COLONIALISM, POSTCOLONIALISM, GLOBALIZATION, AND ARAB CULTURE

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Abstract: This article will address two major related issues regarding Arab culture as an integral part of the globalization ethos. In order to expand the conceptual parameters of globalization and cultural studies, the exclusivity of political and economic globalization will be interrogated in favor of a more diverse, humanitarian definition of the term. At the heart of this argument, inflected by interdisciplinarity and the literature and theory of postcolonial studies, is tolerance, respect, and recognition of difference and for the marginalized voices of the “other.” The theoretical framework challenges the stereotyping, homogenization, and misrepresentation of Arabs, colonialist ideas that have been carried over into the practice of globalism and the marginalization of Arab history and culture within world heritage. It is my hope to correct the negative perceptions about the Arab people, mainstream misperceptions of politicians, the media, and public discourse. The article will underscore the diversity and complexity of the identity and history of people in the Middle East and North Africa. Although in the West Arabs are usually synonymous with Muslims, a discussion of Islam and/or Islamophobia will not be addressed in this article. The first part will elaborate on the historical context of the creation of the modern Arab world. Next, various definitions of the main domains of globalism and their correlation to the contemporary Arab world will be summarized. Integrated into both sections are two major issues: the creative resistance that has accompanied the founding of the modern Arab world and the impact of globalization on Arab society, concepts that have played out in the containment of this region.

Keywords: Arab world, Arab history, Arab culture, globalism and the Arab world, colonialism and the Arab world, postcolonialism and the Arab world

The Historical Context of the Modern Arab World

Learning about the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) through the study of this region’s modern history and the exploration of its creative writing will illuminate some of the intricacies of the historical events that have shaped the modern Arab world. This will also shed light on the sociopolitical, economic, and international
interests in the region. Inserted into the historical and theoretical discussion is an analysis of creative writing, to show that history and theory conjoin in shaping creative writing, refocusing attention on Arab culture and heritage.

In total, 22 countries make up what is referred to as the Arab world, spread across Asia and Africa. The land of the Arab world stretches from the Persian Gulf in the east and the Arabian Peninsula into the Levant, which reaches the Mediterranean coast and the Euphrates and into North Africa. Including Egypt and the Sudan, the Arab world borders Iran to the East, Turkey to the North, with the Suez Canal connecting the Mediterranean with the Red Sea. The Strait of Gibraltar, the small isthmus at the most Southern point of present-day Spain, connects Southern Europe with Arab Morocco in North Africa that stretches west to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean.

Historian Albert Hourani set the date of 1798 when Napoleon invaded Egypt as the time that initiated the onset of the modern period for the Arab Middle East, what is usually referred to as the *Nahda* (Renaissance). Although acknowledging his legacy to Arabic historiography, a few scholars have recently contested his date and one of the main thrusts of his argument—that it was contact with the West that ignited the *Nahda*. Dina Rizk Khoury, for example, writes that as early as 1780 Arab intellectuals were seeking reform, rebelling against the status quo under the Ottomans. In an early manual on marriage, dated 1868, Marilyn Booth also speaks to intellectual engagement with gender issues, before Qasim Amin’s controversial publication of 1899 regarding the emancipation of women (Hanssen and Weiss 120; 210).

Nonetheless, when the Arab *Nahda* emerged, many intellectuals, writers, journalists, lawyers, and political leaders began voicing the Arab desire for equality, democracy, and liberation from Ottoman tutelage. Then, a distinctive voice was heard, narrating the common history, language, religion, and ethnicity of the Arab people, an Arab identity whose desire was to form an independent nation-state. The Arabs found inspiration in the nationalist fervor that swept Europe in the nineteenth century, the ideology that brought about the European nation-states as we know them today. James Gelvin suggests that it was then that “the nationalist movement invented a nation.” This is not to say that there was a unified, cohesive ideology of nationalism across the MENA, but the calls were comparable in sharing basic assumptions about society, state, land, and purpose.

It is interesting to note that the narration of the Arab nation leading up to World War I was written and disseminated in Arabic, considered a marginal language at that time. The first book written in English and targeting an English readership was George Antonius’ *The Arab Awakening*, published in 1938. This is an example of how globalization could have perhaps made a difference in making Arab voices heard outside the local Arab communities and official Western circles.
A comparison of early twentieth-century Arab Nahda in Arabic and the uprisings during the Arab Spring, in multiple languages and heard and seen on social media, would render interesting results regarding the benefits of globalization and modern social media.

It was World War I, however, that marked the decisive historical moment for the Arabs. According to Roger Owen, “The Ottoman Military defeat by the British and French during the First World War produced a radical change throughout the whole Middle East.”5 British and French leaders secretly agreed to divide the spoils of the Ottoman Empire between them, to advance their imperialistic interests. This is what is referred to as the Sykes–Picot Agreement.6 Thus by the end of the war, Britain had occupied the Levant and Mesopotamia, and France had seized Syria and Lebanon, “colonization” that was legalized by the League of Nations and approved by US President Woodrow Wilson. For the rest of the Arab world, the same process had already been in place. Britain was already in Egypt since 1882; Italy invaded Libya in 1911; and France had occupied Algeria in 1830, followed by the occupation of Tunisia and Morocco in 1881 and 1912, respectively. As for Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region, Britain’s imperial endeavors had begun in 1820 when it established Bahrain as a protectorate. Similarly, the small emirates or sheikhdoms in the east of the Arabian Peninsula fell to Britain; and American companies began digging for oil in Saudi Arabia in the 1930s.

Additionally, British and French leaders had made conflicting promises secretly, to different countries and groups. For the Hashemite rulers of the Hijaz, who aided the Allies in the War, promises were made to help to establish an independent Greater Syria. This state would have included present-day Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine/Israel. Additionally, Europe’s two most powerful states invented “a new instrument of political control, the Mandate, which was used to legitimize British and French government of their Middle Eastern possessions” (Owen 6). Owen adds that the Mandate had many features. One major feature was its administrative systems that focused on police and security, whereby the budget allotted two-thirds of its expenditure to security. Education, public health, and welfare suffered. Colonial practices included alliances with landowners and tribal sheikhs, as well as paying special attention to minorities “generally for the purpose of some strategy of ‘divide and rule’” (Owen 10–13). The Mandate was incorporated into the Covenant of the League of Nations in 1922.

