



POINT OF VIEW

ISIS: Syndrome of Creative Anarchy *

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*Humpty dumpty sat on a wall
Humpty dumpty had a great fall
All the kin's men
And all the king's soldiers
Could not put Humpty together again*

Notwithstanding the political boundaries that were successfully concocted by internal clannish and private interests as well as by external hegemonies, the phenomenon of the Social Contract (*Ummah*), regardless of its constituents or size, still plays a most significant role in propelling hopes for better economic, political and social justice among the dis-bursed subjects. Such nostalgic hopes turn into apathy and frustration, depending on the prevailing events of the times. If however, the post Arab-Spring experience in Egypt or Libya or Iraq, Yemen or Syria, just to name a few, puts down firm roots over the region, then it goes without saying that a New Middle East, politically and culturally very different from the one we know today, will arise.

A popular participatory mechanism for selecting a transparent and accountable leadership, absent since the second half of the 7th century AD, is yet to be rediscovered. Since

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then, *Arab Leadership and Governance* was left to the whims and variegated levels of wisdom of a few individuals or interested groups, leaving the multi-ethnic and multi-religious masses in the region out of the equation of governance. All kinds of pretexts were provided, and many possible means including all forms of reward and punishment, (*Targheeb wa Tarheeb*) were employed by successive Arab as well as non-Arab dynasties to justify their naturally inadequate methods of dynastic leaderships. The welfare of the subjects became secondary to the welfare of the leadership..

This fatal lopsided situation still survives in the Arab region to this day. However, the recent burst of demands for change that erupted in the majority of the Arab world in 2011 (popularly described as the Arab Spring) in the face of some of the most brutal and well trained security forces in the world, took the Arab leadership, and probably the international community by surprise. Nonetheless, it created more a feeling of bewilderment among the disbursed Arab rulers and subjects.

More questions than answers were offered in the bazaar of the bizarre international political market. Even then, most of them were peripheral in nature and were removed from the real and practical issues related to the pillars of governance. Almost all levels of social, economic, political or even spiritual facets of individual and communal life were affected. The fabric of a potentially stable social contract was shattered, perhaps beyond repair.

The persistent absence of a minimum standard for sustainable pillars of sound governance from which a balanced social contract develops under a wise leadership has recently led to the emergence of another alleged Sunni contender to power in the Middle East calling itself the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). As soon as it achieved brutally swift success in seizing areas in the deteriorating sovereign states of Iraq and Syria, the group promptly appointed a *Caliph* as an absolute ruler over the *liberated* zones. That, the new leaders declared, is the first step towards achieving their objective of uniting the dwindling Sykes-Picot states of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and historical Palestine under the banner of an Islamic paradigm according to their sole peculiar interpretation.

The raging chaos that overwhelmed the entire region in the aftermath of the Arab Spring indicates clearly that a New Middle East based on religious and ethnic fault lines is in the making. The geography of the recent military successes of ISIS is largely determined according to confessional and ethnic affiliations. The formation of a Sunni crescent running along the border of Iran (Shi'a) seems to be, at this moment in time, an objective in order to create a buffer zone to defend Sunni Arabia. If toppled, Syria's leadership (Shi'a), and its supporter Hezbollah of Lebanon (Shi'a), will leave an almost intact Sunni-led Greater Syria that enhances Arabia's power against the potential threat of Iranian and Iraqi (both Shi'a leadership) perceived antagonistic leadership.

When all is said Islam, however it is interpreted, and by whoever it is promoted seems merely a temporary and convenient pretext employed to achieve un-Islamic objectives. What adds to the on-going dilemma is that Islam, like Judaism, entails both temporal and religious elements whereby the twain can never be separated. Any deviation from the Golden Mean that ensures a working social paradigm among a mosaic arrangement of ethnic and confessional groups will eventually generate havoc, instability and total destruction.

The crushing defeat of the Arab Nationalism movement as a result of the 1967 war with Israel, and the latter's near success in establishing an exclusively Jewish political entity on Arab land in the name of Israel's *Elohyim* created a socio-political tsunami of civil wars in search of an alternative paradigm. This drive must have been enhanced by the perceived success of the Islamic revolution in Iran. Emulating Israel's success and that of Iran, blurred nostalgia of the past played an overwhelming role in the almost naturally reactive Arab

mind. Jihad in the name of *Allah* became the symbol of the potential paradigm. Nevertheless, Jihad against other Muslims became the norm among all opposing warring participants, a course that could take them all to continuous devastation and ultimately into oblivion.

The international and regional geopolitical dynamics are part and parcel of these developments, notwithstanding their continuous Machiavellian political behaviour. A relatively long-term status quo of intra-Arab civil wars leading to human catastrophes, the scale of which could dwarf similar events in modern times, seems still to be convenient for the political planners of the New Middle East.

