

The Summer of Muslim Discontent: It's Not "The Amateur Film" Stupid

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Global Research, September 22, 2012

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Religion](#)

The so-called "Arab Spring:" is a distant and bitter memory to those who fought and struggled for a better world, not to speak of the thousands who lost, life and limb. In its place, throughout the Muslim world, a new wave of reactionaries, corrupt and servile politicians have taken the reins of power buttressed by the same military, secret police and judicial power who sustained the previous rulers.[2]

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Introduction

Death and destruction is rampant, poverty and misery has multiplied, law and order has broken down, retrograde thugs have seized political power, where previously they were a marginal force. Living standards have plunged, cities are devastated and commerce is paralyzed. And presiding over this "Arab Winter" are the Western powers, the US and EU, - with the aid of the despotic Gulf absolutist monarchies, their Turkish ally and a motley army of mercenary Islamic terrorists and their would-be exile spokespeople.

The legacy of imperial intervention in the Muslim world during the first decade of the 21st century, in terms of lives lost, in people displaced, in economies destroyed, in perpetual warfare, exceeds any previous decade, including 19th and 20th century colonial conquests. Much of the latest Western mayhem and violence has been compressed in the period dubbed the "Arab Spring" between 2011 - 2012. Moreover, the worst is to come. The Western overseers have gained strategic positions of power in some countries(Egypt), are engaged in prolonged ruinous wars in others (Syria) and are preparing for even bigger and more destructive military intervention in still others (Iran).

The "Winter of Muslim Discontent" covers an entire arc from Pakistan , Afghanistan in South Asia, through the Gulf region and the Middle East to North Africa . In the throes of the worst economic crises to hit the West since the 1930's, the Western imperialist regimes have squeezed their people, mobilized personnel, arms and money to engage in simultaneous wars in five regions and two continents - in pursuit of overthrowing political adversaries and installing clients, even if it results in the destruction of the economy and uprooting of millions.

Let us begin with Egypt , where the Arab Spring has become a case study in the making of the New Imperial Order in the Muslim world. To attribute the mass violent rebellions across two continents and two dozen Muslim countries to a US made film which desecrates the Prophet Mohammed is the height of superficiality. At most the film was the trigger that set off deeply rooted hostilities resulting from two decades of US led ravaging and destruction

of the Muslim world and more particularly, rage flows from Washington 's crude intervention against the promise of the Arab Spring.

Egypt: The Making of a Client State

From day one, in February 2011, Washington sought in every way to prop up the Mubarak dictatorship as thousands of protestors fighting for freedom were killed, wounded or jailed in the major plazas and streets of Egypt . When Mubarak was forced out of power, Washington sought to retain its influence by turning to his Generals, and backed the military junta which seized power. As the military dictatorship became the target of huge pro-democracy demonstrations, Washington backed a political power sharing agreement between the dominant pro-Western neo-liberal sector of the Muslim Brotherhood and the military, excluding any but the most superficial democratic and socio-economic reforms demanded by the poor and the working and middle classes.

With the election of President Mohamed Morsi, Washington secured the most fervent advocate of savage "free market" capitalism and the second best (after Mubarak) advocate of retaining Egypt's status as a US client state in the Middle East. Morsi, following in the footsteps of Mubarak and in accordance with the Washington and Tel Aviv, closed the trade routes between Gaza and Sinai, traveled to the Non-Aligned Movement in Teheran to deliver the Saudi-Gulf message calling for support of the Western backed armed mercenaries ravaging Syria . Later he announced plans to privatize publicly-owned enterprises, reduce the deficit via elimination of basic subsidies to the poor, de-regulate the economy to increase the flow of foreign capital and end labor strikes^[3] . As a reward for his servility and to ease the process of remaking Egypt as a pliable Western client state, Washington, Saudi Arabia, the IMF, Qatar and the EU have offered Morsi over \$20 billion in loans, debt relief and grants^[4] . Morsi's rule depends on playing the 'spiritual card' to retain the support of the impoverished Muslim masses, while pursuing a staunch neo-liberal economic strategy and neo-colonial foreign policy.

Given the recent revolutionary pro-democracy and nationalist fervor, Morsi looks for ways to deflect rising socio-economic discontent with his neo-liberal economic policies by adopting an apparently pious Muslim posture - condemning "the film" ridiculing the Prophet and tolerating assaults on the US Embassy in Cairo ... which angered Clinton and Obama, who expect total subservience, especially toward the symbols and substance of everything US^[5] .

