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by Andy Hira

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POLICY UPDATE

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For the past two decades, the US and the West generally have lacked any clear strategy for the Middle East. The prevailing approach has been informed primarily by the realist approach to international relations, which sees sovereign states as the primary actors, and that the world rests in perpetual anarchy, with unresolvable conflicts and shifting alliances. I argue in this paper that this approach is flawed, and that the conflict occurring is partly a reflection of the limitations of such an approach. Realism is simply an inadequate perspective for dealing with failed states, in the sense that failure comes in good part from internal causes, not interstate relations. This oversight has led to the current lack of coherence and vision by the West in regard to intervention decisions. The lack of a guiding framework and the consequential fallout have led to US President Barack Obama's Administration largely taking a cautious withdrawal from intervention. Yet, pulling out of the region is unrealistic and unwise. Obama's general movement towards engaging local partners where possible is sound, but that principle alone is insufficient to make the intervention helpful in moving the region towards a peaceful and developing state. Not only have Western approaches been haphazard and ad hoc, but the level of commitment to the region seems to be waning. What we lack is a vision for how the underlying conflicts can be resolved. The approach put forward in my book, *Three Perspectives on Human Irrationality*, offers a window to a different way to think about such issues by considering status games, emotions and tribalism. This paper proposes several pillars that start to construct a long-term strategy derived from this approach. The first is to invest in area expertise and local engagement on a large scale. The second is to consistently promote democracy and human rights as part of a strategy to separate religion from politics. The third is to develop third-party monitoring of oil revenue expenditures and flows to push for effective local development. The fourth and final suggestion is to be willing to redraw borders where necessary to recognize differences in ethnicity, as anathematic as that might be for realists.

KEEPING BOOTS OFF THE GROUND

There is no evidence that any outside power other than the US is willing to militarily intervene in the region, so it is best to concentrate on US foreign policy. Other powers such as China, Russia, and parts of Europe and East Asia clearly have big stakes here in regard to access to oil, stability on their borders, economic investments and immigration, but they so far have shown no long-term strategy or leadership in regard to stabilising the region. A large part of Obama's approach towards the Middle East is premised on the debacle of the Iraq invasion, upon which a large part of his initial candidacy was based. Yet, the resulting approach has been incoherent and haphazard. Obama ramped up troops into a surge in Afghanistan that has yielded questionable results. He intervened in Libya, but the result was chaos. He also failed to support Hosni Mubarak, unleashing the chaotic series of events that led to Mohamed Morsi's rise and fall, and the re-militarisation of the Egyptian state and restoration of many elements of Mubarak's regime. It was not wrong to oppose Mubarak, but the lack of strategy for what happened after is appalling, especially considering the lessons of such from Iraq. Obama's Cairo

speech and the exhaustive efforts of John Kerry to broker an Israeli-Palestinian deal are now just footnotes to history, reflecting these trends.

The lesson Obama's team has derived from the sum of these events seems to be that intervention should proceed with local partners and should not include "boots on the ground." The end result is a haphazard set of policies with no clear goalposts or strategy to guide them. The policies in Afghanistan were to entrust Hamid Karzai's government with billions in aid and military support. Despite early gains in Helmand Province and other areas, no real foundation for security or prosperity was put in place. The implication of Karzai's own brother and numerous reports of siphoned aid have tainted the entire enterprise. A remarkable election took place, to be sure, but the results were questioned and so the democratic process derailed in favour of another short-term brokered solution. More importantly, the government has been unable to use the gains to develop local governance, leading to flailing attempts to create local police units that would be more reliable and less corrupt than the Afghan military. The continuing lack of security, in combination with the doomed attempts to eradicate the main income earner, poppies, meant that the Taliban could corner the opium/heroin trade and simply wait for the Americans to leave. The local population is unable to provide any serious resistance on their own, and the Army is spread too thin and lacks capacity to do so across the country. This is the natural progression of a decade of government that essentially lived off foreign aid, with no real work towards establishing an independent base. Not surprisingly, we have seen a new round of negotiations with the Taliban, presaged by Karzai's frequent anti-American blasts, which anticipated the debilitation of power once the US security and money blanket were withdrawn. The development of numerous pockets of Taliban activity and resistance are all too predictable (see my 2009 piece for the Canadian Global Affairs Institute). The question that needs to be answered is: what is the end game that justifies the sacrifice of so many Western resources, including Canadian troops and billions of dollars?

