

THE ARAB WORLD by Allan A. Findlay. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

The Arab states, like other developing countries, strive for modernization, development, and economic advancement. Since attaining independence, various development strategies have been implemented such as Ataturk's *etatism* in Turkey in the 1930s, Nasser's centralized socialist economy in Egypt in the 1960s, the Shah's 'white revolution' in Iran in the 1960s and 1970s, and the rapid modernization of the oil producing states in the Arabian peninsula after 1973.

In recent years, particularly after the Gulf war, development issues have been debated extensively in the Arab world, with questions being asked as to whether economic progress can be achieved without fundamental political and social change. International and regional changes have focused attention on the subject, including the collapse of the communist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the pressure on third-world countries to liberalize their economies, the continued deterioration of socio-economic conditions in most of the countries in the Middle East, which is undermining their political stability. the growing influence of Islamic fundamentalist movements which oppose modernization, and the severe economic crises in the oil-producing states.

Findlay's book, published in a series devoted to Third World development issues, examines the ways in which the present-day Arab world is being shaped. The author adopts a regional approach focusing on the countries' common problems despite their political, economic and social differences. He first discusses the different perceptions of the West and the Arab world of what constitutes 'development', and proposes assessing it in terms of Arab perceptions and goals rather than by accepted western standards. He then examines the way in which the colonial era and continued western intervention have contributed to political and economic instability in the Arab world, and consequently hindered its development. Most of the book is devoted to a discussion of the transformation of the Arab oil-producing states after 1973 and the repercussions of the oil boom on their neighboring states, particularly through labor emigration; the development of rural economies; and the impact of urbanization on the social, economic and political environments of the Arab states. Alluding to the tension between the territorial state and Islamic universalism, he suggests that the Arabs have to define their identity before they can come up with a coherent strategy for economic development.

While Findlay presents a fresh view of development in the Arab world, he tends to lay the blame for most of its ills on the colonial legacy and continued western intervention. One cannot deny the negative impact of colonialism on the Arab world, but those states have, after all, been independent for over half a century, during which their governments have pursued their own development strategies. Indeed, during the same period, countries in other parts of the world which had also been under colonial rule have made considerable economic

progress. A more critical assessment could have been made of the role played by the Arab regimes themselves in their failure to ensure an acceptable standard of living for their citizens. The book nevertheless presents the complex issues of development in a broad historical context and can be used as a good introductory textbook by students who wish to learn more about development in the Arab world.

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REORDERING THE WORLD: GEOPOLITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE 21ST CENTURY by George J. Demko and William B. Wood (eds). Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1994.

The changes in the world political map have given rise to many new political geographical texts dealing with the new world orders which have, or were supposed to have, emerged. These texts have attempted to confront the seeming contradiction between the post-modern discourse on territory, boundaries and state structures, and the emergence of new nation and nation-dominant states which have only served to further sanctify the notions of boundaries and territorial partition.

The collection of papers, edited by Demko and Wood, addresses many of these problems and changes. The first section of the book deals with some of the recurring issues, including a reassessment of geopolitics in the new world era by Saul Cohen and a rethinking of concepts of territory, sovereignty and identities by David Knight. Cohen sets forth a global geopolitical system which, he notes, is bound together by a series of linking and balancing mechanisms. He argues that this system reflects a new stage of global dynamic equilibrium rather than a New World Order. Knight presents a conceptual discussion on what he describes as the three essential characteristics of statehood, namely territory, population and sovereignty. Since these are human constructs, they are not fixed and, as such, are dynamic and subject to much change. New notions of sovereignty promise, according to Knight, further changes in the politico-territorial structure of the world's surface in the coming years.

The second section of the book deals with environmental and resource issues. The increasing importance of global ecopolitics and environmental hazards are outlined by Phylis Mofson and Roger Kasperson respectively. As the world has become increasingly aware of the dangers facing our environment by continued and unhampered development, so too is the realization that these problems have to be addressed at a global, rather than national, level.

Contextually, the meaning of boundaries and territorial compartmentalization has changed significantly, as ecological and environmental disasters take little account of human systems of territorial partition.