (like achievement in the larger world).

Foundational for modernity as an identity space is precisely its *alterity*, what Campbell (1987) has called the Walter Mitty principle. This implies everything from voluntaristic life-style politics to increasingly collectivist identifications as expressed in communitarianism, ethnic and religious movements, and the like. In my discussion of this phenomenon (Friedman, 1994) I have used a space defined by four polarities (Figure 2).

![Figure 2. Modernity as an Identity Space. Source: Friedman (1994: 228).](image)

Here modernism, traditionalism, primitivism, and postmodernism are four poles of potential identification that define a space of identity variation. *Modernism*, which dominates in periods of hegemony, is based on rationalist developmentalism where both the cultural and the natural are regarded as problems to be overcome. In periods of decline there is increasing polarization in which neo-traditional investment in cultural roots and religious identity may tend to dominate tendencies toward a more naturalistic primitivism (as in youth cultures) and a more cynical postmodernism. This presentation stresses that traditionalism, primitivism, postmodernism as well as modernism are part and parcel of the culture of modernity rather than external to it. So, when I use the term *postmodernity* (Figure 1), I am referring to the decline or transformation of the entire space, that is, the establishment of new "non-modern" conditions of identification.
Intersection of Social and Individual Identification

The question of ethnicity and of forms of socio-cultural integration such as empire or nation-state have rarely been explored in a systematic world historical and comparative perspective and I do not propose to do more than offer some suggestions in what follows. In an earlier work (Friedman, 1994) I suggested a division of forms of cultural identification into a continuum bounded by a holistic/segmentary identity at one end and individualist/citizenship at the other. In Figure 3 the relation between individual and social identity is traced through the continuum from holistic to commercial capitalist civilizations.

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Here the nation-state can vary from the more formal citizenship model of individualist modernism in which voluntary identification and an instrumental view of the state is dominant, to an *ethnified* version in which the nation is dominant, where the nation-state is converted from a contractual to a *familistic-ascriptive* model. The question of national solidarity and the experience of “organic” belonging are central to this phenomenon. European nations, with the possible exception of Great Britain, are ethnic states, in which a particular “rooted” population or peoplehood is associated with statehood. I have suggested that the degree of ethnification of such states is dependent on globally determined conditions of existence (Friedman, 1994). The United States and other nation-states based on mass immigration are quite different insofar as they lack the clear association of an ethnic identity with the state. In the United States, ethnicity as opposed to “race” is commonly an individual identity arena in which subjects identify themselves in terms of several generations of ancestors from X, Y, and Z (Waters, 1990). Mixed ancestry is, logically, an individual issue in such societies, and it is at odds with ethnic group formation. In periods of ethnification even such groups seek collective identities, as in the recent middle
class hybrid and mixed race movement in the United States. This seeking does not imply that national societies such as the United States, Australia, and Canada are entirely different from the societies of Europe, but that the forms of identification are at variance with one another. Cycles of assimilation and *multietnification occur in both cases, but the consequences have been somewhat different; and the immigrant societies have been much weaker in their cultural assimilation than the ethnically based nation-states. National identity in the United States is very much about the state itself, the flag, international success, democracy, and opportunity, while in continental Europe it is more often a question of nature, community, and national roots or history.

In more general and ideal-typical terms there are certain general and common characteristics of commercial civilizations. These are a function, also variable, of the degree of *individualization, the degree to which the internal capitalization of society disintegrates local kin, community, and local-regional sodalities (see above). The “liberation” process creates a vacuum with respect to collective identification. This vacuum is filled both with individualist modernism and *national identity. The *nation-state, in this sense is a product of the Western sector of the modern world system, but it has, I shall argue, its forerunners in the ancient world. *Modernism is an identity that, paradoxically, denies all fixed and rooted identities in the sense of culturally defined and essentialist, that is, ethnic. It may be national but in a political-territorial sense rather than an ethnic one. Modernism (which is not identical with “modern” [Friedman, 1994], cf. Riggs in this issue) is based on the notion of supersession, of growth and development as a general process for individuals and societies (see Figure 2). Fixed identity in such terms is a kind of neurotic paralysis, and tradition is translated into the “repetition compulsion.” Modernism reigns supreme in the hegemonic realms of the *modern world system, but when hegemony declines, it is a difficult project to maintain. The concomitant of declining modernist identity is an increase in narcissistic tendencies that became the focus of works like that of Lasch (1979), where collective identities become a solution to the threat of ego disintegration. It is in such conditions that roots, ethnicity, religion, and postmodernism become increasingly dominant and that individualism is replaced increasingly by what is referred to as *tribalism (Maffésoli, 1988), not only in its ethnic form, but as a form of social organization in which a fragmented public sphere becomes increasingly divided into clientelistic hierarchies. This is the “new Middle Ages” referred to by political scientists (Minc, 1993). These variations are predicated on a well-developed individualization in which community and tradition or gemeinschaft, become essential aspects of the modern fantasy of the world we have lost. Real *communitarianism is in this sense a phenomenon of modernity rather than a left-over from the past.