Another important feature concerned Mandate Palestine/Israel: the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917. British Foreign Secretary Lord Arthur James Balfour sent a letter to the ardent Zionist Baron Edmund de Rothschild, relaying the message of His Majesty to assist the Jewish people in establishing a “national home” in Palestine:
His Majesty’s government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.7

Notice the invisibility of the Palestinian people who are not mentioned by name, although by 1914 Palestinians numbered about 683,000, while the Jews living in Palestine were 60,000, 36,000 of whom were recent immigrants.8 Not only is the Balfour Declaration evidence of “imperial betrayal.” It became a legal instrument which outlined the procedures the British will employ to “facilitate” Jewish migration into Palestine. The first High Commissioner of the British government was Sir Herbert Samuel (1920–1925), an ardent Zionist whose interpretation of the Balfour Declaration and role in creating the infrastructure for Jewish settlers were instrumental in laying the groundwork for the establishment of the Jewish state. According to Sahar Huneidi, “Samuel’s administration was the formative period in the mandate, serving as the pivotal link between pre- and post-Balfour Declaration Zionism and providing the latter with the momentum that made ultimate statehood possible.”9 She adds that under Samuel, Jewish migration into Palestine was facilitated; land purchase by new settlers encouraged; and political, economic, and administrative legislation guaranteed the protection of the growing Jewish community (Huneidi xiii–xiv).

There is no consensus among historians as to why Britain issued the Balfour Declaration. British Prime Minister Lloyd George lists about nine reasons. In Gelvin’s view, the most careless, irresponsible, and unethical is Lloyd George’s assertion that “it [the Balfour Declaration] was part of our propagandist strategy for mobilizing every opinion and force throughout the war which would weaken the enemy and improve the Allied chances” (Qtd. in Gelvin 197). As to the ambiguity of the term “national home,” much debate took place between British officials and Zionist leaders, mostly Chaim Weismann. To Weismann and other Zionists, it meant a Jewish state. To Lloyd George, a “Jewish national home” would eventually become a “Jewish Commonwealth.” In 1937, he declared that at the time a Jewish state was not to be set up immediately by the Peace Treaty without reference to the majority of the inhabitants. However, it was contemplated that when the time arrived for according representative institutions to Palestine, if the Jews had meanwhile responded to the opportunity afforded them by the idea of a national home and had become a definite majority of the inhabitants, then Palestine would thus become a Jewish commonwealth.10

Israel was declared an independent state on May 14, 1948. The British government ended the Mandate, withdrawing from Palestine on May 15, 1948. About
750,000 Palestinians lost their homeland. They became refugees. This is how the *Nakba* (The Catastrophe) originated. At the time of this writing, the Palestine–Israel conflict continues to plague the historic land of Palestine and the Palestinian and Jewish people.

As for the MENA in general, Owen speaks of how by the 1920s, Britain and France had become “the masters of the Middle East” (7). They decided on the boundaries of the states they carved up after the fall of the Ottomans, the type of government for the new states, and who should rule. Moreover with help from the Americans, it was the British who made the decisions about accessing the region’s natural resources, especially the oil that was being discovered during this time period (Owen 7). Owen concludes his remarks by saying,

> It was then that the basic framework for Middle Eastern life was firmly laid— together with many of its still unsolved problems involving disputed boundaries, ethnic and religious tensions and the existence of national minorities which either failed to obtain a state of their own, like the Kurds, or were prevented from doing so by force, like the Palestinians. (7)

Gelvin offers an interesting assessment of the Arab conditions after World War I when he says that when Arab hopes for liberation and independence were dashed, they felt the “imperialist betrayal” (Gelvin 196). Nationalism, nonetheless, continued to sweep the region between the two wars as the people resisted various forms of oppression by their newly installed governments, forms that included but were not limited to censorship and lack of democracy; freedom of the press, expression, and movement; and repression of nationalism. As Edward Said states,

> Democracy in any real sense of the word is nowhere to be found in the still “nationalistic” Middle East: there are either privileged oligarchies or privileged ethnic groups. The large mass of people is crushed beneath dictatorship or unyielding, unresponsive, unpopular government.11

After World War II, however, the MENA enjoyed relative political stability and an economic boom for about 50 years (Gelvin 227). This was due to the interventions of the big powers that focused on protecting the existing regimes from internal and external enemies. Gelvin suggests,

> Whenever some strong man rose to the surface threatening to upset the regional balance of power by playing the role of a Bismarck or Garibaldi, he was slapped down by one or another great power or coalition. This is exactly what happened to Saddam Hussein in 1991 when he attempted to integrate Kuwait into Iraq . . . . (Gelvin 227)
Historian Samuel Hutchinson provides an insightful evaluation of how the globe was constructed. He says, “The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. Westerners often forget this fact, non-Westerners never do.”

In surveying the history of globalization Manfred B. Steger, author and editor of more than 20 books on globalization, affirms that since the early modern and modern periods, the “crucial role of warfare as a catalyst to globalization” should not be underestimated. As discussed above, nowhere is this more apparent than in the MENA. To explain the nuances of globalization, the definitions of globalization and its domains are briefly summarized.

**Globalization: Definitions and Domains**

The term globalization was first used in the 1940s, but it is the 1990s that ushered in the explosion of the term. Globalization is not a new phenomenon. The ancient world was connected through trade routes and wars. However, vast improvements in science and technology, shipping and navigation, and innovations in transportation, industrialization, and communication, strengthened globalization and enabled nineteenth-century high colonialism. Furthermore, information technology overrides time and spatial gaps across continents and time zones, increasing world connectedness. So what is globalization, and how does the Arab world correspond to the globalization ethos? Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Prize winner for Economics in 2001, states that

> Fundamentally, it [globalization] is the closer integration of the countries and peoples of the world which has been brought about by the enormous reduction of costs of transportation and communication, and the breaking down of artificial barriers to the flows of goods, services, capital, knowledge, and (to a lesser extent) people across borders.¹⁴

Globalization is a contested term (*Short Introduction* 9). A debate among academic scholars is still ongoing, given the recent emergence of the field of Global Studies. Steger warns that early best-sellers about the topic were simplistic as they confined the discussion of globalization to economic-technical matters, “spreading the logic of capitalism and Western values by eradicating local traditions and national cultures” (*Short Introduction* 1). Almost all academic scholars, moreover, agree that there is more to the phenomenon than mere economics and technology. Three seminal essays that are relevant to my argument have been selected to clarify the debate: “The Globalization of the Markets” by Theodore Levitt,¹⁵ “The Globalization of Modernity” by Anthony Giddens,¹⁶ and “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy” by Arjun Appadurai.¹⁷
Globalization and the Markets

Entitled “The Globalization of the Markets” and published in the *Harvard Business Review* in 1983, Levitt’s essay inspired many publications about globalization, economics, and technology in the years that followed. He contends that the convergence in industry and business has become the standard, resulting in the disappearance of the national and regional preferences regarding sales and markets in favor of standardized products that are desirable and cost-effective. The same products whether they are autos, steel, agricultural commodities, banking and commercial services, pharmaceuticals, and clothing, to name a few, are the same across the globe. He cites McDonald’s, Pepsi-Cola, and Coca-Cola as examples of the successful globalization and commercialization of the food industry. Consequently, multi-national corporations have been decimated and global corporations were launched (*Globalization* 16–18). Although Levitt’s discussion focuses on the economic-technical aspects of globalization, he is aware of the local/national differences, without elaborating on the issue. He merely advocates that manufacturers and businesses be sensitive to the local/national preferences in order to succeed in the global market. Global corporations have to accommodate or change in order to meet other countries’ demands and/or regulations (22–23), he insists. Levitt concludes his essay by stating that “Different cultural preferences, national tastes and standards, and business institutions are vestiges of the past” (31; 22).

