

The Closed Circle: An Interpretation of the Arabs

David Pryce-Jones

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David Pryce-Jones : The Closed Circle: An Interpretation of the Arabs before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Closed Circle: An Interpretation of the Arabs:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A revelation of recent Arab history, politics, and cultureBy QThis is a profound and revealing analysis of Arab culture and history. He calls his book an "interpretation," which is quite correct, but it is based on factual history and events. His thesis is that Arab history is defined by the imperatives of shame-honor and absolutist power politics. Arab politics are a pure struggle for power, in which the winner becomes a tyrant who monopolizes all state resources for himself and his family, and the voices and welfare of everyone else is disregarded. Pryce-Jones also discusses insightfully how politicians from Europe and the USA have romanticized the Arab countries and people and remain willfully blind to the reality of its politics. In this way, the West enables the fundamental oppression and violence found everywhere in the Middle East.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. ... fully endorse this book for people who want to better understand Arab politicsBy AnonymousI fully endorse this book for people who want to better understand Arab politics, culture, and behavior. I have read many other books, blogs, and articles to try to have a truly deep understanding of a lot of things that happen in the Arab world and with Arabs, but only this book really hammers home for me a lot of the explanations why certain things are said, written, and done. It would be fascinating to read a similar book with analysis of recent events included.13 of 15 people found the following review helpful. Do you want to understand Arab culture?By Donald N. AndersonMr. Pryce-Jones has written an essential description of the honor-shame nexus that is so central to Arab culture. Those who view honor and shame as people in the West do, must read this book to understand the very different properties

honor-shame has in this culture. His description of power relationships is exemplary. He provides many examples of the dangerous consequences to which these power seeking conspiracies lead. The implications are discouraging, but having knowledge of probable consequences is much better than pursuing goals in ignorance. Perhaps we can then select goals and approaches that have some hope of success in this very different culture. I only hope any of our diplomats charged with a Middle East assignment understand the content of this book. I have recommended this book strongly to all my friends who have any interest in the Middle East.

The Arabs are at the centre of the Islamic world. This book should appeal to those wishing to gain a better understanding of the reasons behind the attacks on America on September 11.

From Publishers Weekly Following the end of colonial rule in the Middle East, the newly independent Arab nations did not become progressive and free: they are despotic; most persecute religious or ethnic minorities; all oppress women; none has participatory institutions. In a scathing and provocative critique, Pryce-Jones (Paris in the Third Reich ; Cyril Connolly) blames these dismal conditions on what he sees as a Muslim reversion to tribal and kinship structures as well as slavish obedience to complex codes of honor and shame that prevent concepts such as open debate, democracy and accountability from taking root. With Islamocentric shortsightedness, Arabs understood Nazism in terms of German revenge for humiliation suffered in World War I. Arab leaders admired both Hitler and Lenin as careerist conspirators who made good. Pryce-Jones sees the same tribal, king-of-the-hill mentality at work today in the Palestine Liberation Organization, a careerist group built around a few audacious personalities who arrogated the right to speak for a whole people. Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Reporter Pryce-Jones examines shame-honor ranking as a motivational force in Muslim society vying with Western values, while at the same time tracing the negative impact of Europe on Muslim society. The book facilitates an understanding of the Middle East, and the author has provided copious source notes to support his statements. He cites the diversion of efforts from country and institutional goals to serve personal and tribal religious careerism, and concludes that Arabs don't fit into Western organizing principles. This is an ambitious book that ranges widely over recent Middle Eastern history, but its negativity inspires a sense of futility as to the future, and leaves one wondering whether the conclusions drawn are correct. - Pat Wollter, Sonoma State Univ. Lib., Rohnert Park, Cal . Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. A brilliant book. -- Hugh Nissenson A brilliant insight into the way Arab societies work. A healthy corrective, a thought-provoking study. -- David K. Shipler, New York Times Book A landmark for understanding the politics of the Middle East...as brilliant as it is depressing. -- Daniel Pipes Powerful...must be considered and appreciated even by those who think they disagree with it. -- Amos Elon Refreshing...stimulating...as with the best historical works, The Closed Circle is the outcome, and the resolution, of a puzzlement. -- Elie Kedourie This is definitely a book to be read, if also one to be thought about carefully and rather critically. -- David Morgan, Times Literary Supplement