

Near Eastern Studies 10: Lecture

Andre Garrett

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nomads

Bedouin: Arab word which refers specifically to camel/desert nomads
marginalized, small percentage of the population

sedentarization: movement away from nomadic life, most often involuntary

governments prefer sedentarism to nomadism

tribe loyalty, general disregard for boundaries

several governments forcibly settle nomads down (Jordan, Syria, Iran, etc.)

last half-century: sharp decline in nomadism

city: an area that moved away from agriculture

“parasite of the village” (reliant for food)

dominate politics and culture

irregular housing: squatter settlements ringing the outside of a big city

often called bidonville (French: metal can, tin ... house-building material)

essentially synonymous with the word “slum”

generally integrated into the city

“cities don’t make people poor, cities attract poor people” → opportunity

driving urbanization: lower infant mortality assoc. with high birth rates

people in the city though have lower birth rates

large number of young people and also a great difficulty with unemployment

difficult to measure, though: informal/underground economy significant

governments lie about everything, you never know what to believe

figures from the Middle East are rarely verifiable

there is also “underemployment”

referring to a large number of people working but with nothing to do

especially prevalent in civil/govt orgs: buying loyalty with sinecures

but also evident elsewhere; man paid to turn on the faucet in the hotel

privatization trending upward in the Middle East

most countries (esp. Syria, Algeria) historically feature govt. intervention in industry

example Egypt privatizing wine industry

initially, unemployment spikes with the shift

additionally, crony capitalism prevalent (industries to those in power at dirt-cheap prices)

expectation gap; ability to observe those who are more affluent than oneself

8/31

Many thanks to Lakshay!

Resources in the Middle East

General terms, under resourced and not evenly spread out. Main resource is oil, unrenewable so will run out and what happens then. No one knows when the oil will run out. Technology has improved so they are able to extract oil they wouldn't be able to before. US might become an exporter due to fracking, good for short term!

Second natural resource are phosphates - Morocco is the largest producer. Morocco and Tunisia get income from tourism.

Theres an obvious disparity between each country in the ME, Qatar has an average income of 88000 and yemen only has 1000. The wealth in even the rich countries is distributed poorly. To sustain democracy you need a stable middle class which is often missing in these countries.

Most important resource is water. Agriculture uses up a lot of water. Most countries are semi-arid, so they don't get any rain. Aquifers are rocks which store water underground, this is Saudis main source of water. Some aquifers are recharged every year by rain some times they aren't and this is called fossil water since it's unrenewable. Turkey is building dams to trap water and use it for hydroelectricity and farming etc. However this stops water getting to Syria. Turkey and Syria have damn systems which would working together cause Iraq to lose 80% of its water. River Nile is life blood of Egypt. Very worried about the fact that it runs through Ethopia and so they'll feel the knock on affect. Desalinization is another option. Heat up the water, and then condense the water.

Prime agricultural land is now being turned into housing. Egypt used to be an exporter but now is an importer. North Africa used to be the granary of the Roman Empire now it has to export its wheat.

Some countries practice remittance economies. They send money back home to their families. 3 million Egyptians work outside their home country. The gulf countries have a small populations so need more workers and Germany after WW2 (same with Britain and France). Immigrants don't have skill set and can't speak the language, they aren't treated well so they turn to drugs and petty crime so not good for economy. Very hard to get a job because of discrimination/alienation. In many places workers can't get citizenship, in Kuwait 80% are immigrant workers.

Spark for revolution in Tunisia was Dec 17, 2010. Local street vendor sets himself on fire in protest against unfair system set up there. Needed the system to be overthrown. Driven by anger and humiliation. It isn't religious ideology - positive when overthrowing dictator and crazy when it comes to ISIS etc.

9/2

Language:

a component of ethnicity; binding

they change

they are related to each other by common ancestry

Proto-Indoeuropean

English Latin Russian Persian Lithuanian

Original location unknown, around 6000 B.C.

Writing begins around 3000 B.C.

No hard sources, but a construct of linguists

English most closely related to Frisian, (spoken in regions of Netherlands)

Lesson: to be a language you don't need to have a country

Some language families (number of: 20-40)

Semitic: Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, Akkadian

Altaic: Turkish, Mongolian

Sino-Tibetan: Tibetan, Chinese (several languages)

Indo-European: Persian, Pashto (Afghanistan)

Aramaic (Syria, Iraq, Iran) (Jesus)

60% of people involved in NES 10 speak Arabic

Decline in the number of languages

Key cause: urbanization

Some languages appear unrelated to even Proto-Indo-European

e.g. Basque (Spanish-French mountains)

Monogenesis of language theory (single common ancestor)

Not demonstrable

Use of the same system of writing does not necessarily indicate related languages

Very different forms of Arabic (African, Iraqi varieties, etc. very disparate)

The language stigmatized

Some fear of the co-culturization

Convergence American-centric

9/14

The Current State of Iraq

Iraq is very much a new state; formerly under the Ottoman Empire

Three administrative units, north (Mosul), middle (Baghdad), south (Basra)

Ottoman collapse → control of the British

British combined the three provinces and joined together, named Iraq

British created a very inorganic state, provinces didn't join well

Mosul mostly Kurdish, around Baghdad mostly Sunni, around Basra mostly Shi'i

Shi'i majority, but British created a Sunni-dominated state

Why? Sunnis near Baghdad, and Ottomans had been Sunnis

1946 665,000 Baghdad almost all Sunni Arab

1964 2 million Arab many more Shi'is come in

Good agriculture, good oil source

'Independent' in '32: next period, many coups, untrackable, Saddam Hussein 1970-2006

perhaps the most coercive police state in the Middle East

1980-1988 Iraq-Iran War (much like WWI trench warfare)
pointless war; can't understand motivation, all based on Saddam Hussein's dictate
"we Arabs against those Persians"

Iran seems to begin winning, US begins to help Saddam with weapons, aerial reconnoitering
war devastating to the Iraqi economy, net loss of \$100 billion to the surplus, becomes deficit
Saddam then attacks Kuwait (is part of Basra province, so could be considered part of Iraq)
an argument that he was eliminating an artificial boundary by doing so
but was more or less self-interested, to get the oil (Oct 8, 1990)
Jan 16, 1991, US sends in military in Gulf War I, US returns Kuwait to Kuwaiti
but Saddam Hussein remained in power
assumed that US intervened to prop up Saudi Arabia
US invasion prompts a new use of Islam as a tool for his govt, increasingly allied w/Muslims
9/11 → Gulf War II, WMD, linkage b/t Saddam and Al Qaeda (false)
Al Qaeda composed of Sunni religious fanatics (Saddam a secularist)
Mar 20, 2003, May, Mission Accomplished sign
Problem: what's going to happen after the overthrow
inorganic state with strong fault lines, no democratic govt for 90 years
stirred up anti-American feeling
suppression of the Kurds (e.g. Saddam Hussein, 1988, campaign, for their oil)
Kurdish region more and more separated, safe, as good as independent
But have not demanded out-and-out independence, have just worked w/in system
"We won't break away from Iraq, but they might from us."
Iraq needs to be rebuilt; but more like built for the first time, from the ground up
ISIS; extreme sects of Islam, extreme even for most Muslims
If going to invade, should have made a much larger long-term commitment
Marsh Arabs from the far south of Iraq, traditional lifestyle
Mostly Shiis took refuge there; some say they are Sumerian descendants