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# **Middle East Realities and Western Responses**

by **Michael Bell**  
August, 2015



# POLICY PAPER

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## ► **Executive Summary**

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The 2011 popular uprisings in the Arab world brought much hope that democratic change was dawning. Five years later authoritarianism, exclusive ethno-nationalism and extreme ideologies dominate the region. Fair-minded normalcy in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and tribal Libya, and in the region as a whole, is beyond reach in any foreseeable future because democratic transformation requires profound behavioural changes by the protagonists. The question then is whether there is anything that Western countries can do on a human scale to alleviate the suffering generated by this tragic situation. A realistic and pragmatic approach, governed by our capabilities, is a *sine qua non*. If we content ourselves with limited goals, as with supporting states at risk and refugee relief, we may just salvage something. Disempowering cult behaviour is beyond the art of the possible.





**T**he 2011 popular uprisings in the Arab world brought much hope to liberals in the Middle East and their supporters in the West. They forecast that true democratic change was coming to the region. They however were mistaken. Instead, authoritarianism, exclusive ethno-nationalism and extreme ideologies dominate the politics of the region today. These generate emotions creating distinctive psychobiological states. When needs are not met and dignity ignored, peoples develop distress, anxiety, anger and depression. They look for safe havens and comfort, physical and emotional, among their community, tribe and belief system. Such is the reality of the Middle East today but sadly no positive resolution is at hand. The question therefore is whether anything can be done to alleviate this tragic situation. We must ask what the rest of us can do. A pragmatic approach is a sine qua non if Western interests are to be protected and human rights upheld. But there will be no comprehensive solutions.

What follows reflects my thoughts on this primordial issue based on a career dealing with the region.

## **AUTHORITARIANISM**

Autocrats in the Middle East, who continue to eschew accountability, allow no space for societal or political transformation.<sup>1</sup> Rather, their regimes have been based on the manipulation of culture and identity, equating diversity with heresy. Such perspectives are deeply ingrained and will not be changed by the military intervention of foreign states.

Significant growth in the authority and pervasiveness of the state system became a dominant characteristic of the post-independence Arab world, built on the despotism bequeathed by the Ottoman Empire and the turmoil of the post-World War I imperial governance period.<sup>2</sup> In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the impending collapse of the Ottomans, concepts of Arab nationalism writ large came to the fore, whereby it was envisaged, according to the political thought of Damascene intellectuals as well as the dynastic ambitions of Sharif Hussein of Mecca and his sons, that a single universal Arab entity would fulfill the aspirations of the Arab people. Democracy played no part in this pan-Arab enterprise, or in its reprise, driven by Gamal Abdul Nasser in Egypt and the Ba'ath party in Syria.

Rather, the belief in a single shared Arab language, culture and history became the dominant narrative driven by the new governing elites, turning needy populations into mass movements based on the autocrats' professed goals of power, pride, dignity as well as secularism and an end to the grip of poverty.

Imperial withdrawal and the building of state structures based on colonial borders made fertile ground for authoritarian rule. The security services, the armed forces and the regime's political agency, the party, became dominant institutions in Arab polities. While they were paralleled in

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<sup>1</sup> The Rise and Fall of Arab Presidents for Life, Roger Owen, Harvard University Press, 2012, pp. 23-60

<sup>2</sup> A particularly insightful and detailed assessment of the period is contained in the recent biography of Faisal ibn al-Hussein: Faisal I of Iraq, Ali Allawi, Yale University Press, 2014.



other parts of the developing world, in the Middle East they stuck. Such governance fostered corruption and clientelism making Iraq one of the most corrupt countries on the globe, reflecting a deeply embedded tradition.<sup>3</sup>

Dictators monopolized power, attempting to forcibly integrate diverse people and cultures, and struggled to eradicate ideologies other than their own. Civil society with its dominant definer, pluralism, was and is, anathema in authoritarian eyes. The stability that resulted from the exercise of coercive force was at best brittle. It came at the cost of human dignity and freedom.

The authoritarian one-party state system of Saddam Hussein, Hafez Assad and others smothered pluralistic development and drove citizens toward their core paradigms.<sup>4</sup> Using coercive force, the dictators ensured individuals and communities could never express themselves openly, realize even limited political or social rights and freedoms, or determine the direction of their own individual or collective future. Devoid of legitimacy, authoritarians failed to meet the basic aspirations of the peoples they ruled. The result is the chaos we witness today in these broken state systems, where fear and alienation have driven populations to embrace radical concepts of identity and ideology.

