

Modernisation on its way

Bjørn Olav Utvik is a University of Oslo professor and historian whose field of expertise is the Middle East.

He thinks it's relatively easy to explain why there is not much of an apparent link between economic wealth and democratization in the Arab world.

"Generally, countries around the world that have high GNPs per capita are also ones that have undergone wide-scale and extensive industrialization and parallel modernization of most of their sectors. This has created an educated middle class and as time passed an organized working class which have won greater freedoms and initiated inclusive political systems," says Utvik.

But the countries with the highest GNP per capita in the Arab world have not achieved this wealth through comprehensive modernization. These are countries which until a few decades ago were among the world's least developed, but became rich because of the discovery of huge oil and gas resources.

"Indeed, this wealth financed rapid modernization. Now we see that a middle class is emerging and in keeping with textbook formulas it is starting to push for political rights," says Utvik.

But these processes take time.

"The royal rulers in these countries have thus far successfully stunted demands for political rights by offering citizens a very rapid increase in living standards," Utvik says.

Utvik added that most of the manual labour in many Arab countries is carried out by guest workers who have virtually no civil rights. So there is no substantial national working class that could demand change.

[Read the Norwegian version of this article at forskning.no](#) [9]

 [Democracy cannot be taken for granted. It's an unfamiliar form of government for a big share of the global population. \(Illustrative photo: Reuters\)](#) [10]

 [The pink area represents democratic countries. Their ranks started to grow gradually in the 1800s. \(Table: Halmstad University\)](#) [11]

 [sn.jpg](#) [12]

[1814: Denmark lost Norway but gained democracy](#) [13] [Lost faith in democracy? Blame the teacher!](#) [14] [More democracy support for developing countries](#) [15] [Strong states resisted democracy](#) [16] [Rånge, Max og Sandberg, Mikael: 'Civilizations' and Political-Institutional Paths: A Sequence Analysis of the MaxRange2 Data Set, 1789 ? 2013*, Social Science Research Network August 2014. \(Abstract\)](#) [17]

[Eva Beate Strømsted](#) [18]

Glenn Ostling

December 3, 2014 - 06:21

This field is not in use. The footer is displayed in the mini panel called "Footer (mini panel)"

Source URL: <http://sciencenordic.com/general-prosperity-key-democracy>

Links:

- [1] <http://sciencenordic.com/category/section/society-culture>
- [2] <http://sciencenordic.com/democracy>
- [3] <http://sciencenordic.com/economics>
- [4] <http://sciencenordic.com/government>
- [5] <http://sciencenordic.com/prosperity>
- [6] <http://sciencenordic.com/religion>
- [7] <http://sciencenordic.com/category/countries/norway>
- [8] <http://sciencenordic.com/category/publisher/forskningno>
- [9] <http://forskning.no/2014/11/demokratisering-i-verdens-land>
- [10] http://sciencenordic.com/sites/default/files/sn1_76.jpg
- [11] http://sciencenordic.com/sites/default/files/sn2_3.png
- [12] http://sciencenordic.com/sites/default/files/sn_114.jpg
- [13] <http://sciencenordic.com/1814-denmark-lost-norway-gained-democracy>
- [14] <http://sciencenordic.com/lost-faith-democracy-blame-teacher>
- [15] <http://sciencenordic.com/more-democracy-support-developing-countries>
- [16] <http://sciencenordic.com/strong-states-resisted-democracy>
- [17] http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2455155
- [18] <http://sciencenordic.com/content/eva-beate-str%C3%B8msted>