

Resolve to

- promote greater availability of information on GATS and Higher Education in Africa, and more debate and discussion among relevant stakeholders in order to increase understanding of the potential dangers and/or opportunities from having cross-border higher education regulated by GATS.
- promote further research on the nature and extent of cross-border provision in Africa and on quality assurance and accreditation systems appropriate for the development of higher education in Africa. ■

Wars, Geopolitics, and University Governance in the Arab States

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Universities in the Arab states expanded considerably, from 10 universities in 1939, to 47 in 1975, and to 184 in 2003. In 2004, 40 of the 149 universities affiliated with the Association of Arab Universities were private. Whereas there were roughly 30,000 students in 1945, 5 million were registered in a “tertiary course” in 1999 (out of a population of 240,000,000). Enrollment rates range from 7 percent of the 18-to-23 age group in Sudan to 49 percent in Libya. Gender inequality is most pronounced in Yemen and Iraq, placing women at a disadvantage, while at Gulf universities women are over-represented. According to the 2003 *Arab Human Development Report*, universities are overcrowded, underfunded and “lack a clear vision.”

Universities, Civil Wars, and Military Conflicts

Political instability, civil wars, and military conflicts affect the governance of Arab universities in many ways. Following independence or military coups, higher education institutions were brought into the orbit of the state’s agenda. The appointment of university presidents and deans and the election of student unions are regulated, restricting participation in university affairs. There is no separation between universities and the state, with the exception of Lebanese and Palestinian universities.

In Sudan, the prolonged civil war triggered extensive brain drain, leaving many university departments devoid of senior academic staff. The consequences for

the quality of research and teaching are incalculable. Moreover, following a 1989 coup, Sudanese universities founded during the 1990s were part of Arabization and Islamization policies, fueling conflicts over the aims of higher education in a country populated by different cultural and sociolinguistic groups.

In Lebanon, as in Algeria, universities were affected by civil wars during the 1970s and 1990s, respectively. In Lebanon, the civil war “fragmented” universities as a result of assaults on infrastructure, faculty, and students. Munir Bashshur observes that during post-civil-war reconstruction an effort was made to accommodate cultural and political diversity, while striking a balance between the state’s supervisory role and the universities’ autonomy. In a country where all universities are private save one, about half the student population is enrolled on the various campuses of that one public university. A book by Mahmoud Abu-Ishsha, *The Crisis of Higher Education in Algeria and the Arab World* ([Arabic] Beirut: Dar Al-Jil, 2000), presents a professor’s candid description of university governance in the context of political conflict and division and the precarious state of academic ethics, quality, and standards.

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Across the region, military spending weapons purchased from Western countries, coupled with Western hegemonic machinations and dependent regimes and depleted resources, have decimated generations of students and academics and intensified brain drain. Wars and geopolitical conflicts have exacted their toll as well. Iraq’s invasion and occupation of Kuwait in the summer of 1990 resulted in extensive damages and destruction to Kuwait University. Subsequent U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq hampered teaching and research in universities for over a decade. Faculty and students lacked access to up-to-date publications, computers and software, textbooks, and international conferences. The increased incursion of the Iraqi state during the 1990s into university administration and decision making sought to contain the repercussion of the sanctions within Iraq.

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demonstrations on university campuses across the Middle East and beyond. The war has inflicted heavy casualties and losses on a weakened Iraqi civilian population. With the collapse of the Baath regime, the looting of universities and other facilities ensued. With hostilities still ongoing, the occupying authorities hastened to control universities and other state institutions, implementing a wide-scale “de-baathification” policy. At the same time, U.S.AID was funding partnership programs with American universities. In the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (September 12, 2003), Daniel del Castillo reported that “thousands of professors and all university deans and presidents” were “dismissed” from their positions by occupation authorities. Earlier (September 5, 2003), del Castillo had also reported that an American former college president, and current president of a consulting firm, was appointed as “senior adviser to oversee the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research,” with “broad powers to set a course for the future of higher education.” The long-term impact on higher education governance in Iraq of the American-British military occupation is difficult to predict at this time. Many people recognize that any developments determining the structures of the Iraqi state will affect not only eventually prevailing future academic models but also the status and autonomy of Kurdish universities operating in Iraq’s northern provinces.

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The first Gulf War also indirectly affected Jordan’s higher education system. Private university ventures were undertaken by Jordanians and Palestinians forced to leave the Gulf. Facilitated by economic restructuring policies, the number of universities doubled, fueling debates regarding the quality and regulation of private higher education.

On the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestinian universities emerged from the early 1970s onward under Israeli military occupation, within the context of the Palestinian struggle for national self-determination. Since the Intifada erupted in 2000, universities continue to be critically affected by the stagnation of political negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. Israeli military operations exact heavy human and infrastructural losses, hindering the proper carrying out of research, teaching, and exams. The isolation of the West Bank from the Gaza Strip prevents students, faculty, and officials from moving freely between and within regions to attend universities. System planning, coordination, admissions, and staffing are stalled.

