

Minarets of War:  
The Way Militants Win a Media War in the Muslim World

by

John H Thomas II

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

Approved October 2011 by the  
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Lindsey Meân, Chair  
Ramsey Eric Ramsey  
Majia Nadesan

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2011

©2011 John H. Thomas 2<sup>nd</sup>  
All Rights Reserved

## ABSTRACT

The goal of this study is to use neoclassical realist methodology to add to the growing body of literature explaining why America is failing so horribly in its media war with militant Islamists. The general argument being conveyed is that inconsistencies in America's ostensibly liberal diplomacy strategy leaves it open to criticism and deprives it of the credibility necessary to muster an adequate rebuttal. To accomplish its aim, the analysis begins with an investigation into the origins of America's current liberal rhetorical approach. It is believed that with this sort look beneath the surface of the idealistic romanticism U.S. citizens have been continually conditioned to embrace, it becomes apparent that the grandiose pronouncements made by America's national political elite are actually based on rather dubious foundations. The evaluation then turns to a more focused rhetorical examination, which spans from the start of the so-called Arab Spring uprisings on December 18, 2010 to the delivery of President Obama's highly publicized State Department address regarding these demonstrations on May 19, 2011, in order to go behind the White House's official statements and uncover what truly motivated its policy decision making. The belief here is that a close review of the administration's abysmal performance during this historic period assists in making the inadequacy of America's current rhetorical narrative all the more evident. Finally, once the contradictory nature of contemporary American liberalism has been fully demonstrated, the last section concludes with an effort to explain why replacing America's liberal strategy with a straightforward realist stance is best for both American's relations with the Muslim world and America's overall security.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For me, as I am sure would be the case for most, the idea of comprehensively acknowledging the vast number of those who have played a part in my intellectual growth seems altogether unfeasible. Indeed, as a student of fields as diverse as religious studies, communication studies, and political science, the very thought of mapping out how to even begin such an undertaking feels quite discouraging in and of itself. However, in regards to this specific work in particular, I do believe I owe a special debt of gratitude to Drs. Abdullahi Gallab, Alexander Henn, and Muhammad Sani Umar for sparking my interest in the world of political Islam, Drs. Colin Elman, Miriam F. Elman, and Timothy Ruback for introducing me to the realist theoretical approach, and Drs. Lindsey Meân, Majia Nadesan, and Ramsey Eric Ramsey for providing a critical challenge to my analysis of political communication. Of course, having said this, I consider it incumbent upon me to also add that it would be entirely unfair to charge these individuals with any of the possible liabilities one might find within my writing. I wholly take responsibility for all shortcomings, mistakes, or judgment errors that may be identified. Yet, at the same time, I would still like to say I gladly give them credit for helping to form the foundation of any benefits of my efforts. Their various ways of contributing to my thought process have truly proven invaluable, and I forever thank them for their endless dedication to their work.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
Moment of Clarity .....	5
Neoclassical Realism .....	10
2 A HISTORY OF HYPOCRISY.....	14
The George W. Bush Administration .....	17
The Bill Clinton Administration.....	22
The George H.W. Bush Administration.....	25
Roots of the Rhetoric .....	29
Roots of the Rebuttal.....	35
America’s Fall from Grace.....	40
Minarets of War.....	44
The Change That Never Came .....	46
3 ANXIOUS AMBIGUITY.....	50
The Western Response.....	53
Hard to Let Go.....	55
Conflicting Narratives.....	58
Blowback .....	64
Holding Hands with the Devil.....	69
The Transition .....	73
The End of an Era? .....	77

CHAPTER	Page
4 POWER AND PRESTIGE.....	88
Qaddafi’s Libya.....	88
The New Qaddafi.....	90
Ready for Revolution.....	93
The Prison of Preponderant Prestige.....	98
For the Sake of Civilians .....	104
The War Plan.....	107
The Struggle for Bahrain.....	110
The End Game.....	115
5 FOR THE FUTURE.....	121
A New Path.....	128
Concluding Comments.....	132
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	139

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In May of 2009, *Voice of America* reported that U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had been expressing concerns over the fact that the United States appeared to be losing its media war with Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network in Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, two years earlier, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates lamented "It is just plain embarrassing that al-Qaeda is better at communicating its message on the internet than America."<sup>2</sup> Naturally, such circumstances left many feeling quite perplexed. The question was, "As one foreign diplomat asked a couple of years ago, 'How has one man in a cave managed to out-communicate the world's greatest communication society?'"<sup>3</sup> The situation simply seemed to make no sense.

Of course, today the world knows that bin Laden had, in fact, not been hiding in a cave, but had, rather, been living in a compound in an upscale area of Abbottabad, Pakistan until his death at the hands of U.S. Navy Seals in May of 2011.<sup>4</sup> Certainly, however, his locale makes the degree of success he was able to achieve in comparison to America no less disturbing. After all, even around the time of Secretary Clinton's statement, polls actually showed bin Laden himself to be

---

<sup>1</sup> VOA News, "Clinton Says US Losing Media War in Afghanistan, Pakistan, May 20, 2009," *Voice of America*, <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/a-13-2009-05-20-voa51-68815317.html> (Accessed June 19, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Robert M. Gates, "Landon Lecture (Kansas State University), November 26, 2007," <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1199> (accessed August 13, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Elisabeth Bumiller, Carlotta Gall, and Salman Masood, "Bin Laden's Secret Life in a Shrunken World," *The New York Times*, May 8, 2011.

generally unpopular in the Muslim world.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, in Pakistan in particular, his confidence rating was only at around 18 percent.<sup>6</sup> America's problem, nevertheless, is that apparently U.S. policy has been even less popular. In fact, as former head of the CIA's bin Laden unit Michael Scheuer points out, the greatest ally bin Laden had over the years in his war of words with American diplomats was American diplomacy itself.<sup>7</sup> According to Scheuer, the hypocrisy of America's rhetoric and foreign affairs stance essentially did the al-Qaeda leader's work for him.<sup>8</sup> And Scheuer is certainly not the only American counter-terrorism specialist to recognize this.

For example, after a viewing of the *Power of Truth*, an al-Qaeda documentary that builds a case against U.S. policy by using excerpts from American officials to corroborate its basic argument, one expert was forced to admit just how persuasive he himself even thought the film was: "It's beautifully crafted propaganda, and it's a huge problem for us," said Jarret Brachman, research director at the Combating Terrorism Center at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. "You're left shaking your head and saying, 'Yeah, I guess they're right.'"<sup>9</sup> Of course, neither of these analysts' assessments should have been very surprising to Secretary Gates'

---

<sup>5</sup> Juliana Menasce Horowitz, "Declining Support for bin Laden and Suicide Bombing, September 10, 2009," Pew Research Center, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1338/declining-muslim-support-for-bin-laden-suicide-bombing> (Accessed August 10, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Scheuer, preface to *Imperial Hubris: Why the West Is Losing the War on Terror* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2004), xi.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Scheuer, *Marching Toward Hell: America and Islam after Iraq* (2008; repr., New York: Free Press, 2009), 261-262.

<sup>9</sup> Craig Whitlock, "Al - Qaeda's Growing Online Offensive," *The Washington Post*, June 24, 2008.



associates at the Department of Defense because a 2004 strategic communication report created by their own Defense Science Board essentially stated the same thing.

As the report explains,

Muslims do not “hate our freedom,” but rather, they hate our policies. The overwhelming majority voice their objections to what they see as one-sided support in favor of Israel and against Palestinian rights, and the longstanding, even increasing support for what Muslims collectively see as tyrannies, most notably Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Pakistan and the Gulf states.

Thus when American public diplomacy talks about bringing democracy to Islamic societies, this is seen as no more than self-serving hypocrisy.<sup>10</sup>

Of course, as a result, when the United States uses this sort of rhetoric it, in the end, does nothing but destroy its own credibility.<sup>11</sup> And, obviously, without credibility the idea that America would be able to win a media war, even against a movement as unpopular as bin Laden’s, is rather unreasonable.

Indeed, in full agreement with Scheuer, the Defense Science Board report argued that under such conditions the things the United States says, in reality, only end up *helping* its enemies.<sup>12</sup> Hence, the more America struggles to raise its reputation, the more that reputation ultimately sinks. With this paradoxical predicament in mind, the report looked to offer America’s political leadership a nonsense critique that included sober minded recommendations for lifting the nation out of such a quandary:

Interests, not public opinion, should drive policies. But opinions must be taken into account when policy options are considered and implemented. Policies will not succeed unless they are communicated to global and domestic audiences in ways that are credible and allow them to make informed, independent judgments. Words in tone and substance should avoid offence where possible; messages

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 41.

should seek to reduce, not increase, perceptions of arrogance, opportunism, and double standards.”<sup>13</sup>

Yet, despite the report’s frank analysis, even years after its release, as the above quote taken from Secretary Gates illustrates, U.S. officials were still pretending they were at a loss for why America had been so unsuccessful at communicating with the Muslim world. Apparently, the report’s findings have simply been ignored, and, unfortunately, now that bin Laden has been killed, there is a good possibility that feelings of triumphalism will only increase the likelihood that they will continue to be so. As shall be argued throughout what follows, however, America’s lofty liberal rhetoric about spreading democratic values, which it has duplicitously used over the years to justify its hegemony expanding policies, should now be replaced by a much more honest realist approach due to the contemporary Muslim world’s current sensitivity to American hypocrisy and America’s pressing need to find a means of honorably disengaging its military forces from that region of the globe as soon as possible.

Undoubtedly, some who are opposed to this view may claim that, rather than trying to change its strategy, America should instead feel comfortable to merely “press forward” along its current path because, as Secretary Clinton has argued, “There is no better rebuke to al-Qaida and its heinous ideology” than the peaceful calls for democracy, which just so happened to have been spreading throughout Middle East and North Africa at the time of bin Laden’s death.<sup>14</sup> What those making such claims would be forgetting, though, is that polls from that region of the

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>14</sup> Hillary R. Clinton, “Remarks on the Killing of Usama bin Ladin, May 2, 2011,” <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/05/162339.htm> (accessed May 8, 2011).

world show many people living there were already expressing their lack of confidence in bin Laden's ideology even when Mrs. Clinton was bewailing his rhetorical success over America two years ago. Thus, the U.S. should in no way see such events as a victory in its struggle for hearts and minds, because the United States is itself no further along than it was then. Essentially, very little has changed.

The truth is, as surveys showed long ago, the majority of the people in the Muslim world have for some time wished for democracy.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, according to the *Pew Research Center*, now that the chance for political change has presented itself, majorities or pluralities in almost every Muslim nation polled actually expressed their disapproval of how the situations in places such as Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain, and Libya have been handled by America's leadership.<sup>16</sup> In fact, the only country in which this was not the case was Pakistan, and this was only so in that instance because the majority there offered no opinion on the matter at all.<sup>17</sup> Hence, if anyone truly believed American diplomacy was headed in the right direction, clearly, they were mistaken.

### **Moment of Clarity**

As Scheuer argued when he was asked about the U.S. response to the so-called Arab spring demonstrations, "We [i.e. Americans] tend to think that Muslims are stupid people. That they're going to forget that the United States supported

---

<sup>15</sup> John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, "Who Will Speak for Islam?," *World Policy Journal* 25, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 51-52.

<sup>16</sup> Pew Global Attitudes Project, "Arab Spring Fails to Improve U.S. Image, May 17, 2011, 12, 54," Pew Research Center, <http://pewglobal.org/files/2011/07/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Arab-Spring-FINAL-May-17-2011.pdf> (accessed May 19, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

tyranny for 35 years.”<sup>18</sup> As result, there seems to be the amazingly absurd belief that U.S. leadership can simply play the innocent bystander after decades of siding with dictators, and the Muslim world will naively excuse America as having no part in the turmoil. Quite to the contrary, nonetheless, most Muslims plainly recognize the regimes they oppose have only been able to oppress them because patron nations such as the United States have supplied the means for that oppression. They, therefore, see America’s reluctance to make a clear break with its past as an indication of its unbroken complicity.

Of course, America’s continued use of its liberal rhetoric about the spread of democratic values only amplifies this cause for grievance because it highlights how the nation, in fact, should be acting internationally if it was what it claimed. For example, when asked if the United States had acted too slowly in supporting the demonstrations in Egypt, Sarah Abdel Rahman, one of the young student activists responsible for organizing the protests, replied

“Yes, especially when, you know, we get hit with tear gas, and then we pick it up after, you know, the tear gas is completely taken over -- over our bodies, and we see the mark, ‘Made in the USA.’ So that -- that did not really send the message that I think President Obama is always talking about, about American values.”<sup>19</sup>

And as data from the *Pew Research Center* clearly shows, the disapproval Mrs. Abdel Rahman expressed certainly does not place her in the minority.

Indeed, only 22 percent of Egyptians surveyed said they believed America’s response to the political situation in their country had any sort of positive effect on

---

<sup>18</sup> Michael Scheuer, interview by Eliot Spitzer, *In the Arena*, CNN, May 16, 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Sarah Abdel Rahman, interview by Fareed Zakaria, *Fareed Zakaria GPS*, CNN, May 22, 2011.

how things were turning out at all.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile a 39 percent plurality claimed America's response actually had a negative impact.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, when asked the broader question of how they felt about President Obama's overall handling of regional calls for political change in nations such as Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain, and Libya, the majority of Egyptians stated they disapproved of it, with a plurality expressing the view that he was showing far too little support for such change.<sup>22</sup> Undoubtedly, though, what will seem most troublesome to those who believe these cries for transformation automatically mean the United States is somehow winning the media war against Islamist extremism is the fact that *Pew Research Center* data from the same period also showed that while Egyptians gave bin Laden's al-Qaeda organization a favorable rating of only 21 percent, the U.S. ranked just below it at 20 percent.<sup>23</sup> Obviously, something is not going according to America's war plan.

The greatest impediment to America recognizing what that thing is, though, is its own intransigence. Regrettably, the country's leaders have stubbornly continued to act as if there are no major inconsistencies in U.S. policy, and its people have blindly gone along with them without fully considering what they are being told. Tenuous justifications are given for highly questionable acts, and willfully

---

<sup>20</sup> Pew Global Attitudes Project, "Egyptians Embrace Revolt Leaders, Religious Parties and Military, as Well, April 25, 2011, 24," Pew Research Center, <http://pewglobal.org/files/2011/04/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Egypt-Report-FINAL-April-25-2011.pdf> (Accessed May 19, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>23</sup> Pew Global Attitudes Project, "Arab Spring Fails to Improve U.S. Image, May 17, 2011, 7, 29," Pew Research Center, <http://pewglobal.org/files/2011/07/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Arab-Spring-FINAL-May-17-2011.pdf> (accessed May 19, 2011).

ignorant citizens simply accept them as solemn fact.<sup>24</sup> Clearly, however, there must be a change. Of course, this is not to naively say that each and every aspect of government operations must be disclosed. Indeed, in certain critical situation, such as that during the Cuban Missile Crisis, it is only to be expected that information will be withheld, or even lied about, for the sake of national security.<sup>25</sup> Yet, it must also be realized that a constant pattern of duplicity will, in the end, only destroy America's credibility.<sup>26</sup> Thus, as uncomfortable as it may be, the truth must be told.

As realist theorist Robert Jervis observes, the political and psychological inhibitions to trying to understand why one is hated often stem from the fear that doing so may lead to one asking if there is a legitimate cause for the antipathy.<sup>27</sup> But at this point, Americans can no longer afford the luxury of merely burying their heads in the sand whenever they feel insecure about their foreign policy history. The world is changing, and as new great power competitors such as China, India, and Russia begin to emerge, the United States cannot allow itself to be bogged down by unnecessary conflicts in the Muslim world.<sup>28</sup> It is imperative that its leaders wake up and finally decide to be honest about the nation's past so they can resolve any remaining issues and move on.

---

<sup>24</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *Why Leaders Lie: The Truth About Lying in International Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 77-80.

<sup>25</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *Why Leaders Lie: The Truth About Lying in International Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 31.

<sup>26</sup> Steven R. Corman, Angeka Trethewey, and H. L. Goodall, Jr., *Weapons of Mass Persuasion: Strategic Communication to Combat Violent Extremism* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 175-177.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Jervis, "An Interim Assessment of September 11: What Has Changed and What Has Not?," *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 42.

<sup>28</sup> Christopher Layne, "Graceful Decline: The End of Pax Americana," *Amconmag.com*, May 1, 2010, <http://amconmag.com/article/2010/may/01/00030/> (accessed December 10, 2011).

To assist in the promotion of this change, the following will set out to further detail how American hypocrisy has helped al-Qaeda militants accomplish a marginal victory in a media war that America's leaders would have their fellow citizens believe the United States should be overwhelmingly winning. Though the detrimental effects of America's hypocritical foreign policy stance have obviously been discussed many times in the past, little effort has been made to do an extensive study focusing entirely on how this history of hypocrisy has affected the Muslim world's view of America's communication efforts. The mission here, therefore, shall be to do just that. It is hoped that by taking on this endeavor the truth will become just that much clearer to average citizens in the United States, and that they will in turn demand better from those charged with ensuring their security.

To accomplish this task, the following will begin with an investigation into the origins of America's current liberal rhetorical strategy. It is believed that with this sort of look beneath the surface of the idealistic romanticism U.S. citizens have been continually conditioned to embrace, it will become apparent that the grandiose pronouncements made by America's national political elite are actually based on rather dubious foundations. The evaluation will then turn to a more focused rhetorical examination, which spans from the start of the so-called Arab spring uprisings on December 18, 2010 to the delivery of President Obama's highly publicized State Department address regarding these demonstrations on May 19, 2011, in order to go behind the White House's official statements and uncover what truly motivated its policy decision making. This analysis will center primarily on the protests in Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain, and Libya, the only nations mentioned by name in the *Pew Research Center's* survey, so as to help shed the maximum amount of light

on the type of behavior the respondents to the poll found so distasteful. The belief here is that a close review of the administration's abysmal performance during this historic period, with its perhaps unparalleled focus on issues of democracy in the Muslim world, will help to make the inadequacy of America's current rhetorical narrative all the more evident. Finally, once the duplicity of contemporary American liberalism has been fully demonstrated, the last section will then conclude with an effort to explain why replacing America's liberal approach with a straightforward realist stance will be best for both America's relations with the Muslim world and America's over all security.