Though the market is a powerful dimension of globalization, it is not the only one to consider as one grapples with the twenty-first-century world. British sociologist and former director of the London School of Economics Anthony Giddens proposes another layer to the discussion of globalism.

Globalization and Modernity

In “The Globalization of Modernity,” Giddens defines globalization as

>a dialectical process across time and space . . . [it] has gained currency with the early growth of mass circulation of newspapers, among politicians, the media and other uninformed pundits, and academics of all disciplines since the 18th century and especially in the last decades of the 19th century. (*Globalization* 49)

An intensification of social relations and linkages has taken place across the globe. Giddens adds that the social relations of linking the local with the international have been embedded in what is usually referred to as Modernism. He identifies four processes that have materialized into what is now referred to as globalization: the Nation-state system, the World capitalist economy, the World military order,
and International division of labor (52–57). Giddens emphasizes the significance of mass media when he says that the institutions of modernity were extended with the pooling of knowledge and the “news” (Globalization 57). So in order to engage the topic of globalization, one needs to learn about world politics and wars; relations, alliances, and rivalries among governments; the development of economics, industrialization, and class divisions in both Europe and beyond; and the interdependent relationships among these domains that affect the human condition.

As the first section of this article has demonstrated, the MENA region has been part and parcel of globalization. Moreover, scholars have addressed the interrelationship between globalism, democracy, and neoliberalism extensively, but this topic is beyond the scope of this article.\textsuperscript{18} Suffice it to say at this time is that neoliberal ideology rests on the

belief in sustained economic growth as the means to achieve human progress, its confidence in free markets as the most-efficient allocation of resources, its emphasis on minimal state intervention in economic and social affairs, and its commitment to the freedom of trade and capital. (\textit{Britannica})

Basically, this ideational concept focuses on free markets, less government intervention, and deregulation. The 1970s and 1980s marked the heyday of neoliberalism as a result of the abandonment of the “welfare state” and the cooperation of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1979–1990) and US President Ronald Reagan (1981–1989).

Steger offers a nice 10-point summary of neoliberalism’s concrete measures: privatization of public enterprise; deregulation of the economy; liberalization of trade and industry; massive tax cuts; “monetarist” measures to keep inflation in check, even at the risk of increasing unemployment; strict control of organized labor; the reduction of public expenditures, particularly social spending; the downsizing of government; the expansion of international markets; and the removal of controls of global financial flows (\textit{Short Introduction} 42). In analyzing the political and economic conditions in the contemporary MENA, scholars observe the implementation of almost all the points mentioned by Steger. Recent studies support the fact that the uprisings that exploded in many Arab countries since 2010, what is referred to as the “Arab Spring,” were the result of the combined implementation of neoliberal policies and the global free market.\textsuperscript{19} For example, in Tunisia and despite a good educational system, the combination of economic hardships, lack of jobs, and the oppressive regime of Zine al Abidine Ben Ali, who ruled Tunisia for 23 years, initiated the Arab Spring which spread throughout the MENA region.\textsuperscript{20} Maha Abdelrahman states that under Presidents Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian economy went from bad to worse as a result of privatization,
authoritarianism, and the “open policy” that was first instituted by Sadat and followed by Mubarak. Consequently, poverty; high unemployment rates, which were exacerbated by the repression of civil liberties; undemocratic rule; and injustices reached their height in 2011.21 If for 23 years Ben Ali ran a “police state” in Tunisia (Masri 30), Mubarak created a “state of terror” in Egypt for 30 years (Abdelrahman 4). Kilian Balz and Anja Schoeller-Schletter summarize the contemporary Arab condition well: “The modern Arab dream characterized by shiny shopping malls and exclusive compounds, imported consumer goods and travel abroad, international schooling and university education, remained the privilege of a few.”22

That said, the modus operandi of MENA has been highly impacted by neoliberal globalism. In opposition, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen have led the massive uprisings and caused major ramifications for these countries, while riots and protests broke out in other parts of the region. Understanding how the Arab world was constructed by imperialism and the colonial project, and how the rivalries among the various European powers and their competing interests have played into the making of Arab nation-states should aid in deciphering the contemporary condition of the region and the chaos into which it has been plunged. One needs to address the rising recent voices of the Arab populace since 2010, and the speed of the dissemination of information across the global communication systems. Hence the complexity and interdisciplinary bent of this article. What I consider the crux of my endeavor is the contextualization of the local Arab culture in its diversity and complexity. Postcolonial cultural critic Stuart Hall explains the significance of the context in looking at subjectivity and cultural identities and productions.23 Although he speaks of black cultural politics in Britain, some aspects of his theorization can be extended to the Arab world since the “Arab Experience” has been perceived by both the West and some Arabs as a singular, unifying framework based on language, religion, history, and tradition. Hall stresses that “...the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subject positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category ‘black’ [and Arab] is essentially a politically and culturally constructed category.” He adds that the discursive is grounded in the concrete realities of events, relations, and structures that have real effects on real people and real conditions; it is through the discursive that the real can be constructed with meaning (Hall 223–224). This brings me to the discussion of the global cultural economy.

**Global Cultural Economy: Disjuncture and Difference**

The term culture is broad and refers to all aspects of the human condition including, but not limited to, the imaginative productions across artistic modes. This is not to say that inter-cultural communication has not taken place until now. The world has
always found ways of connections via various modes whether they be commercial, military, or civilizational exchanges. What is significant about the globalization of culture in the contemporary period is the speed by which it has reached territories and peoples across the globe due to the Internet and its media devices. The renowned anthropologist-scholar of South Asian cultures and languages Arjun Appadurai is on a par with the multi-dimensionality of cultural landscapes of globalization and the specificity of the concrete local context. In his essay, entitled “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” he first debunks the claims made by some scholars regarding the “Americanization” or “McDonaldization” that have resulted in cultural sameness or greater differentiation. He also acknowledges the complexity and disjuncture between politics, economics, and culture which cannot be understood by employing the existing models.

