



# The Tail Wags the Dog: International Politics and the Middle East

*Efraim Karsh*

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The continuing crisis in Syria has raised questions over the common perception of Middle Eastern affairs as an offshoot of global power politics. To Western intellectuals, foreign policy experts, and politicians, "empire" and "imperialism" are categories that apply exclusively to Europe and more recently to the United States of America. As they see it, Middle Eastern history is the product of its unhappy interaction with these powers. Forming the basis of President Obama's much ballyhooed "new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world," this outlook is continuing to shape crucial foreign policy among Western governments, but in these pages, Efraim Karsh propounds a radically different interpretation of Middle Eastern experience. He argues that the Western view of Muslims and Arabs as hapless victims is absurd. On the contrary, modern Middle Eastern history has been the culmination of long-existing indigenous trends. Great power influences, however potent, have played a secondary role constituting neither the primary force behind the region's political development nor the main cause of its notorious volatility.

Karsh argues it is only when Middle Eastern people disown their victimization mentality and take responsibility for their actions and their Western champions drop their condescending approach to Arabs and Muslims, that the region can at long last look forward to a real "spring."

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