

From terrorists to revolutionaries: the emergence of “youth” in the Arab world and the discourse of globalization

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Abstract

Why are the Arab Revolution dubbed as Youth Revolutions? Who is pushing for this label? And why? Prior to these revolutions and specifically after 9/11 Arab youth were dubbed as terrorists, and their state of Arab youth has become one of global concern. How over night can terrorist youth turn into revolutionary youth? Why has youth become a focus of concern now? What is at stake here and for whom? How does this shape how we think about social, economic, political, historical issues in the Arab world, and what issues does it obscure? The paper focuses on the historical emergence and transformation of “Arab youth” in the new millennium marked by the war on terror and opening up of the market in the Middle East in the hope that this historical account might shed light on the current label of Arab Revolutions as Youth ones.

Introduction

The past decade has witnessed a “youth turn” in the Arab world. Youth ministries have been formed and national youth strategies produced; there has been a surge in NGOs tailored to youth, and curriculum changes dedicated to making youth “employable;” youth parliaments have been formed in many Arab countries to increase political “participation” among youth. In Egypt, for example, 60% of youth NGOs were created between 2003 and 2006. Many reports about the state of Arab youth have been released. The Arab League dedicated its 2005 and 2006 reports to the subject of Arab youth. Newspapers have dedicated weekly pages to Arab youth. The Arab Network of NGOs dedicated its 2007 annual report to analyzing Arab youth and civil society. Policy-making centers dedicate sections to youth – such as the Issam Fares at the American University of Beirut and the Dubai School of Government.

Prior to this surge of interest in youth in the Middle East itself, a parallel surge of studies and policy-making documents tailored to Arab youth were released in the US, immediately after the 9/11 attacks in 2001. Initiatives were taken to tackle the issue of Arab youth by the *Muslim Youth Initiative* at the Rand Corporation¹, the *Middle East Youth Initiative* at the Brookings Institute (which partners with Issam Fares and the Dubai School of Government program)², as

¹ http://www.rand.org/international_programs/cmep/imey.html

² <http://www.shababinclusion.org/>

well as the US State Department's *YES Program*. NGOs tailored to serving youth in the Arab World were also formed in the US during the period, such as the Education for Employment Foundation. International organizations such as the UN soon followed suit: the *UN Millennium Goals: Arab Youth Lens* was designed³, and the ILO also released a special report on Arab Youth. Besides these special documents on Arab youth, documents that were meant to reform the Arab World overall – such as the *Arab Human Development Report* – also included special focus on the “youth question.”

Why is this turn to youth happening now? How are youth presented in these documents and organizations? Is there one single class of youth? What is the rhetorical, social and political function of youth in this discourse? According to most academic and policy documents on the subject, this newfound sense of priority stems logically and immediately from a concern with the conditions of youth in contemporary Arab society. From these documents, whether in the Arab World or in the West, one can highlight three central reasons behind the recent turn to youth: (1) a demographic “bulge” that has made the current generation of youth in the Arab world the largest in history, with youth comprising 60-70% of the population in most Arab countries; (2) an increased demand for higher level skills, which are usually acquired during youth, as Arab countries move from manufacturing, resource and agricultural to “knowledge” based economies; (3) a growing threat to international peace and security by this large mass of youth, unable to find employment due to their lack of higher-order skills, and easy prey for recruiters from Islamic fundamentalist groups.

But these reasons provide at best only part of the story. The new turn to youth, though ostensibly drawn by a commitment to protecting the rights and interests of youth, receives its deeper motivation from a commitment to serving a coalition of dominant political and economic interests in the region made up of the US state, multinational corporations, as well as local Arab elites. In this paper, I focus on the particular case of youth programming in Jordan to illustrate how the contemporary Arab youth turn works to promote a neoliberal model of economic and political reform in the region, that distracts attention from structural injustices and inequalities, places responsibility for resolving regional insecurities onto individual youths themselves, and primarily benefits the interests of wealthy and powerful Arab, Western and American political and economic elites. This youth turn, moreover is based upon and, in turn, promotes, an Orientalist, cultural deficit model of Arab culture.

