The University & Middle East Studies: Tensions Between Critical Inquiry & Institutional Imperatives

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To illuminate the context within which the rest of the contributions of this volume are located, we provide a historical perspective on the development of "Middle East studies" in the modern university. Arguing that this history reflects both the varied and rarely congruent political contexts and the converging institutional evolution of universities globally, we examine how the study of the Middle East and North Africa illustrates an uneasy tension in simultaneously fostering critical inquiry, producing educated elites, serving national interests, meeting international markets, and producing truly global knowledge. These different aims of the university not only exist in tension but might, under certain conditions, become actual contradictions. We may be experiencing such a moment of contradiction at the present time, both in the United States and in the Middle East and North Africa itself.

Much social science research takes place outside universities – in think tanks, private consultancies, international organizations, and corporate research departments. Most Middle East studies programs are outside the Middle East – in North America, Europe, and increasingly East and Southeast Asia.[1] This means that the focus of this essay and of the volume it is a part of – university-based social science research on the Middle East and North Africa – is one, if consequential, subset of a much larger, ill-defined collection of research enterprises within and beyond the Middle East itself. The imperatives of these enterprises differ, indeed sometimes seem to undermine each other, as the profit motive of consultants jostles with the humanitarian impulse of international organizations, or the national security demands of governments run up against the bureaucratic requirements of global higher education rankings. Nonetheless, locating university social science on the Middle East in this landscape provides a useful backdrop to the discussion that follows.

Much early social research was – and continues to be – undertaken by government agencies. By the end of the nineteenth century, new and newly ambitious states endeavored to manage urban growth, promote social mobility, mitigate

poverty, sustain agriculture, police conduct, and foster innovation. "Seeing like a state" required social science.[2] Over the twentieth century, the business value of greater knowledge and better data became clear as well. Corporate research departments devoted to divining consumer preferences, marketing strategies, and financial and political risk grew, while multinational corporations developed new products and expanded into novel markets after World War II. The creation of the United Nations and the Bretton Woods organizations – the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank – generated still more demand for systematic data collection and analysis about people and their social, cultural, economic, and political lives. International advocacy organizations and think tanks proliferated and employed social scientists to systematically collect and analyze data about individual and collective human behavior.

Today in the Middle East, as public policy scholar Dina El Khawaga has pointed out, social science research is housed in "Arab universities that produce academic theses and courses; think tanks; and private and specialized research centers [as well as] human rights organizations or independent online journalism."[3] Major global consulting companies provide research for governments and multinational corporations while international organizations, like United Nations agencies, regularly commission research undertaken by local consultants. Universities are hardly alone; indeed, they are a relatively modest feature of the big picture.

That said, universities have remained crucial to sustaining the social science research enterprise as sites of training and of theoretical and methodological innovation: the production, accumulation, and transmission of knowledge. The association of research and teaching in the development of the American research universities, an innovation originally imported from Germany in the nineteenth century, afforded social scientists a measure of independence and autonomy that permitted and fostered both invention and self-reproduction through research and teaching.[4]

As a field, Middle East studies was originally driven by multiple purposes, very few of which were internal to the region. As Edward Said showed, almost from the birth of Islam, Christian unease drove both curiosity and antagonism in Europe, but by the nineteenth century, European interest was heightened by imperial ambition: European militaries were occupying North African territories, European travelers were investigating the Arabian Peninsula, and Americans were exploring the Holy Land, including Daniel Bliss, founder of the American University of Beirut in 1866, and Mark Twain, who published his travelogue *Innocents Abroad* in 1869.[5] Paris's Sciences Po (*Institut d'études politiques*) was established in 1872, and in 1886, the university created a colonial studies program to better equip the French colonial administration.[6] By the twentieth century, the demand for qualified administrative staff, as well as commercial agents, mission-

aries, doctors, and other representatives of what the League of Nations would soon formally call the "civilized world" to work in the territories of the defunct Ottoman Empire, created yet more demand for educational programs.[7] London's School of Oriental Studies opened in 1916 (renamed in 1938 as the School of Oriental and African Studies) to prepare Britain's political, commercial, and military representatives in Asia and Africa.