From Morsi's perspective, a one day blow-off of steam aimed at the US Embassy, was the price for his larger agenda of putting an end to the revolutionary democratic and nationalist aspirations of the masses who overthrew Mubarak, especially when Morsi has every intention of "continuing his (Mubarek's) economic agenda with a stated policy to battle corruption"^[6] . Egyptian Muslim and secular populace are profoundly disenchanted with the Brotherhoods betrayal of their promises of welfare, jobs, prosperity and nationalist foreign policy .The "film" served as a "legitimate pretext" to unify their forces: the protest against "the film" was in reality about the larger socio-economic and political cleavages emerging and the tremendous boost in US influence in Morsi's Egypt .

Libya

The Obama regime led the aerial and maritime war that devastated Libya 's economy,

destroyed its national integrity and allowed a plethora of foreign and domestic terrorist fundamentalist groups to seize control over vast regions of the country^[7]. Washington and the UE parachuted a motley group of client ex-pats into government - without any supporting state institutions. The Islamic fundamentalists, the clans, the gangs, the tribalists, monarchists and dozens of other local warlords who the EU and Washington funded, armed and imported to overthrow Gadhafi did much more - they destroyed the entire fabric of organized civil society, the state and public authority. In the face of a Hobbesian chaotic world of warring fiefdoms, many people turned to their primary groups - family, clan, religious authorities, which could offer some minimum protection in the home, street and workplace. The assault on the US consulate was only one of thousands of violent assaults against property and national, regional and local authorities^[8]. The very police, military and ministries are infiltrated by competing armed religious and secular factions seeking to secure scarce oil revenues for their particular group.

The Consulate protest and the assassination of the US Ambassador and Special Forces was merely the most publicized act of murderous violence spawned by the US and EU military intervention. They thought, either out of total ignorance, arrogance or naiveté that they could arm the fundamentalists to do the dirty work of killing off Gadhafi and once their "mission was completed", they could be discarded like a used condom (or shipped off to Syria as shock troops) and could be replaced by neo-liberal technocrats who would run the country as a Western client state: turning the oil fields to EU and US oil companies. Instead Washington and the EU have alienated all sections of Libya society: the millions of beneficiaries of stable secure, secular and prosperous Gadhafi ruled Libya ; the mass of armed Muslim fanatics who demand a fundamentalist state and feel their sacrifices have been pushed aside; the warlords and contrabandists of arms, who demand respect for their territorial acquisitions^[9]. And above all the vast majority of all Libyans who have been impoverished by the war and who looked on with indifference or satisfaction as the armed gangs bombed the US Consulate. The violent protest over the amateur film denigrating the Prophet was clearly the pretext for a vast accumulation of popular and elite grievances which resulted from armed Western intervention.

Yemen

The seizure of the US Embassy in Yemen follows 33 years of US arming and financial backing of the brutal Ali Abdullah Saleh dictatorship, months of drone warfare and the repression of mass peaceful protests. The on-going pro-democracy movement in Yemen , which attained massive proportions, has been blocked by US-Saudi intervention and has left in its wake thousands of dead, wounded and jailed Yemenese citizens. The seizure of the US Embassy, ostensibly over "the film", had far deeper and more comprehensive causes: popular discontent with the decades-long US-Yemen alliance and a phony US-promoted "democratic transition". As in Egypt , Tunisia , as well as in Yemen - personnel changes are designed to sacrifice the incumbent dictator in order to save the client state apparatus (police, military, judiciary) which is the mainstay of US and Saudi power in the Gulf region. In all the "transitions" the US and EU rely on pliable and servile Muslim politicians to harness religious beliefs to their neo-liberal and pro-imperial policies.

Tunisia

In the case of Tunisia , the Washington-EU leveraged the Islamic Ennahda party in power in

order to abort the pro-democracy transformation. They subsequently heavily subsidized the “free-market” Moncef Marzouki regime which has totally ignored the basic demands which led to the uprising: mass unemployment, the concentration of wealth and subservience to EU-US foreign policy especially with regard to Palestine , Libya and Syria . The Islamic regime and party played the usual double game of condemning “the film” and smashing the protest, knowing full well that the street protest could ignite a much more significant demonstration against the regime’s total neglect of the original democratic socio-economic agenda.