Iraqi freedoms were checked ruthlessly by the Saddam Hussein regime, which was overthrown by the American invasion of 2003. American neo-conservatism<sup>5</sup> broke the authoritarian state structure resulting in multiple fragmented ethno-national communities in Iraq based on foundational needs. Such fragmentation caused far reaching societal breakdown. Disaggregation spread throughout the region via the Arab Spring, whose noble aspirations were, in turn, subsumed by ethno-nationalist extremism and ideology, absent any inclusive social culture shared by the citizens of any given state, Egypt excepted, given its ethnically-homogeneous population.

Many Arab activists were young and middle class, supported by the intelligentsia, who had the energy and street legitimacy to drive the despot from power. These pluralists were the drivers of change. They had widespread support among the disenfranchised, poverty stricken and alienated. However they lacked experience, organizational depth and ultimately the base necessary to sustain their revolutionary reform. They were swept aside by the forces of ethno-nationalism and radical idealism.

## ETHNICITY AND IDEOLOGY

The decline of the Middle East had much to do with the weakening of the Ottoman Empire – the Sick Man of Europe – and the void this created. Colonial governance aggravated ethnic and

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<sup>3</sup> Transparency International: Corruption by Country: [www.transparency.org/Iraq](http://www.transparency.org/Iraq). See also Arab Human Development Report, 2005-2009: <http://arab-hdr.org/>.

<sup>4</sup> Owen, op. cit., pp. 23-60. See also: Syria: The Fall of the House of Assad, David Lesch, Yale University Press, 2012; The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace, Ali Allawi, Yale University Press, 2007, pp. 17-61

<sup>5</sup> Neoconservative principles were codified by the now defunct think tank “Project for the New American Century” and set out in that organization’s June 1997 “Statement of Principles.” They had inordinate impact on the decision-making of the George W Bush Administration, stressing the belief that American exceptionalism could be successfully exported should autocrats be overthrown and populations have the freedom to choose their governments.



ideological stresses because it resulted in the division and dismemberment of the sociological communities, meaning nations.<sup>6</sup> Boundaries drawn after World War I were negotiated by the imperial powers to serve their own geo-strategic interests. The European “peacemakers” sitting in Paris were unaware and uncaring of sociological realities. They were obsessed with what they saw as the geo-strategic requirements of empire, best illustrated by Winston Churchill’s aphorism that he had created Jordan in a single day at the 1921 Cairo Conference, sealed by a stroke of his pen.<sup>7</sup> If nothing, Churchill was a colonialist of the old school<sup>8</sup> and he continued to involve himself in the fate of the region. As counterproductive as the British were, the French were more so. The Wilsonian principle of national self-determination was ignored. The desires and needs of the region’s inhabitants never were a consideration.

These “peacemakers,” created a series of fragile structures, ignoring national identity groups, most markedly Sunni and Shia, in both their societal and political contexts. These were communities which saw themselves as nations, sharing culture, narrative and descent that became rudderless. People became citizens of states, legal entities which had to them little meaning. Such communities were often trans-state (Shia) stretching from Iran to Lebanon or sub-state (the Alawites within Syria<sup>9</sup>) minorities. They saw themselves as an ethnic people rather than citizens of the newly created and highly artificial states. These states had legal and organizational frameworks but were not sociological entities. They were impediments to self-realization. They were in no way facilitators.

These disaggregates played against a varied backdrop, which included: co-option, engagement, corruption and rentier<sup>10</sup> economics. They were maintained through repression social exclusion and clientalism, whether in relatively benign entities like Jordan or in the brutal of examples of the Iraqi and Syrian dictatorships.

The autocrats ignored the fact that ethno-nationalism and ideology constitute the genesis, dynamic and outcome of the protracted social conflict. They most often, if not invariably, emphasized, and continue to emphasize, mass adherence to religious, linguistic and other cultural characteristics: images, customs, language, imagined history, a people’s shared narrative, a myth of common descent, and the shared comfort of a common religion. These constructionist traits constitute identity, the underlying reality without which events cannot be understood. They provide communities a means of coping with feelings of humiliation, betrayal and subordination in what they believe to be, and often can be, a fragile hostile environment.

