



What's Really Wrong with the Middle East

By Brian Whitaker

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The problems in the Middle East run deeper than dictatorship. Inspired by the popular uprisings that overthrew the presidents of Tunisia and Egypt, Arabs across the Middle East are demanding change. But achieving real freedom will involve more than the removal of a few dictators. Looking beyond the turmoil reported on our TV screens, Guardian journalist Brian Whitaker examines the 'freedom deficit' that affects Arabs in their daily lives: their struggles against corruption, discrimination and bureaucracy, and the stifling authoritarianism that pervades homes, schools and mosques as well as presidential palaces. Drawing on a wealth of new research and wide-ranging interviews, Whitaker analyses the views of people living in the region and argues that in order to achieve peace, prosperity and full participation in today's global economy, Arabs should embrace not only political change but far-reaching social and cultural change as well. 'A passionate call for political and social change in Arab countries' Jeremy Bowen 'A call to arms for Arab citizens' International Affairs 'A lively, highly readable and illuminating survey of the countless things that are wrong with the Middle East today' Avi Shlaim, Guardian 'This is a writer willing to rattle a few cages... Detailed and well-documented' Huffington Post '[Should] be required reading by Arab elites from the Atlantic to the Gulf' Patrick Seale, Al Hayat 'Whitaker spares no criticism of the region's governments' Egypt Today 'Outstanding and credible' Jordan Times

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What's Really Wrong with the Middle East By Brian Whitaker Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1278982 in eBooks
- Published on: 2011-08-20
- Released on: 2011-08-20
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

According to Whitaker (*Unspeakable Love*), former Middle East editor at the *Guardian*, the various political, economic, and human rights deficits are too commonly shrugged off by the Middle East's civil society as someone else's fault. While acknowledging the huge impact of European colonialism, foreign interventions, and despotic leaders, Whitaker argues persuasively that if Arabs are ever to take charge of their predicament they must stop asking 'How did we get here?' and instead say 'How can we move forward?' In looking for answers, Whitaker brings the conversation to the actual populations struggling against stultifying authoritarianism, cultural stagnation, corruption, and deep-rooted inequalities, in the process revealing the debate among Arabs themselves about change—a debate that many in the west are still largely unaware of. His analysis is accessible and instructive, and cuts deep, settling neither for easy explanations nor simple solutions. (*June*)

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Review

'A passionate call for political and social change in Arab countries... and a stern critique of the status quo.' Jeremy Bowen BBC Middle East Editor One of the many merits of this book is that it tries, as far as possible, to let the Arabs provide the narrative. The narrative comes partly from Whitaker's encounters as a traveller interested in the Middle East and later as a journalist reporting for the *Guardian* newspaper; partly from written sources; and also from a series of lengthy interviews conducted especially for this book. Listening to the Arabs makes a refreshing change from the all too common habit of western pundits of pontificating about the Middle East and lecturing to the Arabs. Whitaker has given us a lively, highly readable and illuminating survey of the countless things that are wrong with the Middle East today. What emerges clearly from his survey is that the root problem, at least in the Arab world, is the lack of freedom. He concludes that in order to achieve peace, prosperity and full participation in the global economy, the Arabs should embrace far-reaching social, economic and political reform. Few would disagree with this conclusion but one has to be an incorrigible optimist to expect real change to take place in the foreseeable future. Avi Shalaim The *Guardian* Review 28th November 2009 'This is an interesting and informative book, and a passionate attack on the corrosive effects of inequality.' Sholto Byrnes, *New Statesman* (Should)be required reading by Arab elites from the Atlantic to the Gulf... This book will anger some and excite others. It is one of the most ambitious attempts in recent years by a western writer to analyse what is really wrong with the Middle East.' Patrick Seale, *Al Hayat*

About the Author

Brian Whitaker has done a variety of jobs at the *Guardian* including, most recently, seven years as Middle East editor. He is currently an editor on *Comment is Free*. He also has his own website devoted to Arab culture and politics: al-bab.com Author of 'Unspeakable Love: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Middle East', published by UCP (2006)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jessica Bradsher:

Do you have favorite book? Should you have, what is your favorite's book? Reserve is very important thing

for us to understand everything in the world. Each book has different aim or goal; it means that publication has different type. Some people feel enjoy to spend their the perfect time to read a book. They are reading whatever they acquire because their hobby will be reading a book. Consider the person who don't like reading a book? Sometime, man or woman feel need book whenever they found difficult problem or perhaps exercise. Well, probably you will require this What's Really Wrong with the Middle East.

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James Robbins:

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Leroy Moore:

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