The withdrawal from Iraq in response to a lack of assurances for military personnel was also part of this general lesson. The surge in Iraq and the engagement of local Sunni tribes led to short-term security gains that never had a long-term foundation. The neglect of the long-term factors of governance led to tolerance of Nouri al-Maliki's government, which systematically ignored the mandate of ethnic power-sharing. Instead of leaving Iraq to Iraqis, the US left it to Shia tribalism supported by Iran. Without balancing US troops and in the face of marginalisation, it is no surprise that the Sunnis turned in desperation towards sui generis forces, who morphed into ISIS, and are undoubtedly aided by external funding from the Gulf. Like the Taliban who represent the Pashtun nation, ISIS should be seen as a representative of the Sunni nation. However distorted their world view, they represent an opposing force to the status quo, one bolstered by Sunni support going back to previous Baathist military commanders. Even if US military advisors can make a significant contribution in individual battles against ISIS, they will have little to say about the peace if Shia forces occupy the towns. In hindsight, it is not surprising that Shia-led forces collapsed when ISIS came to fight for Sunni areas.

In turn, the refusal of Obama to support the Syrian rebels in any significant way reflects the fear that escalation would embroil US troops and budgetary outlays in the region again. The consequence of the lack of support, to the point of voiding the red line of chemical weapons use in return for disposing of the bulk of them, opened the door for ISIS and al-Nusra (al-Qaeda affiliated) groups to enter the void, something fully supported by Bashar al-Assad. Similarly, Iranian-led Shia forces in Iraq and through proxy, Hezbollah, have stepped in to counteract Sunni nationalism. What we see, then, is a purely military strategy predominating to the point that long-term considerations for governance are neglected. The Obama administration counters with two general responses. The first is that there was no credible opposition force; however no serious efforts were made to cultivate one in the early days of the revolution, thus inevitably pushing people over towards more radical forces who were willing to provide the weapons, training and funds to fight Assad. The second is that intervening when the fall of Damascus appeared imminent would have placed the US as responsible for the resulting regime, which could have been worse than Assad. However, this forgets that Assad has lasted due to outside intervention, particularly the Soviets, Iranians and Hezbollah, and that intervention by more radical Gulf donors has fueled the opposition. Most importantly, the resulting chaos and stalemate have had devastating consequences, arguably worse than trying to broker in a new government and setting elections. As in Libya, the vacuum of intervention opens the way for radical forces to enter in. In Iraq, only when ISIS threatened Baghdad did the US pushed in a new government that is supposed to court the Sunnis, recognising the chaos of neglect. It is hard to imagine in the spectrum of possibilities much worse than the millions of lives and property destroyed in Syria from this strategy of neglect.

The default intervention tool has been an overwhelming reliance on airpower as a means to affect conflicts. Air power includes numerous bombing missions to aid the Iraqi government's retaking of territory, which as seen by the fall of Ramadi in 2015, has been haphazard at best, accompanied by remonstrations by the local population at the takeover by Shia troops. Iranian and Shia troops then are bound to have the most lasting influence, even while the US is enabling their success. In regards to Yemen and Pakistan, where no local proxies serve, drone strikes have been the main tool. Drone strikes throughout the region may have taken out key targets, but have also alienated local populations. They have not shown any effectiveness in their years of activity at disabling networks in any serious way; they merely point to the failure to cultivate suitable local forces. Along with Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo, they also raise questions of constitutionality and lack of basic rights such as due process, creating palpable resentment and feeding anti-Americanism as reflected in Pakistani politics and undermining efforts to establish rule of law and acceptable governance. The long hoped for incursion of the Pakistani military into North Waziristan has left networks that the ISI finds friendly, such as the Haqqanis, intact, thus ensuring that the safe harbour problem continues, in part due to the political backlash created by drone strikes. Interestingly, when the Pakistani Taliban threatened Lahore, the ISI saw them in a different light. That was the moment for the US to seize to realign its strategy towards something that supported Pakistani nationalism instead of feeding its anti-imperialist rage.