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<sup>6</sup> The word “nation” in this paper represents a community, which shares common attributes including culture, narrative, descent and language. “Nation” contrasts with civil society, whose existence is based on shared values transcending ethnicity.

<sup>7</sup> Sir Jeremy Greenstock at the Ditchley Foundation conference, “The Arab Awakening Three Years On: Were the Pessimists right?” June 5-7, 2014, Ditchley Park, United Kingdom.

<sup>8</sup> Allawi, *op. cit.*, pp. 378-409.

<sup>9</sup> Minorities within the Arab World, Ofra Bengio and Gabriel Ben-Dor, Lynne Rienner, 1999, pp. 129-148.

<sup>10</sup> Rentier states are defined herein as entities with an abundance of indigenous resources, which they “rent” or sell to third parties, the oil consumers, thereby ensuring the rentiers are financially liquid. The term was developed by Hazem Al Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani in a chapter entitled “The Rentier State in the Arab world” in the volume “The Arab State,” Routledge, 1990.



They provide seeming alternatives to the stress of alienation, unemployment, poverty, rapid urbanization and the absence of social and political freedoms.

They reflect the overweening pull of identity, embodied in collective instincts. They are re-enforced when they come into contact with “the other,” the ingroup-outgroup phenomena,<sup>11</sup> hence Sunni, Shia and Kurd in Iraq, Sunni, Alawite, Christians and others in Syria and Muslim and Jew respecting the Arab/Israeli conundrum. When conflict arises people fall back on their collective narratives focusing on the otherness of their confessional neighbours, and begin to diverge sharply and multiply, each side emphasizing the authenticity of its own claims, while delegitimizing and demonizing those of the others. Old narratives adapt and a new, still more exclusivist and emotional, historiography is created.

Fear is a critical component in the mix when groups become preoccupied with the threat of marginalization or worse.<sup>12</sup> In such situations, group identity provides a sense of strength and comfort against demonization. It avoids the angst of individual isolation, of facing a threatening world, alone which, however paradoxically, leads to a sense of victimization. The “Otherness” hypothesis, underwritten and reinforced by contact, then struggle, becomes essential to one’s own self-definition, thereby reinforcing threats to identity where exclusivist and emotional historiography is created.

Even in authoritarian Egypt, thought to be relatively benign respecting minorities, longstanding cultural bias manifests itself. Under Mohammed El Morsi, Shiites, who comprise no more than one per cent of the population (some 900,000 persons) and who are politically passive were subject to detention and imprisonment following charges, inter alia, of attempting to spread Shiism. This discrimination continues under Mohammed al-Sisi. For instance, on May 18, 2015, Shiite leader Al-Taher al-Hishamy was arrested on charges of blasphemy and proselytization.<sup>13</sup>

Islamic fundamentalism<sup>14</sup> stems from the contradiction between the collective memory of the triumph of early Islam and the failure of the Muslim peoples to find sustenance today. Its draw is further enhanced by rigid traditionalism and a sense of historic humiliation, as well as its ability to provide a comprehensive vision, an ethical set of ideals, and a world view creating expectations and inspiring goals necessitating radical action in the mind of the believer. Fundamentalists reject pluralism. They advocate instead a return to what is seen as the basic tenants of the Koran and Sunnah, bound by a strictly literal interpretation requiring rejection of the inherent corruption its advocates see in differing belief systems. This system has great appeal and offers a sense of belonging to those feeling themselves disadvantaged and marginalized by modern society. Taken to the extreme, violence is justified, indeed required, in

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<sup>11</sup> The Psychology of Nationalism, Joshua Searle-White, Palgrave, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 67-85 provides a thorough discussion of this concept.

<sup>13</sup> “Egyptian Religious Leader to Stand Trial for Promoting Shia Islam,” Marwa al-Asar, Middle East Eye, 22 May 2015

<sup>14</sup> A good reference is: The Challenge of Fundamentalism, Bassam Tibi, University of California Press, 1998, and particularly pp. 138-157.



the name of the most holy for who can ignore the will of the deity? The starkest example today is that of the Islamic State.<sup>15</sup>

The Islamic State is only a symptom of cultural and social dysfunction and self-defeating Western intervention, most noteworthy the disastrous Iraqi intervention. It is characterized by the Shia/Sunni divide, very evident in the current internecine fighting in Iraq for the control of Tikrit, Ramadi and Mosul. Shia militias, in large part, trained, organized and directed by the Iranian regime in Tehran, not the Iraqi army, constitute the main protagonists attempting to subdue Sunni-based ISIS domination of the north-west. The corrupt and ineffective government apparatus in Baghdad is a shell. The Iraqi Prime minister Haider al-Abadi is largely powerless.

