POLITICS

WITHOUT

PROCESS

Administering
Development
in the
Arab World

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Part I
Introduction

1

Perspectives on National Development

A large part of human learning has always occurred through comparison.

Karl W. Deutsch[1]

The demise of colonialism after the end of World War II instigated the greatest structural adjustments of governments in history. One nation after another in Asia, Africa, and Latin America declared itself free of imperial hegemony. At the same time, these countries embarked on various plans for comprehensive societal change, even as their leaders and intellectuals were still arguing the type of political, economic, and organizational structures most favorable for the profound adjustments they were about to initiate.

It was the *performance* of the newly independent states, however, that ultimately mattered most to citizens. National independence elevated peoples' aspirations, and citizens increasingly demanded schools, roads, and health-care facilities as well as jobs and improved economic opportunities. It is not surprising, then, that many were concerned less with defining objectives and aspirations than with having the competence, the commitments, and the resources necessary for achieving them.

This study is about reforming institutions and processes of government in the Arab world. The objectives of these reforms have been linked to the creation of effective administration for executing national development plans and delivering public services. In fact, the functions of service delivery and socioeconomic development define the role of the state in the postcolonial period, a role that often appears limited only by the aptitude of political and administrative leaders, the capacities of the institutions they operate, and the availability of resources (human and material) at their disposal.

I began the examination of various administrative reforms in the Arab world with an awareness of the special influence exerted by political context over administrative process. The conventional wisdom, as conveyed in standard textbooks on government and public administration, advises that administrative institutions *implement* public policies and only occasionally

may actually formulate (or influence the formulation of) those policies. Classic management theories, beginning with Woodrow Wilson's famous article in 1887,[2] also stipulate a separation between policy formulation (a political function) and policy implementation (an administrative responsibility). The current view of the relationship, however, rejects the existence of a line of demarcation between the two functions and recognizes a mutual influence between the political and the administrative roles. Examining this relationship in terms of administrative reform in the Arab state reveals how absolute and personal the political control is.

Arab heads of state continue to control public policies, resources, and institutions, notwithstanding the valid observation by Roger Owen (1994, 18) that "it was usual for Arab states to embark on their independence with a constitution that called for holding of regular elections." Not all Arab states have held regular elections since independence, but all have maintained intrusive, unaccountable, and excessively centralized operations. Without any meaningful limitations on their powers, ruling leaders developed and managed accommodating, "ruler-dominated" bureaucracies.[3]

The subservience of the Arab bureaucracy is subject to various speculations and assessments. One assertion is that bureaucracy cannot be expected to fundamentally change its methods and behavior as long as rewards and benefits are not connected to professional performance. Another conclusion is that senior bureaucrats know too well that the road to power and wealth is through top political office. Appointment, advancement, and retention in a senior administrative post often depend more on the personal approval of the top leader than on the individual's job performance.

In contrast, Max Weber's conception of a modern bureaucracy presumes technical competence as the foundation for efficient service within a legal-rational political system. "The official who is not elected but appointed," Weber concludes, "normally functions more exactly" because "it is more likely that purely functional points of consideration and qualities will determine his selection and career" (Gerth and Mills 1946, 201).

My basic premise is that national development is unattainable without creating appropriate administrative and institutional structures with essential capacities for action. On this, I am in basic agreement with Esman's (1991, 20) thesis that "what most distinguishes advanced societies and their governments is not their 'culture,' nor their natural endowments, nor the availability of capital, nor the rationality of public policies, but precisely the capacities of their institutions and the skills of individuals, including those of management." In all societies, developed and developing alike, bureaucratic organizations are the main instruments for achieving national objectives.

Despite the importance of their functions and the universality of their existence, however, public organizations in the Arab world remain rudi-

mentary in their professional competence. Various reform programs, decreed by political leaders to create administrative capacities, have proved to be inextricably linked to the proficiency of political systems that are frequently in a state of crisis. Ineffectual administrative capacity, as is the case with poor economic performance (Owen 1994, 25), is fundamentally associated with or caused by political conditions or events.

