

# The Recolonisation of the Arab world

By [Dr. Ali Kadri](#)

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Despite vast financial wealth, natural and human resources, the Arab World remains underdeveloped and more than half the population is condemned to a life of poverty.

Instead of underdevelopment, a more fitting concept that would capture the recent historical phase would be that of reverse development or de-development. De-development represents a combination of retrogression in the build-up of physical capital and a denial of the right of people to struggle to build a better life by repression and absolute authoritarianism. Although capital accumulation entails a blend of expansion of market driven forces (commodity realisation) and development by encroachment and dispossession (control by violent means including imperial plunder of third world resources), in the Arab world, the latter pattern of accumulation held primacy, hence, determining the pace of development altogether.

Oil in its raw form, in the way it is priced in the dollar, and in the infinite scientific permutations to its derivatives creating value added, represents a decisive constituent of global accumulation, the control of which is central to maintaining the stature of US Empire, the present global financial order and its associated imperial rents. The articulation of the 'Arab social formation' with global capital is reproduced by a cross-border class alliance of global capital elites and Arab regimes, which maintains outright military superiority and hegemony over Arab working masses, *pari passu*, Israel's military supremacy. The very persistence of conflicts and wars in the Arab world however, mediate lingering and unweathered inter-imperialist rivalries relating to the contradiction between the US and other powers in Europe and Asia over the disproportionate acquisition of imperial rents derived from the stature of US empire.

The mismatch between America's waning economic dynamism and imperial rank, which in part manifests itself in growing US military adventurism, endangers the global financial structure and the dollar as the universal medium of wealth holding and, ultimately, makes uneasy the disposition of imperial partners towards future inter-imperialist collaboration and wealth holdings denominated in dollars.<sup>[i]</sup> Militarism, as a consequence, remains and shall remain the principal province of accumulation, which reigns over much of the third world and, principally, the Arab world.<sup>[ii]</sup>

On the underside of this global process, Arab development, if it were to occur, would conjointly buttress the security of Arab working populations and Arab national security and, would indubitably distort the current balance of forces propping up the US-headed imperial structure.

For the Arab working population to exercise sovereignty over their resources and put back into their economies more of the wealth that would enhance their living conditions, is for America 's position to be de-leveraged globally.

Arab development diametrically undermines the present course of global accumulation and the financial order associated therewith, in which despite a financial crisis triggered by the US in 2008, the dollar gained value on account of US institutional viability, which is bolstered, in great part, by its imperial prowess and reach.<sup>[iii]</sup> Situated in this context, the immiserisation of the Arab people becomes both, an outcome of an inter-imperialist entente, and a complex articulation of global powers necessitating the de-development of the Arab world at the present stage of the crisis of capital. Although power can be couched under various symbolic constructs, it is becoming clearer with the ongoing escalation of counterrevolutionary aggression against Arab working populations, continued direct occupations in Iraq and Palestine, and the growing number of potentially 'failed' and already 'failed Arab states,' that the concept of power, which befits what is being unleashed against the Arab working people, can be basically reduced to fire power.

US and Western aggression against the Arab working population, couched under the rubric of international law and humanitarianism, is made to appear more costly to imperialism than the gains that Western powers are set to expropriate from the developing or Arab world.

The question is often put in a an apologetic way, in the sense that, why should Western powers spend so much on war in countries whose income and resources will not offset the costs of imperial wars? Or, worse yet, Arab scholars who question why the US should side with Israel when Arabs invest so much more in the US, while Israel gets a yearly US subsidy in the form of aid. Imperial wars, seen from this double-entry accounting framework, are explained as being part and parcel of a Western civilising process of democratisation, which has left behind it hundreds of millions of dead in the last century and an ideology of hate and racism inherent in all 'nationalisms,' and, we are yet to see the last fruit of this 'civilising' endeavour. When stripped bare from falsehood and 'de-fetishised' however, prices and, the sums of financial resources they amount to, are brokered by a structure of power from which Arab working people have been wholly discarded. After the usurpation of the bigger share of national wealth by Arab elites and their foreign patrons, the resources remaining for the Arab labouring classes, are insufficient to maintain a historically-determined decent standard of living. A dispossessed and disempowered working population cannot negotiate the condition of its survival.

