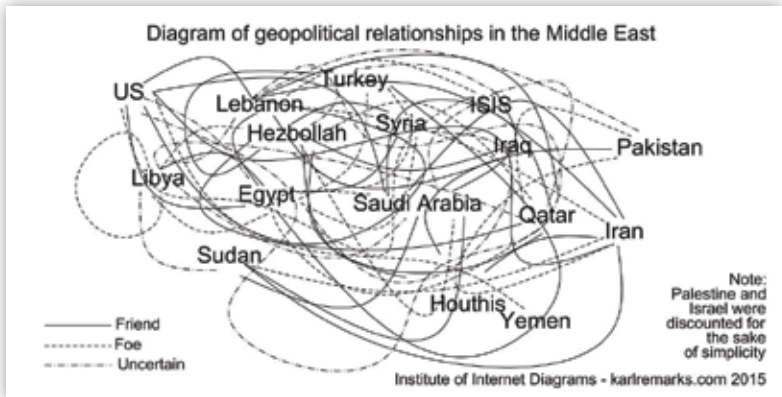


This Is Not How It Was Meant to Be



Quoting someone from the United Arab Emirates, a friend posted the following on Facebook: “I’ve decided – from now on this region should be called “The Muddle East!” I was curious to know who the witty guy who wrote that was. It turned out to be someone called Sultan Sooud El-Qassem from Sharjah, who earlier had posted the humorous diagram you see above, entitled “The Geopolitical Relationships of the Middle East.” The diagram is credited to the Institute of Internet Diagrams – karlremarks.com 2015 (pay attention to karlremarks!) I thought the best part of the diagram was the note “Palestine and Israel were discounted for the sake of simplicity!”

The Muddle East is right, but what a sad and shameful adjective for a beautiful part of the world that is so rich in history, culture, and tradition. In retrospect, can you imagine the region as a whole unit without borders, without strife and war? Probably not. But try to imagine that there had never been a wretched agreement signed by Sir Mark Sykes and François Georges-Picot in 1916, and that you could simply board a train in Baghdad – the second largest city in the Arab world and the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate that became the cultural, commercial, and intellectual center of the Islamic world – and get off in Jerusalem. On the way, you might want to stop in Aleppo and visit its World Heritage Citadel, the medieval fortified palace considered to be one of the oldest and largest castles in the world. Your next stop would be Damascus, the City of Jasmine, one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world and the capital of the Umayyad Caliphate. Heading westward, a stop at Beirut, the cosmopolitan city that oozes culture and joie-de-vivre would be a must. A mere 390 kilometers away lies the must-see breathtaking Rose City of Petra, the capital of the Nabataeans built in 312 BC and another World Heritage site. And in my admittedly biased opinion, the cream of your trip would be the Holy Land, where history, faith, warm people, and modernity all meet.

It pains me that my part of the world is referred to today as the Muddle East. This is not how it was meant to be.

**Warmly,
Sani P. Meo
Publisher**