The Geopolitics of Academic Models

Within this context, the shift from the continental to the American academic model in some Arab countries deserves attention. The continental academic model is based on year-long required courses and end-of-year exams. Prevalent in North Africa, and partially in Lebanon and Syria, it is mainly a legacy of French colonial rule. The American academic model, built around a credit-point course system, includes mandatory and elective components and more frequent exams.

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The seeds of the continental model were briefly introduced in Egypt following Bonaparte’s 1798 military invasion and occupation. The model took root under vice-regal rule, surviving British rule and the British-controlled monarchy. It became the academic norm in post-1952 republican Egypt. During the 1950s and 1960s, Egyptian professors acted as carriers of the continental model, coupled with pan-Arab ideology, into other Arab states, notably Libya and the Gulf states. These movements counteracted the influence of American, British, and French institutions operating in Egypt, Lebanon, and Sudan, as well as monarchic Arab regimes. The founding of the Khartoum branch of Cairo University and the Arab University of Beirut were part of this power struggle. Egyptian academics were also instrumental in the operation of nascent Gulf universities.

From the early 1970s onward, under the impact of revenues generated from the “oil boom,” Gulf universities expanded, adopting the credit-point system. This shift gradually eroded Egyptian academic influence. Yet, it also signaled greater U.S. and U.K. involvement in the Gulf in the 1980s; and an involvement intensified by local economic restructuring policies introduced in the 1990s, following the first Gulf War. The establishment of American and other private universities in most Gulf states during the 1990s crowned this process, leading James Coffman to observe, in the fall 2003 issue of *International Higher Education*, that the American academic model “rules supreme” in Gulf universities. One American consultant in the United Arab Emirates noted that a new university is “designed to reflect the typical design of colleges and universities in the US . . . to facilitate transfers to US institutions and entrance to US graduate programs.”

Gulf universities are being structurally “synchronized” with American universities, while exposure to other Arab, most notably Egyptian, universities is being considerably narrowed in scope. Some view these shifts as reflecting globalization and internationalization trends in higher education, in an increasingly competitive market. Yet, one should also consider the geopolitical corollaries. The Americanization and privatization of Gulf universities are occurring in conjunction with regional and global realignments of strategic military and economic alliances. The mechanisms underpinning this process still await solid research, not only with respect to the role academic models play in mediating foreign policies but also the impact academic models exert on regional economic and political (dis)integration.

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Reconceptualizing Globalization and Internationalization

Universities in the Arab states are precarious and contested institutions. Colonial legacies, state authoritarianism, civil wars, and military conflicts weaken their societal and economic impact, expectations to the contrary notwithstanding. Academic freedom, university autonomy, quality of higher education, and the enduring brain drain raise grave concerns. State administrators often prevail in decision making, at the expense of faculty and student participation, regardless of the academic model in place. In *The Ontology and Status of Intellectuals in Arab Academia and Society* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), M’hammed Sabour shows that modes of governance and administration reproduce within universities clientelism and patrimonial relations.

The impact of wars and geopolitics on university governance, as illustrated above, points to the urgent need to refine the concepts of globalization and internationalization, taking into account the dynamic of wars and the subtleties of geopolitical struggles in any credible account of university restructuring. The economic retrenchment of the state and the corporatization of universities represent just one aspect of a story dominated by economic rationality and discourse. Military and geopolitical conflicts unleash other forces associated with globalization and internationalization, leading states to implement policies that play a hegemonic role in university reforms. States are retrenching, economically speaking, but they have not yielded the trenches. At this juncture, whither universities? ■

Palestinian Universities Under Siege

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In a comprehensive review of the history and problems of Palestinian higher education, the late Professor Ibrahim Abu-Lughod points out that “Palestine’s institutions of higher education were developed under the most trying social, political, and economic circumstances, the result of a military occupation determined to disempower Palestinian society” (*Palestinian Higher Education: National Identity, Liberation, and Globalization*, Duke University Press, 2000). These conditions have prevailed from the start of the June 1967 Israeli occupation until today. The story of how Palestinian education has withstood the cumulative effects of a harsh military occupation needs to be told because it illustrates both the resilience of the Palestinian people and the futility of Israel’s politics of force.

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Eleven Palestinian universities, 5 university colleges, and 26 community colleges operate in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, serving a population of 3.5 million people. Nearly all the institutions were established after 1971, when a small university opened its doors in Hebron. According to the 2002 census, 3,474 teaching faculty serve 83,408 students at all Palestinian higher education institutions.

By 2003, nearly three years into the Intifada and as a result of Israel’s major military assault against Palestinian society (curfews, closures, checkpoints, house demolition, forced entry, and destruction of public buildings—including the two ministries of education), Palestinian institutions of higher education suffered serious human (24 teachers, 194 students, and 7 employees killed and 1,245 students injured) and material losses (estimated at \$4.85 million). Overall casualty figures are in excess of 3,000 dead and nearly 20,000 injured.