At the other end of the scale are holistic identity formations. These are based on very different and historically more common constructions of the individual subject, in which abrupt weaning and a strong socialization to a cosmologically organized structure of authority located outside of the individual body generates a different kind of ethnic belonging. A segmentary structure of encompassment leads from local kin groups to increasingly inclusive structures up to the State. These are not simply categories of membership, but dynamic principles that constitute the subject in powerful ways. Bruce Kapferer’s milestone comparison of Sinhalese and Australian forms of nationalism demonstrates clearly how the Buddhist State in Sri Lanka is internally organized into individual selfhood in ways that account for the particular nature of ethnic violence.
Comparative Integration

By comparing processes of integration one can gain some insight into the differences that I am trying to elucidate. In much of the work on Southeast Asian societies there is an understanding that individuals and groups can change their identity. Thus highland Kachin of Burma may become Buddhists as they settle among the valley dwelling Shan, with whom they identify and take up irrigation agriculture instead of their former swiddening (Leach, 1954). At a lower segmentary level, in-marrying men in patrilineal societies, who cannot afford bridewealth payments, are often integrated into their new lineages by a process of adoption which may require powerful rituals and a great deal of transformative activity. In both cases, the integrative process is one that turns x into y. *Ethnicity here is situational. It is about the practice of social relations with particular people in a particular place. It is not a question of “life-style”—“today I think I’ll be Balinese.” Nor is it a question of “blood” or any other traits that are inherited from generation to generation.1 The subject is not the bearer of several different essential identities because ethnicity is not located in the body, but in the social context. This does not mean that it is instrumental or weak, as can be seen by the Sinhalese example, but that it is the context itself, rather than the body, which is the site of the investment of the self.

In larger imperial organizations the segmentary nature of incorporation becomes salient. It can take a variety of forms of what has usually been referred to as *pluralism. Such states and empires have been characterized by hierarchy among constituent groups. In South Asia this hierarchy is most elaborate in the caste system, in which a similar set of principles organizes the hierarchical incorporation of a great variety of social and ethnic groups, all of which are ranked in a homogeneous scale of purity/impurity. Studies of the expansion of the caste system into marginal areas provide evidence of the way this assimilation to a hierarchical order via Hinduization may have occurred historically. Other more loosely organized models are typical for the great East Asian and Middle Eastern empires, most recently exemplified in the Ottoman millet system. In the last-named system there is no need for assimilation in the modern sense, because the society is founded upon difference. In large parts of the world, this was not merely a cultural difference, but relative social autonomy. Many multi-ethnic empires were effectively multisocietal empires linked only by centralized taxation and/or economic specialization. Note, however, that this differentiation is extremely hierarchical in terms of power and privilege. The state is, in such systems, not a representative of the people, but an ethnic or multi-ethnic class whose primary characteristic is that of authoritarian rule over a great multiplicity of peoples.

It is in commercial *city-states and in nation-states that one finds a strong tendency to both individualization and homogenization. In such states, there is a tendency of the *state itself to be transformed from a ruling class to a governmental body. It becomes representative of the people and there are clear democratic proclivities as well. Questions of loyalty, legal equality, and solidarity become central. These are issues of social homogeneity, that is, the establishment of criteria of trust among citizens. These issues also imply a practice of boundedness, the notion that “This is our society, our state. It is a function of our will. It does not belong to everyone, that is, to outsiders,” who could include foreign traders and a large slave population. While authors like McNeill have discussed this continuity between nation-state and city-state, they seem to argue that the city-state
develops out of a real community of farmers, so that the city-state itself is no more than an outgrowth of an original homogeneous society. But the history of ancient city-states does not corroborate this scenario. Rather, they seem to emerge out of protracted struggles in which state–class elites are gradually transformed into something closer to "governments."

