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Who is going to change?

In 1979, Shah of Iran overthrown and a new Islamic regime got the power. At that time—and even today—according to the Islamic Republic of Iran, it was assumed the revolution has taken place by people of Iran because Shah of Iran was influenced by the U.S. government and he was obedient of their deed. But these days, eventually, the facts shows that the U.S. facilitated the takeover by helping Ayatollah-Khomeini, founder of the new regime. (*BBC News Website,* [*http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-36431160*](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-36431160)) However the U.S. has always interested in the Middle East and tried to pursue their plans in this region.

“Stereotyping of Arabs by the U.S. Ensures Years of Turmoil” is an essay, written by Edward Said; Professor of Literature at Columbia University in New York. The mode of this essay mostly focuses on cause and effect, but it uses explanation and argument too. Said brings up an argument, talks about causes and then the outcomes. He wrote a book about Orientalism by the same name, which is about the “underlying assumptions that form the foundation of Orientalist thinking” (185).

He was born in Jerusalem, supporting Palestinian ideals. In this essay. Said claims that “The United States and Israel have a blind eye—an orientalist’s view—denying Arabs the right to self-determination” (185). To understand Said point of view, it is necessary to figure out what “an orientalist’s view” means. According to Arab American National Museum Website ([*http://www.arabstereotypes.org/*](http://www.arabstereotypes.org/)), Orientalism is “a way of seeing that imagines, emphasizes, exaggerates and distorts differences of Arab peoples and cultures as compared to that of Europe and the U.S. It often involves seeing Arab culture as exotic, backward, uncivilized, and at times dangerous.”([*http://www.arabstereotypes.org/why-stereotypes/what-orientalism*](http://www.arabstereotypes.org/why-stereotypes/what-orientalism)). It is the way of dominating a nation by destroying their self-steam and picturing a distorted version of their tradition, religion, and the way they use to live.

Said declares that in the “modern empires” having big army never helped to keep the colonies under control. He gives examples of the empires like the Britain, France, Dutch, and Portuguese which ruled their colonies with a small amount of army. (185) Said claims, “The key element was imperial perspective.”(185) He analyzes “the imperial perspective” looked at the dominated country as a subject that they could decide its destiny and what they decided, the dominator believe worked best for that country.(186) Said notes that this approach might work for a while, mostly because “the local leaders” didn’t know any other way than “cooperating with the imperial authority.”(186) Said Emphasizes that this relation didn’t last too long because the argumentation between these two was “adversarial and impermanent,” so this argument may lead to a “colonial war."(186) Said confirms his idea by pointing out happened in Algeria and India. (186)

But the situation in the Middle East and specifically Arabs was different. “pacification through unpopular local rulers” let the U.S. to pursued its strategy in these countries.(186) This strategy was about having oil resources flow in The U.S vein, also established Israel domination in the region.(186) Although each empire claimed that they want to help local people with education and liberty, but the people lived in those countries felt otherwise.(186) Said explains how “the U.S. propaganda and policy apparatus” gave American people false information about the Arab world.(186) He claims, “ In the United States, “Arabists” are under attack.”(186) He illustrates how the media treated Arabs people by “vilest racist stereotyping”. (186)

In this part of the essay, Said shows how Americans responded to the Middle Eastern leaders when they were on the same page with them. He analyzes two leaders: the Shah of Iran and Anwar Sadat—Late leader of Egypt—whom were have a good relation with the U.S. Said emphasizes that Americans looked at them as “visionary[ies]” with the same principles as them, not leaders who “understand[s] the game of imperial power."(187)

Then he hints about what happened to those leaders 25 years after: Sadat was a “forgotten and unpopular man” in Egypt, remembered as a servant to U.S. He claims, “The same is true of the Shah in Iran.” Said believes that these two leaders followed by rulers that were “less palatable” toward the U.S. and this fact, “indicates not that Arabs are fanatics, but that the distortions of imperialism produce further distortions, inducing extreme forms of resistance and political self-assertion.”(187)