Thus, bringing the state back into administrative analysis is particularly important. Over time, the political system defines the characters of administrative structures and shapes the behaviors of individuals and organizations within them—and it is especially so in systems of command and control, such as those found in the Arab states. The role of the state is conspicuously visible and decisive in all efforts to build institutions or to form their processes.

This introduction is limited to conceptual and practical issues that have influenced the dominant intellectual discourse on development in the new nations in general, and particularly in the Arab world. With the benefit of hindsight, we know now that the developmental approaches employed by many emerging nations had little prospect of accomplishing their targets. But development is a big order. And it is not my purpose here to pursue every notion in a voluminous literature on development. Instead, I will focus on relevant issues, structures, institutions, and relationships and on how they have been contoured by their contexts. Subsequent chapters are specifically devoted to the institutional performance of the Arab state.

CHANGE AND DOMINATION: A THESIS

For the new nations, independence required substantive adjustments in all aspects of life. In a spiral mode, rising expectations fed citizens' escalating demands for improved standards of living. These demands could not be met without considerable investment in infrastructure and in social and economic development; state institutions had to have the necessary competence and commitment, in addition to such other ingredients as investment capital and coherent objectives. The state was the vehicle for coordinating all elements in a national plan to guide activities and maintain focus on strategic matters.

Conceptually, developmental perspectives that dominated intellectual discussions and exerted powerful influence during the 1950s and 1960s could be combined under two overlapping, loosely constructed frameworks: *nation building* and *modernization*. Within these two frameworks, social scientists labored to discover concepts that offered more definite prescriptions and designs for moving emerging countries from the status of subservient colonies to that of independent, modern statehood. (Ironically,

the most influential theories were advanced and promoted, not from within the new states, but from the outside.)

Both concepts, *nation building* and *modernization,* have been equated with the application of rational control over the physical and social environments of people (Pye 1962; Black 1967; Myrdal 1968); to achieve such control, it is essential to effectively employ advanced technology and science. *Nation building* and *modernization* also assume the acceptance of the nation-state as the prime unit of the polity and a commitment to secularism and justice in public affairs (Pye 1962). According to this view, the implementation of societal change is most effective when administered by institutions that have the capacity to learn and to adapt their functions to reflect unprecedented advancements in human knowledge (Black 1967, 7).

By the 1970s, literature on the dominant approaches of nation building and modernization was not conveying a consensus but rather illustrating growing ethnocentric interpretations. In the meantime, strategies for comprehensive change (relying on global models or grand theories of modernization) were being criticized for lack of definite content, for being "culture and time bound" (Heady 1996), and for "not taking into account the historical, objective background to underdevelopment in the Third World" (Sayigh 1991, 44). A component of this background is the colonial experience, with its psychological legacy of suspicion of powerful, industrial nations as well as the objective political, economic, and sociocultural dislocations resulting from past colonial rule.

In brief, Western perspectives recognized the importance of building institutional capacities as instruments of the universal quest for a transformation to modernity. The apparent convergence of Western literature toward a view of modernity (commensurate with the application of science and technology to control the physical and social environment) presupposed the unfolding of these views within a liberal democratic state. Somewhat distinct from the above view is Apter's analysis, which considers modernization as "a non-economic process [that] originates when a culture embodies an attitude of inquiry and questioning about how men make choices—moral (normative), social (or structural), and personal (or behavioral)" (Apter 1965, 10). He considers choice central for the modern individual, and self-conscious choice implies rationality. "To be modern means to see life as alternatives, preferences, and choices" (10).

Again, the implications for a political system cannot be overlooked. Western writers left little doubt about the underlying political form against which all others were to be measured. The archetype is democracy, with its secular, libertarian, competitive, and multiparty structures, even though comparative political science scholarship has been suggesting alternative forms of political systems, presented in various typologies that describe existing political practices in the world. Morris Janowitz (1964, 5), for ex-

ample, suggested five types: (1) authoritarian–personal control, (2) authoritarian–mass party, (3) democratic competitive and semicompetitive systems, (4) civil-military coalition, and (5) military oligarchy. Similarly, Esman's (1966) typology offers five types of regimes: conservative-oligarchy, authoritative–military reformers, competitive interest-oriented party system, dominant mass-party system, and communist totalitarian.