**Multi-ethnicity in History**

The argument that multi-ethnic societies have been the rule rather than the exception in history is, of course, true, but this is because the history of the world has been the history of empires and segmentary states, and such social organizations, however multi-ethnic, were also *ethnic hierarchies. It is, perhaps, the latter aspect of such societies that is the secret of their relative ethnic peace. Significant, from our point of view, is that multi-ethnicity is a phenomenon that emerges and disappears, and is not merely a type of organization. Thus, the emergence of the Hellenistic empires was a movement from a city-state national ideology to a cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic ideology. The same transformation characterizes the movement from the Roman Republic to the Empire and it is clearly reflected in a whole series of changes. The Cynic school of philosophy provided an entire discourse, interestingly postmodern in character, for this shift, disavowing all social institutions, including marriage and property. They recognized only the natural world as a socially relevant fact. And in the world all men were equal—whether rich or poor, Greek or barbarian, citizen or foreigner. However, since the Cynics surmised that most men were also fools, and therefore incapable of using their freedom and equality to full individual advantage, they had to conclude that only the wise could actually be cosmopolites and make the world their city (Bozeman, 1994: 103).

The Ciceronian system of education based on the cultivation of Roman virtues was transformed by the time of Augustus to one more accommodating of the Empire, in which all were to be citizens of Rome and where there was even a growing fear of foreigners, to which I shall return below. As communities that practice homogeneity expand into empires they also move toward a hierarchical *heterogeneity. But as the latter begin to decline, the heterogeneity begins to assert itself as a political force. This takes us to the central theme of this discussion, the relation between cycles of expansion and contraction in global hegemones and the forms of transnational or trans-state relations.

**Global Process and Equifinality**

All of these variations, and even discontinuities, in the way in which populations can be integrated and in the way cultural differences are maintained, do not necessarily help in accounting for the issues outlined in the title of this article. Part of the reason is that they pertain primarily to the global systemic and as such are products of a dominant commercial and urban organized central zone. There is no transnationalization without nation-states, or at least without some comparatively interesting type of organization, such as the city-states and empires which date back to antiquity. Ethnification is a more serious issue, for while it may be organized in different terms, that is, segmentary and inclusive vs. essentialist and exclusive, the practice of identification and differentiation can lead to similarly violent outcomes. In fact it is logical for essentialization to accompany ethnification no matter what the social and cultural conditions.
The claim that ethnicity is a product of modernity is true only if by ethnicity we mean a form of cultural identity that is essentialist, homogenizing and exclusive in conditions of peace. The idea that the individual is an x because he contains the substance (blood) of x may well be typically modern, but it is also the case that stereotypification in conditions of conflict is practically universal (Lévi-Strauss, 1952). Disorder is, of course, a universal, along with many of the forms that it takes such as social fragmentation, individual crises, new collective identifications, and what I have referred to as ethnification. When a social arena becomes disordered by crisis, its particular reactions vary as a result of its variable constitution. Among the tribal and chiefly societies of highland Burma and Assam a series of phenomena are unleashed by crisis (often endogenously generated), including headhunting, witchcraft, the appearance of were-tigers, anti-fertility and anti-chiefly movements and revolts. Such phenomena may invert the entire workings of former expansive societies in astonishing ways (Friedman, 1979, 1997). Phenomena such as “cargo cults,” witchcraft epidemics and cannibalism (Ekholm-Friedman, 1993) are widespread reactions to crises in societies organized primarily by kinship. Now while these are surely quite specific local forms of action, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that they are not as specific as has usually been assumed. Societies in crisis are often societies in which people “cannibalize” one another in various ways, in which hate and fear rampage through the arenas of daily life and sow the ground for violent conflict. So rather than argue for the existence of entirely different phenomena I would suggest that there are interesting family resemblances at work.