The American rise to global power after World War II led to the formalization of "foreign area studies" in the United States, and by the 1960s, the American government was funding dozens of university-based centers on the Middle East and North Africa, supporting hundreds of students to study the "less commonly taught" languages of the region.[8] Although there were concerns that the end of the Cold War would lessen interest in foreign area studies in the United States in favor of "international" or "global" studies, in fact – and in no small measure thanks to the U.S. response to the attacks of 9/11 in the "Global War on Terror" – by the 2020s, the United States had more than fifty academic centers devoted to the study of the modern Middle East. By contrast, there were only four academic centers on the Middle East and North Africa in the entire Arab world: three at English-medium universities established by Americans – the American University of Beirut, the American University in Cairo, and the Georgetown University campus in Qatar – and one operating in Arabic – the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies and the associated Doha Institute of Graduate Studies in Qatar. (There were also two in Turkey, both at English-medium universities, and several more in Israel.)

In fact, and perhaps not surprisingly, most of the social science research *on* the region *in* the region was focused on public policy, development studies, business, or management. Like the university study of domestic issues in the United States, such research was "mainstreamed" and often housed within faculties, schools, and departments such as Cairo University's Faculty of Economics and Political Science.[9] As elsewhere, however, much of it was sponsored by governments, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, quasi-governmental organizations, and think tanks.[10] The relative weakness of the higher education sector in the Middle East and North Africa meant that while regional universities produced graduates equipped with skills useful to these efforts, they did not house major funded research programs themselves. Governments – many mistrustful of faculty syndicates and student activists – provided relatively little funding for university-based research in general, directing resources instead to more easily managed think tanks and consultants. As a result, very little social science research in the region, whether on the Middle East or otherwise, is systematically subject to the scholarly standards – peer review, verifiable documentation, public dissemination – that contribute to the accumulation of knowledge or to the strengthening of universities.

T he frailty of the social science research enterprise in the Middle East and North Africa is exacerbated by the changing condition of universities globally. Well into the twentieth century, universities were institutions of a privileged elite who in turn sustained their institutions as autonomous spaces in which discovery, broadly understood, was fostered. Unfettered inquiry by students and faculty as they reexamined received wisdom, challenged prevailing opinion, and broadened and deepened understanding of the social world was a source of innovation, productivity, and power. The end of World War II produced not only a demand for area studies in the United States, but also brought the expansion of universities around the world. The postwar "massification" of higher education in the United States mirrored the national push for education after independence in much of the postcolonial world. Newly ambitious governments and growing international, multinational, and transnational organizations wanted skilled, well-educated staff.

By the 1990s, however, across the world, higher education and the institutions it housed represented a sector in crisis. Public support waned, cramped by the fiscal crises that had afflicted many governments, and it was further diminished in the subsequent triumph of neoliberal ideologies. The contraction of the state in favor of the market was heralded as the new solution to the perennial problems of promoting order and prosperity; universities pivoted from supporting the public good to serving the labor market. This turn prized, as philosopher Judith Butler put it, "the profitability of disciplines [and] a new regime of values that includes . . . as well 'impact,' marketable skills, managerial efficiency, donor appeal, the appreciation of human capital, and the internal demands of systems analysis, all of which have been identified as hallmarks of neo-liberalism."[11]

The utilitarian, instrumental purposes of higher education – to satisfy the labor market, to ensure employability, to stimulate innovation and spur growth – seem everywhere to be triumphant. The "crisis of the humanities" may or may not have been real in enrollment terms, but it certainly was in self-image, and in the view of most governments, firms, foundations, and, indeed, families.[12] As sociologists Daniel Nehring and Dylan Kerrigan observed,

