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# BEFORE THE DELUGE: THE OTTOMAN ORIGINS OF CAPITALISM

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## Abstract

*Recent extensions of Trotsky's theory of Uneven and Combined Development (U&CD) have revived the potential for original research within the historical materialist research programme. However, the scope of its explanatory power across historical case studies remains a point of contention. Indeed, numerous critics and sympathisers have argued that its applicability is limited to capitalism. In this paper, I seek to turn this claim on its head by arguing that U&CD played an integral role in the very origins of capitalism itself. In dominant historical accounts, the emergence of capitalism has been credited as sui generis European, thus contributing to the Eurocentric ideal of the 'Rise of the West'. Commensurate with such historiography, the Ottoman Empire (insofar as it is mentioned at all) has generally been portrayed as Europe's Other – the passive non-European and pre-modern mirror against which Renaissance Europe defined itself. I argue that this negative comparison is representative of a material relation of unevenness – the backwardness of Europe vis-à-vis the Ottomans – and that far from the passive Other of Orientalist lore, the Ottomans were active participants in European affairs. Consequently, European history of this period is inseparable from its interactions with the Ottoman Empire who, through war, diplomacy and trade, decisively determined the conditions within which the making of capitalism took place.*

“Modern history of Europe begins under stress of the Ottoman conquest.” Lord Acton

‘The concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations, hence the unity of the diverse’ Karl Marx

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## Introduction

For any scholar with an interest in the materialism of International Relations (IR), German Renaissance painter Hans Holbein’s 1532 masterpiece *The Ambassadors* (fig. 1) provides a vivid record of the geopolitical milieu that defined Europe in the early sixteenth century<sup>1</sup>. Illustrating a meeting between French diplomats Jean de Dinteville and George de Selve in London, the painting astounds because the two aristocratic subjects are placed at the periphery, and the only explicitly religious symbol, a cross, is heavily veiled by a curtain. While these two pillars of medieval power – the church and the aristocracy – are symbolically pushed to the side, the painting’s focal point – the table – is littered with objects, with commodities. A broken lute sitting beside a book of Lutheran hymns reveals the discord of Habsburg dominated Europe and tension between Protestants and the Catholic Church. The globe and textbook of commercial scholarship signify the importance of New World discoveries, and the subsequent competition between European states over commercially profitable territories. On the top of the table, numerous scientific instruments highlight the development of maritime technology while indicating a mounting epistemic shift, away from the divinity of religion toward the rationality of scientific inquiry and humanism. Finally, linking the resting arms of the two ambassadors, and tying the objects together, is an Ottoman rug. This alerts us to the fact that in the context of the New World discoveries, primitive accumulation, religious revolt and Habsburg ascendancy, the Ottoman Empire was a persistent and prominent presence, lying behind and in many ways underpinning these manifold European developments.<sup>2</sup> In this period, the Ottomans constituted

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<sup>1</sup> The ensuing interpretation is owed to the brilliant appraisal of *The Ambassadors* in Lisa Jardine, *Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance* (Papermac Macmillan: London, 1996) 425-436

<sup>2</sup> Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art Between East and West* (New York: Cornell University Press , 2000) 50



Fig. 1: Hans Holbein, *The Ambassadors*, 1533

the most prevalent non-Christian 'Other' that confronted Europe,<sup>3</sup> 'persistently capturing the headlines and profoundly transforming the geopolitics of (and beyond) the Mediterranean world.'<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the Empire was arguably the most powerful agent in international relations at

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<sup>3</sup> Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999) 3

<sup>4</sup> James G. Harper, 'Introduction', in *The Turk and Islam in the Western Eye, 1450-1750*, ed. James G. Harper (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011) 3

this time; ‘this was an Ottoman Europe almost as much as it was a Venetian or Habsburg one.’<sup>5</sup> Yet despite the latent centrality implied by Hoblein’s painting, dominant historical accounts of Early Modern Europe have been constructed with the Ottomans *in absentia*. Whether in the sphere of the politics, economy, culture or ideology, the emergence of capitalist modernity is generally understood as a *sui generis* development specific to Europe. In short, the history of capitalism’s origins is an unmistakably Eurocentric history.

There are two moments to the Eurocentric approach that I will be the subject of scrutiny and criticism in this paper. The first is *historical priority*: based on the assumption that any given trajectory of development is the product of a society’s own immanent dynamics, Eurocentrism ‘posits the endogenous and autonomous emergence of modernity in Europe.’<sup>6</sup> Thus we find in cultural history that the flowering of the Renaissance was an intra-European phenomenon.<sup>7</sup> Analyses of absolutism and the origins of the modern form of state are similarly conducted entirely on the terrain of Europe, with non-European cases appearing (if at all) comparatively.<sup>8</sup> Dominant accounts of the rise of capitalism either as an economic form<sup>9</sup> or as social system<sup>10</sup> place its origins squarely in Western Europe, while non-Europe is relegated to an exploited and passive periphery.<sup>11</sup>

This is not to say that studies of the sixteenth century Ottoman Empire have been heedlessly avoided<sup>12</sup>. But where its imperial apogee has been studied, it has been considered ‘social formation apart... largely a stranger to European culture, as an Islamic intrusion on

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004) 225

<sup>6</sup> Kamran Matin, ‘Redeeming The Universal: Postcolonialism and the Inner Life of Eurocentrism’, *European Journal of International Relations* (forthcoming: 2012)

<sup>7</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, (

<sup>8</sup> Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, (London: New Left Books, 1974); Charles Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, Volume 1: A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986)

<sup>9</sup> David S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Are Some So Rich and Some So Poor?* (London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1998)

<sup>10</sup> Robert Brenner, ‘Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe,’ in *The Brenner Debate*, eds. Aston, T. H. et al (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987)

<sup>11</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System 1: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Academic Press, 1974)

<sup>12</sup> Two giants of European historiography, Braudel and Ranke insisted on the inclusion of the Ottomans within the Europe in the age of Phillip II and Charles V respectively. Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II, volume II* (London: Collins, 1973); Leopold Ranke, *The Ottoman and the Spanish Empires in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Whittaker & Co. 1843)

Christendom.’<sup>13</sup> Here becomes evident the second moment of Eurocentrism: an internalist *methodology*. Either expressed through the comparative approach<sup>14</sup> or methodological nationalism,<sup>15</sup> Eurocentrism tends to overlook the multiple and interactive character of social development. Through this method the Ottomans (among other non-Europeans) have been opposed to Europe, either as an ideological ‘Other’<sup>16</sup> or as a comparative case study, against which the specificity and distinctiveness of Western modernity has been defined.<sup>17</sup> Through numerous sociological trends, and in large part as an ideological legitimization for (neo)Imperialism, the East has in turn been (re)constructed as an intransigent and threatening primordial foe, representing a fundamental and irreconcilable challenge to the values and traditions of the West.<sup>18</sup> In establishing this ‘Iron Curtain’<sup>19</sup> of mutual obstinacy, both Eurocentric internalism and notions of historical priority have been reinforced, not only ideologically but also materially.