Appadurai believes that globalization demands a new language that taps into multiple agents and contexts, which are inflected by historical, linguistic, and political events (Globalization 34). He posits new dimensions, landscapes that capture the fluidity and irregularity of what he calls “imaginative worlds,” extending the terms of Benedict Anderson’s “imaginative communities.” Using the suffix “scape,” Appadurai coins five terms to frame his argument: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes (Globalization 34–35). In this framework, he tells how markets and people have been moved beyond the local context although he hopes that difference within the “third world” will be underlined. His argument regarding financescapes and technoscapes is on a par with the discussion above. Below is a brief summary of Appadurai’s three terms related to my argument: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes.

Though Appadurai does not eliminate the existence of stable ethnicities, networks of kinships, and other affiliative communities, he is thickening the discussion about ethnicity. His concept of ethnoscapes extends beyond ethnicity as he considers the flow of people, such as “tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, [and] guest workers,” among others, across the globe (Globalization 35). Shifting concepts of nation-states within a certain territory will in turn affect the politics, economics, and the “imagined worlds.” The Arab world is a good case in point in illustrating Appadurai’s concept of ethnoscapes when we consider the issue of migration.

The Arab World and Migration

According to Linda K. Jacobs, the Arab world witnessed a flood of migrations before World War I. Between 1880 and 1900, the Syrian colony in New York comprised about 1,500 or so of Syrian immigrants (Syria then designated Greater Syria: the modern state of Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine). These early migrants were seeking job opportunities and better lives for their families. Additionally,
various countries in the Levant have undergone a flow of people more intensely as a result of World War I, but migration lessened between the two wars due to restrictive laws. However, with globalization making headway in the 1980s and 1990s due to economic hardships and authoritarian regimes, migration from both the Mashreq and the Maghreb regions of the MENA have experienced high rates of movement of both skilled and unskilled labor to the Arab world and beyond. Whereas migrants from the Mashreq choose to work in the Gulf region and other Arab countries, Europe attracts a mostly unskilled labor force from North Africa.

Migration from North Africa and the Middle East is an insightful study about the causes and consequences of migration realities. Since independence, the Arab world, like other states in the Global South, has invested in higher education. The Mashreq countries especially have high literacy rates and a skilled labor force which did not correspond to good employment opportunities in the countries of origin. Jordan is a good example to look at in this regard. According to editors Philippe Fargues and Alessandra Venturini, the Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimates that there are between 800,000 and 1 million Jordanians working in the Gulf States (135). However, the editors add that while education and literacy rate are a good motivation for migration for better jobs, education is not the only reason. Poverty, high unemployment rates, the gap between the rich and the poor, poor governance, and authoritative regimes have also driven migration to high levels (1–4). This is a nuanced study that provides chapters about specific countries, taking the sociopolitical and economic domains into consideration, as well as the education, literacy levels, and the market needs of the destination countries.

Political conditions and wars, however, have been the prime causes for migration in many Arab countries, such as Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Tunisia, Yemen, and others. For example, according to the UNRWA website, about 5 million Palestine refugees are registered with the Agency since the Nakba and the founding of Israel in 1948. The plight of Palestinian refugees has been documented by many scholars—Arab, Israeli, and foreign. Since 1948, Palestinian refugees have been flooding the labor market of the Levant, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf region, among other countries in North Africa and the West. When studying Palestinian literature, therefore, one needs to consider the specificity of the writer’s/artist’s environment and the personal and collective factors that shaped her; because cultural productions are not merely expressive or reflective, they also play a constitutive role that help to shape subjectivity, identity, and politics. For instance, the experiences of Palestinian writers, such as Emile Habiby, Mahmoud Darwish, and Samih al Qasim, who remained in what became Israel, differed from Fadwa Tuqan who resided in the West Bank, or Jabra Ibrahim Jabra who emigrated to Iraq, or Ghassan Kanfani who grew up in a refugee camp in Syria.
Darwish’s poem, “Identity Card,” is better appreciated as the narrator insists on being Palestinian given the erasure Palestinian culture was undergoing at the hands of the Zionist state. Similarly when al Qasim addresses the “enemy of the sun,” the poet is launching his resistance from his concrete exilic space in Palestine/Israel against being imprisoned, dismissed from jobs, censored, and terrorized by what he considered an enemy state.

Globalization and the Question of Palestine

The Palestine cause has been a global rallying cry for resistance against colonial oppression since the 1950s and 1960s. As the editors of the Middle East Research and Information Project state in their special issue dedicated to “Transnational Palestine,” Palestine has rallied supporters from people who have challenged colonialism, apartheid, racism, and imperialism for decades. Solidarity with the Palestinian struggle demonstrated itself during the Intifada of 1982 and 2000. In 1989, the African Dawn, an African fusion performance group, released an album entitled Jali, in celebration of their upcoming tenth anniversary. It is a dance album that is basically a Pan African vision: it includes “uncompromising poetry of liberation fused with African music drawn from all corners of the world.” The closing song in the album is entitled “Intifada” and sung in Wolof. Furthermore, support for the Palestine struggle has become more widespread in the twenty-first century, especially in the West, as the growth of the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement demonstrates.

Modern communication technologies and the globalized world, moreover, have seen an intensifying shift in the way Palestine seems to have fared in counter-hegemonic discourse. Global Palestine by John Collins sheds light on how Palestine can serve as an example for the production of realities about Palestine itself and the globe at large. Examining past and present realities about settler-colonialism and occupation reveal the parallel processes that have been at work across the world. Collins’ argument rests on the premise that

... far from simply being shaped by global and globalizing processes, Palestine has been and continues to be an often prophetic index of and shaper of these processes, a kind of monadic unit that contains important clues to a series of much broader realities. (Collins 2)

This argument goes against the grain that has traditionally locked the Palestine struggle within the binary of us/them, East/West, terrorist/legitimate state violence, that is within the dominant discourse of nationalism and the counter-state rhetoric of “real politik and "national interest”” (x).

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Palestine, Collins continues, is not simply a geographical site on the map. It is part of Appadurai’s “imagined worlds” when one considers the movement of Palestinians across regions and continents. The refugee camps set up by UNRWA are monadic reterritorialized sites of Palestine, the dispossessed homeland to which the refugees hope to return. Although the anticipated return has not materialized since 1948 and 1967, Palestinians in the diaspora continue their interconnections with other Palestinians inside Palestine/Israel and outside (Collins 4–5). Simultaneously, Palestinian resistance and hope resonate with other subaltern groups across the globe since they, like the Palestinians, are resisting the globalizing processes of “colonization, militarization, securitization and acceleration” (Collins 15). Since 9/11/2001, war seems to have become a permanent condition in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries worldwide, with the aid of science, technology, and the global economy; Palestine and the Middle East as a whole have been experiencing wars on many fronts. Nonetheless, resistance to wars and oppression continues to speak for the resilience and steadfastness of the Palestinian people, as exemplified in literary production.

