

War and the Cradle of Civilization: Spinning “Humanitarian Invasions”, from The Nile to The Euphrates and Beyond

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“If a man seeks to understand Rome’s casus reason for each foreign conquest, he needs only look into the Treasury.” (Tacitus, AD 56 – AD 117.)

As the US and UK lead towards more illegal overthrows, invasions and destruction in Iran and Syria, a political pattern of manipulation and disinformation has become an art form.

Libya, under Colonel Quaddafi, with highest (UN) Human Development Index in Africa, and living standard which drew immigrants from across the region, has been air brushed out and replaced with a “mad dog” – and a liberating lynching. Oil, spoils and reconstruction contracts, though, are being divvied out apace.

Iraq, formerly described in UN Reports as approaching “First World” standards, also much in ruins, shattered infrastructure trumpeted as due to “thirty years of neglect.” No mention of over fifteen years of decimating embargo and bombings, culminating in “Shock and Awe.” Pretty glaring omissions.

Now President Assad of Syria is being subject to the same build up – or taking down – with calls for a Libya-style “no fly zone.” Being an independent-minded Arab leader certainly comes with a health warning.

On 20th November, Israel’s Defence Minister, Ehud Barak commented: “And it’s clear to me that what happened a few weeks ago to Qaddafi... and what happened ultimately to Saddam Hussein, now might await him.” (i)

Another day, another “despot”, more chilling alarm calls. Ehud Barak is surely in line for the Nobel Peace Prize.

But a decade or so is a long time in politics, especially with Western allies emboldened by a lynching or two.

Consider this, from political analyst Sami Moubayid, author of: “Steel and Silk, Men and Women who have Shaped Syria”(ii) and other scholarly literary over-views of the country’s modern history.

In December 2000, six months into Bashar Al-Assad’s tenure, he wrote of a “cultural revolution” the new President was implementing, entitling the piece: “A Modern-Day

Attaturk.” (iii)

“Overnight the thousands of pictures of Hafez Al-Assad ... disappeared”, following a statement committing to a “realistic” policy that did not immortalize and over-exaggerate leaders. “A relief ... from the ever increasing photo-mania” of Syria (and the region’s) political culture.

Decades old bureaucratic laws were scrapped, a 25% wage increase was instituted – not universally welcomed, as rumors had been circulating that it would be far higher, but quite a start. Compulsory military service was “somewhat” reformed – a service instituted to counter the perceived “ever present” Israeli military threat.

Freedom of speech was “marginally” restored and the Muslim Brotherhood leaders, jailed since 1982, also perceived a threat to the regime’s existence, were released. A conciliatory hand extended. An Ex-chief of staff to his father, with close links to Washington, who had fled the country after allegations of corruption, was welcomed back and received as a guest in the Presidential palace. Another returnee was an “outspoken” newspaper Editor, formerly critical of the regime – who resumed his criticisms.

Before becoming President, Bashar had opened the country up to internet and mobile ‘phone use.

When his father had traveled : “... roads were sealed (and) his entourage comprised ten cars, a mine detector and an ambulance.” Bashar began driving himself, with two car security, eating in public restaurants and attending prayers in various mosques.

He was, concluded Moubayed: “ ... revolutionizing Syrian society at a slow and delicate pace”, warning of the: “the challenge of living up to his people’s very high expectations.”

Given the subsequent turmoil in the region and Syria’s hosting of nearly two million post-invasion Iraqi refugees, he has walked a challenging political and financial tight rope.

Media, politicians and rights groups citing human rights abuses as excuse for regime change, seemingly forget Guantanamo, Bagram, Abu Ghraib, Camp Bucca, and uncounted renditions to unknown detention dungeons across the world; torture, water boarding, and simply disappearing.

In an imperfect world, threatened Syria is fighting an enemy within, but the US, UK and allies most recent marauding, is uncounted horrifying deaths, acres of communities turned to rubble, culminating in the second lynching of a sovereign leader.

The remodeling of the Middle East, however, has been long on the cards .”9/11”, it is increasingly clear, provided the perfect excuse.

“In the Perle-Feith-Wurmser strategy, Israel’s enemy remains Syria, but the road to Damascus runs through Baghdad”, wrote Patrick Buchanan in 2003, reminds Maidhc Ó Cathail.(iv)

The road to Baghdad, of course, had been planned since 1998, when the Iraq Liberation Act (v) declared: “ .. that it should be the policy of the United States to seek to remove the Saddam Hussein regime from power in Iraq and to replace it with a democratic government.

“(Authorizing) the President ... to provide to the Iraqi democratic opposition organizations: (1) grant assistance for radio and television broadcasting to Iraq; (2) Department of Defense (DOD) defense articles and services and military education and training ...

“Directs the President to designate: (1) one or more Iraqi democratic opposition organizations that meet specified criteria as eligible to receive assistance under this Act; and (2) additional such organizations which satisfy the President’s criteria.

“Expresses the sense of the Congress that once the Saddam Hussein regime is removed from power in Iraq, the United States should support Iraq’s transition to democracy....”

By July 2002 when a bunch of US funded Iraqi opposition were welcomed by the British government and hosted in Kensington Town Hall, in a pattern now depressingly familiar in countries doomed to “democratization”: “US officials have reported that SAS troops and MI6 agents are already in Iraq working with opposition groups in the northern Kurdish areas of the country.”(vi)

In 1946 a US State Department Report had described Iraq as: “... a stupendous source of strategic power and the greatest material prize in world history”.