In the meantime, new competing military factions mushroomed, displaying varying intensities of fanaticism, each rallying under its own banner and war cry: trade-marks of imprudent patriotism and insatiable hunger for media recognition. They all share a religious gradual, constrictive dogma as per their whimsical interpretation of questionable and alleged Islamic principles.

The sudden rise of many derivative entities moving in tandem within the lopsided Arab Spring represent a clear and present destructive phenomenon regarding the immediate, as well as the long-term, sustained progress of the individual states in the region. Paradoxically, all share similar fanaticism as manifested by the prevailing Jewish State of Israel Arab Christian and Muslim Palestine. The similarity transcends pure dogma to actual practice. Both extreme groups indiscriminately and brutally attack Muslims and Christians of all ethnic or confessional affiliations in the name of *Elohyim /Allah*.

Despite the apparent intra-fighting among the competing factions, they clearly share similar modus operandi. Both demonstrate maximum contempt for civilian lives, as well as private and public property. Both are religiously based and target and destroy non-military assets whether in Egypt, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Yemen or Palestine until now. The differences between the Jewish and Muslim fanatics are related more to methods, military assets, financial resources, intensities of religious and ethnic fanaticism, as well as the extent and depth of the perceived and actual international legitimacies that each and every party overtly or covertly enjoys.

A previously unknown organization with mysterious origins, ISIS has catapulted into the Middle East political vortex, absurdly described as the Arab Spring. The establishment, support and finance of this well trained, well equipped and efficiently led entity has resulted in the swift conquest of vital areas in both Syria and Iraq. Furthermore, ISIS declared its intention to proceed through Lebanon and Jordan, but was unsuccessful yet in its attempt. Though ISIS invoked its own brand of Islamic interpretation and practices, its success indicates the involvement of an international consortium of wealthy and technologically advanced countries.

ISIS has already established the framework of a de facto State. It is diligently exercising the collection of taxes and fees on trade, transportation and other commercial and economic activities within its domain, notwithstanding the systematic autocratic employment of brutalities against the various conquered minorities and any individual who denies their leadership, allegiance and absolute loyalty. The striking similarities with the modus operandi of Israel's current atrocities in Gaza cannot easily elude the intellect of any lay-person anywhere worldwide. Both seem to be there to stay and not transient, as claimed or hoped by many.

The expanding ISIS domain now includes also vital agricultural lands, water and important oil and gas resources and facilities. Until the USA actively interfered by the end of August 2014, ISIS controlled the largest dam in Mosul, ample oil and gas upstream and

downstream facilities and assets, as well as their conveyance in commercial capacities. Such factors may dwarf any question about the permanency of a consolidated efficient organization. It is highly probable that ISIS is an intrinsic phenomenon of a new Greater Middle East region. Given all the facts on the ground, neither Baghdad nor Damascus is beyond the reach of ISIS unless an international consortium of states, authorized by the proper UN procedures as well as the afflicted countries, puts an end to this organization without harbouring ulterior motives. Otherwise, the magic that was created will turn swiftly against the magician.

Consequently, the rise of ISIS, and all that implies, could be taken as a herald of further disruption which will overwhelm the entire Middle East region and probably spread beyond. Moreover, it could usher in a new international order of dispute settlements that has a higher probability of intensifying world conflicts rather than finding peaceful solutions.

Whether a new Gaza Emirate or a new Sinai Emirate, (both under the direct influence of Israel), or various new Arabian Peninsula Emirates, or a partitioned Egypt will see fruition sooner rather than later, remains to be seen. The expanded political influence of ISIS, even if it should disintegrate today, clearly shows that the world is witnessing the development of a New Middle East. The main characteristics of such geopolitical configurations will primarily include religious as well as ethnic demarcation lines. The ensuing fundamental inter-relationship and delicate balance of mistrust, hidden rancour, and all other elements of instability are expected to deeply cloak diplomatic interface amongst all the participants, with the ensuing likelihood of destructive international ramifications.

If Turkey and Iran are formally and physically dragged into this ethno-religious web, there is no guarantee that they may not face a similar fate of disintegration. The practical and innate tolerance of universal Islamic political wisdom regarding embracing the spirit of the *Ummah of Believers* (the People of the Book) seems to have been exhausted. Simultaneously, the stealthily fading pursuit of quality knowledge which, diligently replaced by constrictive systems of stultification, appear to have finally corrupted, once and for all, sound governance and leadership in the Middle East region. With dire consequences!

A carefully planned, genuine “Revolution from Above” is a fundamental prerequisite for abating the continuous deterioration of the region. However, it has to be reconciled and consolidated by the prevailing leaderships of the separate states of the Middle East in which, the pillars of good governance: *Participation in decision making; Transparency in performance; Accountability in results*, are to be re-implemented. Otherwise, it is highly probable that the Middle East region will continue on its headlong course of disintegration; without return.

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