Exploring the Model of Hegemonic Decline in Global Systems

I do not intend to present a model of global systems here, as that would take too much space (see Friedman, 1994). Rather, I would like to suggest a series of interlinked phenomena that seem to occur in periods of hegemonic decline. To begin with, I do not assume that decline in hegemony is anything like a general decline in the larger global system. On the contrary, periods of hegemonic decline are periods of commercial expansion, due to the process of decentralization itself. In fact it is the decentralization of capital (abstract wealth) accumulation in hegemonic organizations that is the basis of hegemonic decline. And it is the hegemons themselves that are the source of such decentralization because of the gradient of profitability or economic advantage that emerges in periods of strong centrality. The movement of wealth out of the hegemonic center is expressed in the processes of relocation of industrial production, not least of what are called modern mass production industries. Old centers become more oriented to consumption, to high levels of welfare spending, and to postindustrial and postmodern forms of wealth (so-called culture and information “industries,” land and other forms of speculation) while new emergent areas in the system take over larger percentages of the former basic industrial activities, such as heavy industry and the production of mass consumption goods. Historically, the movements of textile, pottery, and other production have been important indicators of centrality and decentralization. Today textiles/clothing are still major indicators of such movements, but the entire gamut of mass consumption goods in the world market follows suit to a large degree. Even so-called high tech industries tend to globalize in today’s world.
This is not, in distinction to the common view of globalization, an evolution to a higher stage of economic development: "Before we were local, now we are global," but primarily a phase that has occurred throughout the history of global systems (Friedman, 1994; Ekholm-Friedman and Friedman, 1987). *Globalization* is in such terms simply the phase of decentralization itself, in which a hegemony is replaced by a period of increased competition, political decentralization, and a shift of accumulation to a new region of the world system. The only factor that might alter this tendency to shift is the rapidity of the cycle itself. For largely technological reasons, not only in transportation rates and costs, but also in the speed of financial transactions and the ability of capital to move quickly from one location to another, one can argue that the hegemonic periodicities of the system have become so short as to preclude the establishment of new hegemons. In such cases we have a new ball game in which a generalized global competition might become normalized.

In any case the tendencies at present are still somewhat old-fashioned. The globalization of capital has led to the formation of a powerful Pacific Rim zone having the fastest growth rates in the world rather than a more even distribution of capital investment. Thus, an increasing degree of multinationalization should not detract us from understanding the differential flows of capital in the world system. In 1956 the United States had 42 of the top 50 corporations, a clear sign of hegemony over world production. In 1989 that number had dropped to 17. Europe as a whole has a larger number (21) of the top 50 firms today than the United States. While production and export have increased unabated since the 1960s, the developed market economies have seen a decrease in their share of total world production from 72 to 64 percent while in the developing countries it has more than doubled. Between 1963 and 1987 the US share of world manufacturing has decreased from 40.3 to 24 percent. Japan has increased its portion from 5.5 to 19 percent in the same period. West Germany is stable at around 9–10 percent, but the UK has declined from 6.5 to 3.3 percent. France, Italy, and Canada also have declined somewhat in this period. "It is especially notable that in the East and Southeast Asian NICs manufacturing growth rates remained at a high level throughout the 1970s and 1980s whereas those of the leading developed market economies fell to half or less of their 1960s levels" (Dicken, 1992: 27). This is reflected in the changing rankings in the world arena, while at the same time the world leaders lost shares in the total world export of manufacturing (see Table 1).

**Table 1. World Arena Rankings (1978, 1989) and Percentage of World Export manufacturing (1963, 1989), after Dicken (1992).**

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The Question of Transnationalization

There are several uses of the term "transnational" in the various literatures on globalization. Most common and interesting is the political economy literature itself. Here some history is also worthwhile. The literature begins as late as the 1960s and 1970s, concentrating on the phenomenon of the internationalization of enterprise. The term "multinational corporation" is the most common and this refers to what appears to be a new kind of power structure in which firms establish themselves increasingly in international arenas where advantages are greater than in the home market. The reasons for the internationalization of firms and its consequences for local labor and other economic factors were debated for quite some time. It seems to have been assumed in this period that such corporations had central headquarters that were nationally rooted. I criticized this concept on the grounds that it implied that profits were repatriated, which seemed contradicted by the fact of increasing capital investment in the global arena. The concept of multinational corporation was replaced by that of the transnational corporation, a more evolutionary concept in which it seems that the corporation is no longer linked to a particular place, but in some versions, hovers above the world in a transnational ether. The problem with this concept is that it often implies that there is a space equivalent to the global, something more than the relations between localities.

The other notion of the transnational refers to the movement of people, information, and goods in the global arena. It is sometimes characterized as a movement of culture, a globalization of meaning, via the media, via diaspora formation (mass migration), and via the movement of commodities. This literature is clearly an expression of a certain consciousness of what appears to be a changing world order. The time–space compression to which Harvey (1990) refers is the background for such consciousness, but it is most explicit among intellectuals and academics whose professions require a certain awareness (however minimal) of such expanding horizons. In Harvey's terms, this is a quantitative rather than a qualitative change. It does not mean that somehow the world has, quite recently, become "a single place," an ecumen of interconnectedness as opposed to the former mosaic of separate cultures and societies. Another understanding of *transnationalization would place it in a cyclical historical framework. In the latter, globalization is a ubiquitous quality of global systems. What changes is the forms which it takes as well the modes of consciousness that accompany those forms.