In next two paragraphs, Said discusses Palestinians reform. He comments that “reform is a matter of imperial interpretation.”(187) He compares Mahmud Abbas—“a bureaucrat and longtime Arafat subordinate”—with Yasser Arafat, who was criticized by Said in medias, but still “universally regarded as the legitimate Palestinian leader.”(187) He claims that Yasser Arafat was "an obstacle" in the way of the strategies that U.S. and Israel were pursuing to impose on Palestinians. (187) He mentioned that the U.S. and Israel, ignored the Independent National Initiative opposition because they didn’t want an “interlocutor” who makes trouble. (187) Said declares this attitude “shortsightedness” and “the blind arrogance of the imperial gaze.” He believes this was the way the United States point of view toward other Arabic countries such as “Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the other Arab states.” (187)

Said confirms, “Underlying this perspective is a long-standing view—the Orientalist view—that denies Arabs their right to national self-determination because they are considered incapable of logic, unable to tell the truth and fundamentally murderous.”(187) He believes that from the attack of Napoleon to Egypt till now, this orientalist view dominated the Middle East and it was the source of mostly bad and some good events. But advisors like Bernard Lewis and Fouad Ajami, “who have directed their venom against the Arabs in every possible way,” also ”Israel dogma shared uncritically by the neo-conservatives” in power who accelerate this problem, made people "accustomed" to the United States "ignorance.(188)

Said points out the source of these years of “turmoil and misery” in the Arabs world is “U.S. power” which is hard to solve because the United State doesn’t believe that. (188)

Because this essay was published on July, 2003,—which is exactly 13 years ago—we have a chance to have a thorough review about things that happened during these years. Especially, regards to the Republican Party nominee for President of the United States in the 2016 election—Donald Trump—about Muslims, make it more exciting and relevant. It is a fact that during last century, the United State tried to gain a bigger share of the Middle East pie, among its competitors—especially Britain, Soviet Union, France.

A few hundred years before the modern colonialism, it was the empires that browsed third-world countries to find one with the kind of resources they need and then invaded those countries, even took people of that nation as slaves. Nowadays, In most undeveloped countries that have a plenty of underground resources—but doesn’t have technology, knowledge or management to use those resources for the benefit of their people—it is probable they lapse to the countries with those talents. On the other hand, countries with “power’, seeking more resources for their power. Up to this part, it looks like a mutual, happy marriage between these two. But in reality, it doesn’t have a happy ending. Powerful countries seeking more power for their country’s sake and gives that much to the undeveloped country to keep this relation ongoing.

What we see in last few years in the Middle East was somehow an approval to this essay. We saw what happened in Yemen, Egypt, and Libya. People seeking freedom isn’t an unknown story. What happened in those countries may confirm the big idea of this essay, but what their situation is now, that is the sign of something more complicated. It is true that Arabs world tries to seek their self-determination, but believing in human rights and seeing all humankind with the same value is an essential ingredient to make a democracy. It is necessary for countries to do their homework before the final exam.

This belief should go through the nation’s vein and people of that country should respect this right. Frankly, I believe that there is difference between countries—same as human being—they don’t share a same value in a cross-section of a time. They may change and gain more potential, but what we are now, that makes what we deserve. If we don’t want to look ugly, we should try to stop doing ugly things. What I said is not about Arabs only, I believe any nation from north Korea to Iran or even the United States, first should try to change their face, then the reflection would become clear. Anyhow, it doesn’t justify the vicious face of stereotyping, which is a wrong way to see the world.

Talking about Iran reminds me in this essay, Said mentions the Shah of Iran and consider this country as a member of the Arabs nations. This is a huge misunderstanding, especially from a person who is authoritative about the Middle East. Not only Iran is a Persian country and most of the people talk in Farsi, there is a bold, thick line between these two which none of them want to make it thinner and talking about that is postponed to another time.

**Work Cited:**

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