

**FROM GOODWILL TO ILL-WILL AND BACK:  
THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED**

By

John Duke Anthony

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## **FROM GOODWILL TO ILL-WILL AND BACK: THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED**

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(Washington, D.C. – July 14, 2003) As late as mid-autumn, 1947, the United States had no enemies in the Arab and Islamic world. Whether from west to east, or north to south, neither did it have any adversaries. Indeed, in all this vast terrain, from Morocco to Muscat, from Baghdad to Berbera, and from Algiers to Aden, with Aleppo in between, not one critic of America existed. From both ends of the spectrum, what characterized the Arab-U.S. relationship was an extraordinary reservoir of multifaceted and mutual goodwill.

In light of the present circumstances, how did the relationship fall from this goodwill so far into a sea of increasing ill-will? What can be done to restore the former while diminishing the latter? My remarks will focus on, one, the roots of the goodwill, two, on the reasons for the mounting ill-will, and, three, on some food for thought as to what is needed for the resumption of the goodwill that has been lost.

It is my view that responsibility for this resumption lies heaviest on the existence and exercise of bold, decisive, and courageous leadership first and foremost by Americans. In saying this, I am of course not unmindful of the role that will also have to be played by Arabs. However, Arabs need no suggestions from me, or lectures from anyone else, on what is at stake in the relationship. Neither are Arabs in need of any reminders of what it means, by way of opportunities and challenges, and by way of benefits and burdens, to be one of America's friends, allies, and strategic partners, and vice versa.

As an American, I see my country's increasing, ongoing, and long overdue obligation in its relationship with the Arab world as follows. I see it as a duty and unending commitment to do the right things in the right ways for the right reasons and with the right people to a far greater extent than has been the case in quite some time. I realize, too, that this will not happen by accident. Neither will it occur by coincidence.

To paraphrase the philosopher Edmund Burke, a significant improvement in the present circumstances will happen only if enough good people on both sides refuse to do nothing and, instead, commit to doing whatever is necessary to set the relationship aright. In no other way is there any realistic reason to hope that one can achieve a greater degree of regional peace and stability in this vitally important part of the world.

### **GOODWILL'S ROOTS: POLICY**

In broadest terms, what are the roots that, for the longest time, were the staying power of American-Arab goodwill and, even now, account for much that is agreed by both sides to

be positive in the relationship? In brief, the roots were and have continued to be two-fold. One is in the public realm and has taken the form of US government policies and positions of importance and benefit to Arabs every bit as much as they have been to the advantage of Americans as well.

For Bahrainis, the United States assistance to you and your GCC neighbors, and, no less importantly, your assistance to your fellow GCC member-states, the United States and other countries, to bring the Iran-Iraq war to an end, to prevent the Iranian revolution from expanding to the Arabian Peninsula, and to bring about the liberation of Kuwait from Iraq's aggression in 1991 are but three among other examples of what, for both of us, were and remain truly significant achievements. For Bahrain, other GCC states, and more distant Arab countries, too, U.S. support for your entry into the World Trade Organization is a more recent example and, again, one of major importance to us both.

Also of ongoing benefit to us jointly are the Defense Cooperation Agreements between the United States and Bahrain as well as several other GCC countries. These constitute additional hallmarks of a set of positive and enduring government-to-government relationships, and an extraordinary degree of trust and confidence, between our two peoples. That the respective parties and signatories to these arrangements and agreements continue to derive considerable benefit is self-evident.

### **GOODWILL'S ROOTS: PEOPLE**

The other set of roots that have sustained U.S.-Arab goodwill over time is an exceptionally rich set of people-to-people ties. Almost everyone in this audience is a personal example of such ties. Indeed, Bahrain is as good an example as any of the fact that the overwhelming majority of these people-to-people ties have been positive, mutually beneficial, and long-lasting.

Up until November 1947, in Bahrain as elsewhere in the Arab world, it was next to impossible to name a single Arab leader who was reluctant to voice her or his praise for the United States and the American people. Of equal interest is that not one Arab leader or any other Arab who spoke favorably about the United States at the time is known to have been criticized by their fellow citizens as being, in essence, little more than one of America's Arabs, America's lackeys, America's running dogs.

All that would come later.

Until 1947, the impact of America's actions and attitudes toward the Arab world was deemed by many observers as reflecting an overall positive mix of American ideals and self-interests. Indeed, prior to the fall of 1947, the governments of the United States and other countries stood out for having succeeded in the exercise of bold, decisive, and principled leadership on three important international occasions.