Somalia and Sudan

Massive violent protests and attacks against the US embassy have taken place in Somalia and the Sudan . Washington has been deeply and directly militarily involved in Somalia for over two decades, shifting from a failed marine occupation to financing African military surrogates, including Ethiopia , Kenya and Uganda . They also engage in drone aerial assaults. As a result of US military intervention, Somalia is a divided, destroyed and destitute country, where piracy flourishes and three quarters of its people are refugees. The “film protests” are merely the tip of an ongoing national liberation war pitting radical Islamists against Western backed surrogates and the “moderate” Muslim puppet Sharif Sheik Ahmed regime.

Sudan is the site of a massive protest and violent attack on the US and European embassies. The ruling elite in the Sudan, subject to US and UE sanctions and a Washington-Tel Aviv-UE funded and armed separatist movement in the oil rich southern Sudan, signed off on an accord which reduced its oil revenues by eighty percent. As a result of Sudan ’s appeasement of the Western separatist surrogate, living standards in Khartoum have plunged, inflation is rife, unemployment is increasing and the regime has turned its guns from the separatists to its own people. The attacks on the US Embassy have more to do with the division and impoverishment of the country than with “the film”. At most the latter served as a ‘trigger’ to ignite the profound frustration against a regime which once upheld the national integrity of the country and of late sacrificed its natural wealth to gain favor with Washington .

Pakistan

Pakistan was the site of mass popular protests in its urban centers as well as in the northeastern periphery. The embassy attacks and flag burning reflect an ongoing and deepening resentment against more than a decade of US ground and aerial intrusions, violating Pakistanian sovereignty. The drone bombing of dozens of ‘tribal villages’ has aroused the rage of millions. The US war waged against Islamic strongholds, its armed intrusion to capture bin Laden and its billion-dollar funding of massive Pakistan military sweeps has led to thousands of deaths and millions of refugees. Pakistan is a country seething with anger and deep hostility to anything associated with the USA . The film merely fed into the cauldron of growing militant, religious and nationalist discontent. This convicted felon, the pro-US President Zarda and his gestures of protest over the film have no credibility: He is marking time before he is ousted.

Lesser protests of “the film” took place in Malaysia , Indonesia , Nigeria and elsewhere where the US has been less ubiquitous in interfering in the military and political order.

The size, scope and violence of the protests against “the film” are highly correlated with the

depth, destruction and destitution directly linked to US military and political intervention.

Conclusion

Faced with a sharp and militant backlash to its on-going counter-revolutionary offensive in the Muslim world, Washington is demanding that its 'new' Muslim clients increase "security" - strengthen the police state and crack down on mass protest movements^[10]. Washington is once again on the defensive.

The shifting relations of power, between popular movements and the US-EU, have once again become more acute.

In the first phase, Washington and its EU allies were caught by surprise and severely challenged by the mass pro-democracy movements which overthrew or threatened their client rulers in Tunisia, Egypt, Somalia, Yemen, Bahrain and elsewhere - what was dubbed the "Arab Spring".

The second phase was the Western reaction to countermand, to halt and reverse the popular pro-democracy movement, via alliances with malleable Islamic leaders (Egypt , Tunisia and Yemen) and by launching and escalating armed struggles via Islamic extremists in Libya and Syria . They also buttressed the despotic royal regimes in the Gulf.

Barely a few months later the neo-colonial clients, imposed by the US and EU, revealed its fragile foundations: The fraudulent "transitions" produced servile, rulers incapable and unwilling to address the socio-economic demands of the pro-democracy movements.

The third phase of the struggle now pits a more complex scenario than the earlier "binary conflict" of dictatorship versus democracy. Today we witness conflicts between neo-liberal Islamists in power against secular and Muslim trade unionists and the poor fundamentalist Muslims fighting for the US (Syria) and against the US (Libya) while secular (Syria) and Islamist (Iran) regimes joining forces facing Western-backed Islamist mercenaries and nuclear-armed Jewish threats. Whether it is Pakistan , Somalia or the Sudan - wherever the US has gained client states it has imposed war policies that impoverish the masses.

The Islamic terrain of struggles for both the imperial powers and the popular masses reflects the discrediting and decimation of secular rulers and popular civil society organizations. The religious institutions have become the refuge, the cloak and the war cry of the dispossessed and the property classes.

A careful study of the two decades of US and EU wars in the Muslim world, finds little evidence of "corporate" oil influence in the conduct of imperial wars. Instead they are essentially imperial military wars. What we see everywhere is the large scale destruction of the means of production; the massive dis-accumulation of capital; the massive displacement of millions of productive workers, scientists and engineers who produce wealth. What investors are going to make large scale, long term investments in Afghanistan , Yemen , Somalia , Syria and Libya when their property and lives are in danger from bands of warring ethno-religious warlords armed and trained by US Special Forces?