> Over the past two decades, universities across the world have begun a transformation from scholarly institutions, concerned with intellectual pursuit in terms of their own merits, into an industry, concerned with the pursuit of measurable contributions to economic life. In other words, academic work and culture has been thoroughly financialized, through shifts in governments' policy, the efforts of international organizations, and the growing importance within universities of a new class of managers who view academia as business.[13]

Obviously, universities around the world struggle to make a case for scholarship in this neoliberal era.[14] Bill Ackman, the private-equity billionaire who spear-

headed the opposition to Claudine Gay as president of Harvard in 2023, wrote, for example, that:

> a university president requires more business skills than can be gleaned from even the most successful academic career with its hundreds of peer reviewed papers and many books. . . . The president's job – managing thousands of employees, overseeing a $50 billion endowment, raising money, managing expenses, capital allocation, real estate acquisition, disposition, and construction, and reputation management – are responsibilities that few career academics are capable of executing.[15]

As scholars of the Middle East and North Africa in Europe and the United States were reminded in the aftermath of the Israeli invasion of Gaza after the Hamas attack of October 7, 2023, academic freedom – the institutional setting for unfettered inquiry – can run afoul of the "reputation management" for which Ackman calls.

I f these are virtually universal characteristics of the state of social science research and university life in the world today, how do they express themselves in the Arab world? To what extent do regional specificities shape how concerns about the shrinking public mandate for social science, the growing commercialization of higher education, and increasing apprehension about the risks of research are exhibited? In some ways, the Middle East and North Africa seems a world apart from the highly elaborated systems of global higher education and research based in North America and Europe. In 2015, Jamil Salmi, education economist with the World Bank, observed that the Arab world

> represents 5.8% percent of the world population and produces 4.5% percent of the planet's GDP, but its universities account for only 0.08% percent of the top 500 institutions in the Shanghai ranking. . . . *The tiny territory of Hong Kong has more universities in the Shanghai ranking as all Arab countries considered together.*[16]

And the causes of the miserable record of the region's universities are well-known, as the secretary general of the Association of Arab Universities put it several years ago:

> The Arab world today faces a host of hurdles when it comes to higher education and scientific research including a lack of clear focus in research priorities and strategies, insufficient time and funding to meet research goals, low awareness of the importance and impact of good scientific research, inadequate networking opportunities and databases, limited international collaborative efforts, and of course, the brain-drain.[17]

This higher education sector in the Middle East and North Africa is relatively young. Until 1953, there were only forty-two universities in the Arab world. Ninety-seven percent of the approximately fifteen hundred universities in the region today were established after 1950; 70 percent were established after 1991.[18]

The first universities established after independence were part of state-led national development projects designed both to broaden access to higher education and to train the civil service of the newly independent countries. But the postindependence expansion of the state – and its related confidence in the value of education and research – was short-lived. The global erosion of belief in state-led development in the 1970s and 1980s, and the correspondingly diminished capacity of the states of the region to fund distributive welfare projects – including public universities that were, virtually without exception, tuition-free – contributed to the deterioration of national universities. Today, public universities everywhere in the region are heavily subsidized and run at a considerable financial loss; yet, despite the oft-remarked decline in quality, they cannot absorb the demand for places. The all-too-apparent inadequacy of the public higher education sector prompted many governments to permit, indeed, encourage, the establishment of private universities.[19] Today about one thousand of the Arab world's fifteen hundred universities, or 75 percent, are private – almost entirely for-profit institutions and almost all established after 1990.[20]

The failure of the early public universities to take root as reliable vehicles for social mobility and the relative novelty of the new private institutions mean that the university sector as a whole does not enjoy widespread popular support. Most university students are first generation, and their families are not experienced judges or consumers of university education. Moreover, with a few marked exceptions, regional universities have yet to develop established constituencies of alumni in positions of authority in either the public or private sectors. Reports on the accession of Mohammed Bin Salman as Crown Prince in Saudi Arabia in 2017 made much of the fact that, unlike most of the ruling family princes, including his older brothers, he had not studied outside the Kingdom.[21]