There are well-founded accusations of retribution by the Shia militias against Sunnis generally. The Sunnis are in turn caught between the extremism of their co-religionists in ISIS and often violent Shia hostility. This tension is reinforced in Iraq by a highly developed sense of Kurdish ethno-nationalism: a separate, distinct, historically put upon minority now controlling its own para-state in northern Iraq which the Kurds will not forgo under any imaginable circumstances.<sup>16</sup>

## INTERVENTION

Over the last decade, as Mesopotamia and the Levant disintegrated, the traditional rivalries between Saudi Arabia and Iran rose to a new pitch. Fear of the other and ethno/religious divides (Sunni vs. Shia, Arab vs. Persian) became overwhelmingly prominent in a ballooning geo-strategic rivalry where each party saw both opportunity and risks. Each was convinced its needs and goals must be supported at all costs throughout the region, including with weapons, personnel, financing and intelligence and terrorism. This situation places Saudi Arabia, for instance, in the ironic position where Riyadh supports Sunni radicals in Syria, which it would view as enemies of the state were they operating within Saudi Arabia.

The regime in Tehran harbours great distrust of the Gulf Arabs. Its aim is the creation of internal dissent across Arabia, destabilizing established Sunni regimes. Tehran vigorously supports Shia-dominated government in Iraq, most visibly through the organization and training of anti-Sunni militias commanded by Iranian officers, designed in the first instance to confront the Islamic State. Their ultimate objective is domination through a stable Shia regime in Baghdad governing at the expense of both Sunnis and Kurds. In Syria, Tehran will continue to work closely with Bashar Assad and with Iranian-trained, equipped and guided militant networks. It will support Hezbollah in Lebanon, for geo-strategic, cultural and ideological reasons. As well, Hezbollah is Tehran's prime pressure point respecting Israel. The Iranians will

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<sup>15</sup> For a detailed assessment of the ISIS belief system see: Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," *The Atlantic*, March 2015. It is notable that Wood is criticized for what critics call his misinterpretation of Islam as a whole. See Jack Jenkins, "What the Atlantic Gets Dangerously Wrong About ISIS and Islam," *Think Progress*, 18 February 2015. See also "Inside the Islamic State," Malaise Ruthven, *The New York Review of Books*, 09 July 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Bengio, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-159.



continue funding and arming Houthi rebels in Yemen, using them as surrogates to further threaten and destabilize Saudi Arabia.

From both Riyadh and Tehran, one can expect denial, deception and dissimulation rather than the creative peace-building that is naively called for by organizations such as the International Crisis Group<sup>17</sup> in the hope of finding a way out through accommodation. But Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shia Iran feed off demonization. In Tehran and Riyadh any attempt to understand the needs of the other is regarded as traitorous, to be confronted by every available means.

## LIBERALISM

In applying their theories to the Middle East, many liberal progressives maintain that “the people’s will” alone will force governments toward increased accountability. They neglect the preponderance of negative factors including: the lack of broad-based agreement on the role of the state, the role of citizens in relation to the state, and, in many cases, the very idea of the state. The outcome of such fundamental misapprehension when confronted with the ingrained habits of inelastic societies leads to bad policy with calamitous results. Despite their brutality, the old authoritarians did provide a very crude form of stability and predictability. Neither democratic reformers nor jihadists have been able to replace them, although there can be little doubt that jihadist methods in ensuring conformity make the old authoritarians, particularly the likes of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, seem benign. The intelligence assessment organization Stratfor now sees Assad’s rule in Syria as doomed and forecasts its replacement by unmitigated factionalism, as found in Libya today, following NATO’s ill-fated intervention.<sup>18</sup>