Compared to that, Syria does not have vast natural resources (comparatively limited petroleum, with phosphates, chrome and manganese ores, asphalt, iron ore, rock salt, marble, gypsum, hydropower.) However, it is geographically: “The doorway to Asia and the Middle East.”

Iraq had its “Liberation Act”, in May 2004, the United States imposed the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act, imposing, in all too familiar words: “ ...a series of sanctions against Syria for its support of terrorism ... weapons of mass destruction programs and the destabilizing role it is playing in Iraq.” Jaw dropping stuff from a country which illegally attacked Iraq, having worked tirelessly on its destabilization for years. (Emphasis mine.)

In 2006, the US Department of the Treasury imposed “special measures” against the Commercial Bank of Syria. As ever, Judge, jury and executioner.

In 2007, Israel bombed an undeclared “nuclear facility” – except it wasn’t. Another weapons of mass destruction myth. It was a textile factory. A German journalist tracked down machine suppliers, and the designing engineer.(vii)

A re-run of the Iraq baby milk factory , declared a chemical weapons factory and flattened – transpiring to be a British engineered baby milk factory. The Al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum, Sudan, suffered a similar fate under US bombs in August 1998, also accused of making chemical weapons.

It manufactured mainly veterinary medicines and malarial drugs, anti-biotics, at prices which undercut the Western multinationals. The suppliers for construction had included the US, Sweden, Italy, Switzerland, and Germany.

Beware of Western governments making assertions.

Meanwhile, British Foreign Minister and Conservative Friend of Israel, William Hague, met “Syrian opposition representatives” (insurgents?) on Monday declaring: “...we will do what

we can to support democracy in Syria in the future.” He appointed former Ambassador to Lebanon and Yemen, Frances Guy, to lead London’s co-ordination with them.

Iraq and Libya revisited.

In the myriad political games, arm twisting, manipulation and propaganda, it should be remembered that President Assad is Regional Secretary of the Arab Ba’ath Party. With Saddam Hussein gone and the concept of a Pan-Arab state now outlawed in Iraq, Syria is the remaining symbol of America’s nemesis, but a concept close to many Arab hearts.

The fathers of the vision of Pan-Arab national ideals, combined with socialism, were, of course, Damascus born Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar, who formed the Ba’ath Party in the early 1940’s.

The commitment included freeing the Arab world of Western colonialism.

Arguably, the overthrow of the last bastion of this ideal on the road through Damascus, would be a powerful Crusaders “victory.”

Echoing Foreign Minister Hague, President Genghis Obama has vowed that the US will: “continue to work with out friends and allies to pressure the Al Assad regime and support the Syrian people as they pursue the dignity and transition to democracy they deserve.” He omitted the “delivered by tens of thousands of air strikes.”

Assad’s hand of conciliation to the Muslim Brotherhood has been badly bitten as they push for a “no fly zone”, implemented by NATO Member, neighbouring Turkey.

Further, Tony Cartalucci argues that: “The ‘Free Syria Army’ is literally an army of militant extremists, many drawn not from Syria’s military ranks, but from the Muslim Brotherhood, carrying heavy weapons back and forth over the Turkish and Lebanese borders, funded, supported, and armed by the United States, Israel, and Turkey.”(viii)

Pepe Escobar (ix) concurs, citing: “A report by a Qatar-based researcher for the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) even comes close to admitting that the self-described ‘Free Syria Army’ is basically a bunch of hardcore Islamists, plus a few genuine army defectors, but mostly radicalized Muslim Brotherhood bought, paid for and weaponized by the US, Israel, the Gulf monarchies and Turkey.”

He adds: “As Tehran sees it, what’s really going on regarding Syria is a ‘humanitarian’ cover for a complex anti-Shi’ite and anti-Iran operation.

“The road map is already clear ... And psy-ops abound ...”

In context, one Washington allegation last week, accused Syria of aggression towards Lebanon by mining their common border. Lebanese de-mining teams combed the border and found none. (Jordan Times, 18th November 2011.)

This week both Iran and Lebanon have claimed to have arrested alleged CIA spy rings. The Lebanese Cabinet is to summon the US Ambassador, Maura Connelly to question her on the issue. They have also submitted a complaint to the UN on alleged Israeli covert activities.

Baghdad, so extensively destroyed in 2003, was the “Paris of the 9th Century.” Damascus

,"City of Jasmin", is widely thought to be the oldest continually inhabited city on earth. The Old City is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The superb Umayyad Mosque, built in the 7th century, is a monument to inspirational wonders of that millennium.

Inside a shrine to John the Baptist, believed by Christian scholars to have baptized Jesus, is perhaps a reminder across the millenia of the secular nature of Syrian society - as, broadly, Iraq and Libya before Western intervention.

Saint Paul was sent to what is now Syria, to destroy the Christians, believers are taught. His conversion on the road to Damascus changed all that. It can only be fervently hoped that today's marauders also have a Damascene conversion, for the sake of Syria's population of today, and most ancient of nations.

Notes

i. <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/19/178102.html>

ii. <http://www.amazon.com/Steel-Silk-Women-Shaped-1900-2000/dp/1885942419>

iii.

<http://www.wrmea.org/component/content/article/217/3483-syrias-new-president-bashar-al-assad-a-modern-day-attaturk.html>

iv. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=27726>

v. <http://www.iraqwatch.org/government/US/Legislation/ILA.htm>

vi. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/jul/13/iraq.brianwhitaker>

vii. <http://lewis.armscontrolwonk.com/archive/4654/closing-the-file-on-hasaka>

viii. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=27766>

ix. http://atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/MK24Ak01.html

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