Many have forgotten that, between 1945 and 1947, the United States and its allies, working from within the United Nations, ordered France, the Soviet Union, and the

Netherlands, in effect, to grant the right of self-determination to the people of Syria, Iran, and Indonesia, respectively. Failure to do so, they were assured, would earn them international isolation, opprobrium, and, possibly, sanctions.

As a direct result, Syria, Iran, and Indonesia became free of foreign occupation. The Truman Administration thereby upheld three core concepts and principles enshrined in the UN Charter: namely, these three countries' right, and the right of other nations, to their sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity. These three rights are among the most fundamental rights, and reflect the legitimate aspirations, of all countries.

How different is the situation that has come to pass in the intervening five and a half decades. How different are the circumstances between what was then and what is now.

I mentioned what the United States previously did in support of three Islamic countries' sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity for a reason. The reason is that they are linked directly to the diminishing degree of Arab and Islamic goodwill towards the United States.

The reason, more particularly, is that, in many ways as a direct result of United States policies, all three of these basic national rights and legitimate aspirations are presently, and indeed have long been, absent in the case of the overwhelming majority of the Palestinian people.

Moreover, in the eyes of many Arabs, there is something that is worse. It is that, however differently Americans may understandably view the situation, an additional reason is that, as if to add insult to injury, the United States has recently been at the forefront of actions regarding which, as a result, the same three rights and aspirations are now absent in the case of another proud Arab people, the Iraqis, as well.

This statement of perceived current reality, however qualified and despite the caveats, is an unpleasant truth, but a perceptual fact. Facts are stubborn things. They have implications for the policies and interests of countries that are believed to have had a role in causing them.

It so happens that, regarding how these particular facts are perceived, they apply to two Arab peoples, Palestinians and Iraqis, who, throughout history and down to the present day, for a long list of reasons, have always tugged at the heart strings of Arabs and Muslims, and many others, the world over.

That most Arabs hold the United States responsible for a substantial proportion of the creation and prolongation of these facts has not, and does not, come free of costs. It has a lot to do with what, in too many places to list, is driving the previously significant reservoir of Arab goodwill towards the United States into the ground and keeping it there.

## **ILL-WILL'S ROOTS: POLICY**

The descent from Arab goodwill towards the United States into increasing ill-will towards it, for reasons related overwhelmingly to its Mideast policies related to Palestine, and more recently to its policies towards Iraq as well, did not happen all at once.

Such things seldom do.

In the interests of time, let me cut to the chase and come to the year 1947 and the basic point. What happened in November 1947? What took place then that, ever since, has caused such an unending river of damage and heartbreak to Arabs, Americans, Israelis, Palestinians, Lebanese, and Syrians, and for the longest time Egyptians, alike? What occurred at that particular moment in time as a result of which the United States and many others are still paying mightily, if unnecessarily, not only monetarily and militarily but morally?

What happened then was that the United Nations General Assembly voted to partition Palestine in a manner that, in the eyes of practically every Palestinian Christian Arab and Muslim thereby victimized, along with all who voted against the resolution, could hardly, by any standard, have been more unjust. In so doing, it acted largely in response to a degree of heavy-handed pressure from the United States.

With three exceptions -- the manner in which the federal government long dealt with the inhabitants of America's indigenous Indian nations, the natives of Alaska, and the millions from African nations who ended up enslaved by Americans -- such pressure as was exerted upon orders of the White House had no precedent in American diplomatic history with regard to any interstate agreement or treaty. Neither had there been any comparable precedent in terms of U.S. policies and positions within any other international, or for that matter regional, organization.

Compounding the shock was that the United States had acted exactly the opposite in the immediate three previous cases involving Iran, Syria, and Indonesia.

In so doing, those who lined up alongside the United States to vote to partition Palestine in the manner proposed elected, in effect, to endorse, and put into motion, what was bound to become a tragedy of monumental proportions. They voted for a resolution the likes of which, I have no doubt whatsoever, they would have resisted, upon pain of death, with every marrow in their bones, were such a vote to have been directed against themselves instead of the Palestinians or, for that matter, against Israelis or any other inhabitants of the land than these two people, had they been in the majority at the time.

If it seems an exaggeration to call this a tragedy of monumental proportions, for which the United States, Israel, the Palestinians, and much of the rest of the world are still paying the price, one can only invite others to be the judge. The facts, stubborn things that they are, are as follows.

