**The Arab Thought**

**Introduction:**

The Arab thought is presented, in recent history, to have its own cognitive systems and peculiarities. Though it was always linked to Islam, but some intellectuals have related its origins to the Arab existence, arguing that it was developed through the ages and influenced by all the changes and challenges that Arabs have experienced in their life. They claim to have been determined by the narrative of Arab heritage; represented in the phenomenon of "*Diwan of the Arabs*" before Islam, and later on by the Islamic tenants encompassed largely in the *Holy Qur’an* and the *Sunnah*, as the foundational structure. It is represented in what the accumulation of intellectual, scientifical, philosophical and in all other elements of the Arab creative arts, literature, ethical and behavioral culture that came and developed after Islam to this day, and it is also shaped by mixing with other Islamic nationalities and their tangible and intangible cultural contributions, and ever evolving cognitive transformations.

Much of today`s literature refers to the term "Arab thought" as an early twentieth century phenomenon, and it came to prominence in conjunction with the Arab military coups of the 1950s. Since then, many things have been attributed to it, such as, "Arab Nationalism" Arab thought institutions, Arab thought symbols and Arab thought forums, as if it is an already confirmed subject and agreeable term. Especially, when Arab public intellectuals began to talk about the renewal of "Arab thought", creating the illusion of cycles of renewal and development, and giving the impression as if it were an ancient cognitive structure that have been permeating the Arab public space for centuries.

As for "thought" and its label of being Arab, some thinks it is basically an attempt to link it to the peculiarities of Arabic and Arabism as core elements, which include language, culture, geography, and everything related to Arabs and their lives in the ancient, modern and present times. Therefore, to accept this definition, the Arab thought includes the contributions of many non-Arab thinkers who wrote their works in Arabic language, which is always been a part of Arab culture and its manifestations in prose, poetry, trends of thoughts, culture and religions. It is well known that several intellectual, religious and literary trends have influenced the Arabs before Islam; the most important of which are *Judaism*, *Christianity*, the *Sabean* doctrine along with other ideas and knowledge. That is said, it is fair to assume the Arab thought encompasses everything that is Arab, mixed it harmoniously with other cultures existed in Arabia before and after Islam. Though harmony here does not mean everything has been accomplished at one time, but in dissonance, contrast and collision at another times.

On the present day, the reference to the Arab thought, though it is understood partially as a distinguished intellectual and cultural contribution of the Arabs. But, it is widely known, on the other hand, that contemporary Arab thought is part of the Arab-Islamic thought as a whole. That includes, but not limited to, its foundations and renewal systems; its subjective and objective elements, local and global influences, personal and general adherences, constants or variables prescriptions. Hence, it is always considered as an important driver of universal thought, which reflects the aspirations of human life in all its aspects.

Therefore, when are discussing "Arab thought", we are necessarily talking about mental activity, which is certainly does not operate or permeate in an empty space. Rather, there should be data and introductions related to the Arab public life and the sphere which constitutes and manifests their material and mental contributions. And since there is cognitive activities and precursors that make up the substance of that activity, then we are to find "intellectual" products. Therefore, any definition of thought must include introductions and consequences resulting from cognitive mental activity.

Hence, before we judge the Arab thought; in essence, whether it is real or not, approve or deny it, we must agree on the perceptions and conviction held by large number of Arab public intellectuals who made their contribution to what they describe as Arab thought, stemming from Arab minds. As a result, we do not fall into an imaginary verbal disagreement over the topics of this workshop.

**Objectives:**

*ORSAM* objectives in launching a series of dialogue sessions on "Arab Thought", to be presented by a leading academic through the readings of the Arab cultural heritage, aiming to explore contemporary intellectual legacy; and find the link between classical Arabic thought; on the one hand, and the continuity of such thoughts today. A collection of scientific works by various influential thinkers in the Arab World and beyond will be examined. With the young minds trying to comprehend the nature, the program wants to investigate, study and scrutinize the Arab Thought in terms of its existence, Islamic connection, cognitive system and its competing ethos with the Western system in competition with the Islamic system.

We need to distinguish between two knowledge systems in the Arab world is a geographical and competitive context. Therefore, we need to define Arab thought and agree on that, for the purpose of discussion and in-depth look into what constitutes the definition of Arab thought, its history, essence, methods, approaches, attributes, contributions, leading thinkers, boundaries and parameters. Testing all of these against what we define as grand issues of today, for example, sovereignty, democracy, religion and politics, secularism, classical and modern liberalism, scientific and non-scientific Marxism, Fascism, Nazism, Socialism, nationalism, globalism, peaceful coexistence and terrorism, etc.