### **Neoclassical Realism**

To assist in making the proposed argument for a realist rhetorical strategy as comprehensive as possible, the analysis described above shall make use of the neoclassical realist theoretical perspective. The advantage of beginning from this analytical platform lies in the theory's realistic understanding of how the world actually works. Put plainly,

Neoclassical realists understand that the real world is complex, not simple. Hence, the neoclassical school blends structural realist theory with historical explanation. Indeed, as Gideon Rose comments, neoclassical realism stresses "detailed historical analysis." Recognizing that even the simplest explanations of a particular state's grand strategy are complex, neoclassical realists sacrifice "rigor" for richness. Rather than make a fetish of parsimony, they understand that case studies of a particular great power's grand strategy need to pay attention to "historical context and particularity."<sup>29</sup>

In doing so, neoclassical realism permits the analyst to raise many of the finer details of historical causality, which are often missed by other realist researchers.

---

<sup>29</sup> Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 11.



Likewise, it should be pointed out that, though generally uncommon to certain realist approaches, “Neoclassical realism focuses on internal variables as intervening variables between the pressures of the international system and the nation-state’s policymaking response.”<sup>30</sup> What this means is that neoclassical realism leaves greater room in its description of world events for matters such as domestic political issues.<sup>31</sup> Of course, in complement to what has already been explained above,

Because neoclassical realism stresses the role played by both independent and intervening variables, it carries with it a distinct methodological preference--for theoretically informed narratives, ideally supplemented by explicit counterfactual analysis, that trace the ways different factors combine to yield particular foreign policies. The neoclassical realist archetype is Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War*, which grounds its narrative in the theoretical proposition that the “real cause” of the war was “the growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Sparta,” and then describes how systemic incentives were translated through unit-level variables into the foreign policies of the various Greek city-states.<sup>32</sup>

Hence, conceived thusly, it can be said that neoclassical realism, with its descriptive fullness, is imbued with a much greater capacity to account for situations driven by multiple levels of agency. Realism’s mainstream structural model is known for its, perhaps, overly mechanical contention that conflicts between opposing actors arise as a consequence of the inevitable frictions associated with the self-help mentality that pervades the world’s anarchic international system of security competition.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Jennifer Sterling-Folker, ed., *Making Sense of International Relations Theory* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006), 13-15.

<sup>31</sup> Gideon Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (October 1998): 144-172.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Edward Newman, “Human Security and Constructivism,” *International Studies Perspectives* 2, no. 3 (August 2001): 27.

The neoclassical variant of realism, however, also concedes to the fact that “Flesh-and-blood officials actually make foreign policy decisions and sometimes they misperceive the actual distribution of power or make erroneous estimates about power trends.”<sup>34</sup> The theory, therefore, allows for a closer look at the unique psychology that shapes individual incidents occurring in the international system.

One such example of this sort of focus on human agency is neoclassical realism’s special emphasis on issues of national prestige. Naturally, even here, the traditional understanding of material power still remains vitally important.<sup>35</sup> But, for neoclassical realists “Perceptions of prestige – that is, a state’s reputation for having power, especially military power – and status – that is, a states recognized position within international hierarchy – also play an important role in world politics.”<sup>36</sup> This recognition of the importance of prestige will become particularly relevant during the later examination of America’s intervention into Libya. For it is America’s reaction to the Libyan uprising that, upon first inspection, may give some the impression that the United States, in reality, does act in accordance with the liberal democratic values it promotes. Nevertheless, after the multiple layers of political nuance and spin have been peeled away, it shall become evident that at the core of the matter there remain the familiar principles of power politics.

---

<sup>34</sup> Jennifer Sterling-Folker, ed., *Making Sense of International Relations Theory* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006), 40.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

Despite this constant talk of matters of power, however, it should be noted that the focus of the analysis below shall not be entirely on such issues. As

Christopher Layne, a leading figure in realism's anti-hegemonist branch, argues,

Realist must shed their reticence to explicate the values underlying their policy preferences, because this reluctance allows their opponents to portray them – unfairly – as amoral (or even immoral). Realist have a moral, as well as prudential, case against American hegemony, and they should not shrink from making it, because – unlike hegemonists – they have identified clearly the price the United States pays in trying to realize its hegemonic ambitions.<sup>37</sup>

Hence, the argument that shall be laid out here will unapologetically side against clear examples of needless injustice. Moreover, it shall do so, at times, in a rather explicit manner. Nevertheless, even with that said, as a realist argument, it, unfortunately, will not be able to do much beyond that. Surely, as offensive realist John Mearsheimer explains, “Realists agree that creating a peaceful world would be desirable, but they see no easy way to escape the harsh world of security competition and war.”<sup>38</sup> So, though realists can certainly make calls for rational restraint, they must also still recognize that the security dilemma that plagues the world system will likely carry on as an ever present reality, and that nations will, thus, need to continue to act accordingly.

---

<sup>37</sup> Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 203.

<sup>38</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 17.

## CHAPTER 2

### A HISTORY OF HYPOCRISY

Of course, when considering how cynical the nature of realism is, it is quite easy to understand why persuading America's political elite to move away from the path their liberal narrative has led them down would be difficult. After all, despite its clear honesty, many Americans may find an unflinchingly realist approach to international relations (IR) somewhat unsettling. As Mearsheimer observes,

Americans are basically optimists. They regard progress in politics, whether at the national or the international level, as both desirable and possible. As the French author Alexis de Tocqueville observed long ago, Americans believe that "man is endowed with an indefinite faculty of improvement." Realism, by contrast, offers a pessimistic perspective on international politics. It depicts a world rife with security competition and war, and holds out little promise of an "escape from the evil of power, regardless of what one does." Such pessimism is at odds with the powerful American belief that with time and effort, reasonable individuals can cooperate to solve important social problems. Liberalism offers a more hopeful perspective on world politics, and Americans naturally find it more attractive than the gloomy specter drawn by realism.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, "Because Americans dislike realpolitik, public discourse about foreign policy in the United States is usually couched in the language of liberalism."<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, despite this public preference, this trend, as shall be fully explained in the sections that follow, will soon have to come to an end because it has now become exceedingly detrimental to U.S. security. The world outside of America's borders is no longer fooled, and preserving its prestige in the manner it has in the past will soon no longer be possible. Therefore, the United States has no choice but to accept

---

<sup>39</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 23-24.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

that its current narrative simply cannot survive. And its citizen can no longer be left to remain as blind as they currently are.

Certainly, however, this is not to say that the vision liberalism proposes is itself objectionable. Indeed, quite to the contrary, the romanticism that forms the foundation of much of liberal thought is extremely idyllic. Nonetheless, once one takes the time to fully understand this theoretical model, one sees that in terms of real world applicability its Manichean simplism is quite problematic.<sup>41</sup> As Mearsheimer explains,

Liberalism's optimistic view of international politics is based on three core beliefs, which are common to almost all of the theories in the paradigm. First, liberals consider states to be the main actors in international politics. Second, they emphasize that the internal characteristics of states vary considerably, and that these differences have profound effects on state behavior. Furthermore, liberal theorists often believe that some internal arrangements (e.g., democracy) are inherently preferable to others (e.g., dictatorship). For liberals, therefore, there are "good" and "bad" states in the international system. Good states pursue cooperative politics and hardly ever start wars on their own, whereas bad states cause conflicts with other states and are prone to use force to get their way. Thus, the key to peace is to populate the world with good states.

Third, liberals believe that calculations about power matter little for explaining the behavior of good states.<sup>42</sup>

They do, of course, on the other hand, freely acknowledge "Bad states might be motivated by the desire to gain power at the expense of other states, but that is only because they are misguided. In an ideal world, where there are only good states, power would be largely irrelevant."<sup>43</sup> In contrast to this position, though, realist detractors such as Stephen Krasner argue that the problem with this sort of

---

<sup>41</sup> Christopher Layne, "America's Middle East Grand Strategy after Iraq: The Moment of Offshore Balancing has Arrived," *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 1 (January 2009), 7.

<sup>42</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 15-16.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

understanding of global politics is that often the leaders of “good states,” who profess to believe in the tenets of international norms, in reality, only do so to conceal their power driven agendas.<sup>44</sup>

Clearly, “There is not much controversy that norms affect verbal and rhetorical behavior.”<sup>45</sup> After all, “Most statesmen claim that they accept these liberal norms and invariably emphasize their commitment to the rule of law.”<sup>46</sup> But

For realists, like Hans Morgenthau, however, the effect of norms was to generate the need for ideological disguises. Norms established desired practices, not practices that actually prevailed. They give rise to justifications, excuses and denials; ‘organized hypocrisy’, to use Krasner’s label.”<sup>47</sup>

Thus, if anything, a leader’s claim that he or she honestly abides by liberal norms simply allows that leader to have an easier navigation around the political checks and balances that one who took an openly realist position would constantly be confronted with.<sup>48</sup> And this is precisely what one sees in “good states” throughout the international system.

For example, when reviewing American history “It should be obvious to intelligent observers that the United States speaks one way and acts another.”<sup>49</sup> Yet,

---

<sup>44</sup> Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons, eds., *Handbook of International Relations* (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 129.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>46</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *Why Leaders Lie: The Truth About Lying in International Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 77.

<sup>47</sup> Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons, eds., *Handbook of International Relations* (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 129.

<sup>48</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *Why Leaders Lie: The Truth About Lying in International Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 93-94.

<sup>49</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 25.

despite the clear hypocrisy of the liberal rhetoric it uses to justify its actions, “Most Americans readily accept these rationalizations because liberalism is so deeply rooted in their culture. As a result, they find it easy to believe that they are acting according to cherished principles, rather than cold and calculated power considerations.”<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless,

As one would expect, the gap between what the United States prescribes for others and what it demands for itself has not gone unnoticed abroad. Indeed, it is a key theme of many of Osama bin Laden’s denunciations, for he knows that accusing the United States of acting hypocritically is a potent weapon in the struggle for hearts and minds around the world.<sup>51</sup>

The power of such an attack lies in the fact that “When foreign leaders and publics react to hypocrisy, they usually bring a much richer fund of moral condemnation.”<sup>52</sup>

Thus, as shall be demonstrated later, the hypocritical actor will ultimately face compounded disdain stemming from both the negative action taken and what is at times perceived as the even greater offense of simply being a hypocrite.

Unfortunately, though, America’s leaders seem not to understand this reality. And as a result, they often feel emboldened to act internationally in a manner that can only be described as rampantly hypocritical.

### **The George W. Bush Administration**

For instance, nine days after the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, George W. Bush announced before a joint session of Congress that “Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>51</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (2002; repr., New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 100.

<sup>52</sup> Martha Finnemore, “Legitimacy, Hypocrisy, and the Social Structure of Unipolarity: Why Being a Unipole Isn’t All It’s Cracked Up to Be,” *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (January 2009): 74.

From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.”<sup>53</sup> What many Americans are likely unaware of, however, is that during Bush’s presidency his administration was itself, in fact, actively harboring and supporting members of an organization known as the Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MEK), which has actually been on the U.S. list of terrorist groups since 1997.<sup>54</sup>

The Mujahedeen-e Khalq, or People’s Mujahedeen, was first formed in 1965 when the group splintered from a guerilla force in northern Iran.<sup>55</sup> Violently opposed to Iran’s former Shah and those associated with him,

Its hit men assassinated a dozen people, including an Iranian general and five American military and civilian technicians in the 1970s. An operation in 1971 to kidnap the U.S. ambassador to Tehran, Douglas MacArthur III, failed. But it helped the group heighten its profile among anti-shah terrorist outfits.

Later, the MEK would play a key role in the events that swept Ayatollah Khomeini to power. The break with the Mullahs came when the People’s Mujahedeen, under its “Supreme Guide” Massoud Rajavi, attempted an armed uprising against the new regime in 1981. Not allowed to field candidates in presidential and parliamentary elections, the MEK sent hit squads to assassinate prominent mullahs and raided several military bases.<sup>56</sup>

One of the 1981 assassination attempts targeted Iran’s present Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, permanently disabling his right arm with a bomb.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> George W. Bush, *Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the United States Response to the Terrorist Attacks of September 11*, from the American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=64731&st=United+States+as+a+hostile+regime&st1=#axzz1abk3xtBH> (accessed October 12, 2011).

<sup>54</sup> Andrew Higgins and Jay Solomon, “Strange Bedfellows: Iranian Imbroglia Gives Boost to Odd Exile Group,” *Wall Street Journal*, Nov 29, 2006.

<sup>55</sup> Amir Taheri, “Iran’s Troubling Opposition” *Wall Street Journal*, June 26, 2008.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> *Frontline* “Showdown with Iran,” PBS, October 23, 2007.



Another MEK linked bombing that year successfully killed the Islamic republic's president and prime minister at the same time.<sup>58</sup>

As one would expect, the reprisal for this wave of terror was quite brutal, but, fortunately for the MEK, a deal was brokered with Saddam Hussein, who was at the time locked in a bitter war with Iran, which gave MEK forces safe haven in Iraq.<sup>59</sup> As a result,

Mr. Rajavi frequently visited Baghdad and formed a close relationship with Saddam, who set up camps in Iraq to train MEK militants for sabotage operations against Iran. Even after the 1988 cease-fire between Tehran and Baghdad, Mr. Rajavi, with Saddam's approval, continued a low-intensity war against Iran from Iraqi territory.<sup>60</sup>

Then, "In 1991, the MEK's 10,000-strong force in Iraq helped Saddam in his brutal campaign against Kurds and Iraqi Shiites, a campaign that left over 100,000 dead."<sup>61</sup>

The MEK's role in the massacre would later be listed in the U.S. Department of State's 2005 Country Reports on Terrorism.<sup>62</sup>

Nevertheless, when the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, the members of the Mujahedeen-e Khalq, who once were known for condemning U.S. imperialism and singing "death to America," were surprisingly placed under U.S. protection.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, not only were they allowed to maintain an American sanctioned base in Iraq, from which they broadcasted anti-Iranian propaganda, but they, in fact, also

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Amir Taheri, "Iran's Troubling Opposition" *Wall Street Journal*, June 26, 2008.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Andrew Higgins and Jay Solomon, "Strange Bedfellows: Iranian Imbroglia Gives Boost to Odd Exile Group," *Wall Street Journal*, Nov 29, 2006.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

became one of America's sources of intelligence on Iranian paramilitary and nuclear programs.<sup>64</sup> As time went on, some would even begin to suggest that the MEK should be removed from U.S. list of terrorist organizations altogether.<sup>65</sup> This idea would remain a point of contention, however, because, according to a recent disclosure from the current State Department, the organization is still secretly training suicide bombers.<sup>66</sup>

Totally dismayed by America's defense of those associated with such activities, former Iranian president Ali Rafsanjani asked "Why terrorists who have committed crimes in Iran are not returned here? Worse yet, they are permitted to enter your Congress, the U.N., and have lobbying and activities."<sup>67</sup> His cries, nonetheless, would ultimately fall on deaf ears. Indeed, even when Iran signaled that it would be willing to exchange members of al-Qaeda that it was holding in custody for some of the MEK members under U.S. protection, American officials refused the offer citing concerns for the safety of those it would be turning over.<sup>68</sup> What is interesting about this humanitarian reasoning, though, is that at the same time, as part of America's extraordinary rendition program, the United States was systematically handing over other terror suspects to brutal regimes such as that of Syria, which the U.S. plainly understood would likely use torture on those it was

---

<sup>64</sup> Jay Solomon and Neil King Jr., "Two Agendas: Why Iran, U.S. Stand Far Apart," *Wall Street Journal*, June 25, 2007.

<sup>65</sup> Glenn Kessler, "Court Tells State Department to Rethink Terrorist Label For Iranian Group," *The Washington Post*, July 17, 2010.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Barbara Slavin, "Iran's 'Terrorists' Helped Disclose Nuke Program," *USA Today*, April 15, 2005.

<sup>68</sup> Glenn Kessler, "Rice Clarifies Stand on Iranian Group; Dissidents in Iraq Under U.S. Scrutiny," *The Washington Post*, November 13, 2003.

receiving.<sup>69</sup> Hence, there was obviously something else at play in the case of the MEK.

Only adding to the hypocrisy was America's reaction to others who worked with the Mujahedeen-e Khalq. In one particular case, a group of seven Iranian Americans who assisted the MEK found themselves fighting a legal battle for nearly the entire period of Bush's two terms to avoid conviction on charges that they had provided material support to a terrorist organization.<sup>70</sup> Their defense, of course, was that the United States, as court documents obtained during the case proved, was, indeed, providing material support to the group as well.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, the charges still remained in place.

The Bush White House, however, was clearly not alone in terms of being hypocritical. Indeed, when examining the way the two administrations that preceded it conducted themselves, one is struck by just how little a change in presidencies actually matters in regards to levels of American duplicity. Generation after generation, both Republicans and Democrats act in the exact same fashion. As Morgenthau and Krasner argue, liberal hypocrisy seems to simply be endemic to the current normative system itself. A perfect illustration of this continuity of contradiction is the way in which the administration of Bill Clinton dealt with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

---

<sup>69</sup> Editorial, "The Courts and Mr. Arar," *New York Times*, August 31, 2008.

<sup>70</sup> American Civil Liberties Union, "Iranian American Refugees Will Continue Fight Over Contributions to Opposition Group, April 30, 2009," American Civil Liberties Union, <http://www.aclu.org/national-security/iranian-american-refugees-will-continue-fight-over-contributions-opposition-group> (accessed May 29, 2009).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

## The Bill Clinton Administration

Immediately after the Soviet-Afghan conflict of the 1970s and 80s, the nation of Afghanistan found itself entirely engulfed in a chaotic civil war.<sup>72</sup> It seemed as if the decades of carnage that Afghans had suffered through perhaps might never end. But then, “As if out of nowhere, a band of madrasa students (taliban) appeared in late 1994 and within two years swept across the country.”<sup>73</sup> The Taliban put an end to the violent power struggles that were raging throughout their land and finally restored a degree of order to a battle-weary nation.<sup>74</sup> Unfortunately, though, for many people, the Taliban’s strict interpretation of Islamic law made life under their rule extremely unpleasant.<sup>75</sup>

Indeed, “Their list of banned items and activities unfurled as a roll call of life’s small pleasures: marbles, cigarettes, dancing, music, singing, homing pigeons, kite-flying, television-watching.”<sup>76</sup> Their laws relating to women in particular, however, were even more archaic. After the group secured their power base “They forced women to wear the chador, prevented women from working and girls from attending school, and imposed *hadd* punishments, including the stoning of

---

<sup>72</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 264.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 11, 2001*, updated ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 282-283.

