

erosion of the Arab system. A watershed event in the last thirty or forty years was the distinction between Arabs and non-Arabs. The battle around the Baghdad Pact was over that. The pact was organized by Britain and the US, and was centred on Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and one Arab country, Iraq. There was a coup d'état in Iraq in 1958, and the first act of the new government in Baghdad was to withdraw from the Pact. From there on, there was a distinction between Arabs and non-Arabs in the Middle East.

There was another important change about twenty years later – Sadat's peace with Israel. That was the first breach in the distinction between Arabs and non-Arabs in the Middle East. For the first time a big Arab state said there is peace, there are diplomatic relations.

Then towards the end of the period there was the Iranian revolution, with a huge impact on Arab masses. And some started looking to Teheran as the new model of the future. With the Iraq/Iran war, some Arab countries took the side of Iran against an Arab brother, a further erosion of the distinction between the Arabs and non-Arabs. What Mark was saying about the rise of non-Arabs – Turkey, Iran and their role in the Gulf – shows the further erosion of this distinction. We are reverting to a Middle Eastern system rather than just an Arab system. And the rise of Islamic militancy tends in the same direction – eroding the distinction.

The second trend which consolidates this tendency, is that for the first time there are threats to Arab countries from other Arab countries. Before this, the military threat was either Israeli or from Western countries. Kuwait had to ask non-Arabs to help it against Arabs.

A third trend is what I call the rise of civil society. People use the term "democratization," and I think that is a bit misleading. I would call it pluralism within Arab society. In the last few years we had the omnipresence of the state; the state was too strong. And the debate we see about the status of the royal family in Kuwait and the possibility of enlarging the political elite, is part of the price of civil society.

Janice Stein: What is unique about this war, is that it was the world's leading military power that organized the coalition forces from a very weak economic base, and was not able to fund the war that it organized. Those who are powerful in the military sense, which is the traditional way we've looked at power in the Middle East, are quite different from those who are economically strong.

There is one state that had the potential to be both. Had it had a different system, it might have been Iraq. But that opportunity has been lost. Egypt which is a potential military power, is a weak economy. Israel has a fundamentally weak economy. Those whose prospects are best economically, however, can never exer-

cise the kind of military power in the region which will enable them to set the agenda.

Historically, when we look back at earlier periods when there has been this disjunction between economic and military power, those are usually very dangerous times. I would suspect that it would be more dangerous in the Middle East, than in the international system. In the Middle East, the use of force is still a legitimate instrument, unlike among the global industrialized powers.

Why I'm pessimistic about the future is that one of the ways that these two systems will be



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connected will be through the export of arms to the Middle East. And this is particularly useful for the US and for other economies that are not as strong. It's not the Japanese who are likely to be the major arms exporters in the next ten years. It is the weaker industrialized economies that are likely to get tangible benefits from a Middle East that is unstable, and in which there are real security fears. I would expect that the Middle East over the next ten years is going to be *the* region for weapons proliferation.

There are social and economic reasons for the strength of the state in the Arab Middle East in a time of social engineering. While political currents are working in favour of pluralism, or of a larger number of voices that are authentic and find some institutional way to be heard, that kind of proliferation of weapons strengthens the state at the hands of civil society. To the extent that the state is strengthened relative to civil society, and you have at the same time pent up political pressure to find legitimate avenues for political expression, what you get is pressure from below, which exacerbates these kinds of insecurities and instabilities.

Hunter: Bahgat's distinction between the Arab and non-Arab actors in the Middle East was a bit too stark. The Middle East system has always been interactive, and the countries on the periphery, if you want to call it that – like Iran and others – have, at least indirectly, been major players in Arab politics. Look, for example, at the alliance of convenience between the Saudis and the Iranians against Nasser of

Egypt. They didn't particularly like one another, but Iran was brought in to be a counterweight to Egypt, and now Egypt is trying to be a counterweight to Iran.

There has been a kind of romanticization of the fact that Arabs don't invade Arabs, but Arabs have used military force against one another. For example, Egyptian involvement in the Yemen civil war was a major military expedition. You have had Libyan and Egyptian wars, and Morocco and Algeria fighting in Sahara.

As far as the resurgence of non-Arabs, the whole notion of Iran re-emerging is a little bit like Islam reviving. Islam was never dead to revive, and Iran was always there.

I would submit that during the 1980s, even though weakened as far as the impact on the underlying forces of the region were concerned, it was much more significant simply because it was acting in a broad Islamic context. Although Iran may be emerging as an actor internationally, Iran may be going back and becoming much more Iranian, and hence its environment of activity is becoming much more limited. I believe that Iran has been traumatized in many ways by the reaction of the rest of the Islamic and, certainly, Arab world.

Bryans: It has been evident in writings over the past year – like the "Roots of Moslem Rage" in *Atlantic* magazine – that some people believe there is a fundamental conflict between the West and the Arab world, the West and the Islamic world. Is there such a thing as an Islamic world, or an Arab world, that is in conflict with the West, and is that even a sensible way to think about it?

Korany: One Arab state swallows another Arab state and says it does not exist any more. This is the first time. How will this affect relations between Arabs or Moslems, and non-Arabs? There was a distinction before, *we* and *they*, which is no longer applicable, because some of *we* can be a threat, and we can count on some of them to help us.

Islam and the West is a perennial battle. One of the prevalent theories in the region about the origins of the Gulf War – a conspiracy theory – is that the whole thing was a trap, by the imperialist powers, to finish off the important regional power that could reach the West and Israel. The sequel to the conspiracy theory is that now that Iraq is finished, the West is going after the next regional power, which is Syria, in order to maintain its domination of the region. People are very selective in the data they choose to confirm their point of view.

Some people feel that Hussein is the Third World voice against the return of imperialism. This might be justified or not, but people act not on the situation as it is, but on how they define it. Perceptions here are very important, and I feel that the gulf between Islamic >