For the last decade, when talk of the Arab world is invoked in the west, the focus has always been on military invasions and occupations – from Iraq to Somalia, and from Palestine to Sudan. In the past year, however, the focus has shifted on popular uprisings, in what has been dubbed in the west as the Arab spring. What I want to focus on here is another crucial element for understanding the region that has received less attention but is vital to understand the connection of both the military interventions as well as the Arab spring. On the one hand,

³ <http://www.arab-hdr.org/publications/other/undp/mdgr/regional/mdg-arab-07e.pdf>

the US-led project of reasserting its power and interest in the region, and military, though obviously overwhelming, was only one leg of this policy. While the jet fighters were still bombing Iraq, Bremmer was writing his laws that looked like a neoliberal dream, and most Arab states were continuing their neoliberal economic and political reforms. While, the military effort may have had resistance and mixed success in constricted areas in the region, arguably, this political and economic agenda has had more far reaching impact in the region and is essential to recognize. On the other hand, despite inspiring efforts and real possibilities for change as a result of latest uprisings, it is still early to know the outcome exactly, since there is already evidence of incorporation or counter-revolution that these same Arab Elites and their global counterpart are playing a major role in. Hence, to understand these, one needs to understand the role of this decade-long project of political and economic reform and the incorporation of regional and global economic and political elites, as a result, in one neoliberal project.

Positivist vs. social constructivist models for thinking about youth

Conventional, mainstream and positivist models for thinking about social identities such as youth considers these identities to be natural, objective and concrete entities out there in the real world, independent of discourse, rhetoric or perception (Ariès 1965, Gillis 1974). If there is an increase in talk about Arab youth in the current period, then this is simply the automatic effects of an increase, for example, in the numbers of youth in Arab populations today. However, the sociological and historical study of youth in the West has shown that this way of thinking about youth is inadequate: for youth, like all social identities, is always and inescapably socially and culturally constructed (Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998).

The salience of youth as a social category emerges, in part, as an effect of social, cultural and economic shifts. In the West, for example, youth emerged with the rise of industrial capitalism, the emergence of large corporations and the creation of the modern bureaucratic nation-state, that together led to an increased demand for clerical, managerial and engineering labor, the spread of formal systems of schooling and extended durations of education that we today associate most closely with youth identity. Changes in family structure and home life in response to the introduction of industrial wage labor – the separation of work and home, parental daytime absence, shifting responsibility for socialization of the young and decreasing family size, for example – created a new sense of well-defined gaps between generations, a distinct separation of childhood from adulthood, and youth as an extended period of transition between these now separated spheres of life, age and activity. The development of state, school and corporate apparatuses for the centralized social control and reproduction of large-scale populations led to the spread of standardized, rationalized and finely age-grade distinctions in law, classification and institutional regulation that made chronological age socially, politically and

economically relevant in a way it simply had not been previously (Sukarieh and Tannock 2008; 2009).

But youth as a social category is never simply a side effect of political and economic development: it plays a far more integral role at the core of such development, and is regularly, explicitly and deliberately invoked and shaped by elites in the service of their political and economic agendas and interests. In the economic sphere, youth has historically been invoked by corporate enterprises and capitalist entrepreneurs as a way to secure cheap and compliant sources of labor to produce commodities, and as a way to construct markets to purchase commodities. From the rise of the industrial textile industry in early nineteenth century America, to the spread of fast-food and retail franchise chain outlets in the 1950s, to the creation of enterprise export zones for textile and electronic manufacturing across the global South since the 1970s, the construction of the “youth worker” has been a pivotal labor recruitment strategy. Likewise, the concept of the “teenager” was essentially invented as marketing demographic in America in the post-war period, identifying a new market niche for which goods and services could be produced, targeted and sold (Foner 1977, Dublin 1979, Klein 1999).

In the political sphere, youth has long been invoked as a threat and problem to be solved, on the one hand, and as the promise and vision of a better future to be embraced, on the other. To use the example of the spread of industrial capitalism in the West again, capitalist development caused massive social and geographical dislocations, leading to the growth of large populations of unemployed, unsupervised youth, often in urban settings, who were attached to identities and ways of life that were oppositional, alternative or exterior to corporate-led capitalism. Invoking scientific discourses of “juvenile delinquency,” based on standardized and universalized notions of proper stages of youth development, teams of psychologists, educators and social workers in the early twentieth century took what were actually conflicts across the divisional lines of class, race and competing social and economic systems, and reframed these as individualized problems in normative adolescent development, to be corrected through the application of expert knowledge and intervention (Willis 1981, Griffin 1993, Sukarieh and Tannock 2008).