MOTIVATIONS OF US AVOIDANCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

In sum, we see that the idea of limiting US intervention has not yielded any stable results. On the contrary, it may have exacerbated tensions through its use of deadly force accompanied by neglect of the consequences. This pushes us to examine two other logical options, either to move back to direct intervention or find other alternatives.

Direct intervention would be in keeping with the US foreign policy tradition of winning the peace for the sides it favours. However, there are many complications with this approach, as appropriately reflected in Obama's caution. First, the US is seen as a neo-colonial power in the region, tightly associated with Israel, which is seen as an occupier of Arab lands. Second, the US invasion in Iraq is highly indefensible, even with the post hoc justifications of the removal of Saddam Hussein. It was largely unilateral in nature and demonstrated the lack of strategic thinking for how to win the peace as reflected in this discussion, as well as a profound ignorance of the region's political history. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the US public is weary of further intervention in the region. The rage for revenge following 9/11 has worn off, and the continuing economic malaise that plagues the West, along with the development of near self-sufficiency in oil through fracking breakthroughs, lend themselves to a strong resistance to any further intervention. Feelings are sometimes stronger than knowledge, and the prevailing feeling in the US is that no action will yield positive results in this cursed region, and in the region, that US intervention is at the heart of many, if not most of the issues, reinforced by constant media conspiracy stories. Paradoxically, getting rid of US intervention has not solved anything; rather, it has inflamed regional rivalries by not offering alternative blueprints. The slight distancing between Obama and Israel reflects this transition, where Israel believes that it no longer has a security blank cheque from the US, as suggested by the détente with Iran. Yet, a cooler perspective reveals little to no real pressure by the US on Israel for any settlement of the Palestinian issue, one of the keys to peace. Indeed, just the opposite is happening with the continuation of Israeli usurpation of territory eliciting nothing more than rhetorical protests from the US and Canada. Similarly, the cooling of relations with the Saudis stems in part from their tacit support of radicalism in the region, including potential links to the 9/11 bombers, as well as the drop in oil prices due to fracking and Saudi increases in supply, but not to the point of changing the balance in the region. This is yet another example of Obama's incremental approach, not necessarily wrong given domestic politics and Western economic dependence on oil, but one lacking a strategy.

The natural result of the US withdrawal from the region, along with the domestic disquiet from the Arab Spring is that other powers, such as Iran, have moved in to fill the gaps. There is bound, therefore, to be a long period of conflict as a new power balance works itself out. The reluctance of some theoretical regional powers, such as Turkey, stands paradoxically alongside overstretching by others such as Iran, whose backing off from nuclear weapons development suggests a reassessment of how fast they can establish their regional hegemon status. Other traditional powers, such as Egypt, are too consumed with internal challenges to offer counterbalances, while internal turmoil across the region ironically opens the door to regional

hegemonic interference. In turn, Turkey's military-Islamist elite sees a populist chance to use the Syrian conflict to turn the tables on their ongoing internal struggle with the PKK.

Withdrawing in systematic fashion from the region has had its own consequences. On the plus side, the de facto creation of a Kurdish nation has provided the West an effective foil against ISIS, at least in northeastern Syria, where there are large Kurdish populations. Despite the Turkish government's growing antagonism, the Kurds have found a way to consolidate territory across Iraq and into Syria, and have been the only credible ground force for pushing out ISIS. Unlike ISIS, they are largely secular and pro-Western, though pragmatic in their foreign policy approach, with numerous economic ties to Turkey and Iran. The power rebalancing likely will mean permanent gains for them and de facto independence, even if Turkey reluctantly enters the fray in limited fashion, though their momentum is also slowed by low oil prices. On the other side, the power vacuum has wreaked havoc in Libya, Syria, Iraq and Yemen, leading to a rising crescendo of human suffering in millions of desperate refugees and an opening for radicals with regional (and alienated Western) support to seize pockets of power in the absence of a strongly-supported central government. Even in militarised Egypt, where the central government appears to be well entrenched, recent insurgent activities in the Sinai point to a wide range of vulnerabilities and de-legitimisation of the state.