Social, Political, and Cultural Parameters of Decline

The decline of hegemonic zones is accompanied by a general process of regional economic decline, increasing stratification, socio-cultural fragmentation, mass migration, and a general increase in social disorder. It should be stressed here that disorder is not limited to the central zones themselves, but may be especially severe in those dependent peripheries that are not the targets of outward moving capital. Thus, most of Africa and parts of western and central Asia are among the most unstable. The collapse of the Soviet empire has produced the same kind of extreme and violent disorder. It is also accompanied, as I said above, by increasing globalization, not just in economic terms but also in terms of the formation of global elites and elite global consciousness. I have suggested how these factors are connected in a systematic way (Figure 4).
Disorder and Fragmentation

The decentralization of capital accumulation creates disorder in areas abandoned by capital. This in turn leads to downward mobility and the economic crisis generates serious identity problems. The decline of modernism is closely related to the impossibility of maintaining a future orientation based on liberation from the past, from tradition with investment in the new, and in change in both personal and social development. In this decline, there is a turn to roots, to ethnicity and other collective identities, whether ethnic or religious, that replace the vacuum left by a receding modernist identity. This rerooting is the resonating base of cultural politics and political fragmentation that spreads throughout the hegemonic center. It takes the following forms:

1. *Indigenization.* Indigenous populations within state territories begin to reinstate their traditions and to claim their indigenous rights. The Fourth World movements have become a global phenomenon, institutionalized via United Nations' organs such as the World Council of Indigenous Peoples. The demography of this phenomenon is significant. The population of North American Indians more than doubled from 1970 to 1980; most of this was reidentification; five new tribes appeared during the same period.

2. *Nationalization.* The nation-states of Europe have become increasingly ethnic over the past 15 years, moving from a formal citizenship/modernist identity to one based on historicized roots. This has been documented via the rapid increase in consumption of historical literature. In France, the Middle Ages, the Celts, and everything that preceded the modern state were highest on the list from the late 1970s on. Much of this literature has an indigenous quality to it, especially where there is no competition from other indigenous populations. The so-called “New Right” movements in France, Italy, and Germany harbor ideologies that are similar
to Fourth World ideologies. They are anti-universalist, anti-imperialist, against universal religions and exceedingly multiculturalist. Thus Jean de Benoist, spokesman for the French New Right states:

Given this situation, we see reasons for hope only in the affirmation of collective singularities, the spiritual re-appropriation of heritages, the clear awareness of roots and specific cultures . . . . We are counting on the breakup of the singular model, whether this occurs in the rebirth of regional languages, the affirmation of ethnic minorities or in phenomena as diverse as decolonization . . . [whether in the] affirmation of being black, the political pluralism of Third World countries, the rebirth of a Latin American civilization, the resurgence of an Islamic culture, etc. (Eléments 33, Feb–March 1980: 19–20; translated in Piccone, 1994).

3. *Regionalism. Sub-national regions have been on the rise since the mid-1970s. After several decades during which it was assumed that assimilation was the general solution to ethnic problems, when social scientists calculated how many generations it would take for ethnic minority groups to disappear into larger national populations, the 1970s came as a surprise to many (Esman, 1977). The weakening of the national projects of Europe became increasingly evident: Scotland, Cornwall, Brittany, Occitania, and Catalonia, today being supplemented by the Lega Nord and a Europe-wide lobby organization for the advancement of the interests of a Europe of Regions rather than nation-states. In the former Soviet empire to the east, the break-up of larger units is rampant and violent in Central Asia and Southern Europe.

4. *Immigrant ethnification. Optimism with respect to regional identities in Europe was identical to assimilationist/integrationist predictions with regard to immigrant minorities, especially in the United States. What seemed to be a trend toward integration was broken and reversed in the late 1960s when multiethnicity of Black and then Red power movements was supported at both grass roots and elite levels (the Ford Foundation was heavily involved in ethnic community local control projects). Today this has become a major state interventionist project in many Western countries at the same time as identity politics has led to what some have called “culture wars,” in which the very unity of the nation-state, its very existence, is questioned. The question of the *diaporsization process is simply the ethnification of transnational connections, so that communications, social relations, and economies become organized and even institutionalized across boundaries rather than immigrant groups becoming transformed into separate minorities. Diasporization is simply the ethnification of the immigration process. It is unlike other processes of fragmentation because it structures itself in global terms, being both subnational and transnational.

