



Research Paper, 20 August 2017

Institutional Reform of State Agencies in the Arab Region

→ Adel Abdel Ghafar, Agadid Zakaria, Islam Abdelmajid, Rabia Belhejla.



Clashes between security forces and fans of the Zamalek Football Club, Cairo, February 2015 © EPA / STR



Arab Reform Initiative

Introduction *by Amr Adly, ARSP mentor* The state was the subject of political and political economic analysis in general in the post-independence period. This was also the case in the Arab region, where new states emerged with cumbersome civil bureaucracies and large military and security apparatus, and with huge powers to control the management and direction of (natural and human) economic resources. It was as if the burden of economic and social modernization had been placed on those newly independent States in the face of traditional societies lacking the social classes capable of advancing modernization, be they bourgeois or national proletariat. Despite the decline of the development models of the state by the seventies, the Arab state has continued to be the focus of analysis of development and modernization with the flow of oil money and the emergence of rentierism in most, if not all, the Arab countries, whether direct producers of oil or receivers of oil through secondary flows. This has placed emphasis on the importance of the state as a holder of wealth and as a source of distribution for different social strata. By the 1990s, the shift towards market capitalism in the larger Arab countries with the least oil possession had renewed interest in the role of the state by focusing on the form of distributive alliances that would enable or impede the shift towards a free market. This moved studies to concentrate on public institutions necessary for free market relations to grow such as protection of private property rights, enforcement of contracts, the rule of law and other good governance standards associated with growth and development. In most Arab countries, the question of the state remains central in order to reach a comprehensive picture of the problems of economic and social development. At the heart of the development problem here are the economic institutions of the state, which cannot be replaced in the absence or weakness of the state as defined by the famous German sociologist Max Weber more than a century ago as the only public actor who is supposed to formulate and apply a concept of public interest. However, the state is not a transcendent political entity that is isolated from society as much as it is the product of a long, complex and tortuous historical development of power in the modern era. Authority is not just a legal feature of the modern bureaucratic state more than it is a relation between the state and society with all its diversity, heterogeneity and lack of homogeneity. Hence the question: Where do the state development institutions come from? How do they reflect political or social conflicts or conflicts that overshadow the development performance of a national economy? These are the questions that this theme



Arab Reform Initiative

seeks to answer. It tries to do so by bringing the Arab state into the subject of research, study and analysis, not as a solid legal entity and as an example of the will of the people to liberate themselves from colonialism but as a historical and sociological form of authority at the stage of region' history that faces challenges and opportunities through highly complex political and social processes which entail deconstruction and reconstruction.



Arab Reform Initiative

About the authors

Adel Abdel Ghafar

Agadid Zakaria

Islam Abdelmajid

Rabia Belhejla

About Arab Reform Initiative

The Arab Reform Initiative is the leading independent Arab think tank working with expert partners in the Middle East and North Africa and beyond to articulate a home-grown agenda for democratic change. It conducts research and policy analysis and provides a platform for inspirational voices based on the principles of diversity, impartiality and social justice.

- We produce original research informed by local experiences and partner with institutions to achieve impact across the Arab world and globally
- We empower individuals and institutions to develop their own concept of policy solutions
- We mobilize stakeholders to build coalitions for positive change

Our aim is to see vibrant democratic societies emerge and grow in the region.

Founded in 2005, the Arab Reform Initiative is governed by a Plenary of its members and an Executive Committee.

arab-reform.net

contact@arab-reform.net



© 2017 by the Arab Reform Initiative.
To view a copy of this licence, [click here](#)