

Washington Opposes Extremism while Promoting Violence and Destruction throughout the Middle East

By [Stop NATO](#)

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by Hua Liming

Amid the anti-American protests in Muslim countries, US President Barack Obama urged world leaders on Tuesday to strongly oppose violence and extremism, arguing that protecting free speech is a universal responsibility rather than just an American obligation.

It seems that US politicians haven't learned any lesson from the anti-US fury sparked by the film that belittles Prophet Muhammad. The United States also refuses to accept that the Muslim protests will make it even more difficult for it to deal with the "anti-American" regimes in Iran and Syria.

The film first sparked anti-American protests in Egypt and Libya, which soon spread to more than 20 countries across the Middle East and beyond.

Christopher Stevens, the US ambassador to Libya, was killed along with three colleagues in an attack on the US consulate in Benghazi. The violent protests also forced 65 US embassies across the world to issue warnings to Americans to take precautions against violent attacks, and the Pentagon has sent Marines to protect embassies in Yemen and Sudan. Indeed, the range and violent intensity of the present anti-American wave is unprecedented.

In a vain attempt to calm the anti-American sentiments, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said the US government "had absolutely nothing to do with" the film. But Washington has to think beyond the immediate impact of the film, because the protests are an outburst of Muslims' longstanding anger at the US.

Washington has remained unrivalled in the Middle East since the end of the Cold War, with its presence enhanced by US-Israeli relations. It also plays a key role in the Israel-Palestine peace talks, even though it is not welcomed by many in the Middle East.

Things, however, could have been different. The US could have been a welcome superpower in the Middle East after the end of World War II, when several countries had gained independence and learned many things from the US' experience. But the US blindly "helped" Israel win the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and deal with other conflicts. Supported by the US, Israel annexed Arab territories beyond the proposed borders of a Jewish state and kept expanding its settlements in occupied land.

Many of the millions of displaced Palestinians are now living in exile, away from the land of

their ancestors. Besides, the past few years have seen many Arab countries fall into economic stagnation. These have helped Islamic fundamentalists attract more youths to their camp. As a result, there has been a massive rise in the number of Islamists since the 1960s and 1970s.

The Sept 11, 2001 terrorist attacks deepened Americans' hatred of Muslims which in turn intensified anti-American feelings among Muslims. The US used the 9/11 attacks as an excuse to invade Afghanistan and Iraq, killing countless civilians and displacing millions. Wartime scandals such as the Abu Ghraib prison abuse and the burning of the Quran by US servicemen added fuel to the fire burning within many Muslims.

Muntadhar al-Zaidi, an Iraqi journalist who threw a shoe at former US president George W. Bush and was jailed for his act, said after his release that he may be free now, but his country is still captive. He said it was humiliating seeing his country suffer, Baghdad burn and Iraqi people killed indiscriminately.

The journalist's words echo the feelings of many Arabs. US-based polling agency Zogby International's annual polls in the recent past show the majority of respondents in six Arab countries, including Egypt, Jordan and Morocco, hate the US and some 80 percent regard Washington and Tel-Aviv as the two biggest threats to regional security.

Washington got it wrong in the Middle East in the first place and is now paying a bloody price for that. Taken aback by the violent protests in the Middle East one year after the "Arab Spring", Clinton said "it is hard for the American people to make sense of that because it is senseless, and it is totally unacceptable," adding that "the people of Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Tunisia did not trade the tyranny of a dictator for the tyranny of a mob."

Clinton's remarks suggest Washington has not yet understood why the Muslim world has erupted in anger. The US has always considered its social system and values superior to that of other countries and is still keen on promoting US-style democracy in the Middle East.

Bush tried to impose democracy with the help of the gun. His plan was doomed to fail, and it did. So when people in some Arab countries overthrew their leaders in 2011, the US rejoiced assuming that it would benefit immensely from the regime changes brought about by the "color revolution".

The reality, however, has turned out to be different. Islamist parties and groups have evolved rapidly and come to power in the Middle East countries that have seen regime changes. Western media reports say that Salafism and the Muslim Brotherhood, instead of Western democracy, have burgeoned in the Middle East after the Arab Spring.

The truth is the self-righteous democratic model of the West is rather feeble, and cannot be applied to a region where Islam is the dominating ideology. No wonder, the new leaderships in the Middle East countries cannot and do not want to contain Muslim anger at the US and Israel. In this sense, the anti-American wave is the inevitable result of the Arab Spring.

If Washington calls the anti-American protesters a "mob", it has to take the risk (one of the greatest it has taken) of confronting almost the entire Muslim population in the world.

But the US will not give up on the Middle East - not because the region is no longer a haven for Americans, not even because it is focused on its "pivot to Asia" strategy. Let us hope the US realizes it opened a "Pandora's box" by launching wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and that

it would be utterly unwise to open another in the Middle East.

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