In fact, over the past decade or so, Arab Gulf states have made it an explicit aim to transform into what are known as "knowledge economies," a framework introduced by management guru Peter Drucker in the 1960s in which "knowledge" is less an end in itself or a tool of empowerment than an instrument by which states or cities worldwide compete for visibility, status, and wealth.[22] The international branch campus has had particular visibility in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, while many of the new private universities are, or portray themselves as, "international" in an effort to convey (if not actually provide) access to the international labor market – see, among others, the German University in Cairo, the British University of Egypt, the German-Jordanian University, the American University in Dubai, and the American University in Kuwait. As a result, education and research – that is, learning – tend to be seen as a by-product. Indeed, the ruler of Dubai, Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, himself a prominent advocate of this new approach, took Ackman's enthusiasm for the management methods of the private sector even further, arguing, "maybe the time has come for [the Gulf

Cooperation Council or the Arab League] to be overseen by leaders, managers, businessmen, heads of industry and entrepreneurs instead of foreign ministers."[23]

In this context, the social sciences have been particularly challenged. Fewer than half the universities in the region offer social science degrees, and six countries (Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq) account for nearly 90 percent of the university-based social science research centers.[24] Even the American-style private universities emphasize technical and preprofessional education, as political scientist Shafeeq Ghabra has observed:

> Most degrees in the new American-style institutions are technical, science-related, or business-oriented. Degrees in the arts and humanities tend to be limited to mass communication, education, and languages. Few universities offer degrees in fine arts, history, or the social sciences.[25]

To some extent, the debility of the social sciences and humanities reflects the unacknowledged bias of many of its fields: as political scientist Stanley Hoffmann noted decades ago, for example, international relations is an "American social science" and, despite many worthy efforts to "decenter" it by scholars in the Arab world and beyond, it continues to reflect a predisposition to see the world from Washington, London, and Brussels.[26]

Skepticism about social science also, however, reflects an anxiety, not to say hostility, on the part of many of the governments that would ordinarily be expected to be major consumers, and therefore advocates, of such work. Even among governments eager to foster the "knowledge production" that will produce world-class innovation and a thriving economy, there is reluctance to invest in the humanities and social sciences.[27] These disciplines are widely – and no doubt sometimes rightly, given their original link with politics and policy – seen as likely to cause embarrassment to governments and harm to states. Such assumptions affect even private institutions. As sociologist Sari Hanafi has written:

> Historically AUB [American University in Beirut] played a major role in producing critical scholarship. Critical intellectuals, reformists and nationalists engaged with the public, addressing critical issues in Arab history, modern readings of the Koran, gender education and Arab unity. However, since the beginning of the 1980s, the financial and institutional focus within universities has shifted from the departments of history, philosophy and Middle Eastern studies, and is instead focused on business and engineering schools. . . . Whereas AUB was once a vibrant space of critical thinking, challenging common suppositions and engaging with the public, . . . administrators have become cautious because of the sensitivity of some of these engagements.[28]

Even when governments do commission research, they are reluctant to disseminate the results, as illustrated in Egyptian sociologist Mona Abaza's descrip-

tion of a study on poverty sponsored by the National Institute for Planning. When the study was completed, the then-prime minister called the principal investigator and reproached him: the study's finding that 36 percent of the population lived under the poverty line could not be published. After negotiations with the government, the official poverty level was announced to be 19 percent. As Abaza put it, "sociologists are constantly negotiating over scientific scales and facts, in an effort to adapt their findings to the national level political reality."[29]

Foreign researchers are similarly suspect. Again, this sometimes is merited. As El Khawaga and colleagues have observed, the "importation of foreign expertise, particularly North American, has served to simultaneously crowd out and delegitimize most local and organic knowledge producers and to marginalize their inputs in formal policy debates."[30] Yet the suspicion of foreigners is often less about empowering local researchers and more about misconstruing research altogether. In the aftermath of the murder of Giulio Regeni, an Italian doctoral student from Cambridge who was killed in police custody in Cairo in 2016 while studying independent labor syndicates, a security official was quoted as saying, "They figured he was a spy.... After all, who comes to Egypt to study trade unions?"[31] There is, in fact, a robust literature on "workers on the Nile," but to many Egyptians, and most Egyptian security officials, a foreign examination of labor activity is at best a reflection of the historical utility of social science research in the service of imperialism, and at worst a simple cover for spying.[32]