What the United States succeeded in prevailing upon others to do on that occasion was give the 30-40% percent of the population of Palestine that was then Jewish 55% of the land. In so doing, they knowingly voted in favor of a proposal that would leave the 60-70% percent of the population who were then Palestinian Arab Christians and Muslims with entitlement to only 45% of the land.

In Arab and Islamic eyes, if not the world's, far worse, from the perspective of almost any social and value system that claims to be rooted in law, and the most elemental norms and notions of civility and justice bequeathed to human kind, was what they thereby elected to do. What they elected to do was the following. They ensured that 93% of the Palestinian Arab Muslims and Christians who owned the land would have their land holdings reduced to only 45% of the total.

With the exception of the three aforementioned indelible stains on the record of the history of the United States, no remotely comparable violation of Americans' stated religious beliefs, moral principles, and ethical criteria with regard to doing unto others what one would have others do unto oneself has since been dealt as great a body blow on the altar of domestic political expediency.

Nor has there been another similar event since that caused basic Arab and Muslim images of the United States government and American Mideast policies to be re-evaluated to such an extent as occurred in reaction to what the United States did and what it failed to do on that occasion.

In the ups and downs of each and every American official effort since then to recover the earlier sense of Arab goodwill towards the United States that previously existed -- and, in contrast to every other country at the moment the Truman administration elected to make this fateful decision, was ours beyond all others for retaining, for deepening, for expanding -- this is the main story.

Much of the rest is details.

One of the more important details was how what we did then, and did subsequently, opened the door for a degree of Soviet intrusion and influence in the Arab world, in alignment with the anti-Americanism that followed, that would never have otherwise occurred.

An additional, even more important detail, is that the United States, then and there, in effect, succumbed to domestic political pressures that it act as though it had, and forever after could but have, only one super special bilateral relationship, a non-Arab one, in the Mideast.

## **A Non-Melodic Chain**

It is now more than five and half decades later.

If one but evaluates the present Mideast, Arab, and Islamic world policy orientations of the so-called Neo-Conservatives and activists among the Christian Israel-is-the-fulfillment-of-Biblical- prophecy fundamentalists, on one hand, and their formidable domestic impact on American foreign policymaking related to the Arab countries, the Middle East, and the Islamic world, on the other, it would seem, in some ways, as if, for more than half a century, time has stood still. Indeed, one cannot help but observe how much the same orientation continues to exist, and persist, among many Americans, in some ways, to a greater degree than ever before.

Here, analytical clarity is important. The origins and prolongation of this conflict are not the sole reason for continuing and mounting Arab, and Islamic, ill-will towards the United States.

There are other reasons. It seems there always are.

But let there be no mistake. The other reasons, whether individually or collectively, pale in significance by comparison.

It is of course neither “politically correct” nor politically wise to say so, but, in comparison to all the additional and vexatious issues that bedevil the Arab-United States relationship, no other single issue comes as close to explaining why for so long the cause of reversing Arab Christian and Muslim ill-will towards the United States has been, and remains, so perennially difficult and elusive of fulfillment.

It is more than enough to state that there is near worldwide agreement that the United States is the one “outside” country that is most responsible for the perpetuation of this particular problem.

A close cousin of this veracity is that the Israel-Palestinian *cum* -Syria conflict continues to be the oldest, largest, and most pervasive of all of America’s challenges to set aright its relationships with its actual and potential friends, allies, and partners in the Arab and Islamic world.

## **EVEN SO ...**

Here it is also important to be clear on another matter. It is a truism that the Arab-U.S. relationship, like life itself, does not pivot on a single issue. Rather, it turns on many issues. In this regard, it needs to be underscored that, despite all of the setbacks to American goodwill that have followed and functioned almost as constants in various arenas within the contemporary Arab-U.S. relationship, the world has not yet come to an end. Neither is there any indication that it is likely to go out of existence anytime soon.

Despite the many negative features of the current situation, a formidable web of Arab-United States relations remains. In many areas of endeavor, Arabs and Americans in large numbers continue to reciprocate a respect for, and, in innumerable instances a willingness to accommodate, each other's interests. Moreover, countless Americans and Arabs are also quick to acknowledge a continuing mutuality of overall benefit derived from the pursuit of these interests.

What are these interests?