Also, we intend to have an in depth look at what constitute today`s Arab thought, and to address its meaning in contemporary terms such as the notion of being Arab, of being Islamic, and in terms of an Arab-Islamic intellectual system in which the local subjective elements and in it many bright human and other aspects of a general comprehensive global character as we are exposed to its major currents emerging from communications between the inherited and the newcomer, and was undoubtedly affected by what is happening in the era in terms of developments and changes in all levels of life. The era and its trends, and we refer in general and from the point of view of some thinkers in the Arab and Islamic world to ways to solve problems and to overcome difficulties and prevent the repercussions of dangerous changes of the age, and ensure a balanced equation that brings together modernity, modernization and heritage and allows Arab Islamic thought to develop and prosper and contribute to building the civilization of its time without giving up its peculiarities.

Taking a historical, analytical, and textual approach, this workshop will examine major traditions of Arab thought. It will start by providing an overview both of the broader history of its tradition, introducing the main systems of thought, schools, figures and debates, and of the contemporary study thereof. The workshop will then focus on a selection of representative topics, which are likely to vary from session to session. For this purpose, the ORSAM Center is inviting international minds to explore and understand the major treats of Arab thought under the supervision of **Dr. El Sadig El Faqih**, the former director of the Arab Thought Forum, a Jordan-based think tank.

**Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of this workshop, participants are expected to:

1. Acquire a detailed familiarity with Arab Thought,
2. Have a critical understanding of key philosophical and theological concepts, problems and debates, and their broader historical and intellectual contexts,
3. Be able to read and understand various threads of Arabic thoughts,
4. Critically examine, contextualize and interpret different trends of Arab thought,
5. Analyze critically intellectual notions and modes of Arab thinking,
6. Exhibit these skills in the final test.

**The Sessions:**

1. The origins of Arab Thought.
2. Islamic Connection.
3. Leading Arab Thinkers.
4. The Rise of Arab Nationalism.
5. The Context of the Ottoman State.
6. Religion and National Pluralism.
7. The Debate of Secularism.
8. Colonialism and the Idea of Nation/State.
9. The idea of unity and peculiarity (Palestine issue, etc.).
10. What Future Holds?

**Organization:**

The sessions will be held on Mondays between May 17th, 2021 – July 19th, 2021, from 18:30 until 20:30 GMT+3, Istanbul time, through the Zoom platform. The participants are expected to read and actively comment on the readings under the supervision of lecturer.

**Recommended Readings:**

1. O'Leary, De Lacy, b. 1872, ***Arabic thought and its place in history***, London : Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.; New York : E.P. Dutton & Co, 1922.
2. Hourani, Albert, ***Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939***, Cambridge University Press (June 23, 1983).
3. Al-Husary, Khaldoun, ***Three Reformers***, Beirut, 1966.
4. Hassoon, Kareem Abbas, ***The Implications Of Contemporary Arab Thought***, Basic Education College Magazine For Educational and Humanities Sciences  
   2019, Volume , Issue 44, Pages 277-280
5. Kassab, Elizabeth Suzanne, ***Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspectives***, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.
6. Abu-Rabi', Ibrahim M., ***Contemporary Arab Thought: Studies in Post-1967***, Arab Intellectual History Paperback, Pluto Press, 20 Nov. 2003.
7. Ismael, Tareq, ***The Arab Left***, Syracuse U. Press, 1976.
8. Daifallah, Yasmeen, ***Political Subjectivity in Contemporary Arab Thought: The Political Theory of Abdullah Laroui***, Hassan Hanafi, and Mohamed Abed al-Jabiri, Pulished 2012.
9. Buheiry, Marwan (ed), ***Intellectual Life in the Arab East, 1890-1939***, American University in Beirut Press, 1981.
10. Group of Authors, ***The Nakba in Arab Thought***, Columbia University,
11. Badawi, Abdul Rahman, ***Humanity and Existentialism in the Arab Thought***, Egypt Nahda Publisher, 15 Jan 2015.
12. Ahmed, Jamal, ***Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism***, Oxford U. Press, 1960.
13. Le Gassick, Trevor J., ***Themes in Modern Arabic Thought***, University of Michigan Press, 1979.
14. Abdel Malek, Anouar, ***Contemporary Arab Political Thought***, Zed Books, London, 1983.
15. Al-Azmeh, Aziz, ***Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies***, Published by Routledge, May 22, 2015.
16. Salem, Paul, ***Bitter Legacy, Ideology and Politics in the Arab World***, Syracuse Univ. Press, 1999.
17. Corm, Georges, ***Arab Political Thought: Past and Present***, Cambridge University Press, 2016.
18. Jayyusi, Salma K***., Human Rights in Arab Thought: A Reader***, (Library of Modern Middle East Studies) Hardcover – December 15, 2008.
19. Hanssen Jens &  Max Weiss, ***Arabic Thought Against Authoritarian Age***, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, February 2018.

***Dr. Elsadig Elfaqih***