One might expect the discipline of IR – ‘a discipline that claims to be... of relevance to all peoples and states’<sup>20</sup> – to offer a way out of this historiographical provincialism. However, IR too has been built largely on Eurocentric assumptions. Mattingly’s classic account of Renaissance diplomacy rests on the discoveries of the Italian city-states in their relations with each other.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, the 1648 treaty of Westphalia – the very foundational myth of modern international relations as a distinct practice and academic discipline<sup>22</sup> – is generally considered

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<sup>13</sup> Anderson, *Lineages*, 397

<sup>14</sup> Gurminder K. Bhambra, G, ‘Historical sociology, international relations and connected histories’, *Cambridge Review Of International Affairs*, 23, no. 1 (2010): 127 – 143

<sup>15</sup> Chernilo, D. 2010: ‘Methodological nationalism and the domestic analogy: classical resources for their critique.’ *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*. 23 no. 1 (2010): 87-106; see also Matin, ‘Redeeming the Universal’

<sup>16</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage, 1979)

<sup>17</sup> Malcom E. Yapp, ‘Europe in the Turkish Mirror,’ *Past and Present* 137 no. 1 (1992): 134-155

<sup>18</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996)

<sup>19</sup> Nancy Bisaha, *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) 12

<sup>20</sup> Branwen Gruffyd-Jones, *Decolonising International Relations*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006) 2

<sup>21</sup> Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (New York: Dover Publications, 1988)

<sup>22</sup> Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648* (London: Verso, 2003)

the product of intra-European dynamics.<sup>23</sup> Where they do exist, substantive engagements with the East tend to emphasise the 'Iron Curtain' of ideological and cultural difference.<sup>24</sup>

The historical sociological turn in IR (HSIR)<sup>25</sup> has not fared much better. Concerned explicitly with challenging ahistorical and asociological conceptions of the international, HSIR has developed convincing arguments that uncover the transience, mutability and thus the historical specificity of modern IR. But HSIR too has predominantly conducted its analysis on the basis of European history.<sup>26</sup> More recently, the attempts to expand Trotsky's theory of Uneven and Combined Development (U&CD) as an historically and sociologically sensitive theory of the international<sup>27</sup> have also been tarred with the Eurocentric brush. For Bhambra, despite attention to the interactive implications of societal difference, U&CD still identifies the central dynamic of capitalism itself with a European origin which excludes the non-West, relegating it to an empirically significant yet theoretically secondary role.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, for Hobson: 'invoking inter-societal processes... is... insufficient... either because 'international' turns out to be 'intra-European' or because when the international reaches global proportions, it is understood in terms of Western agency and Eastern passivity.'<sup>29</sup> Thus Bhambra and Hobson have both noted that insofar as U&CD is considered to be a product of, and specific to, capitalism, it shares with other Eurocentric theories assumptions of historical priority and methodological internalism.

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<sup>23</sup> See John M. Hobson, 'Provincializing Westphalia: The Eastern Origins of Sovereignty' *International Politics*, 46, no. 6 (2009) 671-690; Turan Kayaoglu, 'Westphalian Eurocentrism in International Relations Theory', *International Studies Review*, 12, no. 2 (2010) 193-217

<sup>24</sup> For instance in the English School. See Martin Wight, ed. *Systems of States*. (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977); Hadley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1977); Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society* (New York: Routledge, 1992)

<sup>25</sup> See Stephen Hobden, *International Relations and Historical Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1998); Stephen Hobden and John Hobson eds. *Historical Sociology of International Relations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

<sup>26</sup> Bhambra, 'Historical sociology'; Gurminder K. Bhambra, 'Talking Among Themselves? Weberian and Marxist Historical Sociologies as Dialogues Without "Others."' *Millenium* 39 no. 1 (2011) 667-681

<sup>27</sup> Justin Rosenberg, 'Why is There no International Historical Sociology?', *European Journal of International Relations*, 12 no. 3 (2006) 307-340; Justin Rosenberg, 'Basic problems in the Theory of Uneven and Combined Development. Part II: Unevenness and Political Multiplicity'. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 23, no. 1 (2006) 165-189; Kamran Matin, 'Uneven and Combined Development in World History: The International Relations of State-formation in Premodern Iran', *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 13, no. 3 (2007) 419-447; see also Neil Davidson, 'Putting the Nation Back into the International.' *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 22, no. 1 (2009) 9-28; Jamie Allinson and Alex Anievas, 'Approaching the "international": beyond Political Marxism', in ed. Anievas *Marxism and World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2010) 197-214

<sup>28</sup> Bhambra, 'Talking Amongst Themselves,' 668, 673; cf. Bhambra, 'Historical Sociology' 128, 135

<sup>29</sup> John Hobson, 'What's at Stake in the Neo-Trotskyist Debate? Towards a Non-Eurocentric Historical Sociology of Uneven and Combined Development' *Millenium*, vol. 40 no. 1 (2011) 152

In this chapter, I intend to turn this claim on its head by arguing that U&CD played an integral role in the very origins of capitalism itself. In doing so, I seek to challenge and criticize the two moments of Eurocentrism through the theory of U&CD and in the process defend its non-Eurocentric credentials.<sup>30</sup> I argue that U&CD can make a positive and illuminating contribution to these debates because it speaks directly to each of the two moments of Eurocentrism identified above. By positing the multilinear character of development as its ‘most general law,’<sup>31</sup> uneven development provides a corrective to the ontological singularity and attendant unilinear conception of history that underpins assumptions of historical priority: ‘[A]t any given historical point, the human world has comprised a variety of societies, of differing sizes, cultural forms and levels of material development. Empirically speaking, there is not, and never has been, a single path taken by social development’<sup>32</sup> However this differential development does not occur hermetically and autonomously, but interactively; developmentally differentiated societies constantly impact upon one another’s social reproduction and development – what Trotsky terms ‘combined development’.<sup>33</sup> Through the interactive relations between societies, social formations combine developmental discoveries - ‘drawing together... different stages of the journey’<sup>34</sup> and re-shaping social formations in an original and variegated manner. At the most abstract level all social development is constituted not only by internal social relations but also by social relations between societies. By positing the inherently interactive character of this multiplicity, ‘combined development’ challenges the methodological internalism of the comparative approach.