Marwan Muasher<sup>19</sup> and other progressive Arab thinkers offer both an assessment of the situation and its liberal based needs. They identify the troubled nature of Arab polities and the challenges they must overcome. They show insight into the fault lines of the Arab educational system, not only of rote learning but the value and emphasis attached to technical degrees at the university level, at the expense of the social sciences, which risk, in autocratic minds, independent thinking on political and social issues. Such views are contested on the basis of their emphasis on “what should be done” rather than “what can be done.” Muasher writes for instance, about the need for viable electoral infrastructure, for leaderships to encourage pluralism and for them to abandon the concept that diversity means disloyalty. He urges them to embrace inclusion and to bring about an end to nepotism and corruption. This thinking asserts that such changes will take decades but leaves undefined how they can be effected other than through the force of popular demand and the emergence of enlightened leadership. Muasher himself accepts that opposition within the system will be substantial and determined.

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<sup>17</sup> See for example: “Make or Break: Iraq’s Sunnis and the State,” Middle East Report #144, International Crisis Group, 13 AUG 2013; Arming Iraq’s Kurds: Fighting IS, Inviting Conflict, Middle East Report #158, International Crisis Group, 12 May 2015.

<sup>18</sup> “Considering a Post-Assad Syria,” Geopolitical Diary, Stratfor, 12 June 2015.

<sup>19</sup> A former deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Jordan, currently vice president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, is a prime example. His most recent book, *The Second Arab Awakening and the Battle for Pluralism*, Yale University Press, 2014, exactly represents this situation.



The magnitude of the task can be judged against the critical findings of the Arab Human Development Report.<sup>20</sup>

## WESTERN ROLES

Many of today's Western policy-makers, despite myriad setbacks, often act as though military force alone will provide solutions. While allied air attacks against the Islamic State do serve a purpose in degrading and hopefully destroying that organization's reputation, capabilities and longevity, they will not affect ideological belief systems, ethno-national imperatives and the sense of alienation which the movement represents. The military, no matter how effective they may be in physical combat, cannot address basic human needs for legitimate government, physical security or social and economic development. Nor will the United States, let alone other outside players, volunteer combat troops after their disastrous experience in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya.

When we look at the Middle East, we should be focusing on what can in reality be achieved. To go beyond this is most often an indulgence, however tempting, because it serves to legitimize our own belief system. At a minimum, we have an obligation not to make matters worse than we found them, through ill-conceived interventions which leave catastrophe in their wake, as in Iraq and Libya where getting rid of Saddam and getting rid of Qaddafi is used as the basis upon which to claim a tenuous victory because the resultant reality is too painful to our psyches. We do not want to think about the multitude killed, maimed and displaced, as well as the resulting massive refugee flow which threatens, for instance, Turkey, but also the very survival of Lebanon and Jordan as we know them, both vulnerable states at risk.

Counter to the "war hawks" are those who choose to emphasize progress made respecting liberal goals, including the role of women and the education of children in, for example, Afghanistan and Iraq. The question is not whether these are worthy achievements, which they are, but whether they are sustainable without massive societal transformation. Discrimination against women and minorities in Iraq and Syria, for example, is more pervasive today than it was in the dictators' heyday. Given, for instance, the enslavement of women by the Islamic State, the secularism which characterized authoritarian rule in Iraq and Syria can be seen as a blessing. It is not for nothing that the Assad regime in Syria retains support from Alawite, Christian, Druze, Shia and Ismaili minorities. The yearning for stability provided by authoritarians seems increasingly desirable if that be the only viable alternative to chaos. A current public example was the unanimous decision of Christian Patriarchs to meet in Damascus on June 28, 2015.<sup>21</sup>

It is noteworthy that many in the region, the victims of unprecedented violence and disruption, now seek normality approximating that of the old regimes, such is their desire for stability and predictability.<sup>22</sup> While a majority of Arabs support the concept of democracy, polling indicates

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<sup>20</sup> Arab Human Development Report, 2005-2009: <http://arab-hdr.org/>.

<sup>21</sup> See "Eastern Patriarchs meet in Damascus," Jean Aziz, *Ai-Monitor*, 09 June 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Khalil Shikaki, of the Palestinian Centre in Policy and Survey Research, Ramallah, "Has Arab Support for Democracy Declined due to the Arab Spring" presented at the United States Institute for Peace, Washington, DC, 31



they do not believe democratic practice should deviate from their own socio-cultural norms. As well, they increasingly appear to question whether democracy is appropriate for their particular situation, given their yearning for security in the wake of the current chaos. To the extent this polling is accurate, given that difficulties in conducting such an exercise under the circumstances are considerable, the concept of an albeit benign authoritarianism appears to enjoy broad support.

