

After the Storm: Democracy and Development in a New Middle East

John bell synopsis

This is the basic concept of what I'd like to talk about :

The main focus of Arab political reform, before and after the revolutions, has been focused on terms like democracy, accountability, rights, and the traditional political structures related to these primarily Western terms. The focus on future political development, and the related resource expenditure is therefore mostly aimed in that direction.

However, this approach ignores the fundamental failure in "political culture" in the Arab world : the lack of trust between individuals as well as various identity groups. This deep-seated political habit ("culture") undermines any democratic structure erected in the region, or attempts to develop consensus within or towards such structures. In other words, the Arab world suffers from a problem of political software as much, or much more, than one of political hardware.

How is it possible to address such an intangible and apparently difficult challenge ? Certainly, long term education regarding citizenship, political involvement and pluralism is one solution, but there may also be others : Sometimes indirect methods of approaching the same issue, including those that address cultural habits within the Arab world that may be direct impediments.