Editors’ preface

December 17 2010: Mohammed Bouazizi, a 26-year-old man trying to support his family by selling fruits and vegetables in the central town of Sidi Bouzid, doused himself in paint thinner and set himself on fire in front of a local municipal office.

Police had confiscated his produce cart because he lacked a permit and beat him up when he resisted. Local officials then refused to hear his complaint.

Rifai, 2011

It will be for future scholars to unpick the web of events that led from the immolation of a fruit seller to the downfall of the heads of state in Tunisia and Egypt; to civil unrest in Algeria, Bahrain, Iran, Syria and Yemen and to open revolt in Libya. As we write, the final outcome of these events, for the region and for the world, are unknown and unknowable.

Some of these states are considered in this volume. And, although the events themselves are surprising, even shocking, they are to some extent anticipated by the contributors. Leaders, especially long-serving ones, have become distanced from the populations of their states. More fundamentally than this, they have failed to understand a new generation of politically-aware, technologically-savvy citizens. But most importantly, they have ruled states with governance that is to some extent imported or imposed, and certainly without the ijma, the consensus of the community. Whether this is the gradual erosion of rights under Mubarak or military dictatorship of Gaddafi, these leaders have lost their mandate. The position of the Al Khalifa family in Bahrain, Sunni rulers of a Shi’i majority, remains unresolved.

Yet we would contend that our thesis remains unchanged. We argue for a culturally appropriate leadership model which is derived from the fundamental faith and circumstance of the region. This is, more than ever, a necessity.

SCOPE OF THE WORK

The text which we present provides a critical overview of leadership development in the Middle East. As we hope to demonstrate, a focus on
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the organizational and social practices in the region of our study requires immersion in a broad range of disciplines in social sciences, the humanities, geography, development and religion in order to present a more complete and balanced view of leadership development in the Middle East. If this causes offence to pure ‘discipline’ scholars, we apologize: but our intention is to engender critical engagement as a way of opening out and radicalizing resistance to dominant Western conceptualizations of leadership and management.

In our introduction we touch on the issues surrounding resource, especially oil, wealth in the region and the national, regional and global consequences of the exploitation of that wealth. We take the opinion that to fail to mention resource issues and human-caused global warning would be a far stronger and more contentious political stance than it is to critically assess their impact on the region.

DEFINITIONS, USAGE AND NOMENCLATURE

This book deals to some extent with ‘contested territories,’ not only intellectually but in terms of national boundaries, nomenclature and Arabic usage. As editors, it is not our intention to take a political stance on leadership as manifested in the nations covered and expressed by the individual authors. Similarly, this volume contains some maps. We would like to stress that these are included for illustration only: they do not aspire to strict cartographic correctness and they do not imply any opinion on boundaries which may be contested.

The title of this book assumes that a recognizable ‘Middle East’ exists. We discuss this further in Chapter 1, but would like to acknowledge here that this is an extrinsic construct, necessarily coined outside the region and likely to be not only contestable but contested in some of the territories concerned. As for Arabic usage, while acknowledging that inconsistencies in spelling and construction in terms transliterated from Arabic are almost certainly unavoidable, we have chosen to follow, as far as possible, the transliteration guide of the International Journal of Middle East Studies. We have attempted to be consistent with these guidelines where such matters as general spelling, use of the articles al and El, use of the Arabic u as in Qur’an, Muhammad, Umar, Muslim, etc., and usages such as Shi’ism, Shi’i and Shi’a are concerned.

A number of Arabic terms are used in the body of the book. In general, the definitions given in and the context of individual chapters are to be used to determine the approximate English meaning. However, as a summary and for ease of reference, a glossary is given below.
THE SECTS OF ISLAM, ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE AND INTERPRETATION

It is far beyond the scope of this volume to attempt a thorough explanation of the sects of Islam or the schools of Islamic jurisprudence. We are, however, conscious that a reader new to this area of study may encounter unfamiliar terms and concepts related to such matters. All we can hope to do for those readers is to provide an overview and to give some indication of the patterns of belief that will be encountered in the countries of the Middle East included in this study. Our aim is to assist the reader of this volume, not to give a comprehensive overview. We can only apologize if this seems partial or – as it inevitably must be – incomplete, and if in order to explain, we necessarily concentrate more on historical developments than on current knowledge, interpretation and understanding. For a further introduction, we recommend the Oxford Dictionary of Islam, edited by John L. Esposito (2004).