The process of fragmentation has not been a peaceful one. In 1993, for example, there were 52 major violent conflicts in the world in 42 countries, the most severe conflicts being in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and Africa. Half of these conflicts had been under way for more than a decade (UNRISD, 1995: 15). This is very different from the previous decades of the Cold War when there was a simpler division and a much stronger degree of control in the world system. “All but five of the twenty-three wars being fought in 1994 are based on communal rivalries and ethnic challenges to states. About three-quarters of the world’s refugees, estimated at nearly 27 million people, are in flight from or have been displaced by these and other ethnic conflicts” (Gurr, 1994: 350).
Globalization, Class and Elite Formation

Globalization in institutional terms entails the formation of international “communities,” however loosely knit, that share common interests. There is an interesting and, I think, still to be researched, connection between the larger transformation of the global system and the emergence of new cosmopolitan elites. The aspect of that transformation that seems most interesting is the increasing proportion of the world economy that is collected in the form of public and private funds, primarily based on tax monies from Western countries. UN organizations, especially Unesco, the European Union, and other similar organizations (primarily nationally based) form what might be called global pork barrels that finance institutions, consultancies, etc., that pay enormous tax-free salaries to globalized bureaucrats and consultants and which join in the ranks of other elites, such as those of the international media and culture industries (to which we might add international sports, for example, the Olympic Committee and the entire organization of Olympic and world sports events). These elites are very different from former industrial capitalist elites, not least because many of them are not owners of production but are what might be called “pork barrel” elites. Robert Reich’s characterization of this new class (Reich, 1992) as “symbolic analysts” who in Lasch’s words “live in a world of abstract concepts and symbols, ranging from stock market quotations to the images produced by Hollywood and Madison Avenue” (Lasch, 1995: 35). In Lasch’s terms, “They have more in common with their counterparts in Brussels or Hong Kong than with the masses of Americans not yet plugged into the network of global communications.”

This is still an emergent phenomenon and is understudied. In economic terms it might be part of a general shift of capital from productive to unproductive investment, to the general increase in fictitious accumulation in the old cores of the world system. What is interesting is that a relatively coherent identity seems to have emerged in these elites. It combines a rather self-assured and superior *cosmopolitanism* with a model of hybridity, border-crossing, and multiculturalism (even if there is much inconsistency). The cosmopolitanism of the elite is not modernistic, nor is it devoid of cultural identification, but, on the contrary, is postmodernist in its attempt to encompass the world’s cultures in its own self-definition. This elitism distances itself from “the people” who represent “the national,” the unsophisticated, the “racist,” and expresses loyalty to humanity rather than to its own fellow citizens, or if to it own citizens, to immigrants above nationals. The urban upper middle class has become one of the principal focal points of this development. Sennett’s *The Uses of Disorder* (1970) is a virtual handbook in global cosmopolitan multiculturality. The enemy is the fixed, boring *gemeinschaft* and the believed-in future is something like the singles bar where people without strong social bonds can meet to have their mutually edifying communication, and have fun without personal responsibility, except the responsibility to maintain plurality and the supposed creativity that ensues from this plurality. The urbane, cosmopolitan, and multicultural are well expressed in CNN’s advertising for itself. One well-known advertisement shows a series of images: an Australian Aborigine, a Tuareg nomad, several Northern Europeans, and Asians all to a nostalgic theme which ends with a statement of CNN’s globally encompassing network. All are part of the larger humanity of the CNN family. What is interesting about Sennett, as about CNN, is the normative aspect of their representations. The cosmopolitan multicultural world is a model of how things ought to be and is part of a concerted struggle against the
red-necked rural essentialist-nationalist "people." Similarly, the wave of discourses on cultural hybridity (Canclini, 1992; Hall, 1996; Gilroy, 1993) consists of the analysis of cultural elites and their discourses. World music may be taken up as an example of hybridization, but in spite of the name of this popular genre, a closer examination reveals that it is a metropolitan product and a media industry creation rather than a street phenomenon. In other words, it can be argued that the ideology of hybridity is primarily an elitist discourse in a world that is otherwise engaged in the opposite; the drawing of boundaries to be defended, not just from land or region to land and region but from street to street. Hybridization and balkanization are two simultaneous processes of the global shift in hegemony.