On the flipside, youth has long been deployed by political parties and elites, whether on the left or the right of the political spectrum, as a way to promote and turn into reality their own ideological visions for the future of society. They do this practically by creating youth wings in their political parties, and seeking to use schools, the media and other educational sites to train future generations in their preferred ways of viewing the world. They also do this symbolically by linking their parties, platforms and politics with images and rhetoric’s of youth – and thus, of the new, the future and the modern. Thus, whenever and wherever we see an explosion of talk about youth, whether in the Arab World or anywhere else, it is never sufficient to simply say that this is because, there is a growing number of young people in society. Rather, we need always to ask who is talking about youth, in what contexts, and toward what larger economic and

political ends. Only then will we be able to understand the significance of the emergent youth turn in the Arab World today.

Youth in the contemporary Arab world

The large youth population in the Arab World presents both challenges and opportunities for Arab countries...and can be either a demographic gift or a demographic curse, depending on whether countries can use the human potential represented by their populations well enough to satisfy people's aspirations for a fulfilling life. For example, a large, rapidly growing population can be an engine of material development and human welfare when other factors conducive to economic growth—such as high levels of investment and appropriate types of technological know-how—are present. Absent such factors, however, it can be a force for immiseration as more and more people pursue limited resources and jobs.

- Arab Human Development Report⁴

When we examine the contexts, and agendas of the current youth turn in the Arab World, we find that youth discourse is made up of a tightly knit set of claims: (1) There is a demographic bulge of unemployed and underemployed youth in the Arab World; (2) This marginalized and excluded youth population poses a threat to regional and global security, and is a fertile breeding ground for fundamentalism and terrorism; (3) To help Arab youth and fight terrorism, there is an urgent need to develop and integrate Arab economies with western economies, specifically through promoting a neoliberal model of market liberalization. This discourse is found throughout most recent American and international reports on Arab youth. Graham Fuller, author of the Brookings Institute's *The Youth Factor* and former Vice-Chairman of the CIA National Intelligence Council at CIA, warns, for example:

The existence of a relatively large youth cohort within the population of Middle Eastern societies serves to exacerbate nearly all dimensions of its political, social and economic problems. It is youth that often translates broader social problems into an explosive and radicalizing mixture.... The great question for most Middle Eastern societies is who will be able to politically mobilize this youth cohort most successfully: the state, or other political forces, primarily Islamist? The attitudes that this youthful cohort will have toward the West is a particular concern, given an already serious deterioration of views of the U.S. Barring dramatic change in the U.S. approach to the Middle East, continuation of present trends will almost surely lead to new generations becoming socialized into an attitude of hostility to the U.S. and its policies. This increasingly youthful population may be destined to translate such feelings into political expression and even violent action.

⁴ UNDP. (2002). Arab Human Development Report. New York: UNDP

Indicators are that the U.S. probably will not succeed in the foreseeable future in capturing the imagination of most youth sufficiently to overcome anti-U.S. feeling at the political level or for offering the West as a plausible and attainable alternative model as a path for future development. Attitudes for resentment will also grow toward most regimes in the area. This creates an incredibly destabilizing mix, which could articulate itself in greater levels of terrorism, violence, and underlying instability, enduring over a period of generations (Fuller, 2006, pp.2-4).

But this frame for talking about youth in the contemporary Arab world is echoed by local Arab elites as well. The speeches of Queen Rania of Jordan are typical:

I meet with you, today, as I, together with the people of Jordan, recover from the criminal acts that struck our beloved country on November 9, 2005. These vicious acts have reaffirmed that we can stand up against this evil ideology, and have reinforced, without doubt, that we are witnessing a clear battle between two conflicting ideologies. One that is based upon the principle of life and hope, and another that is rooted in murder and chaos. We believe that the future is what counts, while they live in the past and seek to destroy that future. This future, represented by a fourth sector in society, is the target of today's ideological struggle. We have become accustomed to dealing with three classical sectors: The public, private and civil society sectors. We have overlooked the fact that a fourth sector is the true representative of our future, one that comprises more than 200 million Arab citizens, citizens whose voices have not been heard through the three-sector equation.⁵

Likewise, much the same rhetoric is espoused by the local elites represented in groups such as the Young Arab Leaders. Saeed Al Muntafiq, the head of the Young Arab Leaders, reflects in a personal interview, for example:

Well, we were in the World Economic Forum after September 11; a group of people met in New York and debated the main causes of the tragedy. Through the discussion, one of the main issues we all focused on is to how to prevent another 9/11 from taking place again.... We agreed that this could only happen if we manage youth, who have the future in their hands and who can effect positive change. Youth are the future, the saviors, if we do not catch them early on in life, I do not think we will have anything to look forward to. We need to create a culture of hope among them.⁶

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www.queenrania.jo/content/modulePopup.aspx?secID=&itemID=1035&ModuleID=press&ModuleOrigID=news - 22k Accessed January, 29,2009.