<sup>75</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 264-265.

<sup>76</sup> Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 11, 2001*, updated ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 334.

adulterers.”<sup>77</sup> Taxi drivers were instructed not to stop for women in improper attire, and tailors were threatened with jail time if they took female measurements.<sup>78</sup>

Unsurprisingly, then, when questioned about the conditions in Afghanistan, the Clinton administration felt obligated to express its disapproval of these developments. For example, when asked about the Taliban’s policies in October of 1997, White House Press Secretary Mike McCurry replied,

We’ll, our assessment of human rights in Afghanistan are very consistent with what was reported in the most recent review of human rights situations around the world by the State Department. We share the assessment that they’ve made, there is great concern we have vis a vis the Taliban. We think there have been cases of abuse that were documented quite well in the State Department’s survey, but I would refer you for further comment over to the State Department.<sup>79</sup>

That further comment would actually come quite forcefully just a few weeks later when, “During a November 1997 visit to Pakistan, then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright attacked Taliban policies as despicable and intolerable.”<sup>80</sup> As she explained, “If a society is to move forward, women and girls must have access to schools, be able to participate in the economy and be protected from physical exploitation and abuse.”<sup>81</sup> Later she would add “It’s very clear why we’re opposed to Taliban. We’re

---

<sup>77</sup> John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, rev. and updated 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 224.

<sup>78</sup> Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 11, 2001*, updated ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 334.

<sup>79</sup> Mike McCurry, *Press Briefing by Mike McCurry*, from The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=48542&st=taliban&st1=#axzz1MLIT7g54> (accessed March 1, 2011).

<sup>80</sup> U.S. Congressional Research Service, “Afghanistan: Current Issues and U.S. Policy, June 13, 2003,” 5, by Kenneth Katzman, Order Code RL30588, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/21853.pdf> (accessed March 12, 2011).

<sup>81</sup> Steven Erlanger, “In Afghan Refugee Camp, Albright Hammers Taliban,” *The New York Times*, November 19, 1997.

opposed to their approach to human rights, to their despicable treatment of women and children and their lack of respect for human dignity, in a way more reminiscent of the past than the future.”<sup>82</sup> Thus, at that point, the administration’s position on the Taliban seemed quite unambiguous. Indeed, later, President Clinton would personally align himself with Secretary Albright’s strong stance at an observance of International Women’s Day.<sup>83</sup>

Nevertheless, things were not quite as they seemed. At the same time the administration was condemning the Taliban’s human rights abuses it was also, behind the scenes, courting the idea of working with the regime.<sup>84</sup> The American energy company Unocal wanted to run a gas pipeline through Afghanistan from Turkmenistan and executives from the company had enlisted the help of the administration to work out some of the diplomatic aspects of the deal.<sup>85</sup> Of course, the Taliban government the United States was castigating publically was no different than the one it was willing to cut deals with privately, but apparently, however, Unocal’s proposed plan for securing U.S. corporate interests, further limiting Iran’s domination of regional energy flows, and increasing funds for campaign financing outweighed America’s other concerns.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> Steven Erlanger, “In Afghan Refugee Camp, Albright Hammers Taliban,” *The New York Times*, November 19, 1997.

<sup>83</sup> William J. Clinton, *Remarks on the Observance of International Women’s Day*, from The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=55606&st=taliban&st1=#axzz1MLIT7g54> (accessed March 1, 2011).

<sup>84</sup> Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 11, 2001*, updated ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 362-367.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 301-309.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 305, 307.

In fact, Unocal would eventually be able to even make arrangements for members of the Taliban to travel to America for a meeting at the State Department.<sup>87</sup> During the trip, the Taliban ministers would be graciously treated to a visit to both NASA headquarters and Mount Rushmore.<sup>88</sup> Ironically, the hope was that by exposing those who were thought to be guilty of human rights abuses to American culture they might come to think doing business with the United States was not so bad.<sup>89</sup> In other words, the White House knowingly allowed its understanding of morality to be turned on its head by American corporate executives simply for the sake of its interests. Nonetheless, despite such a questionable compromise, and the intense effort put into the deal, it would eventually fall through when bin Laden, whom the Taliban had been harboring, simultaneously attacked two U.S. embassies in East Africa, killing over 200 people.<sup>90</sup>

### **The George H.W. Bush Administration**

As disastrously as the Clinton administration's Taliban experience may have ended, though, perhaps no diplomatic episode of this kind has gained as much notoriety in recent times as George H.W. Bush's relationship with Saddam Hussein. In 1984, Bush, who was then vice president under Ronald Reagan, met with Saddam's foreign minister Tariq Azziz in Washington D.C. to officially mark the end

---

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 364-365.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 365.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 365.

<sup>90</sup> Mary Pat Flaherty, David B. Ottaway, and James V. Grimaldi, "How Afghanistan Went Unlisted as Terrorist Sponsor," *The Washington Post*, November 5, 2001.

of 17 years of diplomatic estrangement.<sup>91</sup> Iraq had initially severed ties with the United States because it accused America of assisting Israel in its 1967 war with Egypt, Syria, and Jordan.<sup>92</sup> By 1980, however, Iraq found itself involved in a war of its own with its neighbor Iran and was quite soon thereafter looking to renegotiate its diplomatic alignment.<sup>93</sup> Indeed, even three years prior to the '84 meeting in D.C., the U.S., which had also severed ties with Iran for its own reasons, had already removed Iraq from its list of nations harboring international terrorists and offered the Iraqis \$1.6 billion worth of credits and credit guarantees for U.S. goods.<sup>94</sup>

Nevertheless, it would not be long before hostilities between Iraq and the United States would resume. In 1990, Saddam entered into another war, this time with America's ally Kuwait, and Bush, who at that point had become president, decided to organize and oversee an international coalition against him.<sup>95</sup> On the domestic side, Bush maintained support for the campaign by frequently speaking to the American people about the evils of the Saddam regime. In fact, as illustrated in the example below, President Bush essentially argued that resisting such evil was the responsibility of a "good state":

The terror Saddam Hussein has imposed upon Kuwait violates every principle of human decency. Listen to what Amnesty International has documented. "Widespread abuses of human rights have been perpetrated by Iraqi forces...arbitrary arrest and detention without trial of thousands...widespread

---

<sup>91</sup> Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. and Iraq Reported Ready to Renew Ties After 17 years," *The New York Times*, November 13, 1984.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996; repr., New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2003), 247-249.



torture...imposition of the death penalty and the extrajudicial execution of hundreds of unarmed civilians, including children.”

Including children -- there's no horror that could make this a more obvious conflict of good vs. evil. The man who used chemical warfare on his own people -- once again including children -- now oversees public hangings of dissenters. And daily his troops commit atrocities against Kuwaiti citizens.

This brutality has reverberated throughout the entire world. If we do not follow the dictates of our inner moral compass and stand up for human life, then his lawlessness will threaten the peace and democracy of the emerging new world order we now see: this long dreamed-of vision we've all worked toward for so long.<sup>96</sup>

What is quite ironic about this statement, though, is the way in which the president tries to justify his “new world order” war by highlighting the cruelty of Saddam’s belligerent warmongering and his 1980s use of chemical weapons against his “own people” in Iraq’s Kurdish region. After all, as Mearsheimer and Harvard realist Stephen Walt point out,

The United States backed Iraq during the 1980s – when Saddam was gassing Kurds and Iranians – and helped Iraq use chemical weapons more effectively by providing it with satellite imagery of Iranian troop positions. The Reagan administration also facilitated Iraq’s efforts to develop biological weapons by allowing Baghdad to import disease-producing biological materials such as anthrax, West Nile virus, and botulinal toxin.<sup>97</sup>

In fact, after the 1988 *Anfal* massacre of Iraqi Kurds, America, rather than cutting ties with Saddam, instead decided to reward him, once more, with billions of dollars worth of loan guarantees and commodity credits.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, it was none other than Bush himself who, only a year after the *Anfal* incident, signed a national security

---

<sup>96</sup> George H.W. Bush, *Open Letter to College Students on the Persian Gulf Crisis*, from The American Presidency, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=19205&st=own+people&st1=iraq#axzz1MLIT7g54> (accessed February 15, 2011).

<sup>97</sup> John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, “An Unnecessary War,” *Foreign Policy*, January–February 2003, 50-59.

<sup>98</sup> Ken Roth, “War in Iraq: Not a Humanitarian Intervention, January 24, 2004,” under “Two Irrelevant Considerations,” Human Rights Watch, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2004/01/25/war-iraq-not-humanitarian-intervention> (accessed August 9, 2011).

directive that proposed that normal relations between Iraq and the U.S. was good for both America's long-term interests and promoting stability in the Middle East.<sup>99</sup> Sadly, it was not until after Saddam Hussein decided to defy the United States by invading America's ally that the Bush administration began to condemn him as "a new Hitler."<sup>100</sup> Before then, he was just another addition to America's long list of unsavory bedfellows.

Once again, however, as with the other administrations mentioned, Bush certainly cannot be accused of being the first to make use of manipulative hypocrisy. Indeed, as Mearsheimer notes, policy "spin doctors," as he refers to them, have a legacy of success in the United States that stretches back well before the *first* Hitler had even passed away:

For example, in the late nineteenth century, American elites generally considered Germany to be a progressive constitutional state worthy of emulation. But the American view of Germany changed in the decade before World War I, as relations between the two states deteriorated. By the time the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917, Americans had come to see Germany as more autocratic and militaristic than its European rivals.

Similarly, during the late 1930s, many Americans saw the Soviet Union as an evil state, partly in response to Josef Stalin's murderous internal policies and his infamous alliance with Nazi Germany in August 1939. Nevertheless, when the United States joined forces with the Soviet Union in the late 1941 to fight against the Third Reich, the U.S. government began a massive public relations campaign to clean up the image of America's new ally and make it compatible with liberal ideals. The Soviet Union was now portrayed as a proto-democracy, and Stalin became "Uncle Joe."<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>99</sup> John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "An Unnecessary War," *Foreign Policy*, January–February 2003, 50-59.

<sup>100</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 254.

<sup>101</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 26.

Not surprisingly, after the war, America's leaders had absolutely no problem turning the Soviets back into villains. And, of course, this was quite fortunate because fear of the Soviet Union was essential to America's rhetorical justification for expanding its influence in places like the Middle East.

### **Roots of the Rhetoric**

As Christopher Layne points out, even as the Second World War was still raging the United States was already mapping out the possibilities for the expansion of its power in the post-war world, and these plans, despite what many may have previously believed about the Cold War era, were extremely ambitious.<sup>102</sup> In fact,

As the diplomatic historian John Lewis Gaddis observes, the United States "expected to lead the new world order" after 1945: "Few historians would deny, today, that the United States did expect to dominate the international scene after World War II, and that it did so well before the Soviet Union emerged as a clear and present antagonist."<sup>103</sup>

Corroborating this claim is National Security Council paper NSC-68 from 1950, which states quite plainly that despite the obvious threat that the U.S.S.R. could pose to U.S. interests it actually played little role in America's decision to expand its presence in the world.<sup>104</sup> However, what the souring of relations with the Soviet Union did do for America was provide it with a reasonable excuse for this extension of power.<sup>105</sup> This was particularly the case for America's new claims on the Middle East.

---

<sup>102</sup> Christopher Layne, "Rethinking American Grand Strategy: Hegemony or Balance of Power in the Twenty-First Century?," *World Policy Journal* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 9.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

As Truman era State Department official Joseph Jones explains, in the aftermath of World War II the British were no longer strong enough to project their power into the Mediterranean and Middle East in any substantial way.<sup>106</sup> Thus, when Greece and Turkey made simultaneous pleas for assistance against encroaching communist threats, America found itself suddenly in a position to take up Britain's responsibilities.<sup>107</sup> Of course, as Layne discusses below, for the United States this was not at all seen as a problem because it was already predisposed to the idea of doing so:

In 1946-1947 America's growing involvement in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East was driven both by its interest in Middle Eastern Oil and by its fears of the Soviet Union. Distrust of Soviet intentions led the United States to establish a permanent naval presence in the Mediterranean (in fall 1946) and, in 1947, to provide military and economic assistance to Greece and Turkey. Moreover, as U.S.-Soviet tensions escalated, the Middle East assumed a growing military importance as a base to wage a strategic bombing campaign against the Soviet Union in the event of war. Nevertheless, even without the Soviet threat, the United States almost certainly would have been drawn into these areas. America's regional strategic objectives – gaining control over Middle Eastern and Persian Gulf oil, and establishing the United States (at Britain's expense) as the region's dominant power – were fixed during World War II, well before U.S. policy makers became concerned about the Soviet threat.<sup>108</sup>

According to Robert Jervis, however, during the Truman administrations planning for this new regional policy “Proponents of aid to Greece and Turkey felt that the program would be politically acceptable only if it were justified in dramatic and far-reaching terms.”<sup>109</sup> Most understood that there was the very real possibility that the

---

<sup>106</sup> Joseph M. Jones, *The Fifteen Weeks* (New York: The Viking Press, 1955), 129-131, 141.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 129-131.

<sup>108</sup> Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 46.

<sup>109</sup> Robert Jervis “The Impact of the Korean War on the Cold War,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 24, no. 2 (December 1980): 573.

Soviets might view such involvement so close to their borders as a provocation.<sup>110</sup> Hence, the American people would have to be firmly convinced that what was taking place was not simply an unnecessarily risky move toward imperialistic tendencies. And this, of course, would not be possible without the use of rather spectacular rhetorical maneuvering.

The reason for this is that even those who were planning the administration's strategy plainly realized that the United States was, in fact, taking over for the British Empire's as "world leader."<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, despite this realization, as the State-War-Navy Coordination Committee (SWNCC) made clear in one of its policy papers, the United States certainly did not want this takeover to be seen as such.<sup>112</sup> The document argued "The only way we can sell the public on our new policy is by emphasizing the necessity of holding the line: communism vs. democracy should be the major theme."<sup>113</sup> It, therefore, proposed "We should couch it in terms of a new policy of this government to go to the assistance of free governments everywhere."<sup>114</sup> It similarly added "We should emphasize the idea of a common purpose with all democracies."<sup>115</sup> Hence, rather than being viewed as simply an attempt to move into the British Empire's position, America's actions could be seen by the public as a means of defending democratic values.

---

<sup>110</sup> Joseph M. Jones, *The Fifteen Weeks* (New York: The Viking Press, 1955), 162.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 130-131.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 150-151.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

For those who doubted the pragmatism of acting in the world in this way, a novel line of logic was laid out. As President Truman himself later stated in his famous Truman Doctrine speech, “This is no more than a frank recognition that totalitarian regimes imposed upon free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States.”<sup>116</sup> In other words, what America’s leaders were trying say was that the protection of the democratic ideal in the world outside of America’s borders would guarantee that this outside world would never pose a threat to the safety of America’s democracy at home. Thus, by protecting others, American’s would essentially be protecting itself.

Not so coincidentally, it was also during this period that those pushing for domestic civil rights in America first began to experience some success. Even during World War II “German and Japanese propagandists eagerly brandished every report of racial discrimination in the United States as evidence of American hypocrisy and the hollowness of Allied rhetoric about democracy and freedom.”<sup>117</sup> But during the Cold War, America, which now claimed to be taking on the role of leader of the “free world,” found itself open to even more scrutiny.<sup>118</sup> There was perhaps nothing more obvious for the Soviets to exploit.

---

<sup>116</sup> Harry S. Truman, *56 - Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine*, from The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=12846&st=turkey&st1=greece#axzz1MwJTVr2Z> (accessed February 17, 2011).

<sup>117</sup> Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (2001; repr., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 36.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

By “Framing its foreign policy in terms of containing Soviet power and influence in order to promote and sustain a ‘free world,’ the Truman administration exposed itself to accusations of hypocrisy in an era of Jim Crow, colonialism, and apartheid.”<sup>119</sup> Unsurprisingly, therefore, the Justice Department for the first time began to get involved in cases challenging things such as school segregation.<sup>120</sup> Though the famous *Brown v. Board of Education* case would not be decided until the Eisenhower administration had taken office, it was Truman’s Justice Department that began the battle over Jim Crow, and “The Justice Department’s most important brief in *Brown* itself was filed December 1952, during the last weeks of Truman’s presidency.”<sup>121</sup> The bar had clearly been raised, and now America had little choice but to constantly give the impression that it was struggling to reach out and grasp it.

Indeed, Truman had already desegregated the U.S. military by executive order a few years earlier.<sup>122</sup> But he argued that if America was to inspire the rest of the world it would have to show signs that it was continuing to perfect its democracy.<sup>123</sup> In keeping with this, when the narrative of America’s democracy was threatened by the huge confrontation that broke out over school desegregation in Little Rock, Arkansas, Eisenhower, who, in fact, admitted he personally did not care for the idea of desegregation, decided to order a highly publicized dispatch of federal troops to

---

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-84.

<sup>120</sup> Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 94.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 101-102.

ensure the civil rights measure was carried out.<sup>124</sup> The president had been made fully aware of the Soviet Union's use of the incident for propaganda, as well as the massive news coverage it was receiving internationally, and he, therefore, understood all too well what sort of damage a lack of action could do to America's democratic image.<sup>125</sup>

The problem, of course, was that it was much more than America's domestic racial issues alone that would come to make the world question its commitment to democratic values. Indeed, during the Cold War, the United States was, unfortunately, quite notorious for lending support to autocratic regimes that actively suppressed democracy.<sup>126</sup> As long as the leaders of these authoritarian governments claimed to be anti-communism, America seemed to believe that it had a legitimate excuse for allying itself with despotism.<sup>127</sup> Ironically, this was perhaps nowhere truer than in the Middle East, one of the regions which had actually prompted Truman's initial declaration that America would act internationally to protect democracy. In fact, not only did the United States not protect democracy in this region, at times, it even worked to subvert it.