Therefore, what U&CD presupposes is that historical processes are always the outcome of a multiplicity of spatially diverse nonlinear causal chains that converge or combine in any given conjuncture. What this compels historians and sociologists to do methodologically, is to analyse history from a multiplicity of spatio-temporal vantage points – what Anievas has called overlapping ‘spatio-temporal vectors of uneven and combined development’<sup>35</sup> – in order to uncover these causal chains. In this schema, the Eurocentric emphasis on the origins of

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<sup>30</sup> Other examples of such an endeavour include Matin, ‘U&CD in World History’; Matin ‘Redeeming the Universal’; Robert Shilliam, ‘The Atlantic as a Vector of Uneven and Combined Development’ *Cambridge Review of International Relations*, 22 no. 1 (2009) 69-88; Hobson. ‘What’s at Stake’

<sup>31</sup> Leon Trotsky *The History of the Russian Revolution* (London: Pathfinder Press, 2007) 28

<sup>32</sup> Rosenberg ‘Why is there no International Historical Sociology?’ 313

<sup>33</sup> Trotsky, *History*, 28

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.* 26

<sup>35</sup> Alex Anievas, 2012 ‘1914 in World Historical Perspective: The Uneven and Combined Origins of the First World War’, *European Journal of International Relations*, (forthcoming, 2012).

capitalism would constitute one of many spatio-temporal vectors of U&CD; one that must be complimented and combined with other determinations analysed from alternative vantage points;<sup>36</sup> one that is related to – among others – extra-European determinations bound in the histories of colonialism,<sup>37</sup> slavery<sup>38</sup> and global trade.<sup>39</sup> In short, U&CD stresses an ‘internationalist historiography’<sup>40</sup> of the origins of capitalism.

However, I do not intend argue that capitalism’s origins were entirely extra-European, for this would substitute one ethnocentrism with another; nor do I seek to substantially diminish the centrality or uniqueness of Europe in this process. As such, and despite the provocative nature of the title, this chapter does not seek to provide a full or total account of the origins of capitalism. It is rather restricted to the considerably more modest claim and demonstration that the Euro-Ottoman relations of the sixteenth century constituted one of many determinations – one of many ‘spatio-temporal vectors of uneven and combined development’ – that needs to be integrated, indeed combined, with other spatio-temporally distinct historical determinations, both European and extra-European.

In the first section, I aim to challenge the Eurocentric assumption of *historical priority*, by demonstrating that sixteenth century Euro-Ottoman relations were marked by material relations of uneven development. This denotes, firstly, simple qualitative difference – the Ottoman Empire differed significantly from Europe in terms of social and material production and reproduction. Secondly, unevenness indicates the political, military, economic and territorial superiority held by the Ottoman Empire over Europe. This entailed both an Ottoman ‘whip of external necessity’ and a European ‘privilege of backwardness’ which I argue were crucial preconditions for the eventual emergence of capitalism within Europe.<sup>41</sup>

In the second section, I attempt to expose the limitations of *methodological internalism* which neglects the importance of interactivity between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Here I show that European commercial and diplomatic relations with the Ottomans tended to trump

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<sup>36</sup> Bertell Ollman, *Dance of the Dialectic: Steps in Marx’s Method* (University of Illinois Press, 2003) 110

<sup>37</sup> James M. Blaut, *The Colonizer’s Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History*. (Guilford: Guilford Press, 1993)

<sup>38</sup> Shilliam ‘Atlantic as a Vector’

<sup>39</sup> Jairus Banaji, *Theory as History*. (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011) 262-276

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.* 253

<sup>41</sup> Chris Harman, *A People’s History of the World*, (London: Verso, 2008) 141; Hobson ‘What’s at Stake,’ 148



much of the rhetoric against ‘infidels’ and the ‘Terrible Turk’.<sup>42</sup> As much as the Ottomans were considered a threat, they were also an opportunity – primarily for those who wished to check Habsburg power but also those that wished to exploit the commercial opportunities that peaceful relations with the Ottomans entailed. I argue that on the basis of this interactivity the Ottoman Empire had an influential and ultimately determining impact on the developmental trajectory of Europe in this period. In particular I argue that the Ottoman presence unwittingly facilitated the primitive accumulation of capital and brought about a structural shift to Atlantic trade and Northwest European dominance by displacing Mediterranean commerce.

### Unevenness - A Clash of Social Reproduction

It is possible to identify three material loci of unevenness in the forms of social reproduction that predominated in Europe and the Ottoman Empire. The first is in the relations that pertained among social classes based on predominantly agrarian production: between exploiter and exploited (and therefore also in the forms and character of surplus appropriation by the ruling class in these respective societies); and between different sections of the ruling class (and hence political relations as such). The second is the comparative effectiveness of these respective forms of social reproduction in terms of stability internally and ability to make war externally. The third is the relationship between merchants and states that these respective forms of social reproduction gave rise to. These three forms of unevenness will be considered in turn.

#### Agrarian Class Relations and Ottoman Ruling class Reproduction

Ottoman society was characterised by a tributary mode of production, defined firstly, by the vertical opposition of a ruling, tax collecting, class in a contradictory relationship with a class of peasants that were exploited for the appropriation of productive surplus;<sup>43</sup> and secondly, by the horizontal differentiation between ‘landed nobility’ and ‘patrimonial authority’ within the tax collecting class, wherein the latter controlled the former as well as the means of production.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art Between East and West* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2000) 60

<sup>43</sup> Halil Berktaç, 'The feudalism debate: The Turkish end - is 'tax - vs. - rent' necessarily the product and sign of a modal difference?' *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 14, no. 3 (1987) 291 — 333: 311

<sup>44</sup> Banaji, *Theory as History*, 23

The first – ruling class-peasant – division was distinct from the lord-peasant relation in Europe due to the appropriation of surplus through tax (as opposed to rent) collection and the regulation of appropriation by regional and central agents of the Ottoman state.<sup>45</sup> This meant that in comparison to Europe, peasants had greater access to their surplus because of the preservation of subsistence plots, as well as state fixed limitations on taxation by local intermediaries.<sup>46</sup> Peasants also had inalienable rights to land,<sup>47</sup> were better protected from market fluctuations,<sup>48</sup> had the option – albeit limited – to legal recourse should their conditions worsen<sup>49</sup> and were legally considered free.<sup>50</sup>