**General and Specific Properties of Global Systems: A Perspective**

This is an enormous area where I can only make some brief remarks. I have suggested that there are numerous general characteristics of global systems that ought to be expressed in the historical material. As I have concentrated on hegemonic shifts at the start of this presentation, I can suggest some interesting parallels.

**Ethnification**

In both Hellenistic and Roman decline there is an increase in ethnic and religious identification. This is made somewhat complicated by the fact that the cycles of growth and decline are different in ancient and modern world systems. Hellenistic expansion was part of the decline of the civilization of the city-state system. Athens and the other cities declined economically and politically, having exported a large part of its total production (free producers = capital), and the emergence of Macedon (perhaps the first nation-state) led to a rapid expansion into the Middle East and Central Asia, colonization, and the formation of a Greek elite diaspora that imported its goods as well as its culture in the form of Greek academies, the Paideia, and that maintained a strong diasporic elite identity for the most part, at least at the start of the expansion period. Later on this dominance weakened and the Greek colonists were replaced by what appears to be a local class who practiced a kind of mestizo or hybrid identity. These were the so-called Hellenists, who led the differentiation of the Greek expansion into a number of separate "provinces" more or less autonomous and where the hybridization created new local traditions. They were a class who,

. . . in varying degrees, lived a life that straddled these two cultures and in many ways constituted the bridge between them . . . . Whereas the native populations in the Near East identified themselves mainly with their traditional heritages (hence Ptolemy was regarded as a Pharaoh), and the Greek stratum identified mostly with the Greek tradition (viewing Ptolemy as a Macedonian, or a Greek god such as Dionysus), the Hellenists created something between these two worlds. Their ideas of the state were thus a mixture of eastern and western concepts of statehood and nationality. For them the Hellenistic king was neither a Greek institution nor an eastern one. They lived in a world of religious syncretism and attempted to find the equivalents for Greek gods in the various pantheons available in the ancient Near East. Thus Toth became Hermes, Osiris became Dionysus, and Melkart, Heracles. In Egypt this group was even
associated with the worship of a completely new Hellenistic deity called Serapis (Mendels, 1992: 22).

These hybridizing classes may have more in common with the rising classes in Western colonial regimes than with a postmodern phenomenon, as I have suggested. But then, it is here that we may find the continuity between the colonial and the “postcolonial,” as the latter is expressed in the current cultural studies literature. Here we should not, of course, expect exact parallels, but the similarities may indeed be due to certain common historical structural processes. The hybrid ideologies of the present owe much to and are in dialogue with mestizo and similar identities in the postcolonial world. The Hellenistic expansion produced similar processes of identification, but it is not clear in the material I have seen whether the colonial and postcolonial are related in the same way. One aspect of this relation can be found in the cosmopolitan identity of the Macedonian rulers and their successors. In the expansion period itself there was a great emphasis placed in Greek ideals and, the establishment of Greek academies. “The Greeks, for the sake of making civilization meaningful to the majority, had clung to the polis as the cornerstone of their political existence, in the conviction that any greater political community would not adequately contain the kind of life that they had found to be most worth living” (Bozeman, 1994: 101). But the formation of the Hellenistic world was the formation of a highly stratified existence in which only the elite participated in the new cosmopolitan culture and where the ideal of social unity had all but disappeared:

The disparity between cultural and political developments in the Hellenistic Age resulted partly because the common culture, with all its glittering attractiveness, had not—in its historically most decisive period—actually reached sufficient depth in human consciousness. It was consequently unable to generate the moral forces necessary to restrain war and support peace and unity. Indeed, wars were fought more bitterly and treaties broken more frequently than during any previous period of world history. This international society was perhaps further prevented from developing the moral strength that would have enabled it to survive because it was socially divided. While theoretically accessible to individuals from all civilizations and races, the culture in all its cosmopolitan richness, was in practice open and meaningful only to the educated: the men who spoke Greek, and who liked to live the urban life that Greek culture had so eloquently advertised (Bozeman, 1994: 100–101).