But these classifications are also prioritized in terms of their capacities to produce developmental outputs and maximize popular representation. Most prescriptions of Western scholarship implied the higher order of democratic norms by assuming them or by repeatedly emphasizing concepts such as equity, social justice, and participatory political culture (Luke 1990, 212; Black 1967; Apter 1965; Pye 1962).

In the end, viewing development as the application of science and technology within a democratic system presupposes two essential conditions. The first one is the presence of instrumental, rationalized administrative institutions. The second one is the acceptance of the process of change as fairly universal and not necessarily captive to or even dependent on notions of cultural and historical particularism. Thus, the solution for less developed countries, in reaching the stage of modernity, is to discover, learn, and faithfully apply the most likely ways and means that have worked for certain nations. Agreeing with such premises, in 1956 the World Bank, with considerable financial assistance from the Ford and Rockefeller foundations, created the Economic Development Institute (EDI) to offer six-month training courses in theory and practice of development for senior officials from borrowing countries (Rich 1994, 75).[4]

There are those who have profound apprehensions about this point of view. Critics maintain that Western theories of modernization have served as ideological legitimation for domination of Third World countries (Luke 1990, 212). The argument has been made that as the political and economic power of the United States expanded in the postwar period, so too did the preeminence of liberal, developmental thought in the form of modernization theory. In this, such scholars as Samir Amin, Noam Chomsky, Peter Klaren, Timothy Luke, and others see U.S. social science as the product of a collective Cold War mentality and in the service of U.S. policymakers. Academics supplied the doctrine and rationales and found their allies in the ranks of the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID), currently in search of a post–Cold War raison d'être (Klaren 1986, 8; Vitalis 1994, 46).

Those devising and adopting a strategy for development, whether such a strategy is of domestic or foreign lineage, have to contend with the impact of previously instated institutions and processes. Shortly after independence, no matter which alternative scenarios of development were being played out in emerging nations, their citizens were not an important factor.

Instead, it was the influence of the Cold War and the machinations of the superpowers that largely shaped prevalent concepts and practices.

It is no wonder, then, that both formally and informally external domination remains a recurring theme of scholarship from within developing countries and from the West. (Many of the authors expressing this point of view are cited in this study: Samir Amin, Ferrel Heady, Samuel P. Huntington, Paul Kennedy, Peter F. Klaren, Timothy W. Luke, Joan M. Nelson, Edward W. Said, Myron Weiner, and Howard J. Wiarda.) Developing countries have internalized fears of historical domination: These fears are described in a variety of contexts, such as rich countries over poor ones, Western over non-Western, and more recently North over South. Because the issue of external domination is critical for the Arab state as well as pervasive in studies of development, I briefly outline three distinct but overlapping types.

Imperialistic Hegemony

Imperialistic hegemony exists when the power of the imperial state (having a superior military force) dominates inferior political entities and reduces them to satellite status. Historical evidence conclusively supports this thesis. In modern history alone we find Spain, Portugal, France, England, Russia, and Japan acting as imperial powers at different times in relation to different geographic areas. Today, the United States is referred to as the only or the last superpower, acting as an imperial force in its relations with countries of the Third World. As Edward W. Said (1993, xvii) points out, "much of the rhetoric of the 'New World Order' promulgated by the American government since the end of the Cold War—with its redolent self-congratulation, its unconcealed triumphalism, its grave proclamations of responsibility . . . all too easily produces an illusion of benevolence when deployed in an imperial setting."

Dependency Theory

The dependency theory paradigm attempts to explain underdevelopment in terms of imbalance in global economic relationships. The core of this perspective is the notion of economic domination that results in dependency that then fosters underdevelopment. The relationship is one of domination and exploitation by a few central, industrial countries of the many peripheral, developing countries, regarded as helpless in their acquiescence and dependence (Sayigh 1991, 52). Thus, for the dependency paradigm, domination is rooted in the structure of the world economy. The restrictive policies and measures applied by industrial countries result in economic disadvantages for developing countries and perpetuate their dependencies.