

Arab societies



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A handful of Arab countries rely on oil production; the rest rely on other sources of income. None have industrialized. According to our what has that meant for how Arab governments relate to their citizens?

Arab countries have been typecast as oil-rich and its well-off citizens milk its resources to fund their ostentatious lifestyles. Rich Arabs have been depicted to live in sheer luxury, and their continuous investments on land and real-estate to build hotels, resorts and other places that sell leisure to other rich foreigners bear them enormous income. Meanwhile, the former inhabitants of the land purchased by the oil-rich citizens are left to migrate to urban areas leaving their agricultural livelihood to be bulldozed into the ground as the new foundation of an eagerly anticipated tourist destination. These migrants eventually get employed in a job that does not offer them enough income to live comfortably. This is the picture of how most Arabs live in the Middle East as painted by the authors of the assigned readings. The unfortunate thing is that only 5% of the Arab people are living in luxury while the rest live within middle-class to lower-class means. The consequence of the rural-urban migration of people is leaving agricultural lands barren without anyone to tend to producing crops or raising livestock for people's food. Kadri reports that exportation of food has significantly decreased and importation has been on a steady rise. Hence, malnutrition among Arab nations has also spread. What is the government doing about this "rich getting richer" and the "poor getting poorer" situation?

Since huge investments on land and real-estate would need the appropriate permits and authorization to operate, with the authority coming from the government, it may be expected that people in government gain much from the investors and inevitably approve of their investments. Mitchell has

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described such leniency from government as neoliberalism. It may be overwhelming to witness vast lands being turned to “dreamland” while the economy suffers and the majority of the population live in poverty. One may question where most of the revenue from taxes of such luxurious investments go. Certainly not to programs that will uplift the standard of living of middle to low classed citizens! Government priorities have been lopsided, favouring the projects of the rich over the service of the poor. This may be due to the personal agendas of those in power. Farsoun laments how Arab state capitalism produces “parasitic and predatory bourgeoisies and helps reproduce overdeveloped state structures and underdeveloped productive forces” (233). This means that the government yields its control to those who are moneyed and justify that they may provide employment to those who are not. In this sense, the parody of the golden rule applies: “He who has the gold, rules”.

In a sense, the authors believe that the government needs to be more assertive in implementing laws and programs that will benefit the majority. They should be more in control of how resources are used so more people will gain its advantages. Commercialisation may bring with it progress but at the same time corrupt the culture of a people. This is something that the government should keep in mind when new and seemingly better things come, as they would not want to destroy the values that define them as a people.

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