In terms of categories, six different sets of separately defined interests exist between our two peoples. Each is worth nourishing. Each needs to be protected. Out of respect for the knowledge of many who are present, one need only list these interests by category and in descending order of priority. The six sets of American-Arab interests are strategic interests, economic interests, political interests, commercial interests, defense interests, and, for lack of a better descriptive phrase, cultural, educational, and people-to-people interests.

Time does not allow the presentation of a scorecard as to how well Americans and Arabs are doing in each of these six shared categories of mutual interests. Suffice it to say that, despite the setbacks and disappointments on both sides, the overall relationship regarding some of these interests is better than many Americans and Arabs might imagine. Even so, there is a caveat. It is that, regarding certain other interests, the relationship is much worse than many Americans and Arabs are aware.

It needs emphasizing that one of the reasons the overall relationship is better than many recognize is because the continuing positive dimensions of the relationship remain the envy of every other country in the world. An immense challenge, however, is imbedded in the fact that these positive dimensions are valued more and more mainly by government leaders and foreign policy elites.

It would of course be cause for rejoicing if this were also the case with regard to Arab non-leaders and the proverbial Arab in the street. However, the same cannot be said to exist to anywhere near the same extent. Indeed, unfortunately, for many Americans and Arabs alike, the opposite is closer to the truth.

The act of outlining the numerous positive dimensions that remain is purposeful. It is to underscore, to italicize, to capitalize, to neon-ize a powerful fact. The fact is this: it cannot be said that a foundation is lacking for finding our way back, to diminishing the degree of Arab-United States ill-will and enhancing the degree of goodwill.

Such a foundation exists.

We must build upon it.



## **THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED TO THE WAY BACK**

At the outset it was made clear that these remarks would be confined mainly to the American side of the Arab-U.S. equation. The reason is because I am an American. I do so also because I am far more comfortable discussing what my responsibilities are than I am in discussing what someone else's responsibilities may be.

As a bridge to my conclusion, I would like to posit a series of rhetorical questions. They are formulated to stimulate a discussion that will hopefully go beyond what all too often passes for conventional wisdom, considered opinion, established thought.

It hardly needs emphasizing that the need to go beyond such pseudo-certainties is one of the greatest parts of our challenge to reinvigorate the U.S.-Arab relationship at all levels and in such a way as to place the relationship on a firmer foundation for the foreseeable future.

If an acknowledged legitimate American foreign policy objective is to lessen ill-will, if it is to enhance goodwill, if it is to restore a greater degree of honesty, integrity, and credibility to the Arab-United States relationship, there is no getting around having to address some troubling questions about the relationship more forthrightly and effectively than has been the case to date.

To offer just one category of examples with respect to which productive analysis and comment might be put, following are some "WHAT IF" questions related to the steady loss of American goodwill in the region. All but two are rooted in the inception and prolongation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and that conflict's subsequent presentation to Moscow on a silver platter of an opportunity for unprecedented Soviet influence in the Arab and Islamic worlds.

The phenomena embedded in each of the questions that follow, as reflected in the U.S. foreign policies, decisions, and actions that followed, resulted in a series of disasters as far as America-Arab and American-Islamic goodwill is concerned. The policies, decisions, and actions that ensued continue to have other far-reaching negative consequences.

As for their provenance, all of the questions, and the dilemmas for policymakers embedded within them, pre-date 9-11. What is more, all relate in one degree or another to what happened to Arab-American goodwill en route the degree of ill-will that currently exists, for which no early end or effective amelioration or abatement is in sight. Any in doubt might want to consider the following.

### **SOME "WHAT IF?" QUESTIONS**

WHAT IF, as a direct result of the onset and prolongation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Soviet Union had not gained as many footholds in the Arab and Islamic worlds, maintained these footholds for as long as it did, and benefited as it did from the

anti-Americanism associated with the ease with which such footholds were established that was continuously strengthened and expanded by its presence?

WHAT IF the Soviet Union had not taken advantage of the Arab and Islamic anti-Americanism spawned by U.S. policies, position, actions, and attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and thereby, throughout the Cold War, gained as much influence as it did in this vitally important region?

WHAT IF Russia, the Soviet Union's remnant, were not able to utilize the ongoing waves of Islamic anti-Americanism in Tehran, fueled in large measure by U.S. Mideast policies, so as to fish with a nuclear pole in Iranian waters and, throughout the 1990s and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century until the present time, to dangle a similarly baited line in the waters of the Tigris and the Euphrates?