**Palestinian Women Writing Life**

A recent publication in Arabic that embodies Palestinian resistance in creative nonfiction writing is *Party for Thaera: Palestinian Women Writing Life*.33 Edited by Haifa Zangana, this is a collection of stories written by Palestinian women who had been freed after being incarcerated in Israeli prisons for many years.

The stories express the suffering dealt the Palestinian women at the hands of the Israeli occupation, and they are organized into three categories: Incarceration: The Land Speaks to Us; Pawns; and Life Begins. Despite nonviolent actions, the women were found guilty, for Palestinian resistance fighters have been classified by Israel and Western governments as “terrorists.” The women were fighting the violent system that has been designed to slowly kill their morale and identity, as Nadia Khayyat writes (Zangana 21). All the stories, with no exception, speak to the women’s steadfastness, inventiveness, and hope. For Khitam Khattab, *al buqja*, the bundle of clothes the prison guard hands her is a hateful object. It reminds her of both her mother’s and grandmother’s of previous years. *Al buqja* symbolizes the nomadic existence of Palestinians since 1948 and 1967 when they were dispossessed of their homeland and continuing as of this writing. But Khattab’s devastating anger at receiving the *buqja* in prison extends her empathy to the current condition of Iraqis and Syrians who now share the term “refugees” with Palestinians (Zangana 29–31).

The story by May al Ghossayn stands out for its creative impulse. “The Rain Dance,” which closes the collection, may be taken as an allegory for the
collective spirit of Palestinian resistance and resilience. The narrative recalls how at 9:00 a.m. May wakes up to the sound of rain. As soon as the prison guard unlocks the door to her cell, May jumps out of her cold bed and heads outdoors despite the heavy rains. She feels the rain drops touching her soul. Refreshed and free as a bird, she begins to run around the prison yard. May’s sadness seems to disappear as water, the source of life, engenders joy at being alive. She is transformed into a flying bird with a heart full of hopefulness. She writes, “I soared beyond time and place, stretching my hand to watch the rain drops. Optimism just flooded my heart like a waterfall, erasing all my problems” (Zangana 94). Then like little children, the other women prisoners barged out of their cells, running and laughing away. Happily they joined hands and began circling the prison yard as water restored their vigor and freed them so to speak from the confines of the prison walls. May’s thoughts wander to the prison guard, looking out of her closed window, baffled at the women’s behavior. “Perhaps she is thinking to herself: ‘how could they feel so free when they are jailed for life? What is the source of such happiness after being in prison for years?’” Finally May thinks to herself: “Who is the prisoner now? Does she [the guard] realize that she is the prisoner though she holds the keys to the outside world? Is she conscious that she is imprisoned by time and space?” (Zangana 94).

Party for Thaera affords ordinary Palestinian women the authority to speak, the opportunity to raise their voice. As Edward Said suggests, “The Palestinian narrative has never been officially admitted to Israeli history, except as that of ‘non-Jews,’ whose inert presence in Palestine was a nuisance to be ignored or expelled.” Now that these stories are in print, the facts and feelings have acquired a global presence, a “socially acceptable narrative to absorb, sustain, and circulate them” (Said 254).

Globalization: Mediascapes

To return to my discussion of Appadurai’s “scapes” and to analyze their correlation to Arab culture and globalization, I will now turn to what he terms as mediascapes and ideoscapes. He asserts that television, film, and cassette formats distribute images of ethnicities, news, and politics, all of which are commodified within the advertising strategies of the world markets. Additionally, the technological communication systems and the media have caused a shift in time–space perceptions which had not been experienced in earlier periods by ordinary citizens worldwide, including the Arab world. These mediascapes speak to “the distribution of electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information” to private and public consumption, and to “the images of the world created by these media” (Globalization 36). This mixed and complicated transmission, he adds, is experienced by the audience “as a complicated and interconnected repertoire of print,
celluloid, electronic screens, and billboards.” Appadurai concludes that the lines between fact and fiction are blurred whereby some will construct their “imagined worlds,” which may be chimerical, illusory, and fantastical (Globalization 37). Taking his lead, I would add that one has to take into account the mode of transfer-ence of information and images, the purpose and hardware being used, the target audiences, and the invested employers who own and control the media corporations. The stereotyping of Arabs in Western media as “backward,” “uncivilized,” “violent,” or simply “terrorists” is evidence of the blurring of fact and fiction. I believe that unpacking complicated media transmissions of the “other” is harder than words on the page, for different skills are needed, in comparison with basic decoding in reading, writing, and critical and analytical skills of the text. This is a case in point for educators to heed when educating the global citizen.

However, social media has also aided in disseminating information about resistance to media hegemony and rallied support against oppression across the globe. News and images about the “Arab Spring,” for example, were instrumental in the planning and organizing groups, sit-ins, and demonstrations in the demand for liberty, equal rights, and democracy. “What was the role of the social media during the Arab Spring?” Philip N. Howard et al. collaborated to answer this question as a part of the Project of Information Technology and Political Islam. Focusing their research on Egypt and Tunisia, they collected and analyzed data from Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. They concluded that “social media played a central role in shaping political debates in the Arab Spring,” “a spike in online revolutionary conversations often preceded major events on the ground,” and “social media helped spread democratic ideas across international borders.”

Ilan Pappé is in agreement with these findings. He sheds light on the role of the media revolution in changing the landscape of Arab culture. He says that from the advent of the radio and satellite television, freedom of expression has broadened although censorship by authoritarian Arab governments has also constrained people’s access in many places, with the exception of the al-Jazeera network. The Internet revolution and social media, he adds, have speeded up connections between the Arab world and the rest of the globe, whether they are resistance movements or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). “The Internet has an egalitarian nature, which allows the weakest actor to appear as vociferously as the most powerful state” (309). Palestinian resistance to occupation since 1967, and the campaign against the more recent Israeli attacks on Lebanon and Gaza proved to be more effective than official complaints by the PLO or Hamas, Pappé adds. The Arab Spring has demonstrated that social media has given voice to the silenced and ascribed agency to ordinary people, venues that have been absent from traditional Middle Eastern studies. He recommends that scholars in the field should heed Edward Said’s recommendation “to feel solidarity with the oppressed, the
occupied [and] the colonized . . . and ‘to restore justice to the dispossessed’” (Pappé 335). In Israel itself, social media has increased awareness of the atrocities committed in the Occupied Territories, especially since the first and second Intifada. NGOs such as B’Tselem and Breaking the Silence, among other Human Rights Organizations, have been documenting, publishing, and speaking out against the violence against Palestinians by the Israeli Defense Forces, calling for justice and peace between the two peoples.