The second division – between landed nobility and patrimonial authority – was distinct from intra-ruling class relations in Europe because all land was formerly owned by the Sultan, while military fiefs were predominantly non-hereditary, changeable and regularly rotated amongst individuals in the ruling class.<sup>51</sup> This created a contradictory distribution of political power and surplus, forming a centre-periphery socio-political structure between sections of the ruling class.<sup>52</sup> Located primarily in Constantinople the Ottoman centre consisted in the Sultan and his slave corps – comprising a large and unified bureaucratic administration and the Janissary standing army. This centralised state was coupled with devolution of power and

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<sup>45</sup> Caglar Keyder, 'The Dissolution of the Asiatic Mode of Production', *Economy and Society*, 5, no. 2 (1976) 178-196

<sup>46</sup> Halil Inalcik, 'State Land and Peasant' in eds. *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*. Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 103-178: 115

<sup>47</sup> Huri Islamoglu-Inan, *State and Peasant in the Ottoman Empire: Agrarian Power Relations and Regional Economic Development in Ottoman Anatolia During the Sixteenth Century*, (Brill, 1994) 57

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.* 8

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.* xiv-xv

<sup>50</sup> Suriaya Faroqhi, 'Rural life' in ed. *The Cambridge history of Turkey : the later Ottoman Empire 1603-1839*, Suriaya Faroqhi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 383

<sup>51</sup> Anderson, *Lineages*, 370

<sup>52</sup> Serif Mardin, 'Power, Civil Society and Culture in the Ottoman Empire', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 11, no. (1969) 258-81; John Haldon, (1993) *The State and the Tributary Mode of Production* (London: Verso, 1993) 159-169. Due to the character of this stratification, Ottoman society was neither immutable nor monolithic as is presupposed in a great deal of its historiography – see Islamoglu-Inan *State and Peasant*, 140-174 and Mustafa Soykut, 'Introduction' in ed. *Historical Image of the Turk in Europe: Fifteenth Century to the Present*, Mustafa Soykut (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2003) 74. The more concrete remarks on the character of the Ottoman Empire that follow are based primarily on its late fifteenth and sixteenth century history, which was distinguished by relative stability. However, in the historical period outside of this chapter's purview – the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – the Empire was markedly one of struggle, conflict and transformation. For the seventeenth century see William J. Griswold, *The Great Anatolian Rebellion: 1000-1020/1591-1611*, (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1983) and Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1994); for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries see Clemens Hoffman 'The Balkanization of Ottoman Rule: Premodern Origins of the Modern International System in Southeastern Europe.' *Cooperation and Conflict*. 43, no. 4 (2008) 373-396.

relative autonomy of authority and jurisdiction in the Ottoman provinces.<sup>53</sup> As an offshoot of the devolution of power, the Ottomans often conquered territories without fundamentally transforming their own peculiar rules of reproduction – be it legal, ideological, and even material<sup>54</sup> – so long as some tribute was paid to the Ottoman centre, be it in kind, cash or person. Consequently the Ottomans proved adept at mobilising local resources and absorbing the material and ideational advances of occupied territories.

(Geo)political accumulation therefore played an essential role in maintaining the loyalty of disparate sections of the ruling class, as well as coercing rebellions when necessary. Ideologically wars against the ‘infidel’ were a crucial source of legitimation for the Ottoman ruling classes hold on power<sup>55</sup> – it was matter of course for new Sultans to embark on military campaigns to validate their rule.<sup>56</sup> Materially, provincial power holders and Janissaries were allocated spoils of conquest – often booty, but primarily land – as a means of maintaining consent as well as displacing any potential accumulation of power by relocating notables to different regions of the empire.<sup>57</sup>

Unity at home accumulation away

Ottoman devices of ruling class reproduction in this period proved remarkably efficient, considerably more so than the feudal form found in Europe. Due to the nature of Ottoman power-sharing and the relocation of provincial landholders, there was limited potential for unified class interests acting outside the purview of – or counter to – the interests of the Ottoman state.<sup>58</sup> Instead, discontented sections of the ruling class sought to articulate disaffection within the confines of the extant political system.<sup>59</sup> When faced with local unrest the state was able, on the one hand, to maintain the internal integrity of the empire by co-opting local elites into the ruling class either via military positions and allocation of land, or by

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<sup>53</sup> Paul Coles, *The Ottoman Impact on Europe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968) 98-99

<sup>54</sup> Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004) 8-12

<sup>55</sup> Suriaya Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*, (London: IB Taurus, 2004) 8

<sup>56</sup> Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002) 118-119

<sup>57</sup> Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600*, (London: Phoenix, 2000) 107-116; Griswold, *The Great Anatolian Rebellion*, 9-10

<sup>58</sup> Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, 58-59

<sup>59</sup> Griswold, *The Great Anatolian Rebellion*, 39, 56-57

allowing greater local autonomy in the appropriation of surplus.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, the Ottoman centre could also resort to coercive measures through the centralization of power in order to maintain control over the provinces.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, the relatively lenient form of surplus extraction levied on Ottoman peasants, as well as tolerance for local ways of life, meant that rebellion in the countryside was a less marked feature of the Ottoman tributary mode than the European feudal mode.<sup>62</sup> Hence there was little impulse or necessity for reform of the tributary system from above, or significant pressure for revolution from below.

These forms of intra-ruling class power gave the Ottomans numerous direct advantages over their European allies and foes.<sup>63</sup> Due to the balance between a meticulously centralised yet locally autonomous authority, the Ottomans were able to raise vast and loyal armies for military campaigns, while maintaining comparatively uninterrupted lines of communication and supplies.<sup>64</sup> Ottoman intra-ruling class unity also contrasted significantly with the fragmentation associated with the parcelized sovereignty of feudal Europe,<sup>65</sup> a developmental advantage often exploited by the Ottoman Empire in military campaigns.<sup>66</sup> These factors made the Ottomans geopolitical accumulators – empire builders – *extraordinaire*, consistently expanding into

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<sup>60</sup> Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, 212

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.* 192

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.* 91, 241

<sup>63</sup> Mehmet S. Birdal, *The Holy Roman Empire and the Ottomans: From Global Imperial Power to Absolutism*, (London: I. B. Taurus, 2011) 119-20

<sup>64</sup> Gabor Agoston, 'Ottoman Warfare in Europe 1453–1826', in ed. *European Warfare, 1453–1815*, Jeremy Black (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999) 118-144; Rhoads Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500–1700* (London: UCL Press, 1999) 85-104