For example, after America's ally in Iran, Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi, was driven into exile in 1953, the C.I.A. did everything from planting propaganda to planting explosives in its bid to overthrow the democratically elected Iranian Prime

---

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 16, 130, 132-134.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>126</sup> John L. Esposito, preface to the paperback edition of *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), xvii.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., xvii.



Minister Mohammad Mossadegh.<sup>128</sup> Rather than applauding the flourishing of democratic values, the United States instead ignored the sovereignty of Iran and violently resisted what it alleged to be a Soviet conspiracy. Though no one could accuse Mossadegh himself of being a communist, there were claims that his government's willingness to form a coalition alliance with the Iran's communist Tudeh Party would eventually lead to a pro-Soviet stance in the nation.<sup>129</sup> And this, along with his decision to nationalize Iranian oil, of course, was seen as enough of a justification for him to be ousted in a CIA led coup.<sup>130</sup>

### **Roots of the Rebuttal**

On the other hand, however, there was at least one case during the Cold War in which the United States did, in fact, fight on the side of freedom in the Muslim world. In 1979, the Ayatollah Khomeini removed the Shah of Iran from power once again, and this time the United States could do little more than form a regional power-balancing coalition against the popular revolt.<sup>131</sup> Nevertheless, just weeks later, Afghan mujahedeen forces were beginning a resistance of their own to repel an invasion from the Soviet Union, and anxious C.I.A. heads immediately began to develop plans to try to help hamper the efforts of the Soviet army.<sup>132</sup> Naturally, even

---

<sup>128</sup> James Risen, "Secretes of History: The C.I.A. in Iran -- A Special Report.; How a Plot Convulsed Iran in '53 (and in '79)," *New York Times*, April 16, 2000.

<sup>129</sup> Barry Ruben, "Lessons from Iran," *The Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 107.

<sup>130</sup> James Risen, "Secretes of History: The C.I.A. in Iran -- A Special Report.; How a Plot Convulsed Iran in '53 (and in '79)," *New York Times*, April 16, 2000.

<sup>131</sup> Stephen M. Walt "Testing Theories of Alliance Formation: The Case of Southwest Asia," *International Organization* 42, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 294-295.

<sup>132</sup> Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 11, 2001*, updated ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 50-52.

in this case, though, America's actions were not entirely altruistic. From the very beginning, those with interests in the region were nervous about the sort of serious implications a Soviet move into Afghanistan could have. For instance, in the American allied nation of Saudi Arabia, Prince

Turki believed that the Soviet invasion signaled a drive by Moscow to establish strategic parity with the United States in the Middle East. Until recently arms sales had been the communists' primary calling card in the Arab world. Now the Soviet Union was looking to gain more influence over oil prices and supplies. Occupying Afghanistan was not per se a Soviet objective, he concluded, but a step toward increasing its power in the region through proxy communist parties and leftist movements.<sup>133</sup>

American officials agreed.<sup>134</sup> There was already a general understanding that "The upheaval in Iran had created new vulnerabilities for the United States in the Middle East."<sup>135</sup> They, therefore, believed they had good reason to fear that "The KGB might seek to exploit this chaos."<sup>136</sup> To stave off the possibility of that occurring, a proposal was developed that suggested "A sustained rebellion in Afghanistan might constrain the Soviets' ability to project power into Middle Eastern oil fields."<sup>137</sup> To help ensure the ferocity of this rebel insurgency, the U.S. decided to throw its weight behind the most radical Islamist forces in Afghanistan, believing they were the most determined to oppose the Soviet Union's aggression.<sup>138</sup> Likewise,

---

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>134</sup> Steve Coll, *The Bin Ladens: An American Family in the American Century* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 246.

<sup>135</sup> Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 11, 2001*, updated ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 42.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 66-68.

The United States supported efforts to recruit Muslims from around the world for the war to demonstrate the unity of Islamic opposition to the communist occupation of Muslim land, and to harness the religious fervor of those who viewed the battle as a holy war against invading infidels.<sup>139</sup>

As fate would have it, Osama bin Laden just happened to be among those who were instrumental in organizing one of these programs.<sup>140</sup>

Indeed, it was during his effort to recruit Muslims for the war against the Soviet Union that bin Laden first began to develop his media strategy.<sup>141</sup> By utilizing the clout he had gained in Afghanistan from his own experience with combat, he skillfully persuaded other young Arabs that their presence in the fierce struggle against the Soviet onslaught was needed as well.<sup>142</sup> Of course, it was not as if convincing others of the barbarity of the red army forces was all that difficult.<sup>143</sup> After all, in the name of emancipation and national security, they committed unspeakable atrocities against innocent non-combatants, many of whom could not have even found Moscow on a map, let alone pose a threat to it.<sup>144</sup> Thus, the Soviets were essentially creating the mujahedeen on their own.<sup>145</sup>

---

<sup>139</sup> James Wynbrandt, *A Brief History of Saudi Arabia*, (New York: Fact On File, 2004), 246.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 11, 2001*, updated ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 163.

<sup>142</sup> Steve Coll, *The Bin Ladens: An American Family in the American Century* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 302-303.

<sup>143</sup> Michael Scheuer, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Dulles, VA: Potamac Books, 2006). 26.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

Bin Laden, nevertheless, was quite good at telling the story of the struggle.<sup>146</sup> At one point, he would even begin to use the personal wealth he attained through inheritance to produce his own documentary films about the campaign.<sup>147</sup> Years later, he would comment that he had come to believe that in matters of armed conflict the media war actually accounted for 90% of the necessary preparation for battle.<sup>148</sup> He, thus, prided himself on what he claimed was his primary role in life, which was that of an instigator on behalf of the Islamic world.<sup>149</sup> Ironically, though, despite the fact that bin Laden and the C.I.A. never had any direct connections with one another during the Soviet-Afghan war, since they were both working with many of the same people, his natural talent for instigation also worked quite successfully on behalf of U.S. interests as well.<sup>150</sup>

For its part, the C.I.A. could have cared less about what gave the mujahedeen religious inspiration, just so long as the end result was bad for the Soviets.<sup>151</sup> Indeed, although America's support began as a covert operation, by 1983 U.S. officials were so proud of what they were accomplishing "President Reagan had begun to hint

---

<sup>146</sup> Steve Coll, *The Bin Ladens: An American Family in the American Century* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 302-303.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 341-343.

<sup>148</sup> Steven R. Corman, Angeka Trethewey, and H. L. Goodall, Jr., *Weapons of Mass Persuasion: Strategic Communication to Combat Violent Extremism* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 71.

<sup>149</sup> Michael Scheuer, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2006). 65-66.

<sup>150</sup> Steve Coll, *The Bin Ladens: An American Family in the American Century* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 292-295.

<sup>151</sup> Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 11, 2001*, updated ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 68.

openly that America was aiding the Afghan ‘freedom fighters.’”<sup>152</sup> But this love affair was not to last forever. In February of 1989, the battered Soviet army was forced to begin withdrawing its troops from Afghan soil.<sup>153</sup> Not long afterward, the Soviet Union itself would collapse.<sup>154</sup> Hence, with the communist threat greatly diminished, and U.S. interests seemingly secured, the United States abandoned both Afghan “freedom fighters” and civilians alike to the task of dealing with the war’s chaotic aftermath on their own.<sup>155</sup>

Obviously, however, with the Cold War ended, citing the Soviet threat would no longer be a feasible means of rationalizing America’s future strategic actions in the world, a fact Bill Clinton would later be noted as lamenting over during the tenure of his presidency.<sup>156</sup> Nonetheless, America’s pattern of supporting political suppression in the Muslim world continued on from that point essentially unaltered even without the Soviet Union.<sup>157</sup> Confronted by the new geo-political landscape, the authoritarian regimes the United States allied itself with simply switched from legitimizing their tyranny with claims of being anticommunist to instead emphasizing their opposition to the rising wave of anti-Western Islamist radicalism<sup>158</sup> The minor

---

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 184-185.

<sup>153</sup> Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 137.

<sup>154</sup> Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 11, 2001*, updated ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 233.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> James F. Hoge Jr., “Media Pervasiveness,” *Foreign Affairs* 73, no.4 (July-August 1994): 141.

<sup>157</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 218.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

adjustment in terminology hardly even qualified the change in the routine rhetoric as mentionable at all. Then, the attacks of September 11, 2001 occurred.

### **America's Fall from Grace**

In the wake of the horrors of 9/11, America's rhetorical support of democracy over the evils of tyranny experienced an almost messianic revival that gave it a tone perhaps more suitable for religion than for international politics.<sup>159</sup> After "Attributing the terrorist threat to the United States to the failure of democracy to take root in the Middle East, President Bush committed the United States to 'a forward strategy of freedom in that region.'"<sup>160</sup> He, therefore, created a missionary like plan for exporting democracy to nations abroad, adamantly insisting, just as Truman had before him, that doing so was vital to U.S. security.<sup>161</sup> Nevertheless, regardless of its zealous rhetoric, few in the Muslim world seemed to believe the Bush administration's commitment to democracy was any different than that of the administrations that had come before it.

Indeed, polls conducted during Bush's time as president show that despite his repeated claims that he intended to bring democracy to the region, virtually no Muslim majority country accepted that to be the case.<sup>162</sup> For one thing, many Muslims felt that Bush administration officials only began to emphasize calls for democracy after the invasion of Iraq failed to turn up weapons of mass

---

<sup>159</sup> Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 122.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam: What a Billion Muslims Really Think* (New York: Gallup Press, 2007), 83.

destruction.<sup>163</sup> They also believed that even then the administration only did so because it initially thought it would be able to orchestrate a victory for its handpicked candidate, Ahmed Chalabi.<sup>164</sup> They similarly questioned America's refusal to recognize the Hamas government in the Palestinian territories after its clear victory in free and fair democratic elections.<sup>165</sup> And then, of course, there were the scandals such as the one at Abu Ghraib.<sup>166</sup>

In spite of America's relationship with regimes known for using brutal methods of torture to suppress political dissent, the United States had historically been relatively successful at maintaining the perception that it was itself unwilling to use such tactics.<sup>167</sup> Though America's guilt by association surely tarnished its nice image, and clearly caused more than a few to harbor an exceedingly deep antipathy for the country, it was still, despite its obvious inconsistencies, largely able to at least benefit from the advantages of plausible deniability. That would all quickly change, though, when reports about U.S. personnel abusing inmates at the Abu Ghraib prison began to surface. America's liberal narrative suddenly began to completely unravel. Indeed,

It is precisely because the West in general, and the United States in particular, is seen as having "a fair judicial system," as giving its "own citizens many liberties," and portraying itself as champion of human rights that U.S. actions toward Muslims, such as those at Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib and other abuses are seen as so hypocritical.

---

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 165.

One U.S. diplomat who was in Egypt when the Abu Ghraib scandal broke out said she was told by the locals: “We would expect this from our own government, but not from you.” Ironically, it may be because of America’s idealized image as a beacon for democracy in the Muslim world that its actions elicit such passionate anger.<sup>168</sup>

In other words, America’s fall from grace in the eyes of average Muslims was, in fact, more dramatic than it may have been otherwise due to the hypocrisy of its lofty liberal rhetoric. Its grandiose narrative, when compared with its real world actions, made its offenses only seem all the more deplorable.

As journalist Philip Kennicott explained following an interview with two men in Egypt not long after the Abu Ghraib scandal broke, “Both return again and again to American hypocrisy as a central theme, perhaps even more important than all the other, more tangible crimes of America.”<sup>169</sup> Similarly, when they assessed the crisis, communication specialists Steven Corman, Angela Trethewey, and H.L. Goodall, would write “How could a nation devoted to justice, liberty, and the fair and humane treatment of prisoners of war and the legal protections guaranteed by our Bill of Rights sanctions the mistreatment, illegal detainment, and abuse of foreign citizens? In terms of world opinion, our arrogance was only matched by our hypocrisy.”<sup>170</sup> Hence, rather than making the United States more secure, it would seem that the Bush administration’s attempt to boost America’s democracy credentials, while essentially maintaining an unaltered course for the nation, only made the country more hated.

---

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>169</sup> Philip Kennicott, “Kneeling in Judgement; At Cairo Mosques, Angry Egyptians Turn Their Rancor on the West,” *The Washington Post*, July 17, 2004.

<sup>170</sup> Steven R. Corman, Angeka Trethewey, and H. L. Goodall, Jr., *Weapons of Mass Persuasion: Strategic Communication to Combat Violent Extremism* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 15.



Indeed, as Corman, Trethewey and Goodall observed, “From September 2001 until October 2005, the Pew Center’s reports on the image of the U.S. fell dramatically, achieving by the Summer of 2007 the lowest recorded rating in our history.”<sup>171</sup> Quite obviously, in terms of its diplomacy, the Bush administration was simply headed in the wrong direction.<sup>172</sup> To help get things on the right track, the communications trio suggested that “To regain trustworthiness, there must be absolute consistency and alignment between what the U.S. does and what it says, *even if audiences do not like what we are doing or saying* [italics added]. Above all, it must be predictable in this way.”<sup>173</sup> Just as the Defense Science Board had done in 2004, they argued “Lack of credibility is the key U.S. problem in our efforts to resist terrorist ideology. It limits our persuasive power and provides our enemies the means to easily discredit virtually any message we produce – even true and right ones.”<sup>174</sup> Yet, once again, it appears no one was truly willing heed such a warning.

The work of Corman and his associates gained attention from the State Department, the Department of Defense, and the Special Operations Command.<sup>175</sup> But, nevertheless, America still persisted down the same path. The liberal rhetoric continued. And so did the hypocrisy.

---

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 10-15.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>175</sup> Steven R. Corman, Angeka Trethewey, and H. L. Goodall, Jr., preface to *Weapons of Mass Persuasion: Strategic Communication to Combat Violent Extremism* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), ix.

## Minarets of War

For Osama bin Laden, of course, this only meant continued success over the United States. The nation's hypocrisy, as Scheuer has pointed out, is, in fact, what he thrived on. It was as if each instance of it became a towering minaret calling America's enemies in on itself. Some before him, such as Ayatollah Khomeini, had made the mistake of focusing too heavily on what they considered to be America's moral depravity, but bin Laden realized early on that the secret to gaining advantage over the United States was concentrating on its political policies.<sup>176</sup> He even devised a strategy for using the arrogant hypocrisy the U.S. displayed on the international stage to neutralize the charges of terrorism it laid against those who stood in opposition to it. For example, in March of 1997 he declared,

The US today, as a result of this arrogance, has set a double standard, calling whoever goes against its injustice a terrorist. It wants to occupy our countries, steal our resources, install collaborators to rule us with man-made laws, and wants us to agree on all these issues. If we refuse to do so, it will say we are terrorists. With a fleeting glance at US behavior, we find that it judges the behavior of the poor Palestinian children whose country was occupied: if they throw stones against the Israeli occupation it says they are terrorists, whereas when the Israeli pilots bombed the United Nations building in Qana, Lebanon, while it was full of children and women, the US stopped any plan to condemn Israel. At the same time that they condemn any Muslim who calls for his rights, they receive the highest official of the Irish Republican Army [Gerry Adams] at the White House as a political leader, while woe, all woe if the Muslims cry out for their rights.<sup>177</sup>

He, likewise, used examples of American hypocrisy to call into question the country's legitimacy as the self appointed non-proliferation police force of the Persian Gulf.

Mirroring the earlier noted critique used by Mearsheimer and Walt, he would argue

---

<sup>176</sup> Michael Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris: Why the West Is Losing the War on Terror* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2004), 210-211.

<sup>177</sup> *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden*, ed. Bruce Lawrence, trans. by James Hawarth (London: Verso, 2005), 51.

“America accuses Iraq of using lethal weapons against the Kurds, against its own people. It also accuses Iraq of using lethal weapons against Iran; however, what people should realize is that America was not accusing Iraq at the time, but rather was supporting it through various means and agents in the region.”<sup>178</sup> Perhaps most damaging to America’s liberal rhetoric, however, was his critique of its record on democracy.

For instance, in October of 2002, just as the image of the U.S. was beginning to descend into its historic decline, bin Laden delivered a communiqué directed specifically at the United States.<sup>179</sup> In this message, he set out to explain exactly why it was that he opposed the nation.<sup>180</sup> At one point during his comments he stated “Let us not forget one of your major characteristics: your duality in both manners and values; your hypocrisy in manners and principles. All manners, principles, and values have two scales: one for you and one for everybody else.”<sup>181</sup> Not surprisingly, his first point of contention with American hypocrisy was with the stance the United States took on democracy. As he explained,

The freedom and democracy that you call for is for yourself and for the white race only; as for the rest of the world, you would impose upon it your monstrous, destructive policies and governments, which you call “friends of America”. Yet you prevent them from establishing democracies. When the Islamic party in Algeria wanted to practice democracy and they won the election, you unleashed your collaborators in the Algerian army on them, and attacked them with tanks and guns, imprisoned them and tortured them – a new lesson from the “American book of democracy”.<sup>182</sup>

---

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 65-66.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 168-169.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 169.

Of course, as already noted, it would not be long after these statements that the Bush administration, seemingly courting disaster, would help to reinforce this argument, as well as set itself up for similar accusations of hypocrisy from others, when it decided to first encourage free elections in the Palestinian territories only to later decline to recognize Hamas' victory in them.<sup>183</sup> Apparently willing to gamble with the possibility of endangering its entire rhetorical platform, the administration made a less than sincere push for Palestinian democracy when it clearly knew that the only democratic outcome it would be prepared to entirely embrace would be one in which Hamas' opposition prevailed. Naturally, when this wager failed to pan out and the United States was forced to show its hand, allegations that it had acted duplicitously quickly followed. As a result, American popularity suffered, and those like bin Laden, whose work was once again essentially done for them, were handed another easy propaganda victory over the United States due to America's almost inexplicable tendency to allow its overzealous liberal rhetoric to outpace its actual policy agenda.