**Mediascapes and Creative Writing**

Similarly, the digital media has also played a role in disseminating creative writing and the genres that Palestinian writers choose. For instance, Najat Rahman discusses the shift that has taken place in contemporary Palestinian creative output since the 1990s. Due to the continued Israeli occupation, the failures of the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Authority, and the peace process, she says that Palestinian writers and artists have been searching for a new language to express their new condition in the post-Darwish era. To connect the political with the poetic, Palestinians have moved away from traditional forms to new modes that articulate dismemberment and the rupture with history. They redefine Palestinian identity in lyric and prose poetry, film, performance, and the visual arts, using social media, as well as experimental modes such as hip hop, rap, song, and other transnational modes. Additionally, Arabic, English, and Hebrew are employed to reach audiences within Palestine/Israel and elsewhere. These venues across cultures, genres, and languages connect Palestinians with minorities in the diaspora crossing spatial and time boundaries (Rahman 124–125). Palestinian poet-performer Suheir Hammad is one writer who mixes traditional poetic forms with hip hop. Her collection *Breaking Poems* (2008) exemplifies her mélange of Arabic and English, breaking languages and images, mixing the book form with live performance. The breaking in the title personifies the fragmentation, the severing, and the dispersion that both the individual and the collective feel on all fronts—self, people, history, geography, traditional forms, and language.

Nonetheless, Steger is right when he offers two cautionary notes about the role of the media. Although he sees the global media as the prerequisite for the rise of the “global imaginary,” the commercial media market, he warns, has become a monopolizing business not in the least dissimilar to that of the oil or car industry. I am also in accord with Steger when he insists that the danger lies in the fact that popular culture has become so hegemonic to the point where media moguls could depoliticize social reality and weaken civic bonds; news broadcasts and educational programs have been transformed to entertainment. He concludes, “Partnerships and alliances between news and entertainment companies are fast
becoming the norm, making it more common for publishing executives to press journalists to cooperate with their newspapers’ business operations” (Short Introduction 82–83). Awareness of such connections must be brought to one’s attention whereby conflict of interests becomes a threat to telling the truth.

**Globalization: Ideoscapes**

Like mediascapes, ideoscapes, in Appadurai’s view, are also a series of linked images that are more politically oriented, usually put forward to states and by counter-movements that are trying to either resist the states or hoping to capture part of that power. He adds that the ideology of the Enlightenment frames the basic ideoscapes that continue to circulate in globalization discourse, those being “‘freedom,’ ‘welfare,’ ‘rights,’ ‘sovereignty,’ ‘representation’ and the ‘master-term democracy’” (Globalization 37). The eighteenth-century concepts seem to have had an internal logic, implying a dynamic relationship between reading, representation, and the public sphere. Epitomized in the Euro-American master narrative of the founding of the nation-states, these concepts have undergone a transformation, a thinning if you will, caused by the diaspora since the nineteenth century. With the global motion of people, diasporic identity formations, and the translation of these “key words” into other contexts, the concepts are reconstructed by political leaders and audiences. For example, the master-term “democracy” is an interesting example that is employed across the globe, to mean different things depending on the cultural context.

For Arab audiences and rulers, free elections and the legalization of multiple parties constitute the heart of democracy, whereas in the West, democracy connotes an “open competitive politics,” in the words of Roger Owen. He concedes that the process in European democratization has been far from being a linear movement; it has been more difficult and often interrupted more so than many European scholars would admit (Owen 131–132). He states,

> . . . The practice of democracy is a difficult business, easily knocked off course by wars, revolutions, social conflict or economic collapse, and requiring to be underpinned by a complex system of legal, organizational and administrative arrangements if it is to function effectively. (132)

Owen discusses the development, interruptions, and interpretations of democracy in the Arab world, revealing how the term has been watered down by both rulers and the general public. I concur with Owen and would also suggest that when it comes to the Middle East, as my discussion has demonstrated, the term has been watered down by Western powers as well. In fact, the concept has been
totally preempted when we look at the American coalition for the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The case of Iraq is a good example where the concepts of ideoscapes and mediascapes have played out specifically and more generally in the War on Terror.

**Mediascapes and Ideoscapes and the Invasion of Iraq**

Before I discuss the 2003 invasion of Iraq, I’d like to back track to Iraq’s modern history since World War I by referring to Robert J. C. Young’s narration of the violence Iraqis have endured since the Great War. In *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*, he cites the exact words of Sadiq, the senior deputy to the director-general of antiquities in Baghdad. In the spirit of postcolonial ethos, Young records Sadiq’s words, ascribing agency to the Iraqi people to tell their story. He speaks of how the British began bombarding Iraq since the 1920s and at any moment it suited their interests. Before the British left, he adds, they “mapped every meter of our territory, laboriously, meticulously, took photographs of every square centimeter of our country . . . .” Sadiq’s awareness of how the Middle East was mapped and created comes to the fore when he tells Young that although Iraq was the Iraqis’ land, it was not really their country, for they had no say in creating or ruling it. The Middle East states, Sadiq says, were invented by the Sykes–Picot secret agreements for the convenience of colonial powers, who “created states that were no nations, just sets of lines drawn on the map according to their interests.” Finally, his knowledge and consciousness of Western racism toward the Arabs is underscored when he speaks of the complicity of the League of Nations with Britain and France to create the mandate system which was “just a piece of legal fiction to legitimate their new colonies.” Young amplifies Sadiq’s narrative by revealing that when Winston Churchill, the then new colonial secretary, authorized the use of “some kind of asphyxiating bombs” against the Iraqis, he felt no squeamishness about the idea; Churchill is quoted to have said, “I am strongly in favour of using poison gas against uncivilized tribes” (Young 34–37).

The American-led coalition of the invasion of Iraq in 2003 has received extensive coverage by world media. Visions of the bombing and destruction of the country were seen by people across the globe. The War has been the most traumatizing for people and country. In addition, the horrors of the war have been narrated by many Iraqi writers, most notably by poet, novelist, and filmmaker Sinan Antoon. He, who among other Iraqi intellectuals opposed the US invasion, describes the conditions in Iraq in the 1990s for having been so drained “. . . by sanctions, war and dictatorship that to wage another war and with imperial responsibility of the US was bound to produce a chaotic and catastrophic situation” (Farid, 2015)41. Speaking of the difficulty of finding the words to express his mourning for his country, Antoon says “oftentimes I am speechless, like many of
us are, but we are in the business of words so we have to somehow try and represent the effects of all of this on human beings” (*The Guardian*). In 2003, he traveled back to Baghdad to make the first film about the city that has been ravished by Saddam’s authoritarian regime, war, and more recently the American occupation. “About Baghdad” is a documentary that records real people’s voices about the turmoil they have been experiencing since the 1990s whereby they challenge the simplistic binary of pro-Saddam or pro-invasion. In summarizing the film, the Iraqi writer says that he and his team sought unadulterated voices of Iraqi people from all walks of life, Iraqis who have been silenced by Saddam Hussein and re-silenced by the American invasion. The film documents the previously silenced voices of Iraqis who “long to speak out and to claim their future” from decades of oppression, wars, and occupation. “We found in Baghdad,” Antoon concludes, “a people who are tired, traumatized and uncertain about their future, and yet determined and united in seeking to build a strong nation for its people.” Although he still writes and dreams in Arabic, he considers himself a global citizen.