<sup>65</sup> Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*, 43-44

<sup>66</sup> Andrew C. Hess, 'The Ottoman Conquest of Egypt (1517) and the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century World War,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 4, no. 1 (1973) 55-76: 72-74. The most notable example of this was the Lutheran revolts that swept through Germany during the height of military tensions between the Ottomans and Habsburgs. The Habsburgs were dependent on German military support and financial aid in wars against the Ottomans, which was only forthcoming on the condition that Charles V agreed to religious reforms. In this context, Lutherans sought to carve out greater religious freedom whenever conflict between Ottomans and Habsburgs surfaced, using the Ottoman threat as a bargaining chip in negotiations with Charles V - see Stephen A. Fischer-Galati, *Ottoman Imperialism and German Protestantism 1521-1555*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1959); Daniel H. Nexon, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe*, (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009) 169. Moreover, the spread of the Reformation itself was often in territories that bore the mark of Ottoman impact – especially those affected by Calvinism (John Elliot, 'Ottoman-Habsburg Rivalry: The European Perspective' in eds. *Suleyman the Second (ie the First) and His Time*, Halil Inalcik and Cemal Kafadar (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1993) 153-162. Such division preceded the break-up of the Habsburg Empire – first into Austro-Hungarian and Spanish divisions, secondly with independence for the Dutch. Here the Ottomans again played active role, by attempting to cultivate coalitions between Protestants in the Low Countries and Moriscoes in Spain (see Coles, *The Ottoman Impact*, 128; Nexon, *The Struggle for Power*, 192; Andrew C Hess, *The Forgotten Frontier: A History of the Sixteenth Century Ibero-African Frontier*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, p. 94).

Europe and beyond, absorbing and converting Europeans to the ‘Ottoman way’.<sup>67</sup> While Europe struggled with divisions in Christendom, the Ottomans faced them as unified resourceful and disciplined force,<sup>68</sup> one that increasingly constituted an existential threat to European states.

Merchants, the state and war

Because of the fragmented and parcellized character of political power, Europeans that wanted to make war required extraordinary financing outside of day to day ruling class reproduction. In order to raise armies, European rulers borrowed from international banking houses<sup>69</sup> or asked wealthy and powerful sections of society for contributions, either in terms of military support or taxes.<sup>70</sup> This was often conducted via ‘local estates and assemblies or city-leagues in which the merchant-entrepreneurial class wielded significant – even military – power.’<sup>71</sup> Hence a by-product of European feudal war-making was an attendant rise in the political autonomy, power and influence of merchants, with increasing degrees of representation in the decision making structures of states.<sup>72</sup>

In contrast, the Ottoman Empire had little requirement for monetary financing outside of the customary levies already imposed on agrarian production. Consequently, there was scarce potential for autonomous merchant activity outside of the functional requirements of the tributary state. The relations between merchants and the Ottoman ruling class were balanced considerably in favour of the latter, who exercised significant control over merchant activity through the guild system;<sup>73</sup> conflicts or tensions between merchants and guilds tended to curtail merchant autonomy and power,<sup>74</sup> while merchant access to state apparatuses and decision

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<sup>67</sup> Matar, *Turks, Moors and Englishmen*, 9

<sup>68</sup> Maxime Rodinson, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam*, (London: University of Washington Press) 73. See also Fischer-Galati *Ottoman Imperialism*, 18; Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*, 6; Bisaha, *Creating East and West*, 162. Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*, 87; Soykut, ‘Introduction’, 26; Süheyla Artemel: “The View of the Turks from the Perspective of the Humanists in Renaissance England’ in ed. *Historical Image of the Turk in Europe*, Mustafa Soykut (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2003) 149-173: 161, 163; Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire*, 101

<sup>69</sup> Eric H. Mielants, *The Origins of Capitalism and “Rise of the West”*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007) 70

<sup>70</sup> Tilly, *The Formation of Nation States*, 73-74

<sup>71</sup> Mielants, *The Origins of Capitalism*, 70

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.* 79; see also Daniel Chirot, ‘The Rise of the West.’ *American Sociological Review*, 50 no. 2 (1985) 181-195

<sup>73</sup> Halil Inalcik, ‘Capital Formation in the Ottoman Empire’ *The Journal of Economic History*, 29, no. 1 (1969) 97-140: 104

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.* 106

making was limited.<sup>75</sup> Accumulation of wealth was discouraged and restricted by controlling coin circulation, production and prices and anti-luxury laws were deployed to confiscate merchant fortunes.<sup>76</sup> Interregional trade was heavily regulated, in which provisions for towns came almost entirely from their own hinterlands thus narrowing the geographical remit of production and distribution to local regions.<sup>77</sup> Caravan endpoints geographically coincided with seats of government authority, ensuring close supervision of prices and commodities traded. Tax on trade enabled state extraction of surpluses from mercantile activity.<sup>78</sup>

The tension between the state and merchants was also present geopolitically. For a ruling class fundamentally dependent on agriculture and tribute for their reproduction, the capture of trade routes was considered functional to tributary power, to bring those outside of it imperial purview within its tributary regime.<sup>79</sup> While the state could at times show signs of 'economic intentionality',<sup>80</sup> merchants were not considered important enough for state protection or support – agriculture remained the priority. Following the capture of the Mamluk Empire in 1517, the Ottoman naval commander Selman Reis believed that the Portuguese could have been driven out of the India Ocean.<sup>81</sup> But instead, imperial policy reverted to territorial expansion into the agriculturally more fertile and populous territories of South East Europe. That the Ottomans did not pursue the Indian course was primarily due to the reproductive requirements of a ruling class based on agrarian production,<sup>82</sup> reflecting the swelling claims made by provincial notables on access to booty, land, and thus power as such.<sup>83</sup>

In contrast, European powers were explicitly and intimately focussed on bringing under direct conquest and political control commercially valuable territories for specifically

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<sup>75</sup> Keyder, 'Dissolution of the Asiatic Mode'

<sup>76</sup> Inalcik, 'Capital Formation' 104-105, 107; Suriaya Faroqi, 'Trade: Regional Interregional and International', in ed. *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914*. Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 474-531

<sup>77</sup> Islamoglu-Inan, *State and Peasant*, 204

<sup>78</sup> Keyder, 'Dissolution of the Asiatic Mode', 179, 184)

<sup>79</sup> Andrew C. Hess, 'The Evolution of the Ottoman Seaborne Empire in the Age of Oceanic Discoveries 1453-1525' *The American Historical Review*, 75, no. 7 (1970) 1892-1919: 1916; Hess, 'The Ottoman Conquest of Egypt', 75

<sup>80</sup> Palmira Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994) 7

<sup>81</sup> Salih Ozbaran, 'Expansion in the Southern Seas' in eds. *Suleyman the Second (ie the First) and His Time*, Halil Inalcik and Cemal Kafadar (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1993) 211-8: 215

<sup>82</sup> Giancarlo Casale, 'Global Politics in the 1580s: One Canal, Twenty Thousand Cannibals, and the Ottoman Plot to Rule the World', *Journal of World History*, 18, no. 3 (2007) 267-296: 291; Hess, 'The Conquest of Egypt', 69