What we in the West consider innate behavioural modes, applicable to all peoples, are very often at variance with those in the Arab world. Our efforts to export Western values and practices within what we often deem less advanced polities can be labeled “cultural imperialism,”<sup>23</sup> This does not invalidate a Western role but ethnicity and dogma have become governing realities in the region, no matter how uncomfortable we may find them. For Western policymakers “sober realism” must be the watch phrase. “What can be done” rather than “what do we think should be done” is a key calculus in understanding the region. The acceptance of the pull of identity is the essence of realism in today’s Middle East. We in the West have failed to internalize the very “universal principles” we say we revere - even the most uneducated Arab will point to what he believes is Western hypocrisy on the Israeli/Palestinian issue in this respect - largely invalidating our efforts to speak convincingly about worldwide values.

Where assistance efforts are not shaped to the specific nature of the Middle East, as distinct from that of the West, not much can be achieved. The equivocation of the United States respecting Syrian intervention is a telling example. After what was initially portrayed as a great success with the use of air power in deposing Muammar Qaddafi, the international community adopted a long overdue sense of realism as tribal warfare beset Libya. Heretofore Western decision-makers have been culturally blinkered and disastrously overambitious in their expectations of “a better world” as George W. Bush demonstrated so clearly. Western decision-makers are now paralyzed by their disastrous interventions.

While transformational political change is impossible, we do have humanitarian responsibilities to mitigate the worst. The need for relief screams out with, for example, over one million refugees now in small Jordan alone, a bastion of relative moderation despite its own radical challenges. This means food, housing, health care, education and emigration, where it can be accommodated, a not inconsiderable challenge but in part, at least, achievable with outside help.

In this context, humanitarianism must go beyond traditional definitions. For instance, the increasing penetration by radicals into Jordan, as well-governed as any state in the region, must be underwritten militarily and financially, despite its autocracy. Jordan has suffered massive demographic change but its strategic location means it is a key player in any form of regional

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October 2014. Shikaki addressed this specific question in more detailed presentation at an International Development Research Centre seminar in Ottawa at an International Research Centre seminar on 04 November 2014.

<sup>23</sup> The term “cultural imperialism” emerged in the 1960s, becoming an object of considerable research in the 1970s. Its most recognized contemporary advocates are Noam Chomsky, the linguist, philosopher, and activist based at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Edward Said, the literary theorist and public intellectual who taught at Columbia University. Said’s seminal work was “Orientalism,” Pantheon Books, 1978.



peace. Were the Hashemite Kingdom to fall, the status quo powers would be further at risk. Israel would feel itself under direct threat pulling in the Arab/Israeli equation, so far avoided given the Arab parties' virtually total self-absorption. A very fragile Lebanon is also at risk as Syria's civil war has created an excruciating burden given its porous border, and the familial, sectarian and elite linkages that bind the two. Syria's extremist groups have found fertile ground, particularly in the refugee camps but also throughout the Lebanese Sunni community.

## SUMMING UP

Fair-minded normalcy in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and tribal Libya, and in the region as a whole, is beyond reach in any foreseeable future because it must be based on the need for profound behavioural changes by the protagonists. If we content ourselves with far more limited goals, as with supporting states at risk and refugee relief, we may just salvage something. More than that, we cannot do as such would mean disempowering cult behaviour and creating, from the outside, a process fuelled by a shared commitment to meet basic human needs. No matter how noble these aims there is no evidence based on the region's tortured experience that, with its ill-fated interventions, there is any other viable option for the Western allies. We should learn that the concept of dignity for the Arabs is a sine qua non and recognize that heretofore we have shown far too often little respect for it.

## ► **About the Author**

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Mr. Bell served sixteen years in the Middle East as Canada's Ambassador to Jordan, Egypt, Israel (twice), as representative to the Palestinians, and as High Commissioner to Cyprus. He has been Chair of the Donor Committee of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq and was an Arms Inspector for UNSCOM in Iraq.

He is Co-chair of the Jerusalem Old City Initiative, designed to develop options for the Governance of the Old City, the papers from which will be published in three volumes in 2015 by Routledge.

He writes and speaks frequently on Middle East matters.



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