Big investors do not confide in the stability of corrupt, servile, unpopular client regimes buttressed by the US and EU. Investors count ten lost years in Iraq at a cost of billions in oil profits. The US was not at war for oil as some benighted leftist pundits claim.

Military imperialism has led to ruin and rule followed by ruin and run. The only, and obvious beneficiary of the Western wars on the Muslim countries, is the Jewish state of Israel, whose billionaire political influentials and political acolytes in the Pentagon, Treasury, National Security Council, Congress and the US mass media designed and promoted these disastrous wars against the Muslim world. Most recently they have promoted the US counter-attack, turning the 'Arab Spring' into a 'Muslim Summer of Discontent'.

There is and there will be no closure on the wars as long as Israel claims supremacy in the Arab world. The US, is and will be, in permanent war with the Muslim world as long as its foreign policy and political structures are influenced by the Israeli-Zionist power configuration.

No empire prior to the US has sustained such huge financial losses and gained so little in economic rewards. No previous empire has destroyed so many countries without establishing a single viable productive colonial or neo-colonial regime. Yet to read and hear from our most prominent journalists that the massive, widespread and violent Muslim protests against the symbols and substance of US imperial power are about an "amateur film defaming the prophet" boggles the mind. The pundits ignore the fact that mass unrest and anti-imperial assaults preceded and will follow the 'film' incident. A decade of savaging a dozen countries and dislocating tens of millions from Libya to Pakistan, passing through Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Pakistan and Yemen has left an indelible mark on the consciousness of those who suffered and those who struggle and especially among the new generation of pro-democracy fighters who will not accept the roll back of their Arab Spring.

The world-wide protest is not merely opposed to "the film" and the mediocre anti-Muslim reactionaries who produced it, but of the entire political and cultural Islamophobic ambience in the US which nurtures this kind of film. Beginning with the massive round-up of thousands of innocent Muslims by uber-Zionist Michael Chertoff, head of Homeland Security, continuing with the FBI surveillance and infiltration of hundreds of mosques and following the Zionist sponsored rabble rousing campaign in New York City against a cultural center and the purge of a highly respected Arab-American educator; and the rabid weekly anti-Moslem Christian-Zionist rants to 40 million US followers; and the AIPAC-promoted US Treasury appointments, and subsequent sanctions against independent Muslim countries, Muslims have a solid bases for believing that Islamophobia is embedded in US culture. No thoughtful Muslim in the world believes the film was an aberration since Hollywood's pro-Israel film and TV moguls have always demonized and grotesquely caricatured Muslims, portraying them as blood-thirsty villains, ignorant barbarians and worthless playboy sheiks.

Obama's sending of the Marines and warships to defend the missions merely reinforces the image and reality that the US presence in the Muslim world is based on force and arms. There are no critical reflections in US political circles on the larger cultural and political issues involved at home and abroad which arouse the passion and rage now spreading to 20 Muslim nations and beyond.

Islamophobia is not simply an attitude of a minority of marginal extremists, it is part and parcel of policies engaging in large scale on-going wars against a dozen Muslim nations, in policing millions of US Muslims and in arming a Jewish state engaged in uprooting Palestinians and threatening to bomb 75 million Iranian Muslims.

Notes

^[1] FT Reporters, "Rage at Amateur Film Spreads", Financial Times, 9/14/12, p. 2.

^[2] James Petras, The Arab Revolt and the Imperialist Counterattack, (Atlanta : Clarity Press 2012) 2nd Edition

^[3] Borgou Daragahi, "Investment Drive Aims to Boost US Influence in Morsi's Egypt " FT 9/10/12, p. 4.

^[4] ibid

^[5] FT 9/13/12, p. 10.

^[6] FT 9/10/12, p. 10

^[7] FT 9/13/12, p. 11

^[8] FT 9/13/12, p. 4

^[9] Mel Frykberg, "Consulate Attack was just the Latest in Rising Violence in Libya " McClatchy Washington Bureau, 9/12/12.

^[10] FT 9/14/12, p. 2. Roula "Fool ya" Khalef a reliable mouthpiece of the US echoes Clinton 's commands in her diatribe "Islamist Leaders (sic) have power and Responsibility to Defuse Tensions"

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