⁶ Personal Interview, November 20, 2007. Dead Sea, Jordan.

These claims about the current state and significance of youth in the Arab World are repeated so frequently that they become naturalized and universalized, and come to seem self-evident and obviously true. But there is nothing natural, universal or inevitable about any of the claims or assumptions made in this youth discourse. Rather, they perform a series of ideological and political moves that work to shut down debate, critique and questioning.

First, this youth discourse asserts that helping youth in the Arab World is the same as fighting terrorism, and is the same as promoting neoliberal economic reforms: these are all one and the same thing; they fit naturally together. Second, the youth discourse proposes that there is a natural affinity between the interests of US and local political elites to preserve their bases and structures of power, the interests of multinational and local business elites to grow their markets and profits, and the interests of Arab youth in healthy and fulfilling development. Third, the youth discourse suggests that fighting terrorism and promoting neoliberalism can be said to be done not for western, American or local elites, as we might expect, but for the benefit, first and foremost, of one the region's most marginalized population groups: that is, poor and working class, unemployed and underemployed Arab youth.

Quite obviously, it can be politically useful for US, international and local elites if their agendas can be framed as serving not themselves but poor, working and middle class youth in the Arab region. But the youth frame accomplishes more than this. It silences a whole set of questions and critiques: Are Arab youth really a threat to local and global security? What exactly is meant by "terrorism" and "fundamentalism"? Does the promotion of the US war on terror and the neoliberal economy actually help the mass of Arab youth – or does it cause them harm? Is it really the case that there is such a close affinity of interests between Arab youth, local and US elites – or is there actually a conflict of interests that needs to be addressed? According to the youth discourse, we need not worry about any such questions of ideology, political economy, or relations of power within or between nations. Indeed, specifics of local history, culture, social relations and political conflicts are essentially absent from these youth documents, or at best, visible only in the margins and background. Instead, all of these issues in the Arab world can be tied to a single, universal, unilinear and standardized model of healthy youth development in society. This universalizing and depoliticizing youth frame takes what are actually conflicts of ideology, class, nation, region and so forth, and re-positions them as a matter of healthy versus delinquent or stunted youth development. Thus, the specific social, political and economic agendas now being promoted in the Arab region are framed not as simply one choice among many other possible alternatives: they are presented instead as necessary and inevitable because they are, first, in terms of social generations, modern rather than backward, and second, in terms of individual age, demanded by the development needs of the local youth population.

1. Identifying youth: young global arabs vs. local Arab youth

Although the rhetoric used by Arab elites and international organizations speaks of targeting “youth” in the Arab world, in reality there is not a single class of youth that is being worked with. The discourse of youth serves to posit a false universality and cross-class unity that does not exist in the Arab World. Indeed, youth programming tends in practice to be oriented to one of two distinct classes of youth: the “Young Global Arabs,” on the one hand, and “Arab youth,” on the other hand. While both groups are talked about in terms of youth, the kinds of programming directed to each are radically different.

The Young Global Arabs class is comprised of the young members of local and global elites, who share the same perceptions and agendas as the Arab governments, international organizations and the United States. These individuals have mostly been educated in the West: 93.2% of them were educated in the UK or US, 3.4% in Jordan, and 3.4% in American universities in the Middle East, namely AUC and AUB. They choose to speak English as their language of preference, and are leaders of the private sector who have reaped the benefits of privatization and the free market economy. They own businesses and work as heads of NGOs.