CREATING A STABLE BASE

Sometimes answers are so intuitive that they seem deceptively simple. The road to stability in the region falls into such a category. People don't just blow themselves up or engage in suicidal conflicts because of blind obedience to a cause. Syrians, Egyptians and Iraqis before the wars and coups were generally quite moderate in their views. Circumstances move them and others towards the desperate notion that they have nothing to lose and that their sacrifice will be meaningful to their tribe. They are manipulated by religion and political appeals to emotionally-based communal threats, but they are also reacting to the situation that has prevailed for decades in the region, a situation of low hope for economic and political well-being for the vast unconnected majority. The failure of democracy points to the naïve Western analysis of the Arab Spring, that Western-style democracy would take root, ignoring the decades, troops and economic development required for such changes in Germany and Japan, homogeneous states who developed idiosyncratic democracies. The Arab Spring could not be pro-Western in orientation for many reasons starting with the most obvious one that the dictators who were the targets of the rebellions had been supported by the West for many decades. More importantly, democracy takes place only when there is peace, social consensus, and a strong notion and education for citizenship. This requires generations of efforts, well beyond the spontaneous protest enabled by social media, and cannot be created in short order by occupying troops unless they are accompanied by local, legitimate leadership and long-term economic growth (vs. aid contracts), as in the case of Germany and Japan. Social consensus and a sense of nationalism, in turn, are most often forged by an external threat, as in the dawning of the US, rather than the internal struggles of the region.

Understanding this basic logic can inform the potential sources for Western strategy to aid future stability. The first foundation for a stability strategy stems from the Hippocratic oath of do no harm. This needs to be distinguished from doing nothing. The consternation over potentially bad consequences prevents learning from taking place and ignores the consequences of the status quo or doing nothing. The parade of mistakes of previous administrations from the misreading of the Vietnam wars as communist rather than nationalist struggles, to the devastating decision to un-employ the Baathist rank and file following the invasion of Iraq reflect a long line of bumbling judgements based in good part on lack of deep knowledge and understanding about local conditions. One can point all the way back to the support of the mujahedeen in Afghanistan against the Soviets as an unwillingness to understand the local forces with whom one is allied, or even more directly to the inability to capture bin Laden in Tora Bora or Pakistan. More recently our ignorance was highlighted in stunning fashion by the revelation that the long-time Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, *has been dead for two years without our knowing it!* All of it suggests a bewildering continuing lack of deep knowledge by decision-makers about the region, a lack of human intelligence, as admitted by spy agencies after their numerous failures, and an inability to think one or more steps ahead - e.g., what happens after the Soviets are defeated in Afghanistan? The lack of knowledge translates into relying upon weak, if convenient, proxy partners as our middlemen, with all the spectacularly bad consequences that come from that, from supporting Mubarak to Maliki. Buying off Sunni tribes or Karzai's coalition may create peace in the short run, but once the bales of cash dry up, so does the support. Lack of credible intelligence on the ground led directly to the invasion of Iraq to control weapons of mass destruction and feeds into the lack of trust with the nuclear arrangements in Iran. Intelligence efforts are oriented towards interdicting terrorist activities, rather than trying to dissipate the sources of them, and so are in an endless game of creating more terror and evasive innovation, from IEDs to underwear bombs, to the methods they use. The sense of paranoia that was so ably tapped into by contractors after 9/11 created a frenzy whereby no expense or privacy were spared, leading directly to our inability to engage in an appropriate economic stimulus to the ongoing recession, but that fog may be starting to finally lift.