The Cynic philosophers, like the other schools that emerged in this period, have been described in terms of a reaction to the failure of the city-state as a political and moral institution. The Cynics, especially, might be compared to postmodernists in their combination of cultural relativism and elitist cosmopolitanism. What is significant is that the later Hellenistic elites were no longer Greek and that the Greek homeland was in continuous decline throughout the period. Rome is a clearer parallel. Here the export of capital begins explosively with the formation of empire. The civic “national” culture of Rome is replaced by a cosmopolitan orientation. This transition, which affected a transformation in the Roman legal code, the concept of citizenry, and the entire cultural edifice of the formerly hegemonic Roman world view is a clear expression of the disintegration of hegemonic position in an empire in which the decentralization of capital occurred from the very start.
Italy’s privileged position in the commonwealth over which Augustus had watched so jealously was thus gradually weakened. It was abolished by Hadrian (AD 117–137)—himself a provincial from Spain—who regarded the Empire as one indivisible state, rather than a conglomeration of civitates, and was therefore impatient with any national or local particularism, whether expressed in Jewish uprisings in Palestine or in Roman conceit in Italy. The development culminated in AD 212 with Caracalla’s promulgation of the Constitutio Antonia, under the terms of which all freeborn inhabitants of the Empire were granted Roman citizenship (Bozeman, 1994: 179).

It is this kind of transformation that was so much debated in the early years of the century, when Roman history was seen as a mirror of the contemporary world:

... the immediate result of this complete revolution in the relations of nationality was certainly far from pleasing. Italy swarmed with Greeks, Syrians, Phoenicians, Jews, and Egyptians, while the provinces swarmed with Romans; sharply defined national peculiarities everywhere came into mutual contact, and were visibly worn off; it seemed as if nothing was to be left behind but the general impress of utilitarianism. What the Latin character gained in diffusion it lost in freshness; especially in Rome itself, where the middle class disappeared the soonest and most entirely, and nothing was left but the grandees and the beggars, both in an equal measure cosmopolitan (Mommsen, 1911).

But this is not merely a twentieth-century interpretation of the ancient world. It is also present in the increasing xenophobia of the imperial period. Seneca writing to his mother says, “Of this crowd the greater part have no country; from their own free towns and colonies, in a word, from the whole globe, they are congregated. Some are brought by ambition, some by the call of public duty, or by reason of some mission, others by luxury which seeks a harbor rich and commodious for vices, others by the eager pursuit of liberal studies, others by shows, etc.” (Frank, 1992: 47).

This is a Roman Empire in which there is mass immigration, where according to some studies the population of a city is substantially more than 50 percent of foreign extraction (Frank claims over 80 percent), in which the literature is described as “hybrid” (Rand, 1975: 571). The decentralization of the Roman economy led eventually to the transformation of Rome into a capital of imperial consumption, but not production, to a series of financial crises, and to the fragmentation of the empire itself.

**Conclusion**

The argument of this article has been that ethnification and social and political disorder are expressions of declining hegemony in global systems and that this relation occurs in spite of the fact that the societies involved might practice different forms of ethnicity. Whether ethnification occurs on the basis of an essentialist or non-essentialist structure of identity, it has similar effects on the outcome of ethnic conflicts. However, global systems insofar as they are based on commercial economies tend to be characterized by hegemonic centers in which individualism is developed to such an extent that ethnicity takes on essentialist characteristics. The world of *hegemonic* growth is one in which hegemonic classes tend to form as the
elites of culturally *homogenizing* states and where the multicultural is spatially differentiated and hierarchical. The world of decline is a complex world, one that combines balkanization and globalization of cultural and social identities, in which the multicultural invades the center and the global and central state hierarchy disintegrates at the same time as new cosmopolitan elites identify with the larger world instead of with the hegemon itself. New rising centers (such as East Asia) become new zones of nationalization and homogenization where a former cultural and political diversity is less tolerated.  

Notes

1. Ethnicity should not be confused here with kinship. Genealogical relations do, of course, constitute individual identity within the kin group itself, but here, too, adoption is a possible form of recruitment.

2. In the database constructed by Ted Gurr (homepage: http://www.bsos.umd.edu), the distribution of minority conflicts seems, on the surface, to reflect this distribution of forces in the current shifting world system. The great majority of conflicts in East and Southeast Asia appear to relate to problems of incorporation in which minorities are clearly at a disadvantage. In those areas of the West and in Central Europe and Asia with declining hegemonies, minorities have either become nations or are struggling to liberate themselves from larger units. In Africa, in which the larger political units were always rather weak and based on alliances and clientships, the major conflicts seem to be about control of the state, which is the entry point for international funds or for control over natural resources, the major source of wealth and power in this region. In other words, in rising areas, integration of minorities would seem to be the major trend, while in declining areas, fragmentation is the rule. This does not mean that there is a difference in the degree of conflict, but that the outcomes are very different.

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