WHAT IF one of the world's most vital maritime routes, the Suez Canal, had not been shut down twice for extended periods as a result of Israel's invasions of Egypt – for six months in 1956 and nearly eight years in 1967 – with all of its attendant negative consequences for U.S.-Arab trade, U.S.-Arab investment, and the establishment of U.S.-Arab joint commercial ventures?

WHAT if, in 1967, no Arab oil embargo had been declared against the United States, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Portugal, or, again, in 1973, against the United States, with the latter peaceful, not military, response to Israel's continued illegal occupation of Palestinian and Syrian Christian and Muslim Arab lands and resources, which served not only to accelerate Arab anti-Americanism but an unprecedented degree of American anti-Arabism as well?

WHAT IF, in June 1982, Lebanon had not been invaded and occupied by Israel, with the Israeli Defense Forces killing 17,000 mostly unarmed Lebanese and Palestinian civilians in the process, and subjugating the Lebanese people and Lebanon's Palestinian refugees alike, whilst maintaining the occupation, with largely American weaponry, for almost two decades?

WHAT IF, in the 1980s and 1990s, American diplomats, other foreign affairs practitioners, Marines, and more recently students and tourists had not died in Lebanon and in Israel, as Israelis have died, as a direct result of anti-American and anti-Israeli suicide bombers?

WHAT IF, for the past half century and counting, there had been no Israeli invasions and occupations of lands the United Nations allocated to the Palestinians in 1947, 1948, and 1967, of Egypt (1956, 1967), Lebanon (1978, 1982), Syria (1967), Jerusalem (1967), the West Bank (1967), and Gaza (1967), and no denials, to this day, of an independent, viable, and contiguous Palestinian state or, since 1967, the freedom of two-thirds of Syria's Golan Province from Israeli settlement and, since 1983, annexation?

WHAT IF, from the late 1970s onwards until the present, U.S. domestic supporters of Israel in the United States Congress and the mainstream media had not dragged Saudi Arabia through the mud of American jingoism in its several legitimate quests to purchase U.S.-manufactured defense equipment at the time of the Iranian revolution in 1979, again in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, when both the revolution and the war threatened to expand to Arab, American, and other international interests in the Arabian Peninsula, and, again, when the Kingdom's leaders tried in vain to talk sense into American Mideast policymakers in the period leading up to 9-11, in spite of the domestic relentless, gale-like, force bashing of Saudi Arabia and its bilateral relationship with the United States not only then but practically non-stop since?

WHAT IF there had been no Israeli humiliation to the Lebanese, Palestinian, and Syrian people, as well as, earlier, Egyptians, and their respective supporters among Arabs and Muslims further afield, enabling political extremism -- often the harbinger of chaos [Arabic: *fitna*], and, in this instance, its close cousin: anti-American and anti-Israel sentiments-- to take root and grow throughout the region as a whole, and be spreading, as in Iraq and elsewhere, to a greater degree than at anytime previous time in history, with the effect being to preclude any near term prospect of regional peace and stability?

WHAT IF, rooted in and fueled by an atmosphere poisoned by all the foregoing and a great many additional extremism-inducing phenomenon stemming from the wounds of self-inflicted American Mideast policies, for which there had never been any effective acknowledgment of responsibility, let alone accountability, there had been no September 11, 2001?

WHAT IF, as a result of 9-11, the two sides had not been subsequently forced to harvest, as both consequently reaped, the negative political and people-to-people whirlwind of the plummet in visits to the United States by America's Arab friends in search of continued health care assistance, by students from friendly Arab countries seeking to enter or return to their American university for the purpose of beginning or completing their studies, by Arab tourists eager to take their children to Disneyland and the Statue of Liberty or to the place in the United States where their parents went to school, by Arab corporate representatives keen to explore business opportunities with their American counterparts, and by Arab investors otherwise ready and willing to enter into financial arrangements with their American would-be joint financiers, that, among other things, would help to grow the American economy?

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It is an understatement that the heads of state of every Arab and Islamic country, and the rank and file of the citizenry they represent and serve, would have given generously to have prevented any of these tragedies and setbacks to the Arab-American relationship from occurring, for their occurrences benefited no good cause.

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If one detects a degree of cynicism in the asking of such questions, it is because, in the eyes of many, the realities that such queries reflect are enough to give a person cause for cynicism.