### **The Change That Never Came**

Amazingly, however, with the end of Bush's occupancy of the presidency, the United States would actually be given an unexpected chance for redemption. With the warmly greeted election of Barack Obama in 2008, American leadership would suddenly receive a fairly significant boost in its approval rating in the Muslim world.<sup>184</sup> Mr. "Obama's initial efforts to bridge the U.S. and Muslim communities

---

<sup>183</sup> Jillian Schwedler and Laryssa Chomiak, "And the Winner Is...: Authoritarian Elections in the Arab World," *Middle East Report* 36, no. 238 (Spring, 2006): 17.

<sup>184</sup> Jenny Marlar, "U.S. Approval Gains Nearly Erased in Middle East/North Africa," under "Bottom Line," Gallup, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/143294/Approval-Gains-Nearly-Erased-Middle-East-North-Africa.aspx> (accessed November 12, 2010).

around the world were seen as a hopeful beginning to improved relations.”<sup>185</sup> Moreover, as even Obama noted in his June 2009 speech in Cairo, Egypt, much was made of the fact that the United States would elect an African American with a name such as his to be its president.<sup>186</sup> Indeed, al-Qaeda apparently believed that the enthusiasm over this change in America’s face was so considerable that the organization would have to confront the issue head on.<sup>187</sup> In a perhaps ill thought through attempt to do so, its deputy leader Aymin al-Zawahiri addressed the situation by describing Mr. Obama as a “house negro,” a term used by the late African-America Muslim leader Malcolm X to describe Blacks who bowed to White interests.<sup>188</sup>

Nevertheless, regardless of how beset with anxiety al-Qaeda’s leadership may have been in the early days after Obama’s election, it would certainly have little reason to be so for very long. Obama’s popularity would not be everlastingly. In fact, by 2010, the approval rating gains his presidency brought about had already largely been erased.<sup>189</sup> Apparently, it did not take much time for the Muslim world to move passed its initial enchantment.

---

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Barack Obama, *Remarks in Cairo*, from The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=86221&st=remarks+in+cairo&st1=#axzz1aLU7Flp7> (accessed May, 15, 2010).

<sup>187</sup> Craig Whitlock, “Al-Qaeda Leader Uses Slur Against Obama in Web Video; Zawahiri Says Next President Has Proved to Be ‘House Negro,’” *The Washington Post*, November 20, 2008.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Jenny Marlar, “U.S. Approval Gains Nearly Erased in Middle East/North Africa,” Gallup, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/143294/Approval-Gains-Nearly-Erased-Middle-East-North-Africa.aspx> (accessed November 12, 2010).

In reality, though, this rapid transition should have been rather expected. In his speech in Cairo, Obama himself noted that, despite social barriers, a number of Muslim nations had elected female heads of state to lead their countries.<sup>190</sup> Yet, the isolated achievements of these particular women clearly had not meant that inequality, gender or otherwise, had disappeared under their rule. So there was no reason to assume that Muslims, who were fully aware of this, would believe for any extended period that the election of a single individual, who just so happened to have been able to use his personal charisma to transcend America's racial barriers, meant that things in the United States had really changed. Indeed, since there had been no evidence to indicate a substantial improvement in the lives of African Americans since his election, it would have been quite foolish for them to continue thinking his presence in the White House would somehow mean there would be a swift change in their lives either.

But, of course, it was not Obama's personal history alone that inspired hope. As already noted, there was also the optimism his words encouraged. For example, when he gave his address in Egypt he stated "I've come here to Cairo to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition."<sup>191</sup> He then went on to say,

America does not presume to know what is best for everyone, just as we would not presume to pick the outcome of a peaceful election. But I do have an unyielding belief that all people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your

---

<sup>190</sup> Barack Obama, *Remarks in Cairo*, from The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=86221&st=remarks+in+cairo&st1=#axzz1aLU7Flp7> (accessed May, 15, 2010).

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

mind and have a say in how you are governed, confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice, government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people, the freedom to live as you choose. These are not just American ideas, they are human rights. And that is why we will support them everywhere.<sup>192</sup>

Nevertheless, despite these flowery words, the new beginning Obama spoke of never seemed to actually materialize. He raised people's hopes, but his administration was apparently unable, or unwilling, to follow through. And, thus, its ratings quite understandably fell rather precipitously.

Soon, though, the administration would receive an unforeseeable chance to turn things around. Change, entirely independent of it, was beginning to brew in the Middle East, and a historic opportunity to genuinely support democracy in the world would be laid before America's feet. In fact, all the United States would have to do is simply turn its back on those acting against its own democratic values. Instead, however, as shall be seen, the Obama White House would choose the path of political ambiguity. And in doing so, it would find not the way to recovery, but rather to further accusations of American hypocrisy.

---

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 3

### ANXIOUS AMBIGUITY

When protests against President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali broke out in Tunisia in late 2010, none with any sort of knowledge about the history of the nation should have been shocked by nature of the people's grievances. After all, they were, in fact, quite similar to those that brought Ben Ali himself to power decades earlier.<sup>193</sup> His predecessor, "Habib Bourguiba, the 'Great Combatant' of Tunisia's nationalist struggle, ruled a unified, one-party political state for more than thirty years."<sup>194</sup> During that time, Bourguiba would be made notorious for his brutal crackdowns against any and all political opposition to his power.<sup>195</sup> Though there would be a brief period in the early 1980s in which Bourguiba would liberalize the political system somewhat, such toleration for dissent would not last long.<sup>196</sup> Indeed, "In later life he had exiled his wife, son, and prime minister."<sup>197</sup> Clearly, none were immune.

In spite of all this, though, Bourguiba was still quite successful at currying favor with the West because "More than any other Muslim ruler except Turkey's Ataturk, who established a totally secular state, Bourguiba set Tunisia upon a path of modernization which was decidedly pro-Western and secular, becoming a valued

---

<sup>193</sup> Emma Murphy, *Economic and Political Change in Tunisia: from Bourguiba to Ben Ali* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 5-7.

<sup>194</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 161.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.



friend of both France and the United States.”<sup>198</sup> Regardless of Bourguiba’s close relations with powerful Western countries, however, the economic and political stagnation brought about by his complete centralization of power would eventually prove disastrous for Tunisia.<sup>199</sup> It was clear that reforms were needed, yet Bourguiba’s all encompassing character stood in the way of those reforms being implemented.<sup>200</sup> Then, on November 7, 1987, he would be removed from power altogether in a bloodless coup led by his newly elected prime minister, Ben Ali.<sup>201</sup>

Early on, this change in presidency was met with a great deal of optimism.<sup>202</sup> The new head of state set out a plan for both economic reform and political liberalization, and “For the first few years of his rule, Ben Ali’s strategy appeared superficially to be working.”<sup>203</sup> Nonetheless,

By 1997, ten years after the coup, it was clear that such optimism had been premature at best. Reforms to the political system had ultimately been so restricted as to make genuine political competition impossible. The regime appeared unwilling to consider real power-sharing and the secular opposition had proved unable to present an effective challenge. The Islamist opposition, which had demonstrated its capacity to do so, had been not only excluded from official political space but had been subjected to a ruthless campaign of annihilation, along with leftist and trade union opposition to the regime and its policies.<sup>204</sup>

---

<sup>198</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 161.

<sup>199</sup> Emma Murphy, *Economic and Political Change in Tunisia: from Bourguiba to Ben Ali* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 5.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>201</sup> Larbi Sadiki, “Bin Ali’s Tunisia: Democracy by Non-Democratic Means,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 29, no. 1 (May 2002): 58, 60, 62.

<sup>202</sup> Jillian Schwedler and Laryssa Chomiak, “And the Winner Is...: Authoritarian Elections in the Arab World,” *Middle East Report* 36, no. 238 (Spring 2006): 12-19.

<sup>203</sup> Emma Murphy, *Economic and Political Change in Tunisia: from Bourguiba to Ben Ali* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 5, 6.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

At the same time, “Ben Ali’s family was also unusually personalist and predatory in its corruption.”<sup>205</sup> Indeed, “As the whistleblower Web site WikiLeaks recently revealed, the U.S. ambassador to Tunisia reported in 2006 that more than half of Tunisia’s commercial elites were personally related to Ben Ali through his three adult children, seven siblings, and second wife’s ten brothers and sisters.”<sup>206</sup> Apparently, for Ben Ali, the fall of Bourguiba meant little more than an opportunity for the rise of a new dynasty.

That dynasty’s power, however, would abruptly begin to collapse when a simple Tunisian street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi set himself ablaze on December 17, 2010.<sup>207</sup> The 26 year old merchant had actually carried out his act of self immolation as the result of his own personal despair following an incident in which he was humiliated by policemen who confiscated his fruit cart.<sup>208</sup> Nevertheless, the story of what he did that day would ultimately result in the spread of anti-government protests across the entire nation.<sup>209</sup> Seemingly out of nowhere, a revolution had begun.

---

<sup>205</sup> Lisa Anderson, “Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the Difference Between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (May-June 2011): 3.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Daniel Byman, “Terrorism After the Revolutions: How Secular Uprisings Could Help (or Hurt) Jihadists,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (May-June 2011): 48.

<sup>208</sup> Liam Stack “Video of Tortured Boy’s Corpse Deepens Anger in Syria,” *New York Times*, May 31, 2011.

<sup>209</sup> Daniel Byman, “Terrorism After the Revolutions: How Secular Uprisings Could Help (or Hurt) Jihadists,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (May-June 2011): 48.

## The Western Response

As would be expected, though, a crackdown would eventually follow.<sup>210</sup> The government, claiming those in the crowds were violent extremists, began using live ammunition and several protesters were killed.<sup>211</sup> Nonetheless, it soon became apparent that the regime's security apparatus would not be able to contain the growing demonstrations.<sup>212</sup> The unrest had gone on for weeks, yet the strife in the nation only seemed to be getting more intense.<sup>213</sup> In response to this downward spiral, France's President Nicolas Sarkozy offered to provide Tunisia's leader with advisors to help train his forces in riot control.<sup>214</sup> The French also, according to reports, approved the export of police equipment and crowd control devices.<sup>215</sup> Unfortunately for Ben Ali, however, this assistance would not come soon enough. Just days after Sarkozy extended his offer to send trainers, the long standing Tunisian dictator would be forced to abdicate power and flee his country.<sup>216</sup>

Notably, regardless of what one may think of the questionable actions of the French, it would not be until after Ben Ali's departure that the Obama

---

<sup>210</sup> Reuters, "14 Killed in Clashes with Police as Violence Spreads in Tunisia," *The New York Times*, January 10, 2011.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Steven Erlanger, "Sarkozy Says He 'Underestimated' Crisis in Ex-Colony, Tunisia," *The New York Times*, January 25, 2011.

<sup>213</sup> Reuters, "14 Killed in Clashes with Police as Violence Spreads in Tunisia," *The New York Times*, January 10, 2011.

<sup>214</sup> Steven Erlanger, "Sarkozy Says He 'Underestimated' Crisis in Ex-Colony, Tunisia," *The New York Times*, January 25, 2011.

<sup>215</sup> Steven Erlanger, "French Foreign Minister Rebuked for Tunisian Trip," *The New York Times*, February 4, 2011.

<sup>216</sup> Steven Erlanger, "Sarkozy Says He 'Underestimated' Crisis in Ex-Colony, Tunisia," *The New York Times*, January 25, 2011.

administration seemed prepared to weigh in on the Tunisian situation at all. Indeed, when asked about the issue during a January 11<sup>th</sup> interview with the Dubai based news channel *al-Arabiya*, Secretary Clinton stated outright that the United States actually did not want to be seen as taking sides.<sup>217</sup> In spite of this, though, by January 14<sup>th</sup>, the same day Ben Ali just happened to begin his exile, President Obama quickly reversed this stance and declared

I condemn and deplore the use of violence against citizens peacefully voicing their opinion in Tunisia, and I applaud the courage and dignity of the Tunisian people. The United States stands with the entire international community in bearing witness to this brave and determined struggle for the universal rights that we must all uphold, and we will long remember the images of the Tunisian people seeking to make their voices heard. I urge all parties to maintain calm and avoid violence and call on the Tunisian Government to respect human rights and hold free and fair elections in the near future that reflect the true will and aspirations of the Tunisian people.<sup>218</sup>

Apparently, Mr. Obama, now no longer having to guess who the victor would be in this struggle for political change, suddenly felt comfortable standing up for the democratic values he spoke so eloquently about in Cairo, Egypt two years earlier. Unfortunately, what he seemed to not understand was that showing support for the people only after they had accomplished their goals on their own would be seen by many in the Muslim world as essentially no different than showing no support at all.<sup>219</sup> In fact, if anything, all it likely did in the minds of most was add an element of hypocrisy to what was widely seen as an already disappointing performance.

---

<sup>217</sup> Hilary Clinton, interview by Taher Barake, *al Arabiya*, January 11, 2011.

<sup>218</sup> Barack Obama, *24 - Statement on the Situation in Tunisia*, from The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=88899&st=tunisia&st1=#axzz1PGUfTM2d> (accessed February, 2, 2011).

<sup>219</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick, "Many in Arab World Say Obama's Speech Doesn't Dispel Grievances Against U.S.," *The New York Times*, May 20, 2011.

## Hard to Let Go

What was perhaps more problematic, though, was the speed with which the White House would begin to waiver from its new position. During his January 25<sup>th</sup> State of the Union address, President Obama both praised the Tunisian people for their victory over a man whom he called a “dictator” and declared that the United States would support the democratic aspirations of people all over the world.<sup>220</sup> Meanwhile, nonetheless, as pro-democracy protests began to spread from Tunisia to Egypt on that exact same day, the administration seemed unsure of how to proceed.<sup>221</sup> One obvious problem, of course, was that unlike the situation in Tunisia, in which the Obama administration had been able to stay mostly silent until the end of the political strife, the administration would now be expected to take a position from the very beginning.

Indeed, the press would start to question Secretary Clinton about the Egyptian protests on the 25<sup>th</sup> itself. Apparently trying to be politically cautious, however, Mrs. Clinton would reply by stating

We support the fundamental right of expression and assembly for all people, and we urge that all parties exercise restraint and refrain from violence. But our assessment is that the Egyptian Government is stable and is looking for ways to respond to the legitimate needs and interests of the Egyptian people.”<sup>222</sup>

---

<sup>220</sup> Barack Obama, *47 - Address before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union*, from The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=88928&st=tunisia&st1=#axzz1PGUfTM2d> (accessed February, 2, 2011).

<sup>221</sup> Mark Lander, “A Region’s Unrest Scrambles U.S. Foreign Policy,” *The New York Times*, January 26, 2011.

<sup>222</sup> Hillary R. Clinton, “Remarks With Spanish Foreign Minister Trinidad Jimenez After Their Meeting, January 25, 2011,” <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/01/155280.htm> (accessed February 5, 2011).

Unfortunately for the secretary of state, this comment did not go over well with the protestors. Instead, it would actually come to be the specific cause of widespread criticism of her.<sup>223</sup> In fact, even months later, Egyptians would continue to cite it as grounds for bitter resentment.<sup>224</sup> Of course, no one objected to her endorsement of the right of expression and assembly. But, rather than trying to be responsive to those who had assembled to express themselves, the so-called stable government of Egypt had, in reality, simply been attacking the crowds, and Secretary Clinton's allusion to the contrary only enraged the demonstrators more.<sup>225</sup>

Still, one could hardly point to Clinton as the sole U.S. official making the kind of statements that would open the administration up to harsh critique. Indeed, if her remarks were of the sort to lead large numbers of Egyptians to *suspect* that the United States was putting its interests before its professed values, those of Vice President Joe Biden almost certainly convinced them that this was the case beyond any doubt. For instance, when asked during an interview with Jim Lehrer on the *PBS Newshour* if he believed Hosni Mubarak, the long standing head state in Egypt, should be seen as a dictator, the vice president replied

Look, Mubarak has been an ally of ours in a number of things and he's been very responsible on, relative to geopolitical interests in the region: Middle East peace efforts, the actions Egypt has taken relative to normalizing the relationship with Israel. And I think -- I would not refer to him as a dictator."<sup>226</sup>

---

<sup>223</sup> Steven Lee Myers, "Clinton, in Cairo's Tahrir Square, Embraces a Revolt She Once Discouraged," *The New York Times*, March 17, 2011.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> Kristen Chick, "Clinton Rebuffed in Egypt, Faces Tough Task on Arab Upheaval," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 15, 2011.

<sup>226</sup> Joe Biden, interview by Jim Lehrer, *PBS Newshour*, PBS, January 27, 2011.

It was reported some time afterward that Biden later claimed to regret making this statement.<sup>227</sup> Nevertheless, regrets aside, Egyptians clearly had little reason to feel like America had any true commitment to democracy. As Egyptian Nobel Laureate Mohamed ElBaradei complained during an interview with CBS's *Face the Nation*, "You know, on one hand you're talking about democracy, rule of law and human rights, and on the other hand you are lending support to a dictator that continues to oppress his people."<sup>228</sup> Only a few days earlier, in his State of the Union address, Obama had spoken powerful words about democratic values and had even applauded the Tunisian people for their victory over dictatorial rule. But now his administration, with its hesitance to let go of the status quo in Egypt, was making those words look like no more than brazen hypocrisy.

Certainly, from a strategic point of view, though, America's reluctance to jeopardize its comfortable relationship with Egypt's authoritarian regime was completely understandable. The upheaval in a peripheral nation such Tunisia was one thing.<sup>229</sup> The destabilization of a regional linchpin like Egypt was something entirely different.<sup>230</sup> Long known as a leader in the Arab world, changes there could have effects on political, military, and religious trends far beyond its borders.<sup>231</sup>

---

<sup>227</sup> Helene Cooper, Mark Lander, and David E. Sanger, "Policy Rift Muddled U.S. Signals About the Departure of Mubarak," *The New York Times*, February 13, 2011.

<sup>228</sup> Mohamed ElBaradei, interview by Bob Schieffer, *Face the Nation*, CBS, January 30, 2011.

<sup>229</sup> Mark Lander, "A Region's Unrest Scrambles U.S. Foreign Policy," *The New York Times*, January 26, 2011.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, rev. and updated 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 161-162.