The US intention to invade Iraq drew international attention and global outrage. Opposition to the planned invasion caused outrage among Arabs, Muslims, and many Westerners worldwide. On February 16, 2003, the BBC news headline read “‘Million’ March against Iraq War” in London. Police estimated about 750,000 people made it to Hyde Park, and more anti-war rallies were organized in other UK cities and in as many as sixty countries worldwide. Although the UN inspection team under Hans Blix confirmed to the Security Council on March 18, 2003, 1 day before the invasion that no Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) were found in Iraq, the USA invaded Iraq on March 19, 2003. Audiences in the USA and across the globe witnessed the total destruction of the infrastructure of the country as green lights flickered in the Iraqi skies, followed by smoke and demolition of buildings, houses, bridges, and anything that was standing, including humans. Much was not covered by the “embedded” journalists but by independent NGOs. I am here referring to the most notorious imprisonments and tortures of Iraqi prisoners of war in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo. Many of the casualties were women and children. Part of the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) report of 2006 about the effect of the war on women and children is worth quoting:

The war has had serious negative consequences for children and women. As coalition forces gained control in Iraq, they failed to provide security for institutions and key infrastructure. As the war proceeded, there was substantial destruction and material depletion of institutions, with spare parts, water treatment chemicals, equipment, and service vehicles looted. Government and UN offices, including UNICEF, were burnt and/or looted. Security problems
became the overriding limitation on humanitarian work by all agencies. According to UNICEF reports, children reported difficulties for their families to support them and the number of street and working children increased, as did the number of observations of abuse and exploitation of children. It was reported that one third of U5s in hospitals was malnourished.45

A survey by one of Britain’s independent polling groups estimated that by 2008, about a million Iraqi casualties were the result of the War on Iraq.46

**Globalization and Iraqi Women Stories**

Nadje Sadig Al-Ali has collected and commented on untold stories by Iraqi women.47 *Iraqi Women: Untold Stories from 1948 to the Present* is a compilation of interviews of 80 Iraqi women in Iraq and the diaspora. The representation of Iraqi women is not homogeneous but diverse, ethnically, religiously, politically, socially and ideologically, who, in Al-Ali’s words, are not passive victims but resourceful, active, and creative (Al-Ali 1). Belonging to the urban middle class, the interviewed Iraqi women have resisted oppression, war, and occupation, and sustained their families. Chapter 6 of *Iraqi Women* tells of the physical, emotional, psychological, and moral effects inflicted on Iraqi women by the American invasion and occupation whereby anger, sadness, and resistance are articulated. The women’s utterances are not only about the disruption of daily life. But they also tell of the chaos and lawlessness, the uncertainty and lack of security, and the violence and climate of fear they experienced. For example Thura al-Windawi, a 19-year-old young woman who kept a diary, writes about the pain of bombardment on the senses and the psyches. Her entry of April 3, 2003 reads, “The bombardment is really freaking us out. The sound is so loud you know the explosions are very near . . . When each bomb drops . . . it’s too loud and too scary. You don’t know what to do . . . Your heart beats so fast. Your eyes are wide open. We are all staring at each other” (Al-Ali 219–20). Riverbend, a blogger from Baghdad, talks about her cousin’s wife who sat motionless hugging her two children while the bombardment was ongoing. There were no phones or any forms of communication to check on her parents who lived in another area of Baghdad. She was sure they were dead or are dying. Riverbend writes, “At that point my mind was numb. All I could do was react to the explosions—flinch when one was particularly powerful, and automatically say a brief prayer of thanks when another was further away.”48

Additionally, Al-Ali discusses the chaos and lawlessness that followed the American invasion in many Iraqi cities. Armed men and civilians participated in the looting of hospitals, factories, government offices, universities, libraries, and the National Museum. Even UN facilities were looted and destroyed. Most of the
women Al-Ali talked to were very angry at the fact that American soldiers just stood there, without lifting a finger. One medical doctor says,

I saw soldiers laughing and encouraging a group of young men who looted a hospital. They were just standing there and grinning, making their jokes about Ali Baba. It was so humiliating. I shouted at the soldiers asking them to help. I told them that under international law they must keep things under control. But they said they had orders not to intervene. I was so angry and cried when I saw the thieves going out with hospital beds. That afternoon, two US soldiers could have easily prevented this happening. But they did not care. They only protected the Ministry of Oil and the Ministry of the Interior. (qtd. in Al-Ali 223)

Stories about abductions, kidnapping, and sexual abuse of women are particularly poignant since Iraqi society is traditional and rape dishonors the family. Al-Ali and the women she talks to do not deny that rape existed earlier, but during the war it changed to gang rape: “criminals . . . dressed badly with long beards and hair” (Al-Ali 229). Women especially young girls lived in fear and stayed home. A 49-year-old woman tells Al-Ali of her sexual abuse, which was also reported by Human Rights Watch. After she was abducted, tortured, and detained by four men, in an empty building, she says, “They burned my legs with cigarettes. They bit me on my shoulders and my arms. All of them raped me, there were five or six more than the four who kidnapped me, there were ten of them in total and I was raped by all of them” (Al-Ali 227). Furthermore, torture, sexual abuse, and cases of rape by American soldiers have been reported by the American Civil Liberties Union on March 7, 2005 (Al-Ali 239). The Guardian of September 20, 2004, documents the ordeal of Iraqi business woman Huda Alazawi who was held in solitary for 156 days in Abu Ghraib. Although the 39-year-old woman does not mention rape, the report by Luke Harding speaks for itself.49

In presenting Iraqi women’s untold stories, Al-Ali hopes to “uncover more layers of Iraq’s multiple and shifting narratives” (Al-Ali 269). Her endeavor ascribes agency to ordinary Iraqi women and make their voices heard. Women’s memories as eyewitnesses of the war and occupation have been transcribed into history for future generations to show how global violence affects humans at a specific time and period.