This lack of effort at understanding extends to Western communities as well, where first-generation minority Arab communities are marginalised and thus susceptible to radicalisation. While some security monitoring is desirable, it is inexplicable why the link between economic hardship, discrimination and radicalisation is not made more clear. To be sure, there are middle-class exceptions among radicals, but there is undoubtedly a strong sense of alienation feeding their motivation. The high rates of unemployment and difficulties of integration for large parts of the immigrant communities are well documented. Use some of the security funds to provide these young men jobs, and then they will have a stake in the society. Instead of simply securitising the situation, the next logical step of providing alternative paths for social integration is ignored.

This brings us to the second base, which is democracy and human rights. The incidents at Abu Ghraib and the violation of basic due process at Guantánamo converge with the support of

dictators and the movement towards anti-terror modifications of privacy as noted above. If we justify intervention on the basis of rights only when it is convenient (for example, Libya's invasion was supposedly based upon an impending human disaster), then we come across as hypocrites and lose all credibility in the region as brokers. Similarly, ignoring global financial systems that allow Western companies, terrorists and narco-traffickers to use the same offshore havens, or the arms and petrol trade, ignores the fact that Western consumption of oil, institutions and technology indirectly support our own enemies. This merges with a long history of colonialism and sweet deals for corrupt and despotic regimes that makes evocation of human rights seem self-serving. The blind and unlimited support of Israel, despite the burgeoning security state that weighs on Palestinians, seems to endorse a might makes right view of the West that prevails far stronger than democracy in the region. Israel may claim to be a democracy with Western values, but it is also a highly religious state which limits the possibilities for including Palestinians in the same state, and one where politics thrives on paranoia, preventing any compromise. At the same time, the unwillingness to allow for normal commerce and territorial concessions in Palestinian areas or multinational peacekeeping forces dooms it to perpetual conflict with its neighbours. It is strange that the land-for-peace formula that worked with Egypt has been discarded, reflecting again the preponderance of emotion over reason in the region, and suggesting a new approach is needed. The same disjuncture between means and ends is seen in the Arab World in regard to Western discussions of democracy. One could see the possibility with limited costs of supporting a democratic process, for example, before the overthrow of Morsi, even if he was not the most palatable of leaders. But notions of democracy appear to be empty promises when not backed up by any serious actions against the coup that resulted and the failure to return to a democratic process, leading to another generation of violence by the Muslim Brotherhood or even more radical (undemocratic) factions. As I discuss in the *Book of Rules*, extremist positions inevitably create radical responses, even to the point (especially when) where the opposition is backed into the corner. The same can be said for instilling electoral processes in the region, from Afghanistan to Iraq, where corruption abounds in every appointment. If the lack of transparency, a culture of compromise, and democratic governance are at the root of regime weakness and discontent in the region, then Western prescriptions of democracy seem ephemeral in practice.

The third basis for moving towards stability lies in the nature of many of the regimes we support, namely kleptocratic, oil-based governments that use a combination of buying off and coercion to keep a fragile peace. The religious and anti-Western shrouds that cloak their activities are kept in place by the hypocrisy noted above, but also by a history of Western support for oppressive regimes in return for access to petroleum. While there certainly have been economic progress and solid projects in the region, the potential pales with the reality, where it lags behind many of the common human indicators in regard to inequality, access to health care, education and the like. If we are true democrats, we should start with supporting women's basic rights, explaining it not in cultural terms but in the fact that it is proven as one of the most reliable paths to rapid economic development. In light of the largely correct perception of the population that massive wealth comes from exploitation of fossil fuel resources, the local regimes cleverly turn the blame on Western exploitation to funnel frustration elsewhere. The

West is thus effectively allied with regimes based upon a private notion of state capture for their cronies. To be sure, the rule of law and transparency of contracts are not easily inured in a global world where multinationals, including those from non-democratic states such as Russia and China, are competing for contracts. However, in the long run, not only Western governments and populations, but also their companies, are damaged by the inherent instability of corrupt arrangements. Western partners are seen as no different, thus the stability of their business relations is equally subject to mercurial changes in politics. Prosperity and peace evidently go together. But in a deeply conflictual situation, the mentality of short-term gains means that power is a zero-sum game. It is no surprise, then, that the Egyptian military ensured its control of the economy again, or that the Gulf states feel so threatened by any real move towards democracy. Democracy means not only giving up power but also direct control of wealth, ignoring the fact as the pie gets bigger, a more productive upper class can emerge as it has in the West. But the pie can never grow until there is a sense of stability to create incentives for long-term shared gains and a desire to include all groups in pursuit of mutually beneficial national development. That window was open for a time after the fall of Saddam, but the loss of interest in the Maliki regime closed it back into tribalism.

