

## **The Arab League: Ignoring Reality, or Ignorance of it?**

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The Arab League was established in the first half of the last century. Here we are today, in the 21st century. Time will not come to a stand-still. The 22nd and the 23rd centuries will come, with the League frozen at the first half of the 20th Century.

The members of the Arab League officially entered Palestine in 1948. That action was legitimate at that time. Nowadays, they cannot do such a thing. In 1916 Sharif Hussein was proclaimed as the king of all Arabs, with the agreement of the countries allied against the Ottoman Empire.

That too was acceptable at that time. Today, who can claim to be the king of the Arabs? If any one proclaims himself as such, it will not be accepted. That person will be considered insane. He will be the laughingstock of the whole world, Arabs and non-Arabs alike.

One of the sons of Sharif Hussein was proclaimed king of the Syrians, despite the fact that Syrians are not Hashemites. That too was acceptable at that time. When the French invaders expelled him from Syria, he was proclaimed king of another Arab country, Iraq. At the beginning of the last century, that was perfectly acceptable.

At that time, a man like Abdul Aziz ibn Saud could mobilize his forces and lead them out of "Al Dar'iyah" his home town, to seize all the other parts of the Arabian Peninsula by force of arms, regardless of their affiliation, Hashemite, Yemenite or otherwise. Today, if the Saudi monarch thought of annexing a tiny emirate like Ajman or Ras Al-Khaima, the world would go up in arms and send mighty armies to abort his plans. The world reaction to Iraq's annexation of Kuwait is a case in point. Farouk used to be the sovereign of Egypt and Sudan. That too was perfectly acceptable and considered legitimate.

Today's Arabs do not heed the pleas of their Arab brethren when they seek refuge from their enemies. Arabs now are granted asylum in foreign countries because the sisterly Arab countries deny it to them. In the past, that was not the case; Arabs were given asylum and protection in other Arab countries. Now, thanks to the order established by the Arab League, this is politically unacceptable.

If a foreign power occupies your country, you will find no succor in any state member of the Arab League. The leaders of the resistance to occupation used to be able to move freely within the Arab World. They were assured of official

protection and support. Donations in support of the armed struggle were encouraged. Anyone could volunteer to join the fight. Today all this is prohibited by the powers that be.

Nasser advocated Arab unity. He was supported, and subsequently rivaled, by the Arab Socialist Baath Party.

The torch was then passed to the Libyan Revolution. It made bold initiatives and courageous attempts to translate those nationalist dreams into reality until the new era of globalization and giant entities dawned.

The map of the world stared taking a new shape on the basis of pragmatic new giant demographic entities, like the European Union, the African Union, ASEAN, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the new Commonwealth, the Shanghai Grouping, The Organization of South Asia and NAFTA that creates an entity extending from Canada to Mexico. Those new entities give no consideration for race, religion, language or color.

This new world does not recognize any emotional or cultural ties because those are not practical, pragmatic or of economic value. The new entities cannot be based on religion, nationalism, color or even language.

The sole basis is regional, an area whose infrastructures can be linked to each other. They thus create a single market, a single customs union, a single visa and a single transport and road network. This integration serves the interest of the region concerned and strengthens its negotiating position vis-à-vis similar entities. It also increases the region's competitiveness.

Arabs are of the same race. They speak the same language and share the same culture. Most of them are adherents of the same faith. This is an indisputable fact. However, geographically they are divided between Africa, Asia and the Arabian Peninsula.

Those in Africa are an integral part of that continent. They are members of the African Union which came into being as a result of globalization. Thus, Asian Arabs and African Arabs have been separated from each other due to the nature of the new age of globalization and giant entities. African Arabs will in the future be component states of the United States of Africa just like the Europeans who established the United States of America and became Americans despite their European origins. In the same manner, two-thirds of the Arabs will become African citizens.

In the future, near or distant, the African Union will constitute a single political, economic, security and cultural entity. There will be one unified African identity along with a single currency, a single army of defense, a single foreign policy and a united negotiating position.

We do not know what fate awaits Asian Arabs. It is likely that they will become part of a yet-to-be born Asian entity. They might become members of various entities, some Asian and some Mediterranean. That too is possible. What is clear is that they will be divided.

They will be drawn in by the gravity of the larger entities. They will be fragmented. A similar fate awaits Iran and Afghanistan if they fail to join the Organization of South Asia or the entity of the Indian Ocean. If they do not do so, they will disappear or at best be assigned the role of a buffer or lubricant that minimizes friction among the larger entities.

Some might ask if it is possible for the Arabs to create their own entity. We say that that is not possible. The Arabs of Africa are part of the African Union. This is not a matter of choice. It is the reality and the basis of their survival. It is a demographical imperative.

Africa and Asia are two distinct entities. The African Arabs are geographically separate from Asian Arabs. National and religious affiliations are of no use if they are not coupled with geographical location that enables the establishment of a single entity with a single unified market, economy, defense, currency, identity and environment and satellite communications.

Nigeria and Indonesia share the same religion. But there can be no economic, security or defense ties between them. No such ties could be established between Iraq and Mauritania despite the fact that their peoples belong to the same race.

Africa's Arabs are two-thirds of all Arabs. However, by today's standards they are too weak and too small to establish their own entity. They can constitute one state within the African Union. Asia's Arabs are also too weak to constitute their own entity.

A viable entity requires certain production and consumption patterns that enable it to compete on the world level. Asia's Arabs lack those essential elements. So do Africa's Arabs. The two of them combined also lack them. Neither Iran nor Afghanistan has those elements, not even if they unite. To prove this point, suffice it to take a look at the gross domestic product of some entities:

The GDP of 15 states of the European Union is \$9.25 Trillion.

The GDP of all Arab states combined is \$700 Billion.

The GDP of a southern European state like Italy is \$1.5 Trillion.

Studies prove that Italy would disappear in 30 years if it were not a part of the European Union despite the fact that its GDP is twice that of all members of the League of Arab States combined.

Had Arabs been able to create their own viable entity, they would have achieved their national unity during the age of nation-states. Indeed the so-called Arab World or the Arab Homeland is in grave danger of ethnic and sectarian fragmentation due to the paradoxical nature of this era of giant entities and feverish minorities.

Any attempt at joint Arab action or attempts to hold on to the League's structures will be defeated by the reality. Holding on to the Arab League betrays an ignorance of reality or an attempt to ignore it.