Most people outside the region and outside the faith of Islam are aware of the terms Sunni and Shi’i (often rendered as Shiite), and to the existence of some historical schism between the two. We believe this is fundamental to scholars attempting to understand leadership in the modern Middle East as this schism goes to the very heart of leadership in Islam, as we will expand on in Chapter 1.

An estimated 85 per cent of Muslims belong to the Sunni branch of the faith. To explain this further we must first introduce some concepts, starting with Shari’a: ideal Islamic law or, ‘God’s eternal and immutable will for humanity’ (Esposito 2004, p. 287): law making or establishing rules is only part of the concept of Shari’a.

The more fundamental meaning of Shari’a has been translated as, ‘the road to the watering hole, the straight path to be followed’ (Esposito 2005, p. 78) or as Ramadan eloquently puts it: ‘the path that leads to the spring’ (2005, p. 31). This is expressed in the Qur’an and in the example, in sayings and action, of Muhammad. These do not, however, provide an exhaustive body of laws, and the requirement to delineate Islamic law in a comprehensive fashion led to the development of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh). Fiqh is the science or discipline that has sought to ascertain, interpret and apply God’s guidance. In all, there are four sources or roots of law: the Qur’an; sunna; consensus (ijma) of the community; and analytical reasoning or deduction (qiyas).

Sunnis stress the sunna and ijma. In full they are the Ahl al-Sunnah wa’l-Ijma, the people of the sunna and consensus. To Sunnis, the other Islamic sects have introduced bidah or innovations, departing from the sunna. In contrast, Shi’i Muslims are guided also by the wisdom of the
descendants of Muhammad through his son-in-law Ali and daughter Fatima.

This precedence to the Shi’a of the descendants of Muhammad is at the root of the schism. The Sunni accept the legitimacy of the first four successors to the Prophet, chosen from among his Meccan companions and known as the Rightly Guided Caliphs. Ali was the fourth caliph, but is to the Shi’a the first legitimate successor to Muhammad, the first Imam, and the succession continued through Ali and Fatima’s sons, Hasan and Huseyn. The term Shi’i is a contraction of Shiat Ali or partisans of Ali. It is this belief that Muhammad’s divine guidance was passed on through his descendants that differentiates Shi’i from Sunni Muslims.

There are three main branches of Shi’i Muslims, distinguished in general by those of the later Imams whom they recognize. The Zaydis are discussed in the chapter on Yemen: the other branches are the Isma’ilis and the Ithna Isharis (also known as Twelvers). Shi’a form a majority of the population only in Iran and Bahrain, with a significant minority in Iraq.

The Sunni sect of Islam comprises four schools of legal thought: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi’i and Hanbali. Today they are dominant in different parts of the Islamic world – the Hanafi in the Arab Middle East and South Asia, Maliki in North, Central and West Africa, Shafi’i in East Africa, Southern Arabia and Southeast Asia and the Hanbali in Saudi Arabia. Hanbali traditions were reinvigorated in the seventeenth century by ibn Abd al-Wahhab and have since maintained a close connection with the al Sa’ud dynasty, as discussed in Chapter 7.

Two other groups are referred to in this volume. Sufism is an Islamic mysticism whose followers strive to be constantly aware of God’s presence. Ibadis, dominant in Oman, are a sect derived from the Kharijis or ‘seceders’ and are neither Sunni nor Shi’i, having initially supported Ali and later turned against him. An approximate breakdown of the religious affiliation of populations in the countries considered in this volume is given in Chapter 1, Table 1.2 and Figure 1.5.

One final point that we would like to stress is that, in an era of global scholarship, we have made a concerted effort to be inclusive and to draw on a wide range of sources including, as well as those from the Anglo-American and European traditions, others from Arab and Persian sources including some still unpublished in English translation. We have consciously aspired to avoid exclusively citing a narrow range of US-dominated organization and management journals.
REFERENCES