This skepticism often extends to universities as a whole. As John Waterbury, former president of the American University in Beirut, wrote,

> There is ... one piece of the governance puzzle that does sharply distinguish the Arab university from its European and American peers. The Arab university is perceived by the prevailing authoritarian leaders in the MENA as a particularly dangerous entity. The concentration of brain power, youth, energy, open debate and daily engagement with big issues constitutes a threat for autocrats. They become schizophrenic, hoping the university will produce the expertise needed to run the country while seeing threats and malevolent maneuvers in every corner.[33]

The conviction that research and education are intrinsically dangerous resonates with the growing global anxieties about the importance of risk management.[34]

For these reasons and perhaps others, the observation of Hanafi and sociologist Rigas Arvanitis about Egypt before 2011 seems apt: "The research system had come to a halt.... The stress on the university system was enormous: lack of funds, inappropriate structures, bad management.... We cannot but be convinced that some of the dry tinder that fed the [2011] revolution can be found among the frustrated academics and students."[35] The fires of that revolution were soon spent, however, and higher education in the region was caught in the ensuing battles. More than five hundred academics were assassinated in Iraq in the fifteen

years after the U.S. invasion in 2003; a January 2013 bombing of Aleppo University killed over eighty students and a March 2013 mortar attack on Damascus University killed fifteen more; student protests in Egypt after 2013 reportedly led to over one hundred and fifty deaths. An estimated seventy thousand Syrian university students are displaced in Lebanon and another forty to fifty thousand are displaced in Turkey and Jordan.[36] A poll of young people aged fifteen to twenty-four in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and the Kurdish Region of Iraq concluded in 2016 that "across the Middle East, a whole generation of young people . . . is losing hope in the future. . . . If we are to avoid a lost generation, much more support needs to be given to youth to allow them to regain control over their futures and develop into educated, productive and engaged members of society."[37]

The study of the Middle East and North Africa is fraught with power disparities, with the imposition of distinct and often competing policy agendas, with institutional contexts that are at best indifferent and often actively hostile to the research enterprise itself. Scholarly collaboration across national borders is inhibited by conflicting political commitments and demands as well as legal impediments, institutional constraints, and disciplinary conventions. Social scientists both within and outside the region look to each other for solace and support in contexts where their colleagues are often ignorant of and indeed even unsympathetic to the challenges of the research enterprise. Yet, as one of us has written elsewhere, while "the possibilities for nurturing transregional academic innovation, dialogue, and exchange appear bleak . . . there are new opportunities for Middle East studies to reinvent itself as a truly global field of knowledge."[38] The Research Ethics in the Middle East and North Africa (REMENA) project of which this volume is an expression is devoted to revealing and addressing the obstacles to that reinvention, in the enduring belief that the social science research enterprise, in Middle East studies and beyond, represents a worthwhile contribution to human knowledge.

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ENDNOTES

[1] See Degang Sun, "Six Decades of Chinese Middle East Studies: A Review," *Bustan: The Middle East Book Review* 2 (1) (2011): 15–32; Miyazi Kazuo, "Middle East Studies in Japan," *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 34 (1) (2000): 23–36; and Byung-Ock Chang, "Islamic Studies in Korea," *International Area Studies Review* 13 (1) (2010): 3–21, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/223386591001300101.

[2] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (Yale University Press, 1999).

[3] Dina El Khawaga, "Sites and Channels of Public Policy Knowledge in the Arab Region: The Forest, the Trees, and the Poison Ivy," in *Knowledge as a Public Good: Reconceiving the Purpose and Methods of Knowledge Production*, ed. Jamil Mouawad, Sarah Anne Rennick, and Andrew Findell-Aghnatios (Arab Reform Initiative, 2024), 13.

