

Presidents, Plots, Broken Promises, Coups, Torture, Two Gulags and the “American Dream”

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“Oh what a tangled web we weave,

When first we practise to deceive.” (Sir Walter Scott, 1771-1832.)

It has been a bit of a foot-in-mouth week for the constitutional lawyer who is President of the United States.

As Egypt’s increasingly autocratic and theocratic Muslim Brotherhood’s President Mohammed Morsi was rejected by the population with an estimated thirty three million person demonstration and a twenty two million signature petition, the US Nobel Prize Peace Laureate cheer leading for the overthrow of Syria’s sovereign Head of State, declared he is “deeply concerned” over the ousting of President Morsi.

He called for the :

“ ... return (of) full authority back to a democratically elected civilian government as soon as possible, through an inclusive and transparent process, and to avoid any arbitrary arrests of President Morsi and his supporters.”

“The United States continues to believe firmly that the best foundation for lasting stability ... is a democratic political order with participation from all sides and all political parties — secular and religious, civilian and military,” Obama stated, demanding that: “ ...during this uncertain period, we expect the military to ensure that the rights of all Egyptian men and women are protected.”

Further, the United States supported:

“ ... a set of core principles, including opposition to violence, protection of universal human rights, and reform that meets the legitimate aspirations of the people.”

CNN called the (certainly also infiltrated) demonstrations the largest number of protestors at a political event in the history of mankind. Whatever the outcome of the interim government and the nation’s longer term response to it, it was demonstration of another rare kind: democracy in action.

Whilst castigating Egypt for an example of democracy’s definition, by his avowed hero

Abraham Lincoln – whose journey Obama emulated on road to the White House – “government of the people, by the people, for the people (which) shall not perish from the earth” (Gettysburg Address, November 19th 1863) Obama blithely ignored the dangerous criminality of sections of the ousted President Morsi’s supporters.

On 4th July, as the US celebrated Independence Day, in a chilling mirror image of America’s favoured fundamentalists in Iraq, Libya and Syria:’

“True to their vows, pro-Morsi Muslims are attacking Egypt’s Christians for participating in the anti-Morsi protests. The St. George Coptic Christian Church in a village in al-Minya, Egypt, has just been set on fire by “pro-Morsi” forces.

Copts are reported to be in a state of “fear and panic.” ‘

Days earlier, a letter was circulated in al-Minya, which has a very large Coptic population, calling on Copts not to join the protests, otherwise their “businesses, cars, homes, schools, and churches” might “catch fire.” ‘ (i)

The message concluded:

“If you are not worried about any of these, then worry about your children and your homes. This message is being delivered with tact. But when the moment of truth comes, there will be no tact.”

Some of the other threats delivered in support of Dr Morsi, to those of all or no religious persuasions, include relieving them of their eyes and wiping them “off the face of the earth.” (ii)

Yet President Obama related his deep concern at : “ ... the decision of the Egyptian Armed Forces to remove President Morsi and suspend the Egyptian constitution” calling on: “the Egyptian military to move quickly and responsibly to return full authority back to a democratically elected civilian government as soon as possible, through an inclusive and transparent process, avoiding any arbitrary arrests of President Morsi and his supporters.” This as he is stepping up funding and weapons to terrorists in Syria committing acts of barbarity exceeding even anything in Egypt.

Obama’s deep concern at the removal of President Morsi is at odds with his repeated statements on President Assad, as exemplified in the May White House meeting with Turkey’s now embattled Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan: “We both agree that Assad needs to go. He needs to transfer power to a transitional body,” he said (news, websites.)

President Assad’s government and territorial integrity is, of course enshrined in the fine legalese of the UN. Further, as Obama pledges millions\$ in equipment, training and aid to the Syrian insurgents, he directs his Administration to review US assistance to Egypt – on the basis that American law forbids aid to countries that remove leaders in a military coup, as he plans and funds one for Syria. Arguably, a lawyer who gives the term “legal leeway”, entirely new dimensions.

The atrocities in Syria being committed by the “Free Syrian Army”, alleged to be paid in “crisp US \$ bills” are a legion. The terrorist “commander” videoed mutilating a corpse and cannibal-like eating parts of organs, was described in the Los AngelesTimes (14th May 2013)

as vowing thus:

‘ “I swear to God, soldiers of Bashar, you dogs – we will eat your heart and livers”, the “commander” declares, while brandishing the organs, directing a sickening message to Syrian President Bashar Assad. “Oh my heroes of Baba Amr, you slaughter the Alawites and take their hearts out to eat them!”

‘Human Rights Watch said the man in the video appeared to be a rebel figure known as Abu Sakkar, of the Independent Omar al-Farouq Brigade, which arose ... last year in the Baba Amr district of the city of Homs. The brigade is one of scores of rebel factions in Syria that answer to no central command.’

Those pad in “crisp US \$ bills” have summarily executed across the country, including a fifteen year old street tea seller for “blasphemy.” Beheadings also include a Priest and a Bishop, along with desecrated bodies, burned Mosques and Christian churches and reportedly the massacre of an entire village of Christians at al-Duvair. (iii)

Also in formerly secular Syria “units” from the self-declared “Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham” (ISIS) – from the equally formerly secular Iraq until the US backed fundamentalists gained sway – have also begun imposing stricter interpretations of Islamic law and have filmed themselves executing members of rival rebel groups.

The latest internecine clashes were in the town of Al Dana, near the Turkish border, on Friday, local “activists” said. An opposition group known as the Free Youths of Idlib said dozens of fighters were killed, wounded or imprisoned.

