and the political climate in the region at the moment of writing this review, this vision, sadly, appears remote. Policymakers and government officials should take notice, however, for if Ghanem's assessment is correct, the national conflict threatens to be escalating rapidly toward civil war.

In sum, Ghanem’s book offers a more thorough and comprehensive assessment of the political movements of the Israeli-Palestinians than has previously been available. It is valuable for the profiles of the core political movements it provides and for its overall thought-provoking depiction of the Palestinian-Arab minority in Israel.


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On the eve of President Bush’s threatened war to topple Saddam Hussein’s murderous regime, State in Society provides an opportunity for pondering the limitations on modern states trying to impose institutional changes on recalcitrant societies. In eight essays, Joel Migdal proposes supplanting Max Weber’s widely accepted definition of the state as a dominant “human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” (p. 13) with a more nuanced state-in-society model. Migdal’s definition emphasizes that, rather than being the prime mover at the apex of a pyramidal hierarchy, a state contends for predominance within a complex mélange of domestic and international forces. Real state behaviors are shaped by both idealized images and diverse practices, which often overlap and contradict one another. Rejecting Edward Shils’ center-periphery model of society subordinated under the state, Migdal posits that the state’s image is a strong, unified “representation of the commonality of the people, deriving from their underlying connection” (p. 18). This unitary image intrudes across the porous social boundaries between the state, private actors, and social forces. State practices engender laws, rules, regulations, moral codes, ceremonies, and other institutions that may reinforce or erode the distinctions between its elevated image and the civil society. Migdal’s perspective draws analytic attention to perpetual struggles for control and influence between the state and contentious nonstate actors (tribes, clans, villages, sects, ethnic communities). Rather than imposing a finished project, the modern state “continually morphs” (p. 23) as its image of a powerfully unified organization clashes with fragmented, ill-defined practices of social groupings both inside and outside its official territory.

Migdal pursues his state-in-society theme across several loosely linked essays. “Strong States, Weak States” investigates efforts by centralizing Third World states to displace local strongmen rivals in making and enforcing societal rules. Paradoxically, as the state bureaucracies controlling institutionalized violence, such as the army and police, grow more powerful, they threaten to undermine the top state leaders’ capacities to achieve their modernizing goals by mobilizing popular support from peasants and laborers. Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser resolved this dilemma by pioneering the “Big Shuffle,” which periodically moved potential rivals to new bureaucratic posts before they could build loyal followings. To the question, “Why Do So Many States Stay Intact?” instead of falling apart like Yugoslavia, Migdal answers that the tripling of national states since World War II reflects the production of intense meanings for peoples that “naturalizes” continued state existence: “their dissolution or disappearance become unimaginable to their subjects because of their longevity, provision of crucial goods and services, and other factors” (p. 150). Such mutually constitutive relations between states and societies, embodied in laws and public rituals, enables even highly inept states to survive well past any rational cancel-by date.

The essay on individual psychological change presents book reviews of some past best-sellers, including Lerner’s, 1958, The Passing of Traditional Society, Pye’s, 1962, Politics, Personality, and Nation-Building, and Inkeles and Smith’s, 1974, Becoming Modern. Revisiting those old controversies, about the effects of rapid macropolitical and
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Macrosocial changes on microlevel transformations from traditional into modern personalities, is poorly integrated with the state-in-society model. Migdal calls for "new directions for understanding individual-level change," (p. 191), but his book reviews provide only the sketchiest of roadmaps for finding our way. More valuable is his concluding essay, castigating political scientists for analytically isolating the state as a subject for inquiry, and praising anthropologists and political sociologists for restoring a more balanced process-oriented perspective. He delineates how culturalist, rationalist, and historical institutionalist "lenses" could enable twenty-first-century theorists to see more clearly exactly what makes the modern state modern.

I found these essays—apparently Migdal's collected writings spanning two decades—to exhibit uneven quality and insight, and to rely too heavily on anecdotal cases as support for his contentions. The state-in-society model lacks the detail and rigor required by a coherent theory capable of generating explanatory propositions that could be systematically tested with empirical evidence from diverse developing nations. Migdal's analyses expose how earlier work on the state "led to a mystification of its capabilities and power" (p. 231). He shrewdly cautions that the modern state is often quite limited, and that societies and states mutually constrain one another's potential. Not an unimportant reminder when the United States may shortly embark into uncharted terrain.


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Politics and Society in South Africa is a highly successful exercise in synthesis and clarification: It provides an excellent guide to the issues preoccupying scholars of South Africa over the past three decades, that is, from roughly the time Heribert Adam published his analysis of National Party reform initiatives, Modernizing Racial Domination, in 1971, up until Anthony Marx compared South Africa, the United States, and Brazil in Making Race and Nation, in 1998. Between these two dates, of course, South Africa was transformed from a country whose government was tinkering with the details of white supremacy to one being consolidated as a genuine liberal democracy. Rather than write a simple synopsis of scholarly debates or retell chronologically a familiar tale, author Daryl Glaser has sought to lay bare the historical processes shaping South African society since the seventeenth century.

Glaser, a graduate of the University of the Witwatersrand and now a lecturer in government at the University of Strathclyde, identifies himself as a radical revisionist and materialist, but he treats scholarly debates in a remarkably even-handed way, pointing out strengths and weaknesses of each theoretical perspective. The book fulfills the promises of the Sage series to which it belongs: Sage Politics Texts offer "authoritative and accessible analyses of . . . key debates and concepts." In the case of South Africa, these debates are necessarily drawn from a wider range of disciplines than the promised "political science and international relations." Historians probably produced the lion's share of the works Glaser cites, followed closely by sociologists. Glaser's task, therefore, was to mold historians' insights to his thematic categories and organizational rubric: the origins of white supremacy (colonialism, capitalism, and modernity); the nature of the state, class, ethnicity, and resistance; and finally, the dynamics of the current situation.

Glaser succeeds admirably in maintaining a balanced tone. He is not beholden to a party line, either of the African National Congress or of those who Feverishly attack it. He eschews a heroic image of the party. He is sanguine, but not starry-eyed. "What South Africa lacks," he writes, "is a civil society, if by that is meant a space in which political competition and negotiation can proceed in a climate free of violence and intimidation"; this lack presents a formidable, though not insurmountable, barrier to the task of building a democracy (p. 218). His jargon-free style serves him well, especially given the complexity of many of his key points, some of which fly in the face of popular wisdom, as when he argues that black resistance has been overstressed. Glaser grabs hold of fre-