The Young Global Arab position themselves as forward-looking reformers, who work in alliance with international and western groups to manage and reshape the broader class of local “Arab youth,” a group that is represented in starkly contrasting terms, as being backward, lazy, unskilled, unmannered, undisciplined, narrow-minded and susceptible to fundamentalism and terrorism. The Young Global Arabs in effect become “domestic Orientalists,” promoting a stereotyped vision of Arab culture, as incarnated by the local youth population. The problems of youth are the problems of Arab culture. The youth do not have entrepreneurship skills because we lack it in Arab culture. The youth do not value work because we have a culture of shame in the Arab world. The youth are terrorists because we lack a culture of hope in the Arab world. The youth are terrorists because the Arab mind is extremist. The youth are suicide bombers because the Arab culture is a culture of death. The youth are intolerant and do not accept others, because the Arab culture is fundamentalist. For the Young Global Arabs, the local youth/culture needs to be managed, for otherwise terrorism will take over the region. For this reason, they join hands with the “orientalists” of the West – in the American administration and other international organizations, such as the WEF, World Bank, and UN – to “manage” this local youth/culture that breeds terrorism. The young elites talk constantly about the “youth”, an abstraction that allows them to easily label them since they are speaking of an idea, youth, and not specific individuals.

Hence, the rhetoric of youth is not exempt from all the hierarchies embedded in Jordanian society. The notion of “youth” differs when used in reference to the young King, Queen and elites as opposed to referring to Jordanian youth in the rest of the population. The notion differs between the young, who are agents, and youth, who are their subjects. If youth is about change, there are the young – the King, Queen and elites – who design and implement programs of change,

in close coordination with US and international organizations, and then there are the youth, on whom these programs are implemented, and on whom change should be affected.

For not only do the reformers ally themselves with global elites, they also refer to the reformed as the local youth. Being affiliated with all sorts of global youth organizations, such as the Young Global Leaders, the Young Presidents Organization, the Young Arab Leaders, the Young Business Association, the World Economic Forum and its baby, the Arab Business Council, and having themselves started new organizations in Jordan, such as the Young Entrepreneurs Association and the Young Economists Society, these young reformers identify themselves as global and refer to the youth who are to be reformed as local. Many were the times when my young reformer interviewees referred to Jordanian youth as the local youth.

These “Arab” Young Global Elites have adopted the same view as the American administration about youth and have joined hands with other global elites to fight terrorism. Perceptions of youth among these young elites can be divided into two categories: the first pertain to the problems of youth, and the second to the solutions to this problem. Since fighting terrorism is done through integrating the non-integrating gap through the opening up of a market economy, perceptions of both the problems of and solutions for youth are projected in economic terms. Youth lack the skills to work in the global economy, they are lazy, they expect the government to help them, they are intolerant of others, and they are irresponsible, they do not like to take risks and be entrepreneurs, they do not know how to work in teams, and they are politicized and prone to fundamentalist recruitment. Youth thus need to be managed, protected from the fundamentalists; they need to learn to be entrepreneurs, to take responsibility for their lives, to accept the virtues of work, and to learn tolerance.

So what makes these elites perceive their culture the same way the orientalist do? Who are these elites? How do their interests converge with that of American imperialism? And what are their interventions? The split between Young Arab Elites and Jordanian youth tends to be represented by elites and international actors in Jordan as the division between the new society and the old society in the country. The new elites are always referred to as the new guards, who are for change, flexibility, openness and globalism. They are at war with the old guards, who are resistant to change, and who are against the reform projects just for the mere reason of being against change. As one of the new Arab Global leaders explained to me, “As products of the old guard, Jordanian youth, who have not had the chance like the young Arabs to study abroad and broaden their horizons, incarnate these values they inherited from the old guard and hence the need to work on them.” The whole political and economic struggle against the Hashemite reform project has been reduced to a cultural problem that can be resolved through a cultural intervention, led by USAID, without any need to reconsider what has the reform projects have inflicted upon Arab society.

The young new guards are mainly private sector actors, who are becoming increasingly important in Arab economy since the withdrawal of the state through privatization and structural adjustment programs. The emergence of such elites is not the outcome of competitive economic and entrepreneurial criteria, such as having leadership skills and creative ideas. Rather, these elites have been able to gain advantage by supporting the Palace, manipulating reform policies, and exploiting a system of personal networks to benefit from the new economic arrangements produced during the reform process. They are fluent speakers of English, which they embrace as if it were their native language. They are well educated and highly connected with global corporations and institutions such as the World Economic Forum.