[4] See Jonathan Cole, "Defending Academic Freedom and Free Inquiry," *Social Research* 76 (3) (2009): 811–844.

[5] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Pantheon Books, 1978); Sally Totman, "Imperial Reach: European Explorers and Imperial Agents in the Middle East," in *Staging Authority: Presentation and Power in Nineteenth-Century Europe. A Handbook*, ed. Eva Giloi, Martin Kohlrausch, Heikki Lempa, et al. (De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022), 339–362; Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge University Press, 2004); Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad* (Wordsworth Editions, 2010); and Betty S. Anderson, *The American University of Beirut: Arab Nationalism and Liberal Education* (University of Texas Press, 2011).

[6] Richard Descoings, *Sciences Po. De la Courneuve à Shanghai* (Presses de Sciences Po, 2007).

7 "The Covenant of the League of Nations," The United Nations Office at Geneva, https://www.ungeneva.org/en/about/league-of-nations/covenant (accessed September 5, 2024).

8 Full disclosure: one of the authors of this essay, Lisa Anderson, began her Arabic language training supported by what was then called a National Defense Foreign Language (NDFL) Fellowship; by the late 1970s, the program had been renamed the Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship, which is what it remains to this day. See Seteney Shami and Cynthia Miller-Idriss, eds., *Middle East Studies for the New Millennium: Infrastructures of Knowledge* (New York University Press, 2016); Matthew F. Jacobs, *Imagining the Middle East: The Building of American Foreign Policy 1918–1967* (American University in Cairo Press, 2011); and Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

9 Rigas Arvanitis, Roland Waast, and Abdel Hakim Al-Husban, "Social Sciences in the Arab World," in *World Social Science Report 2010* (UNESCO Publishing, 2010), https://horizon.documentation.ird.fr/exl-doc/pleins_textes/divers11-01/010050270.pdf.

10 El Khawaga, "Sites and Channels of Public Policy Knowledge in the Arab Region: The Forest, the Trees, and the Poison Ivy," 15. See also Noha El-Mikawy and Laila El Baradei, "Public Policy Studies and Research in the Arab World," *Global Perspectives* 5 (1) (2024), https://doi.org/10.1525/gp.2024.93045.

11 Judith Butler, "Ordinary, Incredulous," in *The Humanities and Public Life*, ed. Peter Brooks and Hilary Jewett (Fordham University Press, 2014), 18.

12 Matthew Reisz, "Humanities Crisis? What Crisis?" *Times Higher Education*, July 9, 2015, https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/humanities-crisis-what-crisis (accessed August 8, 2024). Let the Spellings Report stand as a case: "Fewer American students," it said, "are earning degrees in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, mathematics), medicine, and other disciplines critical to global competitiveness, national security, and economic prosperity.... [Thus,] the commission supports increasing federal and state investment in education and research in critical areas such as the STEM fields, teaching, nursing, biomedicine, and other professions." To that end, the report went on, "Higher education institutions should improve institutional cost management through the development of new performance benchmarks designed to measure and improve productivity and efficiency. Also, better measures of costs, beyond those designed for accounting purposes, should be provided to enable consumers and policymakers to see institutional results in the areas of academic quality, productivity and efficiency." See U.S. Department of Education, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education* (U.S. Department of Education, 2006), https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED493504.pdf (accessed August 10, 2024).

13 Daniel Nehring and Dylan Kerrigan, "Introduction: Academic Freedom in Crisis," Social Science Space, September 2, 2016, https://www.socialsciencespace.com/2016/09/introduction-academic-freedom-in-crisis.

