

FROM THE “ARAB SPRING” TO THE “ISLAMIC AWAKENING”: CONTINUITY OF US HEGEMONY

PART III

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As the tumult and tribulations of this world continue to beat up and pound down working people with little solace from existing human agencies—either governmental, corporate, or individual, average folks will invariably turn towards alternative means of liberation either from strategies firmly planted in this world or from other worldly promises of relief from their distress, for as human beings we are hard-wired to seek freedom, and when this fundamental desire is suppressed and consolation from our worldly pains are denied, we die emotionally and become at best automatons easily manipulated and controlled by others. As the U.S. Declaration of Independence states: “Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security” (July 4, 1776).

In the case of the United States foreign policy towards Bahrain and the Gulf Kingdoms, Jeffersonian democratic values enshrined in the nation’s Constitution consisting of majority rule; republican (i.e. representative) forms of governance; separation of powers between legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government; federalism (division of power between national and local rule); and checks and balances (to prevent any one branch from becoming supreme) have seemingly disappeared from the country’s foreign policy agenda, and this does not even begin to catalog the apparent abandonment of concern for fundamental human rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom of assembly, and freedom to redress grievances—all of which are being ignored on a daily basis in Bahrain today with tacit U.S. government support.

Vocal utterance of and bland support for such democratic values are made from time to time when the U.S. is castigating regimes it considers hostile, but in the case of allied or client regimes in the region—unless they are on the verge of internal collapse as in the recent case of Mubarak’s Egypt—such democratic ethical principles are almost completely dismissed. And just as individuals are judged by the company they keep, so too are governments evaluated and assessed by their political dispositions, orientations, and allies.

Of the many lessons that can be learned from the Arab Spring rebellions at present, one definite conclusion is that the inhabitants of the region are fed up with the blatant hypocrisy not only of their domestic rulers but, more importantly, of their government’s external allies

which, according to Chalmers Johnson, leads to blowback. In fact, Iranian scholar Dr. Seyed Mohammad Marandi writes that “the Western political establishment, the Western media, and most Western “experts”—who had not anticipated the coming revolutions in the first place—were once again incapable of correctly understanding the situation in Egypt or correctly interpreting the broader region’s realities.”

Continuity of US Hegemony under The “Islamic Awakening”

Commenting on the results of the first round of parliamentary elections in Egypt on November 28, 2011, Marandi notes that the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Coalition and the Salafist Nour Coalition, i.e. avowedly Islamist parties, together garnered over two thirds of the vote. Observing the “dismay” of many western political “experts” to such an electoral outcome, Marandi argues that contrary to a western understanding of Arab publics seeking secular liberal democracies in an “Arab Spring” of revolts, instead, as Iranian leader Ayatollah Khamenei proposed in a sermon he gave back on February 4, 2011, what is currently unfolding is an “Islamic Awakening” (January 17, 2012).

Marandi also notes the irony of Salafist parties—whose ideologies share “a great deal in common with those of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda—being “heavily financed by the West’s closest regional allies.” He writes that: “For reasons largely linked to self-preservation, Saudi Arabia and other Arab dictatorships in the Persian Gulf region are financing such extremist groups all over the Arab World and beyond. Over the past three decades they have radically affected societies in significant parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan, creating a culture of intolerance and radically altering the local culture” (Marandi, January 17, 2012).

In trying to stay ahead of these rebellions, the U.S. is desperately working to replace longtime autocratic puppets with fresh new faces in an attempt to maintain hegemonic control over the MENA region. At the same time, the U.S. is trying to extend its regional dominance by implanting new client regimes, as they have succeeded in doing so far in Libya, with Syria and, next, Iran currently in their sites. Just as in the run-up to the eight-year war on Iraq where the U.S. alleged that Saddam Hussein’s government was pursuing the acquisition of nuclear weapons, so too with Iran are similar charges being made despite the lack of evidence (McGovern, Ray. January 24, 2012). “Under the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Iran has the legal right to produce nuclear power for peaceful purposes,” writes reporter Marjorie Cohn, and she notes that neither the UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) nor U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta have found any evidence that Iran is producing such weapons (January 18, 2012). Meanwhile, the U.S. turns a blind eye to Israel’s possession of nuclear weapons, another sign of outright hypocrisy which is not lost on domestic populations in the region.

United States policy in support of the Gulf monarchs is trying the patience of the region’s citizens and exacerbating their sense of fair play. These long suffering people are fervently weighing various claims of liberation by competing movements and parties in order to determine how best to move forward.

In his most recent State of the Union address, President Barack Obama, speaking of the Arab Spring of revolts, stated: “How this incredible transformation will end remains uncertain. But we have a huge stake in the outcome. And while it’s ultimately up to the people of the region to decide their fate, we will advocate for those values that have served our own country so well. We will stand against violence and intimidation. We will stand for

the rights and dignity of all human beings—men and women; Christians, Muslims and Jews. We will support policies that lead to strong and stable democracies and open markets, because tyranny is no match for liberty” (January 25, 2012).

The Kingdom of Bahrain

If the average American citizen were truly aware of the reactionary, autocratic, oppressive, brutal, and tyrannous nature of the US supported Bahraini administration, they would be appalled and demand the immediate cessation of any and all support for such governments, including those of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Continuance of a policy that supports a regime of this nature, especially at a time when a clearly majoritarian democratic opposition is demanding reforms in Bahrain, would normally lead to widespread domestic charges of treason by those who are acting against the nation’s avowed democratic values, similar to the chastisement directed against the infamous Benedict Arnold who betrayed the Continental Army to support the British monarch George III during the course of the American Revolution. Every schoolchild in America is taught that monarchy—by its very nature—leads to tyranny, and this is why the facts of U.S. government’s support of the Gulf Kingdoms must be suppressed domestically. Alas and unfortunately, most Americans are currently unaware of the type of client regimes the U.S. is supporting in the Gulf, as the mainstream American media remains largely silent and tight-lipped as regards democratic activists in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

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