Another major consequence of the War on Iraq is the Iraqi migration into neighboring countries and beyond, referred to as “the refugee crisis.” According to Sophia Hoffmann, as many as 2 million Iraqis fled their country to Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and the West.50

I, therefore, agree with Appadurai when he suggests that a new language is needed for the twenty-first century. I would add that what is needed is a nuanced language that clearly and coherently defines the terms being employed by the
specific agents. I also concur with his claim that global interdependence has enhanced the global imaginary by initiating new identity formations that are in sync with the twenty-first-century post-nationalist context (Globalization 4), although a qualification is needed as far as the Arab world is concerned. While the term “post-nationalist” may be applicable to the European/Western context, it does not reflect the situation of the Arab Middle East. The contemporary events that engulfed the region since December 2010, the so-called “Arab Spring,” indicate a popular nationalist bent. This time around the nationalist feelings are articulated via the specificity of the local country rather than Arab Nationalism of the 1950s and the 1960s. Four of the uprisings were successful in toppling the authoritarian regimes the people were protesting against—in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. Some uprisings have plunged a few countries into violent civil wars that are ongoing at the time of this writing—mostly in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. Why did the Arab Spring take everyone by surprise—governments, local and foreign, ordinary people, and Middle Eastern experts? To answer this question, one must look back at the history of the modern Middle East to put the contemporary events in their historical context. Historical events do not spring up in a vacuum, as this article has demonstrated.

Conclusion

In what ways, then, would this article contribute to the plethora of research about the modern Arab world? I believe that knowing the facts about how the contemporary Arab states came into being will alert global readers to an in-depth understanding of how the Arab people were perceived and treated by imperialist agents, and the reasons why the region has drifted into the chaos that exploded in 2010 and beyond. It is imperative to correlate current events to past historical events. A People’s identity is shaped by their past for better or for worse.

I have discussed the global interventions in the MENA region and demonstrated their effects on a few specific countries and on the region as a whole. Contemporary events of the early decades of the twenty-first century continue to witness how imperial policies are imposed on the Arab people. This is far from perceiving the people as victims. Resistance to colonialism, occupation, and wars has continued alongside oppression, inequality, and injustice throughout the last century and into the twenty-first century. Since the end of World War II, moreover, the USA has held that same banner of policing and controlling the so-called “Third World.” According to Gelvin, the USA has sold weapons that have been used against civilian populations in Lebanon and Palestine, to name a few. As for United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to poor countries, it is employed to pressure governments to enforce economic restrictions on them,
constraints that do not benefit the average person, Gelvin emphasizes. Additionally, the IMF and the World Bank have been cooperating with the USA and other Western governments to keep the poor poorer and the rich richer.\textsuperscript{52} To preserve the status quo and advance its interests, “the United States has achieved its goals by supporting truly appalling regimes . . . and U.S. policy has inflicted its own share of horrors on the population of the region as well” (Gelvin 312).

The conceptual frameworks of globalization provided by the selected experts discussed in this article will aid in refocusing both the local and global contexts in all the traditional fields of study, to prepare future generations for the twenty-first century. As Süssmuth affirms, “Becoming a more close-knit global community means getting to know each other better. It means discovering how different and similar we are. Most of all, it means recognizing our interdependency and the necessity of mutual respect and tolerance” (Süssmuth, 2007, 196).\textsuperscript{53} I have shown that although the Arab world has much in common, the geography and history, economics and politics, the interpretations of religion, degree of development, and the variations in the spoken dialects create a tapestry of difference that is specific to each region and within the countries themselves. This stance resonates with Masri’s view when he states: “Arab countries are diverse—geographically, culturally, and historically. But a common language, with hugely variant spoken dialects, and a shared religion connect them, somewhat artificially” (Masri 7).

Contrary to the over-emphasis of some academic scholars on one or two aspects of globalization, I strongly feel that an interdisciplinary framework will aid in learning about other people, raising awareness about global problems, and preparing global citizens for future challenges. Specifically, this approach to Global Culture is urgent at this juncture of human development. Appreciating the specific history of a people puts that people’s culture in context, locally and globally; integrating literature into cultural studies humanizes history; and incorporating the social sciences provide knowledge about the politics, economics, and sociology of a country/region. It is time for a new language that injects ethics and compassion into the globalized market. Steger emphasizes,

I also welcome the flow of ideas and goods, as well as the sustainable development of technology, provided that they go hand in hand with greater forms of freedom and equality for all people, especially those living in the disadvantaged areas of the global South.\textsuperscript{54}

When many Arabs arose in 2010 to oust their oppressors and voice their demands for freedom, equality, and justice, the uprisings were a call for dignity. It is time we acknowledge and respond to this basic human need. Following the lead of Edward Said, Pappé suggests that the need for an interdisciplinary approach is
recognized and applied, and “a reflective response to events was finally legitimized as an essential factor impacting on—and at times transforming—scholarly research” (Pappé 331). His assessment of the Arab Spring is worth quoting:

The people of the revolutions were almost wholly absent from even the best scholarly works of the late twentieth century, and any explorations of the emotions that propelled them to act were even more difficult to find. It was the Arab Spring, not scholarly analysis, that brought the invisible people to the fore. (Pappé 331)

Notes

27. “Palestine Refugees.”
29. See “Transnational Palestine,” Middle East Research and Information Project 282, online (Spring 2017); for a comparison between Palestine and South Africa and the use of cultural production as resistance, see Anna Bernard, “Cultural Activism as Resource: Pedagogies of Resistance and Solidarity.”
35. Philip N. Howard et al., “Opening Closed Regimes.”
38. For an insight on the failure of the USA in the peace process, see Rashid Khalidi, Brokers of Deceit: How the US Has Undermined Peace in the Middle East (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2013).
39. For an elaboration of Hammad’s poetic creativity, see Rahman, 31–43.
40. Fredric Jameson’s terms, qtd. in Globalization, 37.
48. Ibid., 221.
51. In “5 Things You Need to Know About the U.S.–Israel Relationship Under President Obama,” Bernadette Meeham lists the following, to demonstrate the US commitment to Israel: “Israel remains the leading recipient of U.S. foreign military financing (FMF), receiving over $20.5 billion since 2009”; “The United States in Fiscal Year 2014 provided Israel with more security assistance funding than ever before. In Fiscal Year 2016, which marks the eighth year of a 10-year, $30 billion Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. and Israel, we have asked Congress for $3.1 billion in FMF funds for Israel”; “The President has provided $2.9 billion in funding for missile defense programs and systems. Since 2011, the United States has provided Israel with over $1.3 billion for the Iron Dome system alone, including $225 million in short-fuse funding last summer”; and “The U.S. and Israel regularly conduct joint exercises to improve our military capabilities and strengthen our bilateral security,” The White House Web Page (1) March 2015.
54. Steger, Globalization, xiii; emphasis in the original.