14 And the examples are legion: In 2015, Wisconsin Governor and erstwhile Republican presidential candidate Scott Walker proposed to remove words in the state code that for the last century directed the distinguished state university to "search for truth" and "improve the human condition" and replace them with "meet the state's workforce needs." He abandoned the effort when the issue became public and drew intense criticism. The same year, in Japan, more than a quarter of the country's eighty-six universities said they would be closing their social sciences and humanities faculties after receiving a letter in June 2015 from the country's education minister that called on them

all to take "active steps to abolish [social science and humanities] organizations or to convert them to serve areas that better meet society's needs." This too sparked criticism and the universities of Tokyo and Kyoto, the only Japanese universities ranked in the world's top one hundred, announced that they would not comply. See Valerie Strauss, "What's the Purpose of Education in the 21st Century?" *The Washington Post*, February 12, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/02/12/whats-the-purpose-of-education-in-the-21st-century; and Jack Grove, "Social Sciences and Humanities Faculties 'to Close' in Japan after Ministerial Intervention," *Times Higher Education*, September 14, 2015, https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/social-sciences-and-humanities-faculties-close-japan-after-ministerial-intervention.

15 Bill Ackman, Post on X, January 3, 2024 (2:03 a.m.), https://twitter.com/BillAckman/status/1742441534627184760?lang=en.

16 Jamil Salmi, "Higher Education in the Arab World: From Glorious Past to Uncertain Future," Global View on Tertiary Education, November 25, 2015, https://tertiaryeducation.org/higher-education-in-the-arab-world-from-glorious-past-to-uncertain-future.

17 Sultan T. Abu-Orabi, "Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Arab World," HRK [German Rector's Conference], December 4, 2013, https://www.hrk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/hrk/02-Dokumente/02-07-Internationales/02-07-15-Asien/02-07-15-1-Jordanien/Higher_Education_in_the_Arab_World_Dr_Sultan.pdf.

18 Mohammed Bamyeh, *Social Sciences in the Arab World: Forms of Presence*, First Report of the Arab Social Science Monitor (Arab Council for the Social Sciences, 2015), 18. Arab Social Science Monitor, *Higher Education Institutions in the Arab Region, December* 2024 (Arab Council for the Social Sciences, 2024), https://doi.org/10.25825/FK2/VXVPVP.

19 For an in-depth examination of one such development, see Taavi Sundell, "Capitalism in Academia and the Theory of Academic Capitalism: Political Economy of Higher Education in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan," *Middle East Law and Governance* 15 (2) (2022): 173–196.

20 Sultan T. Abu-Orabi, "Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Arab World"; and Arab Social Science Monitor, *Higher Education Institutions in the Arab Region, December* 2024.

21 See, for example, Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "Who Is Saudi Arabia's New Crown Prince?" *The Washington Post*, June 22, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/06/22/who-is-saudi-arabias-new-crown-prince. The Crown Prince is a law graduate of King Saud University in Riyadh. See also Antonia Carver, "Spoiled by the Promise of Brilliance: American Universities in the Arab World," *Bidoun* 6 (2006), http://archive.bidoun.org/magazine/06-envy/spoiled-by-the-promise-of-brilliance-american-universities-in-the-arab-world-by-antonia-carver. Nearly all of the heads of state and government in the Arab world who are not professional military officers have at least one foreign degree; the same appears to be true of the leading business figures, and this will probably be true for some time, given the credentials of the individuals identified by *Arabian Business* as the "100 Most Powerful Arabs Under 40" in 2015. See "100 Most Powerful Arabs Under 40," *Arabian Business*, https://www.arabianbusiness.com/list/100-most-powerful-arabs-under-40-589646-html (accessed September 5, 2024).

22 Martin Hvidt, "Transformation of the Arab Gulf Economies into Knowledge Economies: Motivational Issues Related to the Tertiary Education Sector," Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies, January 18, 2015, https://www.dohainstitute.org/en/Research

AndStudies/Pages/Transformation_of_the_Arab_Gulf_Economies_into_Knowledge_Economies_Motivational_Issues_Related_to_the_Tertiary_Education_S.aspx.

23 Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, *My Story* (Explorer Group Ltd., 2019), 143.

24 Arab Social Science Monitor, *Higher Education Institutions in the Arab Region, December 2024.*

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