<sup>83</sup> Faroqi, *The Ottoman Empire*, 12

commercial purposes. The reason was due to the relative backwardness of European feudal reproduction which was dependent of the wealth drawn from merchants and financiers to either fund (geo)political accumulation (in the case of Habsburg Spain and Austria) or for the direct reproduction of the ruling class itself (in the case of city-states such as Genoa and Venice). Consequently, the state was sensitive to, or at the behest of, merchant interests, wherein state resources, especially military, were deployed in order to obtain commercial advantages.<sup>84</sup> And such was the extent and autonomy of merchant power that no European Emperor could have withdrawn or demanded the return of ships in the Indian Ocean as the Ottomans had done.<sup>85</sup>

The Euro-Ottoman relation was therefore marked by the relative backwardness of the European ruling classes, and the comparative weakness in its form of social reproduction. These European ‘privileges of backwardness’ encouraged and compelled its people – both ruling and ruled classes – to develop and adopt new ways of securing their social reproduction. At the same time, the relative strength of the Ottoman social form entailed a ‘disadvantage of progressiveness’, wherein the stability of social reproduction provided no immanent impulse for change or development. This relation of unevenness goes some way to explaining why the so-called miracle of capitalism would occur in Europe, and why it would not be repeated in Ottoman territories. That this divergence was a product of Ottoman progressiveness and European backwardness suggests that Eurocentric assumptions of historical priority need to be reconsidered. Moreover, these two elements – Ottoman strength; European privilege of backwardness – were ultimately *interrelated and co-constitutive phenomena*. As a consequence of its comparative strength, the geopolitical pressure of Ottomans constantly affected and redirected European development, in turn compelling changes in its forms social reproduction.<sup>86</sup> This meant that while the Ottomans faced Europe as a significant existential threat, they were also an opportunity for the most backward part of Europe – the Northwest – to outflank and outstrip the more advanced Habsburg Empire and Italian city-states. The next section focuses on uncovering this element of the Euro-Ottoman relation by looking at its combined development.

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<sup>84</sup> Philip Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade and World History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 116, 128

<sup>85</sup> Ronald Findlay, “The Roots of Divergence: Western Economic History in Comparative Perspective.” *American Economic Review*, 82, no. 2 (1992) 158-161; Leften S. Stavrianos, *A Global History*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall 1999)

<sup>86</sup> What Trotsky would have called a ‘whip of external necessity’

## Combination - Pax Ottomana and European Trade

Coupled with the unevenness in forms of social reproduction, the Euro-Ottoman relation entailed a curious form of combined development that contributed to the emergence of modernity in Europe, be it aiding the development of the Reformation,<sup>87</sup> the Renaissance,<sup>88</sup> modern diplomacy,<sup>89</sup> the military revolution,<sup>90</sup> or the identity of Europe itself.<sup>91</sup> For the remainder of the chapter, I would like to explore an additional and underappreciated trajectory of combined development between the Ottomans and Europe in the sixteenth century – that of trade and commerce – and argue that this constituted a fundamental and necessary (but not sufficient) condition for the emergence of capitalism in Western Europe.

Pax Ottomana - spatial combination and the facilitation of global trade

Prior to the definitive establishment of the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth century, Europe existed in an interdependent commercial relationship with the rest of the world in which it was relatively isolated from and peripheral to global trade.<sup>92</sup> European traders of this period therefore greatly benefited from pre-existing networks, relations and cultures of exchange,<sup>93</sup> as well as the exposure to extensive sources of technology and knowledge.<sup>94</sup> Due to this condition of backwardness, the recovery of European feudalism, the flourishing of commerce and the cultural Renaissance that accompanied it were directly connected to the reestablishment of peaceful lines of communication and trade between East and West that followed the expansion and consolidation of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>95</sup>

Through the institutional support of the Ottoman state, *Pax Ottomana* lowered commercial protection and transaction costs, established relatively uniform trading practices and hastened the alacrity of trade. On land and sea Ottoman rule was crucial to safeguarding traders from

<sup>87</sup> Fischer-Galati, *Ottoman Imperialism*

<sup>88</sup> Jardine, *Worldly Goods*

<sup>89</sup> Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire*

<sup>90</sup> Agoston, 'Ottoman Warfare'

<sup>91</sup> Yapp, 'Europe in the Turkish Mirror,' 134-155; Coles, *The Ottoman Impact*, 148-149

<sup>92</sup> Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 6

<sup>93</sup> Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System AD 1250-1350*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) 355-361

<sup>94</sup> Hsu 'Asian Influences' 27 fn. 2; Hobson *The Eastern Origins*, 190-219; Hobson, 'What's at Stake'

<sup>95</sup> Kate Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade in the Early Ottoman State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 123; R. J. Barendse, 'Trade and State in the Arabian Seas: A Survey from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century' *Journal of World History*, 11, no. 2 (2000) 173-225: 192; Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 3



banditry or piracy, while building roads and canal routes that would facilitate interregional trade.<sup>96</sup> The emergence of a *Pax Ottomana* brought together highways of commerce linking Russia and Central Asia with Europe via the Black Sea, and the Levant and North Africa to the Indian Ocean where the bulk of Euro-Asian trade was conducted;<sup>97</sup> geographically and economically, ‘the Ottoman Empire was the hinge that connected the rapidly growing economies of Europe with those of the East.’<sup>98</sup>

The safe passages into the Indian Ocean and along the Silk Route were crucial to the transmission of commodities that gave rise to the European demand for Eastern goods, which aided the further development of commerce in Europe.<sup>99</sup> Hence, ‘engines of the economic boom of the late fifteenth century as Venice, Marseilles, and Ragusa depended on the Ottoman Empire’ for both luxury and bulk goods.<sup>100</sup> And in the course of the sixteenth century less established states such as France, England and the Low Countries became increasingly reliant on Ottoman raw materials.<sup>101</sup> Trade and communication between the Ottomans and Europe also assisted the transmission of social and technological knowledge, leading to a spurt of development in European manufacturing, particularly those sectors imitating Eastern products.<sup>102</sup> The boost in French economic activity following a trade agreement with the Ottomans led to the proto-industrialisation of towns such as Marseille.<sup>103</sup> The competition in silk markets between the Levant and Venice inspired the creation of the hydraulic mill in Bologna which would later be adapted to construct Lombe’s Mill in Derby in the early eighteenth century<sup>104</sup> – arguably the world’s first fully mechanised factory.<sup>105</sup> Because Ottoman