Moreover, as Vice President Biden pointed out, the Egyptian government under Hosni Mubarak in particular had been vital to securing America's geopolitical interests. Not only had Mubarak been willing to go against the regional tide in his support of Israel, but he had also been extremely vigilant in the suppression of terrorism.<sup>232</sup> If he were to depart from his position of power, there would be no way of knowing for sure if his replacement would be anywhere near as accommodating. After all, not so long before, the relationship between the United States and one of Egypt's former heads of state was actually quite hostile. In fact, it is only by understanding the history of America's struggle with former Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser that one can fully understand the true origins of America's current cause for anxieties in the region. As shall be shown below, Nasser's ideological impact would set in motion a series of pro-U.S.-interests countermeasures that would in the end come back to haunt the United States for years to come.

### **Conflicting Narratives**

Even with the most drastic of measures, however, dislodging Nasser from power would surely not be easy. Versions of the socialist brand of Arab nationalism he and his fellow "Free Officers" endorsed after seizing authority in the Egyptian coup of 1952 had quickly sprung up not only in Egypt, but also in Algeria, Libya, Sudan, Syria and Iraq as well.<sup>233</sup> Hence, the struggle against Egypt's president was, in fact, a struggle against an entire regional movement. Nasser's personal charisma driven rise in popularity during the mid 1950s may have made him the most

---

<sup>232</sup> Steven Erlanger, "Egypt, Feeling Pressure from the Arab World on Gaza, Also Feels it From Within," *The New York Times*, January 3, 2009.

<sup>233</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 67-72.



influential leader in that movement, but he certainly was not alone in his way of thinking.<sup>234</sup> All of the nations mentioned shared a similar worldview, and all of them promoted an ideological narrative that challenged the previous order:

They indicted European imperialism for its invasion and occupation, as well as its policies which divided by creating states and drawing artificial national boundaries, thus debilitating the Arab and Muslim world. They espoused a continuing struggle against colonialism, exacerbated by the West's role in the creation and support of a Western colony, Israel, in the Arab homeland, and denounced the failures of the traditional Arab political leadership and its Western liberal nationalism. They condemned the radical individualism of capitalism, called for Arab unity and solidarity, and promised the creation of a new social order to alleviate the plight of the masses of Arab societies.<sup>235</sup>

Yet, what was clearly most distressing for America and its allies in the area was Nasser's claim that the region's oil reserves belonged not to local monarchies, but rather to the Arab people as a whole.<sup>236</sup> Only adding to this sense of anxiety was the fact that Nasser had developed an extremely friendly relationship with America's key rival, the Soviet Union.<sup>237</sup> If the Soviets were able to gain control of Middle Eastern oilfields through their relationship with Nasser, it could prove to be devastating for America's global strategy.<sup>238</sup> Clearly, something had to be done.

To help in its bid to challenge Nasser's influence, the U.S. looked to one of its closest friends, King Saud of Saudi Arabia, to stand as its leading regional anti-

---

<sup>234</sup> John O. Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World* (1982; repr., New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 175-176.

<sup>235</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 68.

<sup>236</sup> *Frontline* "House of Saud," PBS, February 8, 2005.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*

communist ally.<sup>239</sup> According to Hermann Eilts, a former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia, “The Eisenhower administration had the idea that perhaps King Saud could be built up in a political fashion that might make him a contender with Nasser in terms of leadership in the Arab world.”<sup>240</sup> Certainly, the partnership looked as if it made perfect sense. The Saudi royal family undoubtedly had their own reasons for opposing a socialization of their kingdom’s natural resources, and “They were also threatened by Arab socialism’s populist critique of the ‘feudalism’ of conservative Arab monarchies and its support for their overthrow.”<sup>241</sup> Unfortunately for America, though, King Saud lacked many of the qualities necessary to make such a strategy work.<sup>242</sup>

For one thing, Saud was notorious for allowing his love of Western indulgences to hamper his ability to manage the kingdom’s finances.<sup>243</sup> He was also rather well known to have a fairly serious drinking problem.<sup>244</sup> Worst of all, however, was the fact that his lack of leadership skills prevented him from being able to reassure even the members of his own family that he could be a competent steward of affairs.<sup>245</sup> As a result, his time as king would soon come to a sudden end

---

<sup>239</sup> Steve Coll, *The Bin Ladens: An American Family in the American Century* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 70.

<sup>240</sup> *Frontline* “House of Saud,” PBS, February 8, 2005.

<sup>241</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 71.

<sup>242</sup> Steve Coll, *The Bin Ladens: An American Family in the American Century* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 70.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, 68, 70.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 69-70.

when he would be abruptly replaced by his much more respected brother Faisal in a bloodless transition of power initiated by the royal family itself.<sup>246</sup>

This unexpected transition, however, would actually prove to be quite advantageous for U.S. interests. For it was under Faisal's leadership that an Islamist counter-narrative came to be the antidote to that put forward by Nasser's "un-Islamic" socialist Pan-Arabism movement.<sup>247</sup> Of course, it may be a bit unfair to say this trend was entirely a matter of political strategy. But, it is hardly a secret today that "While Faysal had been socialised into Islamic education from an early age under the influence of his Al Shaykh maternal kin, his Islamic rhetoric came to the forefront mainly as a counter-discourse to current Arab political trends associated with Arab nationalism in both its Nasserite and Ba'athist versions."<sup>248</sup> Likewise, it was obviously not America's love of Islam that prompted its backing of this movement either. Thus, even from its very inception, a degree of hypocrisy tainted the foundations of Faisal's program of political Islamization.

Regardless of his motivations, though, one thing that is for certain is Faisal would clearly demonstrate that he did not share in his brother deficiencies. His plans would prove absolutely galvanizing in the Islamic world, and the Saudis, under his leadership, would exploit every means possible to keep up the pressure:

They used their Islamic claims as keepers of Islam's sacred cities of Mecca and Medina and protectors of the pilgrimage, and their oil wealth, to promote themselves as patrons of Islam and to encourage Muslim solidarity. They created international Islamic organizations such as the World Muslim League (1966) and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (1969), through which they

---

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>247</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 71-72.

<sup>248</sup> Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 123.

distributed funds for the promotion and preservation of Islam (the building of mosques, schools, hospitals, and the printing and distribution of religious literature) and organized Muslim countries and institutions.<sup>249</sup>

They even invited members of the Muslim Brotherhood, an organization which had been brutally suppressed by the Nasser regime, to come and take refuge in Saudi Arabia.<sup>250</sup>

In the early days of Nasser's time in power, the Brotherhood actually had relatively warm relations with the Egyptian government.<sup>251</sup> The group had a militant fundamentalist orientation, but it shared in Nasser's belief in the need for regional liberation.<sup>252</sup> Nevertheless, over time, growing rivalries between the two opposing ideologies led to a break in ties and an all out open confrontation.<sup>253</sup> It was then that Faisal, hoping to challenge Nasser's legitimacy even further, welcomed them into the kingdom.<sup>254</sup>

Once there, Brotherhood members were allowed to establish themselves in a wide range of fields such as business, Islamic banking, media, and higher education.<sup>255</sup> The kingdom's university system would be where the Brotherhood would attain its greatest foothold, however, due to the desperately poor condition it

---

<sup>249</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 72.

<sup>250</sup> Robert Dreyfuss, *Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2005), 126-128.

<sup>251</sup> John O. Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World* (1982; repr., New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 181.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 180-181.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>254</sup> Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 144.

<sup>255</sup> Robert Dreyfuss, *Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2005), 127.

was in upon their arrival.<sup>256</sup> Taking full advantage of the situation, the Brotherhood used Saudi academic institutions to spread their own version of Islamist ideology. Ultimately, this would help to engender greater radicalization of Saudi society, and, thus, change its worldview.<sup>257</sup> In fact, it would actually be a Brotherhood professor at bin Laden's university who would first introduce the young Saudi to the ways of global of jihad.<sup>258</sup>

Yet, despite the strong religious tones of Faisal's project, "Its leitmotif was clearly not Islamic piety, for the pact included the Shah of Iran and Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia – men not particularly known for the observance of Islam."<sup>259</sup> Furthermore, Faisal was also still receiving support from America as well.<sup>260</sup> Looking back on America's position in regards to these developments, David

Long, a perceptive analyst with a strong sense of irony, says that despite the fact that it was glaringly obvious, most U.S. policy makers and analysts had little or no appreciation of the potentially explosive nature of the Islamic resurgence. "We didn't see Islam. We saw Saudi Arabia," he says. "Pan-Islam was not, to us, seen as a strategic threat. There were bad guys doing bad things to people on the left, to Nasser. They were fighting the pinkos. So we didn't see pan-Islam as a threat."<sup>261</sup>

Long claims that during his time at the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research he tried to warn of the possible dangers of this policy, "But there was

---

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>258</sup> Steve Coll, *The Bin Ladens: An American Family in the American Century* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 253-260.

<sup>259</sup> Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967*, updated ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 74.

<sup>260</sup> Robert Dreyfuss, *Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2005), 131, 144-145.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 144-145.

no market for it.<sup>262</sup> Apparently, few understood that elements within the Islamist movement they were supporting were just as anti-Western as they were anti-communist.<sup>263</sup> Soon, however, regional events would make signs of this more and more obvious.

### **Blowback**

After the Israelis handed Egypt and other Arab nations an embarrassingly decisive defeat in the 1967 Six Day War, Nasser's claim that Pan-Arab ideology was the solution to the issues confronting the Arab world largely came to be seen as discredited.<sup>264</sup> Not only had these secular governments been ineffectual in dealing with domestic socio-economic problems, their armies had now been crushed and much territory, including east Jerusalem, the third holiest site in Islam, had been lost.<sup>265</sup> Many religious leaders reflecting on the defeat, often referred to in the region as the "disaster," argued that it had, in reality, come about as the result of the Arab world's deviation from the true path of Islam.<sup>266</sup> The faithful had abandoned their faith, and now it was time for a return.<sup>267</sup>

With the death of Nasser just three years after the Six Day War, the move away from Pan-Arab socialist activism would begin to proceed with even greater

---

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>264</sup> John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, rev. and updated 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 160-162.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 160-161.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 161-162.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 161-162.

momentum.<sup>268</sup> Nasser's successor Anwar Sadat would not only initiate an active program of "de-Nasserization," but would actually try to stabilize Egypt's place internationally by becoming a rather strong ally of the United States.<sup>269</sup> Likewise, to try to help secure his rather shaky place in power domestically, he would attempt to offset the influence of Egypt's remaining Nasserites elements by heavily incorporating Islamic symbolism and taking on the title "The Believer President."<sup>270</sup> As an added measure in this latter campaign, he would also ease restrictions on certain Islamic oriented organizations and allow Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood to once again have a degree of room for operation.<sup>271</sup>

It would not be long, though, before the regional trend toward radical political Islam would begin to have disastrous unexpected consequences for those leaders endeavoring to use it for their personal advantage. As already noted, "Muhammad Shah recognized the power and influence of Islam and tried to mobilize it in support of his autocracy."<sup>272</sup> But, in the 1979 Iranian Revolution he would find himself swept out of power by those such as Ayatollah Khomeini, who believed traditional Islamic values in Iran had, in truth, been trampled upon by the Shah and that these values could only be restored after his monarchy had been

---

<sup>268</sup> John O. Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World* (1982; repr., New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 323.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, 323–324.

<sup>270</sup> John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, rev. and updated 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 171.

<sup>271</sup> John O. Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World* (1982; repr., New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 323.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

removed.<sup>273</sup> Likewise, the Saudis were now finding that they had placed themselves in a rather difficult position as well. King

Faysal was responsible for promoting an Islamic world-view, together with an Islamic foreign policy, but both undermined his growing partnership with the United States and rendered the behavior of members of the royal family that deviated from Islam more problematic. His Islamic policy was a double edged sword. It enhanced Saudi Arabia's position internally and internationally, but also invited criticism whenever the Islamic ideal was perceived to have been violated.<sup>274</sup>

This tension came to a head when in November of 1979 Islam's holiest mosque, located in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, was seized by radical anti-Saud forces loyal to Juhayman ibn Muhammad al-Utaybi and Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Qahtani.<sup>275</sup> The rebellion would eventually be brutally put down.<sup>276</sup> But, the members of the House of Saud were realizing just what sort of danger they had placed themselves in. Ironically, "The majority of Juhayman's rebels had been students at the Islamic University of Medina, where the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's influence had been strong."<sup>277</sup> It seemed that Faisal's tactical move to undermine Nasser's rule was at this point beginning to undermine his own.

Luckily for the royal family, however, the Soviet-Afghan war would be starting around that same time. Along with many other Arab leaders, the Saudis, taking full advantage of the situation, happily exported scores of their restless young

---

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., 300-302.

<sup>274</sup> Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 144.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.



Islamists to the Afghan warfront.<sup>278</sup> Indeed, to help encourage these young men to go abroad and risk their lives, the Saudis began a campaign that taught that dying in a just war, such as the one in Afghanistan, should be the greatest aspiration of any Muslim.<sup>279</sup> The hope, of course, was that these mujahedeen fighters would in fact die in the Afghan jihad and, thus, no longer pose a problem.<sup>280</sup>

Meanwhile, Anwar Sadat would soon find himself face to face with another sort of jihad. After their long persecution under Nasser, Egypt's remaining Muslim Brotherhood members moved away from violence and attempted to work within the Egyptian system, concentrated mainly on helpful social programs and political reform.<sup>281</sup> Nevertheless, "A new crop of secret revolutionary groups, some funded by disaffected and radicalized former Muslim Brothers who had been imprisoned under Nasser, began to challenge both what they regarded as Sadat's hypocritical manipulation of Islam and the moderate posture of the Muslim Brotherhood."<sup>282</sup> They, along with many others, were angered by Sadat's alliance with the West, his signing of the Camp David Accords with Israel, and his decision to give support to the Shah of Iran.<sup>283</sup> They, therefore, unwilling to follow the lead of the Brotherhood

---

<sup>278</sup> Michael Scheuer, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Dulles, VA: Potamac Books, 2006), 120.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 140-141.

<sup>282</sup> John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, rev. and updated 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 171.

<sup>283</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 96, 147.

any longer, made plans to remove Sadat from the scene by force.<sup>284</sup> On October 6, 1981, an opportunity to do so presented itself, and a group known as Jamaat al-Jihad assassinated Sadat as he oversaw the procession of military personnel during an annual parade.<sup>285</sup>

In response to the assassination, Sadat's successor, Hosni Mubarak, clamped down heavily on militant Islamist activity.<sup>286</sup> His government increased the vigilance with which the nation's security forces intervened in religious clashes and decisively crushed any riotous outbursts of violence.<sup>287</sup> Nevertheless, while others, such as Tunisia's Bourguiba, were at the same time launching operations to crush even moderate Islamist groups, Mubarak was careful to differentiate between reformists and more radical elements bent on violence.<sup>288</sup> He was also noted for his attempts to bring about greater political liberalization in the nation in general.<sup>289</sup> Though he plainly had no qualms about responding with full force against those that resorted to violence, his overall approach was one of relative tolerance.<sup>290</sup>

Unfortunately for the Egyptian people, however, Mubarak's tendency toward leniency would be short lived. As time went on, the idea of openness to opposition

---

<sup>284</sup> John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, rev. and updated 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 171.

<sup>285</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 95.

<sup>286</sup> John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, rev. and updated 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 173.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>288</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 96, 167.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

became far less acceptable, and the government began to charge that there was little difference between groups working within the system, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, and those that engaged in outright terrorism.<sup>291</sup> Islamists of all shades soon found that arbitrary arrests, torture, and extrajudicial killings were to be the new norm.<sup>292</sup> Mubarak likewise extended his new heavy handed approach to non-religious oriented dissenters as well, silencing the media, professional syndicates, and other elements of civil society.<sup>293</sup>

### **Holding Hands with the Devil**

Thus, by the time the so called Arab Spring protests began some 30 years after Mubarak first became head of state, few Egyptians would have reason to lament his departure. The political promise of his initial days in power had proven to be little more than a misleading mirage and, after decades of his rule, discontent among the Egyptian citizenry had been given more than enough time to boil over. Making matters worse, his economic policies were essentially bringing the nation's underclasses to the brink of collapse and rumors that his son was quietly being groomed to take his place only led to the fear that the future would hold nothing but more of the same.<sup>294</sup> Meanwhile, on the other hand, America's political elite hardly had any reason to share in this sense of betrayal. Mubarak may have been at times

---

<sup>291</sup> John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, rev. and updated 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 173.

<sup>292</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 99.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>294</sup> Dina Shehata, "The Fall of the Pharaoh: How Hosni Mubarak's Reign Came to an End," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (May-June 2011): 27-29.

accused of shrewdly orchestrating a narrative that presented the situation in Egypt as a choice between himself and Islamic fundamentalism.<sup>295</sup> But those in America, whom he supposedly sold this tale to, were certainly not naïve novices to the ways of the world. Hence, regardless of how cathartic doing so might be for America's own sense of itself, it would be quite difficult to maintain, with any intellectual honesty, that he was truly fooling anyone with such a pretext.

Clearly, Mubarak's practices ran counter to America's purported values. But, "International politics, however, is not a morality play."<sup>296</sup> The Middle East has a great deal of strategic significance for the United States, and "When important geopolitical interests are on the line, realpolitik, not regime type, determines great power policies."<sup>297</sup> So,

Although there are a lot of governments in that region with which it is distasteful to do business, the devil one knows is better than the devil one doesn't. And, unpalatable though it may be, a great deal of stability – or at least less instability – usually can be bought by dealing with nondemocratic regimes than by attempting to transform them.<sup>298</sup>

Nonetheless, as the protests in Egypt persisted, it became increasingly unclear if Mubarak continued to have the capacity to guarantee the greatest degree of stability possible for U.S. interests. Indeed, during his aforementioned interview, Elbaradei cautioned that the only way calm could be restored to the nation was if Mubarak, in fact, agreed to depart, and, as he explained, America's inability to recognize this fact

---

<sup>295</sup> Jackson Diehl, "Mubarak Outdoes Himself; Election Fraud Backfires," *The Washington Post*, December 5, 2005.