This new generation has also benefited from their parents' generation's traditional economic bazaar-style networks, on top of which the new generation has created an international and modern network. Though the new Global Arab Elites present themselves as the new guards who are fighting against the old guard and all what it represents (i.e., nepotism, corruption and patronage), they continue the same practices of the old guards (who happen to be their parents), but now as part of the neoliberal as opposed to the welfare state. Their self-appointment as young agents of reform of Arab youth and society was only made possible by their inherited positions of privilege in the party system. Moreover, the patronage system inherent in the welfare state that they now condemn is replaced by a new patronage system based in the private sector. In fact, the private sector in most of the Arab world is dominated by relations of dependence on the government or on family, all cemented together by patronage-clientele networks implicit in the *Wasta* system. The reforms initiated in Jordan have been implemented within a system of rent-seeking and have preserved a network of state-business relations. The beneficiaries from such arrangements have been not only politicians, tribal leaders, and the traditional economic elites, but also a new generation of entrepreneurs, many of them the sons and daughters of the old political and economic elites.

Thus, although they position themselves as reformers and people who will fight against corruption, nepotism and connection to build the model society the US is calling for, stories of reform suggest the exact opposite to this is happening. Corruption and nepotism are fought when it comes to using public resources to get the public jobs, but not when it comes to getting public project contracts for elites. The Arab World has seen the emergence of a young entrepreneurial oligarchy, some of whom are more influential in determining political and economic policies than the prime minister or his government. The main player in this group is Bassem Awadallah, director of the King's Office and former finance and planning minister. Another major player is Sharif Zu'bi, who was once minister of industry and is now minister of justice. A law firm his family owns handled several mega-deals in Jordan before he took office, including the privatization of the telecom and mining sectors and other infrastructure deals that have influenced economic policy. The corruption of the old guard that stemmed from abusing Jordanians through promising them jobs in the public sector is replaced now by the new entrepreneurial oligarchy's use of their

political leverage to avoid implementing reform projects that harm their interests.

2. Disciplining youth: creating the compliant, neoliberal subject

Although official youth rhetoric speaks grandly of preparing young Arabs to work in a high skill, global knowledge economy, many youth programs in fact are geared to promoting discipline, work ethic, time manage and culture of responsabilization – all of which are more typically thought of as basic level, “soft skills.” Youth programming in the Arab world works to adapt youth to the extensive neoliberal economic reform process that has been pushed through by the most Arab governments since the late 1980s.

But in order for a neoliberal market economy to function, without facing massive political opposition and social unrest, the youth need to be trained to act and think as neoliberal, free market, enterprising subjects: not just by being provided with the requisite “skills,” but behaviors, attitudes, values and ideologies as well. While national identity promotion through Campaign like Jordan first, Lebanon first and others, is the responsibility of the public sector and civil society, with help from the private sector, American and international organizations are taking on the responsibility of promoting neoliberal free market economy to Jordanian youth. What are these programs teaching? What youth are targeted by these programs? The claim is often made in the West that Jordan is the focal point and one of the best examples of international efforts towards democracy promotion, youth empowerment, and modernization in the Arab world. A closer look at what is going on, however, reveals a promotion of neoliberal free market economy under the rubrics of democracy and promotion of nationalism rather than democracy in the political sphere.

The main organizations promoting these ideologies are Injaz - the Arab affiliate of Junior Achievement. Having had royal patronage- queen Rania of Jordan, Shikha Hassa of Bahrain, sheikh Moza of Qatar and the Young Arab Leaders of the World Economic Forum- and the support of major private sector corporation, Injaz have good media coverage in most of the Arab countries. It is mainly through this media promotion that Injaz is reaching out to almost all the youth population in the Arab world, beyond the number of students who are attending its courses. Hence, parallel to the 160,000 student participants of Injaz courses and programs, there are millions more youth who are being exposed to Injaz ideology though the media coverage of the organization.