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<sup>96</sup> James Mather, *Pashas: Traders and Travellers in the Islamic World*, (London: Yale University Press, 2009) 26; Inalcik, ‘Capital Formation,’ 97 fn. 2; Niels Stensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution in the Seventeenth Century: The East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade*, (London: University of Chicago, 1974) 62

<sup>97</sup> Sevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 23; Efraim Karsh, *Islamic Imperialism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007) 93

<sup>98</sup> Thomas, W. Gallant, ‘Europe and the Mediterranean: a Reassessment’ in ed. *Europe and Asia Beyond East and West*, Gerard Delanty (London: Routledge 2006) 126

<sup>99</sup> Morris Rossabi, ‘The Mongols and the West’ in eds. Carol Gluck and Ainslie T. Embree (New York: M. E. Sharp, 1997) 55-63; Pamuk, *A Monetary History*, 11, 18

<sup>100</sup> Barendse, ‘Trade and States,’ 190

<sup>101</sup> Bruce McGowan, *Economic Life in the Ottoman Empire: Taxation, Trade and the Struggle for Land*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 3-5

<sup>102</sup> Jack Goody, ‘Europe and Islam’ in ed. *Europe and Asia Beyond East and West*, Gerard Delanty (London: Routledge, 2006) 144

<sup>103</sup> De Lamar Jensen, ‘The Ottoman Turks in the Sixteenth Century French Diplomacy’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 16, no. 4 (1985): 451-470: 464

<sup>104</sup> Murat Cizakca, ‘Price History and the Bursa Silk Industry: A Study in Ottoman Industrial Decline, 1550-1650’ in ed. *The Ottoman Empire and the World-Economy*, Huri Islamoglu-Inan (Cambridge: Cambridge

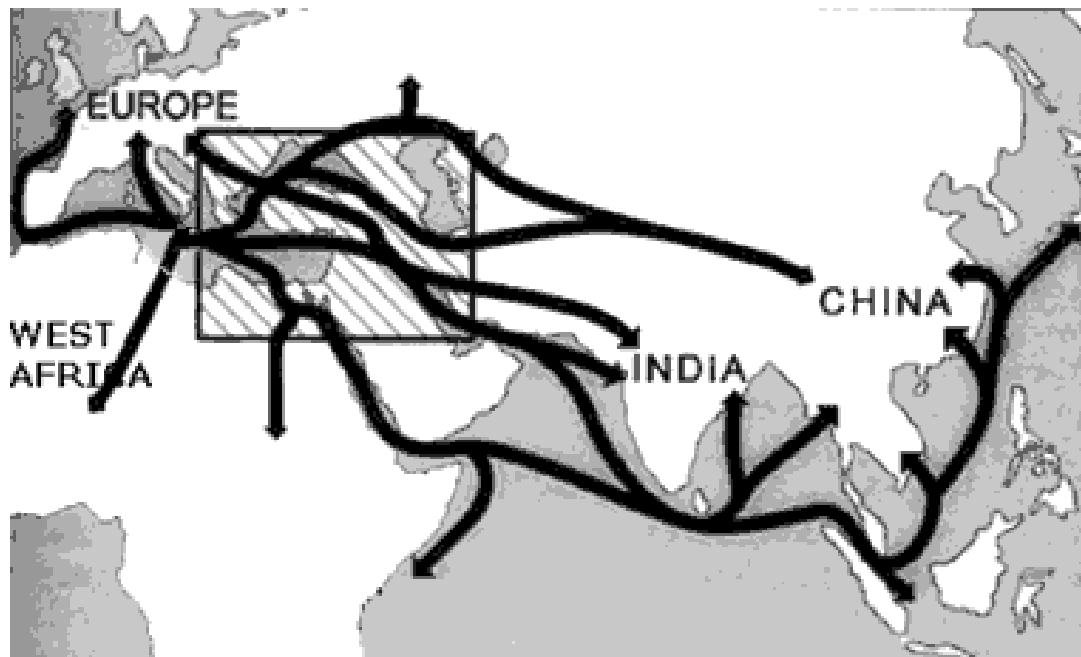


Fig. 2 Eurasian trade routes during *Pax Ottomana*

merchants themselves were active agents in bolstering trade within the Empire and beyond, their own credit system and methods of accumulation such as *commenda*-like *mudaraba* agreements became woven into the fabric of European commercial relations, prefiguring the advance system of company capitalism.<sup>106</sup>

The Ottoman presence also had an unintended but continuous influence on agrarian relations of production in Europe. Levant trade fed Western Europe with staple commodities produced through extensive land use, which removed the need for self-sufficient production at home. By ‘freeing’ agricultural land from extensive production, land use around European towns and ports became geared toward more capital-intensive and labour-intensive forms, such as (proto)industrial manufacturing.<sup>107</sup> The concomitant increase in land value – especially among those plugged into interregional and international trade networks – increased the

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University Press, 1987) 247-262: 253-254; Goody, ‘Europe and Islam,’ 143; Banaji, *Theory as History*, 270-273

<sup>105</sup> Gillian Darling, *Factory*, (London: Reaktion, 2003) 104

<sup>106</sup> Inalcik, ‘Capital Formation’, 100-101; Kemal H. Karpat, ‘Introduction’, in ed. *The Ottoman State and its Place in History*, Kemal H. Karpat (Leiden: Brill, 1974) 8; Goody, ‘Europe and Islam’ 143;

<sup>107</sup> McGowan, *Economic Life*, 3-5; Mielants, *Origins of Capitalism*, 144

profitability and hence frequency of short-term land lets, sales of land and land transfers. This contributed to sixteenth century population increase, pressures on land, rises in rents and short-term tenures, depression in rural wages and growing demand for staples.<sup>108</sup> In short, the upsurge in Euro-Ottoman trade contributed to the preconditions of rural revolt and the primitive accumulation of capital in Northwest Europe.

