

History and sanity

Everyone should have the right to celebrate history and honor the nation's historic leaders; however, no one should be encouraged to think that he or she can relive history or reenact a historical event. Since history is unable to repeat itself, it cannot be made to reenact a role it played in the distant past. Continuous change makes the past a fading memory that is hard even to imagine, let alone reconstruct as a living reality. As a consequence, any attempt to recreate the past is destined to fail because it starts by discounting the complexities of life, while underestimating the extent of change it has undergone over the past decades and centuries. Such attempts tend to confuse the present, distort the past, and, unintentionally, disgrace its great legacy. Living in the past will furthermore, falsify our consciousness and undermine our ability to plan for a better future.

Arab societies have countless traditional intellectuals who have the courage to challenge their colleagues, foreign powers, and the present. However, most such people have no courage to challenge authority, prevailing dogma, or even outdated traditional values, as if traditions have more rights than people, and their life is more sacred than the dignity of man. Traditional intellectuals are always busy promoting a future built on the bases of an imagined past that never existed, except in their imagination. Yet, they have little capacity and patience to construct a workable plan to facilitate the realization of the imagined future. Because of such an attitude, traditional intellectuals are working hard, often unintentionally, to misinform the public, distort reality, waste people's time and lead them to despair.

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