Name

Professor name

Subject

Date

Orientalism

Edward Said claims that orientalist representations and stereotypes exist in Arab countries and Middle East. Orientalism represents prejudices of the west and false representation of Arabs or Muslims. This term is used for imagining the differences between Arab people and other cultures such as United States and Europe. Middle East and Arab countries are viewed with prejudice and racism. West is inclined to view Middle East and Arab culture as uncivilized, backward and exotic. This reflects Middle East is still viewed as dangerous and unsafe place by the western people. west has constructed east as a very different and inferior place which is looking for rescue from the west. Orientalism is still existent in Middle East and Arab as women are wearing veils in most of the countries. It is mandatory for women to wear veils which is seen as a non-liberal side by the western people (Abraham).

Existence of orientalism becomes more visible in the Arab spring that occurred in the twenty-first century. Arab spring is viewed by the west as a movement against tyranny and that resulted in revolution. The reason for the people in Egypt to unite against the monarchic regime was to follow the democratic model of the west. Orientalism is thus used for associating democracy with modernity. The existence of orientalism in the Middle East and Arab countries is also apparent in the stereotypes that convince people to recognize the political tyranny (Ventura). Historic differences have been mediated by art and culture. This helped in the co-existence of two distinct cultures.

Western representation of Middle East and Arabs is deeply rooted in the western culture. West perceive Muslim countries as conservative and backward. This conceptualization existed since the first encounters of the Arabs with westerners. Arab expansion in Europe in the third millennium promoted some stereotypes about Muslims in the west. They were identified as aliens or enemy due to their uncivilized ways. Edward Said claims that west has played a negative role in promoting hatred against Muslims in the western countries. This became more apparent after the incident of 9/11 when every Muslim was seen as a terrorist. European and American coverage of Islam encouraged negative stereotypes against its followers (Ventura). The western media creates representation of Middle East and Middle Easterners by displaying their anger and uncivilized ways. An Arab woman taking a veil is associated with conservativeness by the western media.

Orientalist representation of Muslims in the western world has created negative stereotypes such as Islamophobia. This representation has affected the people of America specifically after 9/11. Americans feel unsafe and paranoid in presence of an Arab or Middle Easterner. According to Said these stereotypes infected the relationship of Americans with Arabs. Mass arrests and discrimination against Muslims are common repercussions of such orientalism. Said mentioned, “if one speaks Arabic in public or reads a document in the Arabic language, one is under suspicion”. He further claimed that US remained silent over the brutal treatment of Israel towards Palestine but the foreign policy also considered Arabs as villains. These situations reflects intense hatred of American state towards Arabs and Muslims (Ventura).

Based on the review of documentary it is appropriate to conclude that orientalism still exists in the Middle East and Arab. Middle East representation by the western media exhibits cultural ascendency by showing them backward, uncivilized and aggressive. Media and western foreign policy largely changed the views of westerners towards easterners. The central claim made by the west is that Middle-east is lacking the same democratic values.

Work cited

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