Development in the Arab world therefore, has to be continually denied so that the security of working people and, by implication, national security are exposed and laid open. Hence, the terms of power, which determine the terms of trade or, the very making of the price system, and underlay the reproduction of the global accumulation process, will remain calibrated by belligerent means or otherwise to favouring a US headed global capital. The continually deepening crisis of capital implies a further escalation of the violent dispossession process carried out against the working people in the Arab world and, a cheapening of Arab human and material resources.

Notwithstanding the enforced public to private transfers that were carried out under neo-liberalism prior to the Arab revolutions, wars against working people in the Arab world act as the definitive instrument by which social and non-monetised resources and labour are

coercively engaged in the formation of value under capitalist accumulation. Wars on an already defeated Arab world have served to maintain US control of oil supplies through direct military subjugation, stabilised a financial order in which the dollar remains the world reserve currency and wealth holding medium, reinforced militaristic, religious and ultra nationalist ideologies globally, assisted in the compression of the global wage and, ultimately, US capital held at bay ascendant and competing imperialist powers.

There is a social story, antecedent to economics and its price facade, which explains the maintenance of global capital rate of profit and the dislocation and immiserisation of Arab people. In an integrated and closely interlocked circuit of global capital, in which Arab oil and development form principal moments of a totality, which is capitalism as an historical epoch, the denial of Arab development in itself becomes an input to capital accumulation. In the inexorable process of capital, the usurpation of resources and the ideological underpinnings imparted through war, specifically, those of sect, ethnicity, Islamophobia, etc., which pit working people against one another, form self-reinforcing constituents of accumulation. Arab social de-development thus far has represented a cornerstone in the reproduction of global capital in social, physical and, and ideological terms. Capital, lest one forgets, survives not only by oil and the sweat of the working class, but also by its capability of turning reality upside down through ideological means.

As for Eurocentric Marxists' views counterpoising values to prices, one is to recall that the profits extracted from the immiserisation of the Arab people are not solely to be gauged on the basis of the value created from longer working hours or poorer working and living conditions (absolute surplus value). Profit rates derive from the grabbing and engagement of non-moneyed or underpriced value forming elements in the process of production as well. The process of production starts with engaging labour and raw material, however, the labour process in the Arab world is not about the expended muscle, intellect and effort in creating surplus value. It is about cheapening lives. The question then becomes: what passes more value to a commodity the lives of the poor in the developing world or the stress of workers in the developed world. Hence, wither the progressive nature of capitalism that Eurocentrics drum up from a bourgeois class position and, when it is precisely at this point, that ethics becomes no longer obscure.

Relative to the global product, the value seized in the Arab world, which is an outcome of this absolute measure of surplus value extraction via impoverishment, will not be significant in distorted power-brokered price terms. However, the social product derived from imperialist control of Arab assets, which is the outcome of the practice of depriving peoples of the right to own and deploy their resources for their own benefit, will be hugely significant in value terms or, more importantly, in terms of partly stabilising profit rates by the wasted lives of the innocent in Iraq and elsewhere in the Arab world. Would Marx's method, which was in line with the principle that 'reducing existing differences to Identity is faulty because quantitative differences are only the differences which are quite external,' have admitted that capitalism was progress in terms of heaping commodities pure and simple, irrespective of the fact that it consumes man and nature?[\[iv\]](#) Not so, by a long shot, especially when Marx's method espoused a principal tenet of life being a self-differentiating process.