<sup>296</sup> Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 53.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

was beginning to seriously ebb away at its own credibility.<sup>299</sup> In the past, Mubarak's iron fisted approach to maintaining order may have made him a valuable ally, but, as his hold on society began to slip, his brutal methods were simply becoming a liability. Nevertheless, despite attempts on the part of U.S. officials to publicly distance America from Mubarak's policies, with the outcome of the demonstrations remaining uncertain, the Obama administration still appeared to be hesitant to entirely break with Mubarak's government.

For instance, on January 28<sup>th</sup>, President Obama followed up Mubarak's first televised address regarding the protests with a rather strategic public statement of his own. In this speech, Obama subtly edged his administration away from Egypt's ruling regime by recounting his appeal to the Egyptian leader to refrain from violence, restore full access to Egypt's internet and mobile services, which Mubarak had apparently disconnected in an attempt to paralyze the protestor's ability to communicate, and make good on the pledges made in his address to his people by providing Egyptians with tangible examples of change.<sup>300</sup> Then, tying his remarks in with the broader vision he presented during his days of greater popularity, Obama closed by stating

When I was in Cairo, shortly after I was elected President, I said that all governments must maintain power through consent, not coercion. That is the single standard by which the people of Egypt will achieve the future they deserve. Surely there will be difficult days to come. But the United States will continue to stand up for the rights of the Egyptian people and work with their

---

<sup>299</sup> Mohamed ElBaradei, interview by Bob Schieffer, *Face the Nation*, CBS, January 30, 2011.

<sup>300</sup> Barack Obama, 57 - *Remarks on the Situation in Egypt*, from The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=88942&st=egypt&st1=#axzz1SgZ2nS8V> (accessed February, 2, 2011).

Government [sic] in pursuit of a future that is more just, more free, and more hopeful.<sup>301</sup>

If that were not enough, only adding to the sense that his administration was now serious about supporting the Egyptian people's democratic rights was the fact that just a few of hours earlier White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs announced "We [i.e. The Obama administration] will be reviewing our assistance posture based on events that take place in the coming days."<sup>302</sup> Nevertheless, when Elbaradei's CBS interview was conducted a few days later he promptly pointed out that conditions were only growing worse, and that the time for cutting funding to the Mubarak regime had obviously arrived.<sup>303</sup> Faced with what may have been an intentional call of its bluff, the administration, still unwilling to fully move away from its hedge position, was forced to allow America's insincerity to once again be exposed. Despite the Obama administration's symbolic statements of solidarity with those fighting for democracy, the Egyptian government's funding would not be cut, and the Egyptian people would receive no more than slightly varied forms of the rhetorical repetition they had already been given.

Naturally, such policies had very little chance of removing suspicions of U.S. duplicity. The political game of back and forth America was playing had essentially left the United States in the same position it had begun in, and it was quickly becoming more and more apparent that the propaganda being issued by the Obama

---

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Robert Gibbs, *Press Briefing by Press Secretary Gibbs*, January 28, 2011, ed. John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters in *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=88944&st=egypt&st1=#axzz1Ruumnj2L> (accessed February, 2, 2011).

<sup>303</sup> Mohamed ElBaradei, interview by Bob Schieffer, *Face the Nation*, CBS, January 30, 2011.

administration was simply its way of trying to avoid fully alienating either side until it could be sure of who the ultimate victor would be. Completely disenfranchised, one young Egyptian demonstrator declared “I don’t believe in America. They play with the -- the -- the, winner, not with the -- the people or with the power. The winner, USA will be with the winner.”<sup>304</sup> And, unfortunately, for those Egyptian who may have hoped for U.S. assistance, it would still be some time before America would know who that winner would be.

By February 1<sup>st</sup>, however, a victory for anti-Mubarak forces was beginning to seem increasingly likely. The momentum behind the protest movement was showing no sign of decline and, with little choice but to make at least some sort of seemingly significant concession, President Mubarak announced that in recognition of the will of the people he would be stepping down from power after Egypt’s national elections, which were scheduled for September 2011.<sup>305</sup> In spite of this offer, though, the Egyptian people, untrusting of Mubarak and angered by the idea of compromise, made it clear in the streets of Egypt that they were not satisfied.<sup>306</sup> They continued to demand that Mubarak step down immediately.<sup>307</sup>

## **The Transition**

As one might expect, with it now being evident that Mubarak’s proposal would not be accepted, President Obama once again felt the need to try to frame

---

<sup>304</sup> *PBS Newshour*, “Massive Demonstrations Planned as Mubarak OKs Talks with Opposition,” PBS, January 31, 2011.

<sup>305</sup> Anthony Shadid, “Mubarak Won’t Run Again, But Stays; Obama Urges a Faster Shift of Power,” *The New York Times*, February 2, 2011.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*

America's position. In yet another televised address designed to make public his call to the Egyptian leader to be responsive to the people of Egypt, Obama stated "What is clear – and what I indicated tonight to President Mubarak – is my belief that an orderly transition must be meaningful, it must be peaceful, and it must begin now."<sup>308</sup> By the tone of his performance, the president appeared to want to express a sense of both decisiveness and resolve. Likewise, his decision to once more make a statement so quickly after Mubarak's own may have been intended to help heighten a feel of urgency. Nevertheless, as was even pointed out in the American media, it was hard to overlook the fact that the phrasing Obama chose to discuss the time frame for the transition seemed "deliberately vague."<sup>309</sup> To be sure, endorsing the cause of positive change is always a commendable thing to do. But the president scarcely could have missed that a "transition" that "must begin now" could start immediately and yet last for decades.

Meanwhile, as America's position remained quite questionable, it was the outlawed Islamist group, the Muslim Brotherhood, which was left to stand up for the protesters in Egypt's Tahrir Square when pro-Mubarak forces, allegedly sent in by the regime itself, attacked the crowds for two days.<sup>310</sup> The square had become the symbolic focal point of Egypt's revolution.<sup>311</sup> But, on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, it became a

---

<sup>308</sup> Barack Obama, *63 - Remarks on the Situation in Egypt*, from The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=88954&st=egypt&st1=#axzz1TB4TCZ5E> (accessed February 5, 2011).

<sup>309</sup> Anthony Shadid, "Mubarak Won't Run Again, But Stays; Obama Urges a Faster Shift of Power," *The New York Times*, February 2, 2011.

<sup>310</sup> *Frontline*, "Revolution in Cairo," PBS, February 22, 2011.

<sup>311</sup> Anthony Shadid, "In the Euphoria of the Crowd, No Party or Leader Unifies the Opposition," *New York Times*, February 1, 2011.



virtual battleground as men wielding clubs, knives, and firebombs poured into the area to assault the ill prepared demonstrators.<sup>312</sup> Initially, the anti-Mubarak forces tried to avoid being pulled into the violent bout.<sup>313</sup> It eventually became clear, though, that the assailants would not relent. Ironically, the Brotherhood's senior leadership was at first slow to get involved with the protest at all.<sup>314</sup> But now, after doing so, they suddenly found that the responsibility to stand on the frontlines to protect the demonstrators in this unexpected urban battle would fall on the soldiers of young men from their organization.<sup>315</sup>

During his February 1<sup>st</sup> address, President Obama had praised the Egyptian army for both allowing demonstrations to continue and serving as protector of those involved.<sup>316</sup> The army, unlike the Egyptian police force, which had itself brutally attacked the crowds, vowed after being deployed into the streets not to use force on those peacefully voicing their dissent.<sup>317</sup> Nevertheless, when the demonstrators found themselves being violently intimidated by Mubarak sympathizers, military forces stationed in the square merely stood by and watched the bloodshed unfold.<sup>318</sup>

---

<sup>312</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick and Kareem Fahim, "Mubarak's Backers Storm Protesters as U.S. Condemns Egypt's Violent Turn," *New York Times*, February 3, 2011.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> *Frontline*, "Revolution in Cairo," PBS, February 22, 2011.

<sup>315</sup> *Frontline*, "Revolution in Cairo," PBS, February 22, 2011.

<sup>316</sup> Barack Obama, *63 - Remarks on the Situation in Egypt*, from The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=88954&st=egypt&st1=#axzz1TB4TCZ5E> (accessed February 5, 2011).

<sup>317</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick, "Mubarak's Grip is Shaken as Millions are Called to Protest," *New York Times*, February 1, 2011.

<sup>318</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick and Kareem Fahim, "Mubarak's Backers Storm Protesters as U.S. Condemns Egypt's Violent Turn," *New York Times*, February 3, 2011.

Thus, by virtue of the military's inaction, the people were now essentially being abandoned to rely on the Brotherhood.

For its part, the White House did not even seem to be willing to use any serious diplomatic pressure to help the situation. In his official release concerning the melee, Press Secretary Gibbs simply stated "The United States deplores and condemns the violence that is taking place in Egypt, and we are deeply concerned about attacks on the media and peaceful demonstrators. We repeat our strong call for restraint."<sup>319</sup> Notably, however, there would be no subsequent demands on Mubarak to personally see to it that the people were protected. Nor would there be any threats of withholding aid if he did not immediately do so. Once again, the United States appeared unready to move away from the sidelines.

In the end, though, those in Tahrir would prove themselves able to persevere through the two day confrontation even without the assistance of outside forces. Through their determination, they independently demonstrated that their revolution was far from over. America's chance to place itself on the right side of history in their eyes, however, may have been. As Journalist Nicholas Kristof later reported,

To many Egyptians, the U.S. is conspiring with the regime to push only cosmetic reforms while keeping the basic structure in power. That's creating profound ill will. In Tahrir Square, I watched as young people predisposed to admire America – the Facebook generation – expressed a growing sense of betrayal. In a country where half the population is under 24, we are burning our bridges."<sup>320</sup>

And, surely, there was good reason for the resentment.

---

<sup>319</sup> Robert Gibbs, *Statement from White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs on Violence in Egypt*, from The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=89461&st=We+repeat+our+strong+call+for+r+estrainment&st1=#axzz1aLU7Flp7> (accessed February 7, 2011).

<sup>320</sup> Nicholas D. Kristof "Obama and Egypt's Future," *The New York Times*, February 10, 2011.

Though it was perhaps not entirely clear to many in the American audience, the violence in Egypt was quite significant. As Kristof would go on to explain,

Human Rights Watch has confirmed 302 deaths in the Egypt upheavals, based on visits to hospitals in three cities, and says the real toll may be significantly higher. To put that in perspective, that is several times the toll when Iran crushed its pro-democracy movement in 2009. And it's approaching the toll when the Chinese Army opened fire on pro-democracy protesters in Beijing in 1989. Yet when it's our ally that does the killing, we counsel stability, gradualism and order.

These are Egypt's problems to work out, not America's. But whatever message we're trying to send, the one that is coming through is that we continue to embrace the existing order, and that could taint our future relations with Egypt for many years to come.<sup>321</sup>

Regrettably, when all was said and done, it would be revealed that the situation in Egypt was, in fact, much worse than Kristof had originally reported. Indeed, the figures he quoted would not even amount to half of the ending death toll.

According to final tallies, during the 18 days the protests lasted, over 800 people lost their lives.<sup>322</sup> Ultimately, however, it could at least be said that those lives were not lost in vain.

### **The End of an Era?**

After making one last attempt on February 10<sup>th</sup> to calm the unrest with another televised address, President Mubarak finally chose to accept the inevitable and abdicate his position as head of state.<sup>323</sup> In his initial announcement, he, in addition to delegating certain authorities to his vice president, once again tried to

---

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick, "Lawyer Says Mubarak Is in a Coma, but the Report Is Quickly Contradicted," *The New York Times*, July 18, 2011.

<sup>323</sup> Michael Slackman, "A Brittle Leader, Appearing Strong," *The New York Times*, February 12, 2011.

reassure the people he would be stepping down after the elections in September.<sup>324</sup> But, when the crowds realized he would not be immediately resigning, as many expected him to do during the speech, the people were thrown into a fury.<sup>325</sup> Indeed, there was the fear that the following day immeasurable violence would erupt.<sup>326</sup> As Mohamed Elbaradei explained, the nation was on the verge of exploding.<sup>327</sup> If Mubarak had not stepped down, the situation possibly could have descended into an all out war.

Fortunately, such a disaster was averted. After decades in power, Mubarak's long reign came to an abrupt end. The Egyptian army took control of the nation.<sup>328</sup> And the people of Egypt won a powerful symbolic victory.

With the struggle now over, President Obama, at this point no longer unsure of which side would ultimately prevail, ceremoniously congratulated the demonstrators on their triumph.<sup>329</sup> Just as the young Egyptian protestor predicted, he was finally prepared to shake free from ambiguity and declare that the "USA" was "with the winner."<sup>330</sup> Of course, Mubarak's fate was not even an issue of discussion.

---

<sup>324</sup> Anthony Shadid and David D. Kirkpatrick, "Mubarak Won't Quit, Stokin Revolt's Fury and Resolve," *The New York Times*, February 11, 2011.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

<sup>327</sup> Scott Shane and David D. Kirkpatrick, "Military is Caught Between Two Sides," *The New York Times*, February 11, 2011.

<sup>328</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick, "Egypt Army Sets 6-Month Blueprint, but Future Role is Unclear," *The New York Times*, February 15, 2011.

<sup>329</sup> David E. Sanger, "Obama Hails Outcome in Egypt, but Sets Out Benchmarks for the Military," *The New York Times*, February 12, 2011.

<sup>330</sup> *PBS Newshour*, "Massive Demonstrations Planned as Mubarak OKs Talks with Opposition," PBS, January 31, 2011.

The Egyptian leader may have been viewed as a close friend of the United States while it was reasonably clear he was America's best strategic option. But, once he unequivocally proved not to be, the White house had no problem quickly severing all allegiance. As explained earlier, America's primary concern is stability. And unfortunately for Mubarak, as the former president of Liberia Samuel Doe would have likely told him, – if Doe were able speak from the grave – once a dictator loses his utility in securing U.S. objectives he is no longer of any interest to America.<sup>331</sup>

Certainly only adding to the administration's comfort with the transition was the already mentioned fact that it was, in reality, the Egyptian military that took control of the nation, not the protestors. Since the United States has long had relatively close ties with Egypt's military, which it had given billions of dollars to over the years, the administration could basically feel fairly confident that America's interests would remain at least somewhat secure even without Mubarak.<sup>332</sup> Indeed, it was possible that things would actually not change at all. These new circumstances, however, were clearly not entirely unproblematic.

The army, being seen as somewhat removed from the Mubarak regime, was still a well respected institution in Egypt, and with its numbers being largely made up of conscripts, it enjoyed a special connection with nearly every Egyptian family.<sup>333</sup> During the protests, anti-Mubarak demonstrators were even known to chant “the

---

<sup>331</sup> Herbert Howe, “Lessons of Liberia: ECOMOG and Regional Peacekeeping,” *International Security* 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996-1997): 147-151, 154.

<sup>332</sup> Howard Schneider and Greg Jaffe, “A Test of Egypt's Military and its Relations with U.S.,” *The Washington Post*, January 30, 2011.

<sup>333</sup> Editorial, “Egypt's Moment,” *The New York Times*, February 12, 2011.

army and the people are one.”<sup>334</sup> Nevertheless, cracks in this relationship suddenly began to surface during the Tahrir Square incident in which the army essentially took on the role of spectator while protestors were brutally assaulted for two days. A subsequent investigation carried out by Egypt’s new authorities charged that the actual orchestration of the violence was, in fact, conducted by close allies of President Mubarak.<sup>335</sup> Still, many of the protestors felt extremely betrayed by the army’s inaction. Indeed, after a number of those in the square realized they would have to face the onslaught wholly on their own, their desperate pleas to the army for protection eventually turned to bitter condemnation.<sup>336</sup>

There would also be further, and much more serious, complaints after Mubarak’s resignation. Under the rule of the former regime, acts of torture by the Egyptian police force were considered rather routine.<sup>337</sup> Once the army took lead of the nation, however, many began to allege that such domestic human rights abuses had quickly become the calling card of the military as well.<sup>338</sup> Mubarak the man may have departed, but apparently “Mubarakism” had not.<sup>339</sup>

Naturally, the uneasy post-Mubarak environment in Egypt left plenty of room for al-Qaeda to try and insert itself into the nation’s political discourse, and bin

---

<sup>334</sup> Nicholas D. Kristof “Freedom’s Painful Price,” *The New York Times*, March 27, 2011.

<sup>335</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick, “Lawyer Says Mubarak Is in a Coma, But the Report Is Quickly Contradicted,” *The New York Times*, July 18, 2011..

<sup>336</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick and Kareem Fahim, “Mubarak’s Backers Storm Protesters as U.S. Condemns Egypt’s Violent Turn,” *The New York Times*, February 3, 2011.

<sup>337</sup> Liam Stack, “Complaints of Abuse in Army Custody,” *The New York Times*, March 18, 2011.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> Nicholas D. Kristof, “Freedom’s Painful Price,” *The New York Times*, March 27, 2011.

Laden's deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri was clearly well suited to lead such a charge. Zawahiri, as a former member of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, was intimately familiar with both the country's history and just how brutal the repression could be in the nation.<sup>340</sup> He, therefore, had special insight into many of the fears the Egyptian people were confronting. And, as one would only expect, he attempted to use those fears to stir up apprehensiveness toward America.

In fact, even in earlier comments, Zawahiri made every effort to call America's diplomatic position on the Egyptian revolution into question. For instance, after Mubarak's grip on power began to look somewhat unsure, Zawahiri argued

America is watching the situation and is issuing vague statements; so if Mubarak becomes able to control the situation using murder, suppression and displacement, then that would be what America wanted from the biggest Zionist Arab, who has allowed the abuse of Egypt, its ports, airports and the Suez Canal, which for that he suppressed the Islamic movement, and for which he juices up the prisoners via the American-supervised refinery of retrogressions, so they can come out as disfigured creatures and ugly beasts who would praise their torturers and who would revolt against their own principles.

He is the one who is sanctioning Gaza, and he...protected the southern Israeli borders and has emptied Sinai from weapons for its sake, and instead he has turned it into a beacon for Israel prostitution trade. And America until now remains watching and following up, and it is holding the stick from the middle, with its full knowledge of Mubarak's crimes and that he would be the last one to implement any American measures of democracy. But she [America] has a grasp of him because he is the biggest Arab Zionist and protector of her interests and guarantor of the continuation of her crimes against Islam and Muslims.