The bodies of a “commander” and his brother, from the local Islam Battalion, were reportedly found beheaded, with locals saying that the men’s heads were found next to a trash bin in a main square. Again, chillingly reminiscent of years of the same, which overwhelmed Iraq under the American and British invasion and occupation.

Of Egypt, last Wednesday Obama demanded that: “during this uncertain period, we expect the military to ensure that the rights of all Egyptian men and women are protected.” No such demands over the daily slaughter of innocents in Iraq under a US puppet Prime Minister, Syria under US funded and armed gangs – and a presumption that the President’s ritual signing off on the droning to death of men and women in the villages of Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia or where ever – is a God given right.

But perhaps the greatest example of schizophrenic chutzpah, was the Nobel Laureate’s visit to South Africa’s Robben Island prison, where Nelson Mandela was held for eighteen years, in and eight ft., by eight ft., cell.

After standing in Mandela’s former place of incarceration, looking out of the barred window for a photo op, he wrote in the prison, now museum visitors’ book: “On behalf of our family, we’re deeply humbled to stand where men of such courage faced down injustice and refused to yield. The world is grateful for the heroes of Robben Island, who remind us that no shackles or cells can match the strength of the human spirit.”

Tell that to Edward Snowden and Bradley Manning. Ironically, his Secret Service agents stood watch in the old tower where South Africa’s apartheid thugs watched over Nelson Mandela and his colleagues. What symbolism.

Tell it also to those without hope who Obama made an election promise to release, rotting in another island gulag: Guantanamo Bay, where in fact there are eight stalags, built on a US leased former coaling and naval stations dating back to 1898.

In 2008 Amnesty USA recreated a life-size replica of a maximum security Guantanamo cell and toured the States with it. (iv) At eight feet high, ten feet long and seven feet wide, it is just two feet longer than Mandela's cell – and one foot narrower.

However, when the first prisoners arrived at the gulag on 11th January 2002, cells were reported to be made from chain-link fencing and measuring just six feet by eight feet, with corrugated metal roofs. Sleeping arrangements were a foam sleeping mat on the concrete floor. Two buckets sufficed for washing and a toilet. (v)

After Camp Four riots in June 2006, prisoners in Camp Six were incarcerated alone: “for at least 22 hours a day in windowless, concrete, steel-doored cells.

In even more restrictive camps such as Camps Three and One, it is reported that the prisoners are denied “special items” – such as toilet paper. When nature calls, a prisoner must ask the guards for the “necessary” amount of toilet paper. Think about it.

“Lights in the prison are kept on 24 hours a day ... The camps are surrounded by barbed wire and green sheets to restrict any views, including that of the ocean.”

“Since the opening of the prison at Guantanamo Bay on 11 January 2002, the U.S. government has detained more than 759 men there. To-date, only three prisoners have been convicted of committing war crimes against the United States.”

In Camp Three:

“The detainees' cells were sufficiently isolated from one another that they couldn't see one another. Additionally, there were noise generators near each cell so they couldn't hear one another.”

In April 2010 the Guardian reported that a TV had been installed in a common area in Camp Six – with prisoners shackled to the floor during television “privileges.”

On the campaign trail in 2008 Barack Hussein Obama was unequivocal, if elected: “We are going to lead by shutting down Guantanamo and restoring habeas corpus ... I have said repeatedly that I will follow through on it.” Further: “I have said repeatedly that America doesn't torture, I am going to shut down on it, we are not being true to our values.” (vi)

This week, two allegations of torture at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison, including: “electric shocks; repeated brutal beatings; sleep deprivation; sensory deprivation; forced nudity; stress positions; sexual assault; mock executions; humiliation; hooding; isolated detention; and prolonged hanging from the limbs”, by US mercenaries employed by CACI, were dismissed by US District Judge Gerald Bruce Lee.

The Judge's grounds were that US corporations are immune from prosecution for acts

committed on foreign soil. This in spite of the fact that the US military was an occupying force and thus legally responsible for the well being of the Iraqi population at the time CACI was committing the unimaginable – and a US General was in overall charge of Abu Ghraib and eleven other of Iraq’s prisons.

Speaking after he left that tiny cell on Robben Island, Obama said: “Nelson Mandela showed us that one man’s courage can move the world.” Quite, especially if you are the self styled most powerful one on earth.

Incidentally the window in Nelson Mandela’s sparse little place of incarceration, in front of which Obama stood for his photo op, was multiple times larger than the near slits that pass for windows in Guantanamo cells that have them. (viii)

“Pity someone didn’t slam the door shut on him”, remarked an intolerant friend. Tut, tut.

Notes

i.

<http://cpnagasaki.wordpress.com/2013/07/04/revenge-coptic-christian-churches-homes-are-reportedly-under-attack-by-morsi-supporters/>

ii.

<http://cpnagasaki.wordpress.com/2013/07/04/revenge-coptic-christian-churches-homes-are-reportedly-under-attack-by-morsi-supporters/>

iii. <http://www.dailypaul.com/287415/syrian-rebels-massacre-christian-village>

iv. http://blogs.suntimes.com/conventions/2008/09/inside_your_very_own_guantanam.html

v. <http://the-beacon.info/countries/united-states/demographics-of-guantanamo-bay-prison/>

vi. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8USRg3h4AdE> (1.43m)

vii. <http://www.allgov.com/news/us-and-the-world/americans-get-away-with-murder-and-torture-in-iraq-130701?news=850439>

viii. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-23121416>

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