#### The Ottoman Blockade in the Age of Discovery

However, these general conditions were felt unevenly across Europe, and only took on significant levels of efficacy precisely because of the fragmented and disunited character of European feudalism. Since the Ottomans controlled access to the Black Sea, Red Sea and much of the Mediterranean, European traders were only allowed conditional admittance<sup>109</sup> in accordance with the former's geopolitical interests and aims. Thus besides facilitating trade, *Pax Ottomanica* broke down the monopoly on commerce previously held by leading traders (primarily Venetian and Genoese) in the Mediterranean and Black Sea,<sup>110</sup> while increasingly exposing such trade to competition from Northwest European traders, as well as Ragusan, Armenian and Jewish merchants under Ottoman suzerainty.<sup>111</sup> Having obtained these territories, commercial activity became subject to aforementioned state regulations and supervision thus limiting the export of key commodities such as timber, horses, grain and alum.<sup>112</sup> At the same time, Ottoman-Habsburg military conflict exacerbated volatility in the Mediterranean, persistently 'cutting the arteries of Venetian seaborne trade'.<sup>113</sup> The Spanish and the Portuguese fared little better, failing to push into a Mediterranean rife with Ottoman sponsored corsair attacks on merchant ships.<sup>114</sup>

By blocking the most dominant European powers from their customary conduits to Eastern markets, the Ottomans directly compelled them to pursue alternative routes. Having lost its Black Sea monopoly, Genoa sought to circumvent the Ottoman passage to Indian and Far

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<sup>108</sup> McGowan, *Economic Life*, 4

<sup>109</sup> Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower*, 7; Hess, 'The Conquest of Egypt', 71; Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire*, 129-133

<sup>110</sup> Geoffrey V. Scammell, *The World Encompassed: The First European Maritime Empires, c. 800-1650* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd. 1981) 93-96; Hess, 'The Conquest of Egypt', 59

<sup>111</sup> Ronald, S. Love, *Maritime Exploration in the Age of Discovery, 1415-1800*, (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006) 6-7; Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire*,

<sup>112</sup> Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade*, 132-133

<sup>113</sup> Scammell, *World Encompassed*, 132

<sup>114</sup> Coles, *Ottoman Impact*, 138; Hess, *The Forgotten Frontier*, 125

Eastern markets,<sup>115</sup> while turning to private business and financial operations in Western Europe and the Atlantic.<sup>116</sup> With the Ottoman dominated Mediterranean inaccessible to Genoese capital, the Atlantic became a considerably more promising avenue for commercial activity.<sup>117</sup> Thus both in Spain and in Portugal, the relationship between Genoese merchant-financiers and New World colonialists grew as Genoa's position in the Eastern Mediterranean declined. The Atlantic ventures that this alliance gave rise to were ultimately possible through the investments of Genoese capital that had been forced out of the Mediterranean by the Ottomans: 'It was precisely the inter-city-state competition for access to Eastern markets and the threat of the expanding Ottoman Empire that led to the discovery of the Americas.'<sup>118</sup>

In the course of the Ottoman blockade, 'capitulations' came to play a major role, mediating European commercial and Ottoman geopolitical interests. Capitulations were unilateral Ottoman grants that provided European recipients with basic legal rights and privileges within the empire's territories while regulating trade relations through the establishment of ordinary customs, taxes and dues.<sup>119</sup> Capitulations had a geopolitical purpose and were used by Ottomans for the dual diplomatic aims of alliance building and blockading rivals; the Genoese, Habsburgs, Spanish and Portuguese were all excluded in accordance with the military and diplomatic exigencies of Ottoman policy at any given time, while the French (1536), English (1583) and Dutch (1612) benefitted from capitulations. Political in scope for the Ottomans, capitulations proved an economic boon for the merchants of Northwest Europe. These states that had been otherwise peripheral to the Mediterranean (and thus Eurasian) commerce were now able to trade under significantly advantageous terms compared to their competitors. Plugged into the security afforded by the Ottoman state along its trade routes, Northwest European connections with Asian commodity markets were significantly expedited.

Over the course of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman blockade brought about a 'structural shift',<sup>120</sup> from the commercial dominance of Adriatic city-states such as Genoa and Venice, towards France and then English and Dutch supremacy. The competition over markets that

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<sup>115</sup> Scammell, *World Encompassed*, 165

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.* 170

<sup>117</sup> Coles, *Ottoman Impact*, 108; Charles Issawi, 'The Ottoman Empire in the European World Economy, 1600-1914' in ed. *The Ottoman State and its Place in World History*, Kemal H. Karpat (Leiden: Brill, 1974) 111

<sup>118</sup> Mielants, *Origins of Capitalism*, 85

<sup>119</sup> Eldem, 'Capitulations and Western Trade', in ed. *Cambridge History of Turkey Vol. III: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839*, Suriaya Faroqhi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 283-355

<sup>120</sup> Mather, *Pashas*, 154

arose from this shift gave a major impulse to the development of company capitalism and anticipated the increasing unity of merchant and state interests that became a hallmark of the English and Dutch politics in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.<sup>121</sup> These developments would lead to efforts to build permanent circuits of capital through the advance system, in turn escalating merchant intervention and control over international production.<sup>122</sup>

### Conclusion - The Ottoman Empire as a Vector of U&CD

In presenting this argument, I hope to have problematized the Eurocentric assumptions of historical priority and methodological internalism: not only was the emergence of capitalism predicated on the backwardness of Europe in comparison to the Ottoman Empire, but this backwardness only became determinant under the very geopolitical pressure of the Ottoman Empire itself. The duality of Euro-Ottoman relations – both belligerent and collaborative – was thus a crucial causal factor in some of the key developments in this period. By establishing a node of international trade, the Ottomans contributed to the internationalisation of merchant activity and a commercial revival in Europe that indirectly and unwittingly changed feudal social relations, subsequently setting conditions for the primitive accumulation of capital. Through its geopolitical policies, the Ottomans actively and directly brought about a structural shift away from Mediterranean trade and the concomitant ascendancy of Italian city-states, toward the Atlantic powers that would eventually come to dominate the world through colonialism. It must be emphasised that none of these developments were sufficient conditions for the emergence of capitalism; there were numerous other causal chains – vectors of uneven and combined development – both European and extra-European that must be incorporated into a full understanding of capitalism's origins. Yet it is difficult to establish a proper appreciation of the key developments in sixteenth century history and the European trajectory towards capitalism without looking at the Euro-Ottoman relation as a fundamental determinant.

The theoretical upshot of this argument helps clarify how far U&CD can be extended as a general abstraction for the purpose of a sociologically and historically sensitive study of international relations. I hope to have shown that even though precapitalist U&CD did not necessarily demonstrate the same level of sociological intensity as it does now under capitalism

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<sup>121</sup> Mielants, *Origins of Capitalism*, 84

<sup>122</sup> Banaji, *Theory as History*, 270-273

(itself due to the unevenness between precapitalist and capitalist modes of production), it was nonetheless historically significant, insofar as the interactive relations that arose from social unevenness were determinant in the developmental trajectories of precapitalist societies. Not only does U&CD capture the historical significance of these determinations, it also gives them theoretical expression, thus elevating their importance as a field of investigation; one that is irreducible to, yet fundamentally related to, the sociology and history of any given society. In doing so, U&CD broadens our field of vision beyond the confines of Eurocentrism, by internalising at the level of theory a dimension of concrete reality – the international – hitherto considered external to dominant studies of the origins of capitalism.

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