Any suggestions of conditions by the West will be met in the region, as they are in China, by accusations of interference. Yet, the acceptance of the status quo is an acceptance of certain conditions and values. If the West does not truly believe in military and intelligence subservience to civilians under the rule of law; transparency in public budgets and personnel hiring; women's rights to education, health care and occupational choice; or the right to vote and speak out, it should not prescribe such things. But intuitively, we in the West know that all of these things are the foundations for a standard of living and quality of life that bring with it a contentment among large segments of the population, and thereby, a stability that frees us from physical violence and ensures economic progress. Critics will point to various scandals in the West such as recent racial violence in the US or protests against inequality, but these are more a reflection of the system working out its contradictions than any questioning of the principles themselves. Our argument should rely upon logic and outcomes rather than vague evocations of superior culture, tradition and religion to explain why women should be allowed to drive or attend school. In the end, one of the crucial turning points in Western history was the separation of Church and state, though the relationship remains fraught at times. Logic through the rule of law can only prevail when religion is taken out of the picture as a justification for rules, so this is the biggest barrier to evolution of the state in the Middle East. Tradition, as in proscriptions against homosexuality, holds up weakly in the long-run faceoff with the values of individual and communal basic freedoms when a free discussion can take place. Tradition based on logic as in proscriptions against theft, and prescriptions for honesty, thrift and charity, hold up over time in proving their usefulness, based on a bedrock of maximum tolerance for difference, as long as no one else is harmed. Morality can be reinforced by religion rather than being manipulated by it for the aggrandisement of the religious mullahs who are embedded in Middle East governments. The Arab Spring may be seen as an awakening among a younger generation of the Middle East that can see the difference between basic rights, including having reasonable avenues open for work based on merit, and becoming Western. We have not yet recognised that

difference. Rights and governance can share democratic values while taking on more acceptable local forms.

While we can take a strong stance towards basic rights, we cannot do so in a vacuum. This takes us to the last principle, which is communalism. Thanks to the consumer and voter paradigm, we in the West think only of individuals. However, every Western country developed on the basis of nationalism, which was used in the long run to push individuals to sacrifice short-term gains towards a system that benefited all. In other words, social capital or trust, as many recent analysts put it, is at the heart of a well-functioning society. Recent problems with immigration in the US and Europe, and long-standing ones in Japan, point to the fact that when communal identities feel challenged, they become defensive and xenophobic. Before Western societies, including the US, Canada and Australia, opened up to a secular and tolerant state, they first were relatively homogeneous colonies and then states with a dominant set of values and rules to match them. Evidently, we don't see this in the Middle East, Africa or Southeast Asia because of the way that borders were drawn. It is impossible in the foreseeable future to see a democratic Iraq emerging from the three main ethnic groups there, just as it is in Afghanistan where geography and centuries of history and conflict also separate ethic groups. Colonialism's main weapon was to exploit these differences, creating untenable power structures where minorities such as the Alawites in Syria could take over using their control of the military. It is no surprise that the main tool of the state in the region is coercion.

To reinforce the point, the one place where one does find a relatively secular state is in Kurdistan. If nationalism is necessary for trust, and thus a democratic process and rule of law that enable capitalism, then conflicts in the Middle East reflect almost untenable states, from Yemen to Lebanon to Turkey. A stable Syria dominated by the Alawites or the Sunnis is impossible to imagine, if only for reasons of revenge that would ensue. Even in Egypt, the fear by the Copts of Morsi's domination of the minority group helped to spur on the military coup. This suggests that we may need to rethink crossing the line on the sanctity of state sovereignty, the holy line of international relations. Large parts of Turkey are Kurdish in nature, and thus instability is bound to continue unless the nature of the Turkish state itself changes towards a more open and tolerant one, which is hard to foresee given the recent election of Islamic-based parties. Rather than going back to the status quo ante of supporting dictators, we should take the long view that the Arab Spring opens up new possibilities. We are in a period of transition and can help the region move to a better situation, rather than throwing up our hands at the unknown. Democracy will require a long learning curve and ongoing social evolution, as we know from our recent history, ranging from the activities of the FLQ to the civil rights movements. The experiment in Tunisia shows that the dark side of the Arab Spring is only one possibility, and we have the chance to encourage alternative futures far brighter than possible under the previous dictatorial regimes. Taking the long view should give one optimism to replace the current mood of despair.

