

countries and the non-Moslems has increased after the Gulf War.

Heller: I certainly agree that Islam is viewed as some kind of identity delimiter in relations between Islamic peoples and non-Islamic peoples. But I'm very skeptical that it goes very much beyond that in terms of either a determinant, or a predictor of political behaviour. The most salient divide sometimes appears in the case of a direct conflict or clash between a non-Islamic society and an Islamic civilization, in which case, the natural impulse is for other Moslems to feel sympathy or solidarity on primordial grounds. But very rare are cases in which that ultimately determines the kinds of policies that governments of Islamic countries pursue. I would go further and say that it is not even a reliable indicator of sentiment among Islamic publics.

In fact, in extreme cases we can see the most anomalous kinds of behaviour, at least at the popular level, in which other kinds of considerations of identity or other kinds of social cleavages will lead to precisely the opposite kind of behaviour that you would expect if you were judging solely on the basis of Islam. The events of the last few weeks tend to confirm this. Iraqi Kurds would feel much less solidarity with the ostensibly Islamic government in Baghdad, though they themselves are Moslems, than with non-Moslem powers in the area or further afield who might be useful in promoting their immediate objectives.

A most graphic example, and I don't know how much of this is information or disinformation, is the picture of Iraqi Shia begging the US armed forces to stay in the territory of Iraq to protect them from the government of Iraq. I wonder if the processes that we are seeing lately are not accelerating the movement in the opposite direction, that if in some indefinite time in the future Islam will be of no more psycho-political relevance than the concept of Christendom – which at one point in the middle ages meant something, and means nothing any more.

Bahgat is absolutely right that the uniquely unequivocal character of Iraqi behaviour with respect to Kuwait, and the total defeat that resulted from it, leads to the discrediting of what could have been termed the integrationist impulse of pan-Arabism, over the last thirty or forty years. We were talking before about the contradiction between state and civil society. The dominant ideology in the region, since the collapse of the Ottoman empire, has been the denial of the sovereignty of the individual, the denial of the legitimacy of the autonomy of the part against the whole. There may be incipient signs that the integrationist impulses are also coming under challenge.

The impact of the international system, wittingly or unwittingly, is to retard or stop whatever devolutionary processes may be taking place within states. It does it by strengthening the institutions of the state as against the individual or sub-sectors of society. It does it in the intellectual sense through the dominant myth of the international order, which is the primacy of state sovereignty. I think the myth of state sovereignty, and the way that it is manifested in international law and in the performance of international institutions such as the United Nations, creates an intellectual and institutional strength for states against societies which they would not otherwise be able to sustain in a different kind of world.

Stein: What was unique about this war if you look at it with proper historical perspective, may be that it was a war fought to defend the principle of state sovereignty. And that wasn't only important to the Arab governments, it was important to almost all governments in the Third World who face similar kinds of problems. That is an important part of the explanation for why it was possible to assemble an international coalition.

On the relationship between Islam and the West, from inside the Middle East, one of the really crucial questions over the next decade is what the appropriate models of social and economic change within each state are going to be. In the post-war period in the Middle East, there have been different kinds of experiments

so powerful and its impact went far beyond Iran itself, was an attempt in Iran to create an Islamic revolution, which was a social and economic revolution, as well as a political revolution.

So what are the alternatives? Where do we look inside the Middle East, for models of social and economic change? It is not only external aid that strengthens the state, the state plays a role which is built-in, to the extent that there are fundamental economic problems, which only the state is capable of addressing. That is in conflict with, what I call, the state breaking, nation building tendency – which we face in Canada.

To the extent that this may have been a war which was fought to preserve state sovereignty, it may be a historical curiosity. The war ended by the UN taking action with respect to the Kurds, no matter how limited or circumscribed, that was unprecedented. So the war may have started with one overarching principle, but the end is just as interesting as the beginning.

It is not only that these state breaking impulses are going to conflict with established state structures, but they are up against absolutely crucial and tough processes of how social and economic change is going to be managed. That is where Saddam Hussein touched a very important cord, on the issue of redistribution of wealth. But who redistributes wealth? States – both externally and internally.

Hunter: My sense is that the traditional unitary centralized Jacobin sort of state will eventually have to change in the Middle East, if it is going to succeed. For Iraq to remain Iraq it will have to try to accept diversity and perhaps a loose confederation.

Maybe Iran will have to have similar things in place among certain parts of the population.

Stein: What Shireen's just been saying and what I have been arguing is a reflection of two broad tendencies in global and international systems. On one hand you see a move toward federation. But what do you see in central Europe? State breaking, which is a result of nationalism from below, the destruction of state structures.

Bryans: Lurking off-stage in this conversation, and over the last eight months, is Israel. Where are these state breaking, nation making forces there? Or is Israel a special case?

Korany: When you discuss with Moslems and say to them, we are in the twentieth century, you can't just look at everything as a function of a religion which was established in the seventh century, they'll usually point to Israel, and Judaism as a religion. If you have a religious basis on one side, you can't deny it to the other. From this point of view, what we do with the Palestinian issue will determine a lot about the

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and they reflected what was happening in the international system. In the fifties, the Nasserite experiment was enormously attractive, not only in the Arab Middle East but in other parts of the Third World as well. It reflected both an attempt to build the state, not only to strengthen it against internal society, but also to engage in social and economic engineering.

For reasons that are not relevant here, that experiment was discredited. The prior experiment that Nasser discredited – and we forget this – was the so-called Western liberal model which had an earlier run in the thirties. The third interesting experiment, and that is why it was