But the purpose of the moment is different. It is to underscore the overriding American as well as Arab national and bilateral need not to yield to cynicism or defeatism. For hope springs eternal, and not just among Palestinians and Israelis, and now also Iraqis, but, also, their respective well-wishers, inclusive of Americans in the United States and elsewhere.

One of the best tools for countering such cynicism and defeatism is, again, sheer facts. Among the more powerful facts with which one can work to improve the present situation are the following.

One would not know it if one listened only to anti-Arab pundits among the Neo-Conservatives, many Members of Congress, or numerous editorialists in the mainstream media, but a silver lining, even now, exists with regard to various aspects of the overall Arab-U.S. relationship. For example, as has long been the case, a range of constants seem almost certain to ensure that the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf region will remain exceptionally important to vital U.S. national security and related interests for far into the future.

One of these constants, these facts, is that Bahrain and its neighbors comprise the one region of the Arab world that is likely to retain, if not increase, its special status in American foreign policy formulation towards the Arab world. Status here is defined only in part, albeit a substantial part, as a geological, geographical, geopolitical, and geo-economic area that is indisputably vital to American national needs and concerns.

In this light, who can cast serious doubt on the GCC region's immense and ongoing strategic, economic, political, and commercial weight, actual and potential?

Little wonder why: the nature and number of important American material interests in this region exceed those in any and all other Mideast sub-regions.

It is one of the reasons, among others, why a Bahrain-U.S. Free Trade Agreement is currently being given such serious and favorable consideration by the United States government. It is one of the reasons why few if any U.S. officials will deny that the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf states, by any standard, form an assemblage of countries like no other seven Arab countries anywhere else in the world.

What is more, there is every indication that Bahrain and its neighbors will continue to possess a preponderance of natural resources that, for far into the foreseeable future, will remain vital for the overwhelming majority of the people and places on our planet. There is little doubt that these resources, in turn, will continue to be integral components to the generation of employment, exports, and corporate profits, to the engine of economic, transportation, and infrastructural growth, to the expansion of trade, investment, and

technology, and to material well being of the overwhelming majority of humanity.

As it is, Bahrain and its Arab neighbors seem certain to continue benefiting from the fact that, collectively, they comprise a stretch of strategic real estate that is greater than all of Western Europe combined.

And in the realm of American and Arab moral principles and religious beliefs, as well as the cultural and family values that are intricately linked to both, there remains much that Americans can and need to learn from Bahrain and Bahrainis.

One would do well to listen to Bahrainis and their leaders. In many ways, there is a far greater need for Americans to listen to Bahrainis than there is a need for Bahrainis to listen to Americans. This is quite apart from the fact that, in acknowledgment that the Bahraini guests among us this evening are presently enrolled in a management development program at Thomas Jefferson's famed University of Virginia, Jefferson is known once to have said, "The best conversationalist is a good listener."

One would do well to listen to Bahrainis for other reasons, ones that are largely unknown to Americans other than Arabists and other specialists who need no reminders as to why Bahrain is important for where it is, for what it has been, and for what it is as a modern day descendent of what Bahrain was and has continued to be since the earliest march of human history. For anyone who would listen to the people of Bahrain, much benefit could derive from acknowledging the fact that, since time immemorial, Bahrain and its neighbors have been part and parcel of the cradle of culture, the crucible of civilization, the crossroads of continents.

Indeed, beyond being the Arab world's oldest archipelago, Bahrainis are the descendents of history's first human beings. In a metaphoric sense, the ancestors of the present generation of the Bahraini people were synonymous with the anvil of antiquity.

The nursery of nations.

The source of sunshine on the classical world.

What is more, given Bahrain's close identification with the evolution of the world's three monotheistic faiths, it must have seemed to its people at times that they risked becoming part of the traffic jam of the devout.

Indeed, after all is said and done, by no means least is the fact that, for nearing a millennium and a half, and counting, Bahrain and its fellow GCC member-states have been, and continue to be, situated adjacent to the epicenter of prayer and pilgrimage, of faith and spiritual devotion, of between a fifth and a fourth of all humanity.

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For everyone present, I hope it is abundantly clear that we have a lot of work to do if we are to restore the previous level of goodwill in the Arab-United States relationship.

\* Dr. John Duke Anthony is President, CEO, and founder of the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations; Secretary and co-founder, U.S.-GCC Corporate Cooperation Committee; and Publisher and co-founder of GulfWire and Saudi-American Forum. All three are Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit, nongovernmental organizations dedicated to the education of Americans and others about the Arab countries, the Middle East, and the Islamic world.