The main objective of these programs is to empower youth and provide them with skills that will make them employable in the global market economy. This is achieved through a series of courses at two levels, secondary and post-secondary. Courses offered at K to 12 school levels are: Personal Life Planning, Personal Economics, and Enterprise in Action, Success Skills, Leadership Courses, Travel and Tourism Business, Entrepreneurial Master Class, My Money Business. Courses provided at the university level are: Fundamentals of Market Economy, Success Skills, Business Ethics, Leadership Course, Company

Course, Entrepreneurial Master Class, and Easy Learning. Through these courses, youth learn about the benefits of the free market economy, the importance of entrepreneurialism, and the primacy of business interests.⁷

The goal of these courses is to promote a sense of individual responsibility for economic well being in Jordan. What determines whether a young person makes it in the system or not is whether an individual has a good work ethic, is disciplined, has a sense of leadership and entrepreneurial skills. This promotes the myth that the free market economy is open to everybody: it is just a matter of skills you learn in order to succeed. It also obscures the structural injustices inherent in the system and the withdrawal of the government from providing for the public welfare. If this is true at an individual level, it is also true at a state level. Youth are taught that the US is the leader of the global economy, not because it is exploiting other nation's resources but because young people there have a set of skills that make them competitive, and this is due to the successful education system in the US that is designed to this end.

In this way, these programs work not only to pull youth into the global market economy but also to address the problems of economic instability that have been caused by the economic reform process in Jordan. Aware of the insecurities that the economic reforms for extending the free market economy will reproduce for Jordanian society, and bearing in mind the riots that erupted in the two phases of reforms during the reign of King Hussein in 1989 and 1996, USAID is implementing programs such as Najah, Injaz and the curriculum reform in order to prevent any such riots, by turning the insecurities of the system back onto individual themselves. Not only are youth made to internalize these insecurities, they are also made to believe it is their choice, turning them away from making demands on the state for protections from the shocks of the market. If in the old system, they were the workers by necessity, today they are the entrepreneurs by choice.

Injaz promotes a model of education where education is considered relevant when it is tied directly to the interests of the market and the private sector. This involves opening up the direct participation of the private sector in public education reaching UNRWA schools lately. The Injaz program itself involves corporations such as McDonalds, Safeway and Aramex in consulting on the programs, providing volunteers to teach Injaz courses, hosting internships, presenting their "success stories" to public school students, sponsoring schools (which gives them a space to advertise for their corporations), and most importantly, funding Injaz in its entirety since the conclusion of the initial grant period of USAID.

⁷ <http://www.injaz.org.jo/SubDefault.aspx?PageID=153||Node=183> Accessed on July 27, 2007

Conclusion

Are these projects tailored only to youth? Is the ideology spread through programs tailored to youth confined to them or is it spread through other projects tailored to other social categories in the Arab world? If the same sets of ideas are promoted to different categories how are to think about youth? Would it be more critical if we consider policies that are being promoted for what they are, to see whose interests are being served and what alternative could be chosen instead? And if same policies are being promoted to different categories in the Arab region in this historical moment a question poses itself: what is the function of youth now?

From research on the topic, one can infer that there are five functions of youth that seem to be clearly serving interest of elites as well as international community at the moment. First, youth fits into the ideas of change needed for the region: youth are always thought as the agents of change so this will legitimate the project of change and reform through which interests of US policies are carried out. It goes along well with the whole infatuation with change, a way of framing the project of development as a single evolutionary process; youth are unfinished adults and need to be brought into adulthood; Like the Arab world is underdeveloped and needs to be brought into global economy in order to develop, Arab youth need empowerment in order to be competitive in the global economy. Second, youth discourse promotes an orientation to the future, delays of desires and suspensions of dreams, asking people to invest in projects now on the understanding it will lead to returns in the future. To reach this future, forums are established" forum for the future, and funds are allocated, funds for the future targeting projects with youth. Third, youth provides a neutral category, a euphemism that can avoid talking about other categories like class, although targets of youth programs are designed according to class, mainly the middle class and the poor youth, and religion that can be more politically charged, and this helps the process of depoliticization, aiming at the creation of politically docile citizens/consumers. Fourth, fostering divisions among generations constitutes part of a process of atomization, which follows neo-liberal democratization through decentralization and the separation of economics from politics, helping the process of control. Fifth and finally, youth discourse legitimates intervention, training and paternalism that constitute the American project in the MENA region.

If this paper focused on specific political agendas of work with youth in the Arab World, it is important to keep in mind, however, that youth appeals to different groups not all of whom share the kinds of political agendas this paper tried to cover. This however, makes us recognize that this is precisely why youth is promoted as a frame by political and economic elites in this part of the world in such a historical conjuncture: simply due to the fact that it has broad appeal and it can become a good marketing tool for projects they need to effect in this part of the world. Researchers need to look at why it is being promoted now, by

whom and to what ends. The same applies for the promotion of the latest development in the Arab world as youth revolution.

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