From a purely quantitative angle, little also would it matter for capital had Arab development proceeded by market expansion, productivity gains and higher wages. For this growth by market driven forces would also dim in significance relative to the product of Western formations assessed in money form. In point of fact, the share of Arab GDP from

OECD output is around one percent.[\[v\]](#) But from a more concrete perspective, a non-war based and less dehumanising developmental process in the Arab world, which entails a betterment of living conditions and an empowerment of working people would still result in enhanced individual and communal security, hence, it would still distort the current international balance of forces forming the substratum of global order. The game strategy is to safeguard the power structure which underlies the reproduction of capital, both in terms of a social relationship and, in terms of physical accumulation. Wars on the Arab world, for the purpose of control, ensure the imperial booty held as collateral against rising fictitious US capital. More importantly, given the erratic nature of modern finance, the degree of conflict in the Arab world makes for a decisive moment holding together a house of cards at this stage of capitalist development.

The real reason for colonisation has not changed, it is undertaken to strip the people of the third world of sovereignty over their resources. It is to allow the balance of forces behind the scenes to set the price of their primary commodities far below the social value necessary to reproduce the population and maintain living standards. In addition to this, wars, by dispensing of human beings, cheapen labour globally. The acquisition of third world labour by means of forced migration, which gets engaged in the capitalist production of a centre that has not initially borne the social costs of reproduction of the immigrant labour force, generates immense value and, hence, profit, insofar as it transfers grabbed value and depresses wages. In this ongoing endeavour, imperialism gets something for nothing-keeping buoyant its rate of profit.

Although in the financialisation phase of imperialism, capital has filed some of the spikes of nationalism, inter-imperialist rivalry lingers as a result of the growing disproportionate share of the US rentier mode and rising global imbalances, which destabilise the universal wealth holding medium or dollar.[\[vi\]](#) However, whether the bourgeois canaille re-colonises together or separately, Western capital must expand by destroying and reengaging peripheral assets and by patenting the reconstruction to its benefit, including, no less, the design of neoliberal economic policies facilitating the usurpation of value in money form. What the pricing in the dollar façade conceals is that short-changed values from the third world create massive profits for the first world. Capital in the Arab world as noted all along however, has literally made a killing before it made a profit.

In the current revolutionary phase of Arab history, the counter-revolutionary imperialist assault amounts to an offensive on working people, which is meant to destroy the remaining semblance of an Arab state or any form of social organisation that could, at a future date, pull together the political objectives of working people. For years, brutal dictators worked hand in glove with their imperialist bosses who turned a blind eye to the abjection and misery that has been wrought upon the working masses. Arab dictators were graded brightly by the number of souls they have slain in the course of their tenure in power. So long as they mow down the opposition in cold blood, as they are doing now, they were imperial favourites.[\[vii\]](#)

Now, the very imperialists who had groomed these dictators look to further cheapen and control Arab and, by implication other third world resources, so they opportunistically step in to steer a revolutionary course in line with their ambitions. If contingently a state stands in the way of resource grab, then wither that state. A stateless, sect torn, or tribal conglomeration has no say over its resources. The revolutionary forces however, wish

dictators to be defeated, but are not indifferent to who defeats them.<sup>[viii]</sup> That is why the litmus test of the success or failure of the present Arab revolutionary process is measured by the distance revolutionary forces keep from the US and its NATO allies. The imperialist aim was for long to breed the brutal Arab dictatorships in preparation for the destruction of any form of political control of Arab people over their resources, including, their already enfeebled states. The crisis of capital is steeper now than before and, the case may be, that only through re-colonisation and extended warfare against working people in the Arab world, will this baleful phase of imperialism hold together.

*Ali Kadri is presently visiting fellow at the London School of Economics (LSE). He is conducting research on the political economy of the Arab world. Formerly, he served as Head of the Economic Analysis Section of the United Nations regional office in Beirut. [A.Kadri@lse.ac.uk](mailto:A.Kadri@lse.ac.uk).*

## Notes

[i] <http://petras.lahaine.org/?p=1857>

[ii] <http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1913/accumulation-capital/index.htm>

[iii] <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/06/business/06dollar.html>

[iv] <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/sl/slsubjec.htm>

[v] <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD>

[vi]

<http://21stcenturymanifesto.wordpress.com/2011/01/11/prabhat-patnaik-notes-on-contemporary-imperialism>

[vii]

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/report/saudi-arabia-human-rights-abuses-name-fighting-terrorism-20090722>

[viii] <http://newpol.org/node/447>

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