It is hard for the West to take a long view, even though in its own evolution a dominant ethnic tradition won out and then evolved over long periods of time into the modern secular states of

Europe, North America and Japan. However, democracy and capitalism are based in good part on the rule of law, and can only exist where trust prevails (one hundred per cent enforcement of any rule is impossible and prohibitively expensive). Thus it is hard to see how countries born in a history of violence and ethnic domination of one group over another can lead to stability. It is hard to see a stable democracy in Israel where a growing majority of Arabs of Palestinian background (due to higher birth rates) would participate. Such a shift in thinking is highly resisted for the obvious complications it brings up, such as how to divide a city like Baghdad, Jerusalem or Kirkuk where resources and ethnic mixes prevail. But until such lines are redrawn, the temptation to create violence over control of a certain territory or resources or to simply rally the population against enemies from within and their external allies will likely be too great to avoid. In conditions of corruption, politics is a zero-sum game where the winner takes all. Stable transitions are unlikely until the game becomes inclusive and everyone is given a fair stake. That requires social communalism, or culturally-based trust built on long experience, along with the shift to separate religion from politics, transparency, and to ensure minority rights.

In sum, there are elements available to the West and the US for a shift in thinking that would lead to a more productive long-run strategy in the Middle East. An example is the painstaking approach to the Iran-US nuclear negotiations which required major efforts to avoid falling into emotionally- and communally-based thinking, as well as helping both sides to avoid losing face or looking weak. These elements were as crucial to the success of the talks as the bargain itself. Such principles cannot substitute for the work that needs to be done in developing a theory of stabilising failed states. As noted in our first suggestion, more resources need to be put into a systematic study of experiments and experience along these lines. Otherwise, we will repeat the efforts of non-profit and diplomatic forces in Afghanistan and elsewhere (see Haiti), where good intentions and large amounts of resources were not guided or accountable, and therefore aid and intervention fatigue inevitably set in. The principles are a good starting point, though. Shifting policies to promote effective, fair and just governance in the region will create anguish during a transition period and claims of violations of current state norms. Yet, they have a logical basis for providing stability that our well-meaning but presently quite short-term and incoherent approach lacks, and they recognise elements of human nature that other approaches to diplomacy based upon straight up bargaining and individually-based rationality ignore. It will require in the short-term foregoing some contracts or convenient allies and experimenting with new techniques such as de-escalation of emotions, but in the long run stability in contractual and political relations will rest on a reasonable foundation, one that squares the ends and means of our actions and better serves the populations in the region, removing their motivations to resort to violence and to implicate the West.

About the Author

Andy Hira is Professor of Political Science at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, BC. His expertise is in international development, political economy, and energy and technology policies. He is the editor of the recent book, *What Makes Clusters Competitive?* (McGill-Queens U. Press, 2013) about regional competitiveness strategies, and the editor of *Mapping Out the Triple Helix: How institutional coordination for competitiveness is achieved in the global wine industry* (Prometheus: Journal of Innovation, Dec. 2013). His newly released book, *Three Perspectives on Human Irrationality* (Book Guild, 2015), challenges traditional approaches to international relations theory by bringing in new developments from neuroscience, animal behaviour, and social psychology, illustrated using the cases of the US invasion of Iraq, the financial crisis, and climate change. He is working on editing a new special edition proposing new approaches to fighting corruption in the public sector that will be published in the *Journal of Developing Societies* in early 2016.

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