

# Challenges to Development in the Arab World

David W. Fraser

Newtown Meeting Adult First Day  
Class

10 April 2011

Human development is “a process of expanding people’s choices.”

- Arab Human Development Report 2003:  
Building a Knowledge Society

# Members of the Arab League

Algeria	Bahrain	Comoros	Djibouti
Egypt	Iraq	Jordan	Kuwait
Lebanon	Libya	Mauritania	Morocco
Oman	Palestine	Qatar	Saudi Arabia
Somalia	Sudan	Syria	Tunisia
UAE	Yemen		

# Arab World at a Glance

- 350 million people in AL in 2010 (=29% of world's Muslims, but includes Coptic Orthodox, Jacobite, Maronite Christians, animists, others)
- Only Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, Bahrain, Oman and Saudi Arabia have Human Development Index >83 (= Romania; based on UNDP's assessment of per capita GDP, adult literacy and life expectancy)
- Only Qatar ranks in top 44 countries in *Economist's* 2010 assessment of competitiveness (overall, government or infrastructure).

# **Deficits that Limit Development in Arab Societies (AHDR 2003)**

- Knowledge
- Freedom
- Women's empowerment

# Women's Empowerment (Mernissi 1987)

- Imperatives of modern (Moroccan) Muslim life impinging on family structure and relations of the sexes: the needs for **sexual equality** and to be **Arab** and **Muslim**
- Qasim Amin (1863-1908): Arab-Muslim societies are weaker than West because half the population is excluded from production; women's exclusion is not due to Islam but to secular customs not eliminated by Islam's teaching.
- "Nowadays being Arab is primarily a political, not a racial, claim." E.g., the division of Berbers and Arabs, fostered by French colonists, has been succeeded by Arab nationalism in Morocco and Egypt.

# 3+ Years of Rights 1972-2000

<b>Non-Arab Muslim</b>	<b>Arab Muslim</b>
Albania, Bangladesh, Djibouti, the Gambia, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Turkey	Lebanon
12/31	1/16

Freedom House political rights score <4  
("moderately high" on 7-point scale)

Source: Stepan & Robertson. An "Arab" more than "Muslim" electoral gap. J. of Democracy 14(3), 2003.

# 3+ Yrs Electorally Competitive

	<b>Great over-achievers</b>	<b>Overachievers</b>	<b>Predictably competitive</b>	<b>Indeterminant</b>
<b>Non-Arab</b>	Bangladesh, the Gambia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria (5/29)	Albania Pakistan (2/29)	Turkey Malaysia (2/29)	None
<b>Arab</b>	None	None	None	Lebanon (1/16)
<b>GDP</b>	<\$1500	\$1500-3500	\$3500-5500	>\$5500

# <3 Yrs Electorally Competitive

	<b>Predictedly non-competitive (&lt;\$3500)</b>	<b>Indeterminant</b>	<b>Underachiever (&gt;\$5500)</b>
<b>Non-Arab</b>	Afgh,Azer, Burki,Chad, Como,Djib,Erit, Guin, Indo,Kygy,Maur,Sene Sier,Soma,Suda,Taji, Turk,Uzbe (18/29)	Iran, Kazakh stan (2/29)	None
<b>Arab</b>	Egypt, Iraq, Morocco, Syria, Yemen (5/16)	Algeria, Jordan, Tunisia (3/16)	Bahrain, Kuwait,Libya Oman,Qatar, Saudi Arabia UAE (7/16)

# Positive aspects of Islam re electoral competitiveness (Stepan & Robertson)

- Koran: there shall be no compulsion in matters of religion
- *shura* (consultation)
- *ijtihad* (independent reasoning)

# **Possible reasons for Arab electoral gap (Stepan & Robertson)**

- Arab countries lack sense of nation-state, as boundaries are arbitrary, post-colonial
- Strong pan-Arabism
- Arab-Israeli conflict

# **AHDR 2003 on Largest Challenge to Contemporary Arab World**

“Arabs, in previous epochs, contributed substantially to the production of knowledge... How can the region move beyond merely importing scientific and technological products in the form of goods and services from companies and institutions abroad?”

# Knowledge Dissemination (AHDR 2003)

- **Socialization:** Arab child rearing tends to be authoritarian or over-protective, rather than firm
- **Education:** Arab education is often underfunded and does not encourage independent thinking. Arab universities lack autonomy
- **Mass media:** Arab countries have fewer newspapers, radios and TVs per capita. News stories tend to be narrative, not analytic.
- **Translation:** Five times as many books are translated into Greek as into Arabic

# IT in the Arab World in 2010

- Saudi Arabia (#10), UAE (#27), Oman (#40) and Qatar (#42) rank in top 50 in **computers** /100 people
- UAE (#32) and Qatar (#40) rank in top 40 in % with **broadband** access
- UAE (#1), Bahrain (#3), Saudi Arabia (#11), Qatar (#19), Oman (#38) rank in top 50 in **mobile telephone** subscribers/100

# Knowledge Production (AHDR 2003)

- One scientific research paper each from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Algeria in 1987 was cited 40+ times, compared to 10,481 from USA and 523 from Switzerland.
- In Arab workforce there are 3.3 researchers with masters or doctorate per 1000, 3-10% of prevalence in developed countries.
- Of research centers in Arab countries, <3% specialize in biotechnology or electronics.
- Arab countries have 5% of the population and produce 1.1% of books (many on religion).

# Knowledge Production (2)

## (AHDR 2003)

There is strength in the social sciences in Arab countries:

- ✦ Iraq & Syria: history and civilization
- ✦ Egypt: economics & political science
- ✦ Maghreb: sociology and anthropology

# Recent higher education initiatives

- Doha, Qatar: Education City (VCU, Cornell, Texas A&M, Carnegie Mellon, Georgetown, Northwestern)
- Abu Dhabi: NYU, Sorbonne
- Saudi Arabia: KAUST
- Sharjah: American University of Sharjah
- Dubai: partnerships with US universities

# Suggested Reading

- Vartan Gregorian: “Islam: a mosaic, not a monolith”  
<http://carnegie.org/fileadmin/Media/Publications/PDF/pesay01.pdf>
- Arab Human Development Report 2003: *Building a Knowledge Society*. UNDP: NYC, Amman
- Alfred Stepan, Graeme B. Robertson: An “Arab” more than “Muslim” electoral gap. *Journal of Democracy* 14(3), 2003
- Paul Collier. *Wars, Guns & Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places*. Harper Perennial 2009.
- Fatima Mernissi. *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*. University of Indiana Press. 1987.