And what Mubarak has offered until today of dissolving the government and appointing his representative and promises of reforms, does not solve anything and that does not extinguish the flames of popular outrage, which demands his fall because he is the main criminal....America...tries to gain time so that

---

<sup>340</sup> Fouad Ajami, "Sizing Up bin Laden's Successor," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 24, 2011.

Mubarak may be able to control the situation so her interests and crimes can continue.<sup>341</sup>

Of course, as already illustrated, much of what Zawahiri had to say about America's lack of decisiveness had already been criticized either by average Egyptians or more prominent figures such as Mohamed Elbaradei. In fact, the suspicion that the United States was essentially just trying to hold onto the status quo was even expressed by American writers such as Kristof. Thus, Zawahiri was clearly doing the revolution itself no major service by pointing this out again. What making these sorts of statements did for al-Qaeda, however, was firmly establish that it continued to wholeheartedly side with those who opposed dictatorship in the Muslim world regardless of whether or not the method chosen by the protestors was different than the one the group actually preferred.

In fact, on a later occasion, Zawahiri, in an apparent attempt to identify with Egypt's political activists, even went out of his way to make it known that he himself had taken part in similar protests. Beginning with the Nasser regime, he would basically recount a short history of Egyptian popular dissent:

And before I migrated from Egypt, I focused on participating in the popular uprisings since 1968, and during the popular protests against the regime of Gamal Abdunnasser [sic]. And then I participated in many popular protests and demonstrations against Sadat and his regime. And I was in the Tahrir Square in 1971 with a group of protestors and with me in these demonstrations were kind brothers who had honorable stances in the last Egyptian revolution against Honsi [sic] Mubarak and his corrupt regime. And if I wasn't fearful that I would cause them embarrassment or harm, I would've mentioned them by name and spoke about their brave stance.<sup>342</sup>

---

<sup>341</sup> Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Message of Hope and Glad Tidings to Our People in Egypt, Episode 3*, Flashpoint Partners, [http://globalterroralert.com/images/documents/pdf/1210/flashpoint\\_zawahiri0227.pdf](http://globalterroralert.com/images/documents/pdf/1210/flashpoint_zawahiri0227.pdf) (accessed June 11, 2011).

<sup>342</sup> Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Message of Hope and Glad Tidings to Our People in Egypt, Episode 6*, Flashpoint Partners, [http://globalterroralert.com/images/documents/pdf/0110/flashpoint\\_zawahiriegyp6.pdf](http://globalterroralert.com/images/documents/pdf/0110/flashpoint_zawahiriegyp6.pdf) (accessed October 11, 2011).



Despite these efforts, nonetheless, in terms of absolute gains, al-Qaeda's reputation surely achieved very little, if anything at all, by such tactics. After all, it was quite obvious the organization played no significant role in the actual street demonstrations that removed Mubarak from office. Moreover, as Zawahiri himself acknowledged, even their words of encouragement tended to suffer great delays in reaching the people due to the security concerns the militants had to consider when delivering messages.<sup>343</sup> Hence, it would have been quite difficult for Zawahiri, or any of those associated with him, to make any sort of full-fledged claim on the Egyptian people's victory. Yet, unlike the United States, al-Qaeda was at least able to avoid the accusation that it had acted hypocritically during the upheaval. And it was from this position of comparative integrity that its deputy could feel free to try and add even greater fuel to the already blazing flames of anti-American suspicion.

In one such attempt, Zawahiri, obviously recognizing that many Egyptians were likely feeling quite insecure under military rule, saw it fit to remind them just how precarious the state of their revolution actually was. As he cautioned,

The Egyptian people's revolution succeeded in removing the tyrant, and then what? And this is the dangerous question and the big challenge.

Our people and brothers in Egypt: many populaces revolted throughout history, but also many of the revolutions ended with undesirable results for these populaces, and sometimes opposite of what they want. Revolutions many times get stolen, and they transform into suppressive and abusive regimes. The French Revolution was transformed by Napoleon into an empire, and the Bolsheviks stole the Russian Revolution after the German government had prepared Lenin's entrance via a German train in order to steal the country's governance, in exchange for withdrawal from the First World War. And then, on his hands and the hands of his successors, Russian, Central Asia and Eastern Europe submitted to one of the worst eras of suppression in human history.

---

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

And the revolution of 1952 – Which the Muslim Brothers protected and which was supported by the people and looked positively at – the regime transformed into an abusive, suppressive and humiliating regime for 60 years.<sup>344</sup>

Then, after pointing out how the military had in effect assumed lead of the revolution, he argued “The tyrant Hosni Mobarak [sic] handed the rule to men in the armed forces. And we have to look at the facts as they are and not to be led after emotions; as the ruling military council is not trustworthy, whether through its historical record or behavior.”<sup>345</sup> Explaining further, he later would go on to add “The leadership of the Egyptian armed forces is directly responsible – during the rule of Mubarak – for many of the disasters of the political prisoners, whom the military courts sentenced to prison and to death row, and now it is responsible for the misery of all the political prisoners after Mubarak’s rule.”<sup>346</sup> Finally, bringing his argument its ultimate aim, he moved on to America.

According to Zawahiri, the United States was essentially the controlling force behind all that had and was to transpire. As he explained,

America transferred the rule from an agent to another in order to guarantee a calculated change in Egypt away from the goals that threaten the rule, and they are: governing with Islam, canceling the peace agreement and relations with Israel, and stopping the intelligence, military and economic dependency on America.

America does not care who rules Egypt after Mubarak; whether a military or civil government, or democratic or suppressive, but it cares that the governance transfers peacefully, in a calculated way, to a government that walks the same footsteps of Mubarak in fighting Islamic forces, protection of Israel’s security, sanctions on Gaza and service to the American interests.<sup>347</sup>

---

<sup>344</sup> Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Message of Hope and Glad Tidings to Our People in Egypt, Episode 5*, Flashpoint Partners, [http://globalterroralert.com/images/documents/pdf/1110/flashpoint\\_zawahir0411.pdf](http://globalterroralert.com/images/documents/pdf/1110/flashpoint_zawahir0411.pdf) (accessed June 11, 2011).

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

Unfortunately for the Obama administration, with its lackluster performance dealing with the anti-Mubarak demonstrations, and its relative silence about the behavior of Egypt's new military regime, it would be hard for U.S. officials to dispel such allegations amongst an already distrustful Egyptian population, regardless of whether the charges were, indeed, accurate or not. The circumstantial evidence just seemed to be rather firmly stacked against them. And the same would go for America's situation in Tunisia as well.

As Zawahiri noted, the administration had been doing its best to give the impression it was perfectly aligned with the wave of change taking place in the Middle East, "But the popular movements in Egypt and Tunisia slapped the U.S. in the face when youths protested in Tunisia against the visit of Hilary Clinton, and in Egypt they refused to meet her."<sup>348</sup> Clearly, the narrative was not playing out as the White House would have hoped. Of course, for al-Qaeda, on the other hand, these incidents were absolutely marvelous news. In fact, Zawahiri, plainly reveling in such developments, paused in the middle of an address to the Egyptian people to state "And here I would like to send greetings to the youths of the revolution who refused to meet Hilary Clinton, as this is a stance that signifies the youth's awareness regarding the crimes of America and her political hypocrisy."<sup>349</sup> Al-Qaeda may not

---

<sup>348</sup> Ayman al-Zawahiri, *And the Noble Knight Dismounts*, Flashpoint Partners, [http://globalterroralert.com/images/documents/pdf/0107/flashpoint\\_zawahiri0611.pdf](http://globalterroralert.com/images/documents/pdf/0107/flashpoint_zawahiri0611.pdf) (accessed June 11, 2011).

<sup>349</sup> Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Message of Hope and Glad Tidings to Our People in Egypt, Episode 6*, Flashpoint Partners, [http://globalterroralert.com/images/documents/pdf/0110/flashpoint\\_zawahiriegyp6.pdf](http://globalterroralert.com/images/documents/pdf/0110/flashpoint_zawahiriegyp6.pdf) (accessed October 11, 2011).

have found a way to win the battle for hearts and minds, but, with the United States losing as bad as it was, the organization hardly needed to.

Obviously, there was much for the United States to reflect upon. In 2007, journalist Thomas Friedman, in a seeming state of utter bewilderment, scornfully critiqued the George W. Bush administration's performance in its media war with bin Laden by declaring "Mr. Bush is losing a P.R. war to a mass murder."<sup>350</sup> Unfortunately for those like Friedman, however, four years on, President Bush's successor was sadly doing only slightly better. Despite its best efforts, the Obama administration's ambiguity had not been able to conceal its hypocrisy, and, as a result, al-Qaeda's message continued to outcompete that of the United States even among those residing in nations pushing for what America supposedly championed. Obama's presidency had begun with much promise, but, as his four year term in office neared its end, it was beginning to appear as if that promise would go unfulfilled.

As fate would have it, though, the Obama administration would once more be presented with yet another chance to restore its reputation. The Middle East protests were far from over, and the United States would be able to take full advantage of these circumstances to demonstrate how firmly it was willing to stand up for its values. Finally, it would take swift action on the side of those tyrannized by dictatorship. Nevertheless, as shall be explained in the following pages, upon close inspection it is quickly revealed that America's actions had more to do with issues of prestige than principle. And with its subsequent behavior so thoroughly

---

<sup>350</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, "Swift-Boated by Bin Laden," *The New York Times*, August 26, 2007.

exposing its continued hypocrisy, its humanitarian deed may have in fact done its image more harm than good.

## CHAPTER 4

### POWER AND PRESTIGE

Of course, after its abysmal performance dealing with the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, many may have assumed the United States would act identically when attempting to manage each and every instance of unrest that arose in the region. This assumption, however, would only be partially correct. The United States would certainly continue to make policy decisions based on its interests. But under special circumstances, those interests would actually call for military force rather than political inertia. This was the case when America decided to respond to the crisis that erupted in Libya.

#### **Qaddafi's Libya**

The story of Libya, both in regards to its recent revolt and its longer history, is in many ways an extension of that in Egypt. In fact, the 1969 military coup that brought Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi to power was actually inspired by the one carried out the previous decade by Egypt's Gamal Nasser.<sup>351</sup> Later, Qaddafi would even go so far as to offer his Egyptian hero full control of Libya.<sup>352</sup> And when President Nasser finally passed away, Qaddafi, ever the devout disciple, would attempt to proclaim himself the rightful heir to the Nasserite legacy.<sup>353</sup>

Clearly, however, he would not be able to merely pick up from where the Egyptian leader left off. As discussed earlier, at the time of Nasser's death,

---

<sup>351</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 68, 77.

<sup>352</sup> Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967* updated ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 143.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, 107, 143.

Nasserism was facing major setbacks. Qaddafi, therefore, would have to quickly learn to command attention in new and innovative ways Nasser surely would have never imagined. The Muslim world was now heavily influenced by Saudi-driven Islamic rhetoric.<sup>354</sup> And in that environment, Qaddafi needed to find a radical approach in order to compete.<sup>355</sup>

In the West, Qaddafi's new ideological dynamism, with its religious overtones, would lead many to label him an Islamic fundamentalist.<sup>356</sup> In truth, however, he was anything but.<sup>357</sup> Though he may have, indeed, been quite adept at exploiting Islamic symbolism, his government's religious philosophy clearly had little regard for Islamic tradition.<sup>358</sup> Age old pillars of Islam, such as charity (Zakat) and pilgrimage (Hajj), were reinterpreted to fit the regimes whims, and many of the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad were simply pushed to the side.<sup>359</sup> Thus, not only was he not seen in the Islamic world as a fundamentalist, many, in fact, considered him a heretic.<sup>360</sup>

Obviously, nevertheless, the question of whether or not Qaddafi's religious claims were valid had no bearing on the threat his government's activities posed to America's global strategy. After all, regardless of how orthodox its theology may or

---

<sup>354</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 81-83.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, 81-84.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

may not have been, the political orientation of his regime was clearly anti-Western.<sup>361</sup> Moreover, “In order to achieve its objectives, and unlike other Arab countries, Libya resorted to international terrorism by supporting organizations opposed to Western interests.”<sup>362</sup> Thus, even with all other matters aside, the militantly defiant nature of the upstart nation alone would have placed it on a direct collision course with America’s international agenda.<sup>363</sup>

As time went on, however, Qaddafi’s government gradually began to feel the pain of its erratic behavior. Its involvement in acts of terrorism had not only led to military counter strikes by the United States, but painful sanctions from the United Nations and the European Union as well.<sup>364</sup> It was largely alienated from much of the Arab world.<sup>365</sup> And it increasingly faced an ever growing threat from radical Islamists.<sup>366</sup>

### **The New Qaddafi**

Ironically, though, it would actually be America’s call for assistance in its post 9/11 offensive against international terrorism that would in many ways make Qaddafi’s escape from the verge of disaster possible. The United States was quite obviously in need of a great deal of intelligence information, and Qaddafi, apparently recognizing that it would be exceedingly difficult for his government to continue to

---

<sup>361</sup> Yahia H. Zoubir, “Libya and Europe: Economic Realism at the Rescue of the Qaddafi Authoritarian Regime,” *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 17, no. 3 (December 2009): 403.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid., 404-405.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., 402.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid., 402, 405.



exist in isolation, let it be known that he would be more than happy to assist.<sup>367</sup> Of course, “Libyan cooperation in the war on terror was due largely to the fact that many of the Islamist organizations now targeting the White House were the same or similar to those that had threatened the Qaddafi regime throughout the 1990s.”<sup>368</sup> However, Qaddafi’s collaboration in the effort would also gain his government a certain degree of diplomatic praise as well.<sup>369</sup> Soon thereafter, Libya added to this show of goodwill by formally abandoning its nuclear weapons program.<sup>370</sup> And by May of 2006, the United States would officially remove its former enemy from its list of state sponsors of terrorism.<sup>371</sup>

As one would expect, Europe was also quite pleased with the transformation its North African neighbor was experiencing.<sup>372</sup> Unlike the United States, the continent had never been able to entirely wean itself off of Libyan oil, and the threat of having a hostile regime just off of its shores naturally served as a constant cause for concern.<sup>373</sup> Thus, the complete normalization of relations with such a strategic state could, therefore, be viewed as a victory on multiple levels. Moreover, with Qaddafi now an ally, European nations were also able to negotiate a deal with Libya

---

<sup>367</sup> Ronald B. St. John, “Libya and the United States: A Faustian Pact?,” *Middle East Policy* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 135.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>369</sup> Yahia H. Zoubir, “Libya and Europe: Economic Realism at the Rescue of the Qaddafi Authoritarian Regime,” *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 17, no. 3 (December 2009): 407.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>371</sup> Ronald B. St. John, “Libya and the United States: A Faustian Pact?,” *Middle East Policy* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 139.

<sup>372</sup> Yahia H. Zoubir, “Libya and Europe: Economic Realism at the Rescue of the Qaddafi Authoritarian Regime,” *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 17, no. 3 (December 2009): 408.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, 403-405.

that would have the latter serve as a sort of coastal security force preventing illegal African immigrants from traveling northward across the Mediterranean.<sup>374</sup> Hence, not only was the Libyan leader no longer viewed as a threat on Europe's borders, he was, in fact, now helping to guard them.

Libya's new status in the West was not without its remaining issues, though. Back on January 31, 2001, Abdel Basset Ali al-Megrahi, a Libyan national, was convicted of bombing Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland in December of 1988.<sup>375</sup> Subsequently, in an attempt to settle the affair, the Qaddafi's regime, still hoping to curry favor with the West, would agree to pay family members of those slain in the attack millions of dollars in restitution.<sup>376</sup> Yet, despite the seeming resolution of the incident, the issue continued to be a major matter of contention due to Libya's unyielding insistence that Megrahi was, in reality, innocent.<sup>377</sup>

Then, in August of 2009, Mr. Megrahi was suddenly transferred from British custody into the hands of Libyan authorities after British Petroleum (BP), hoping to secure a gas and oil deal with Qaddafi's government, helped to convince Scottish officials that Megrahi should be released due to his losing bout with cancer, which was supposedly to kill him within three months.<sup>378</sup> Rather predictably, however, mass indignation was stirred when it was learned that not only had Megrahi been

---

<sup>374</sup> Yahia H. Zoubir, "Libya and Europe: Economic Realism at the Rescue of the Qaddafi Authoritarian Regime," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 17, no. 3 (December 2009): 402, 407, 408, 409, 411, 413, 414.

<sup>375</sup> Ronald B. St. John, "Libya and the United States: A Faustian Pact?," *Middle East Policy* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 133, 135.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*, 135, 136, 138, 140.

<sup>378</sup> John F. Burns, "BP Faces New Scrutiny in Lockerbie Case," *The New York Times*, July 16, 2010.

released from prison under questionable terms, but that he, in fact, was greeted upon his arrival in Libya by what some described as a hero's welcome.<sup>379</sup> Libyan officials insisted the situation was being blown out of proportion by Western media institutions.<sup>380</sup> But some analysts argued an unrepentant and ever defiant Qaddafi was now mocking the West over its willingness to make concessions to him.<sup>381</sup>

### **Ready for Revolution**

Thus, when the Middle East protests spread to Libya following the fall of Mubarak in Egypt, the relationship between the West and Qaddafi was tenuous to say the least. As a result, once it seemed plausible that his government might soon collapse from within, his uneasy allies had little incentive to continue standing by him. In past times, the prohibitive cost of regime change may have made Qaddafi the Western world's best option. But, if the people of Libya were already themselves on the verge of successfully duplicating what had just been accomplished in Tunisia and Egypt, the West would hardly have cause for deep felt sympathy.

The disenfranchised in Libya, on the other hand, would have plenty of reasons to feel passionate anger if their longstanding government was to remain. According to the United Nations, when being compared to other African states, including its North African neighbors Egypt and Tunisia, Libya enjoyed the highest

---

<sup>379</sup> Alan Cowell and A.G. Sulzberger, "Libyan Jailed in Bombing of Jetliner Arrives Home," *The New York Times*, August 21, 2009.

<sup>380</sup> Saif Al-Islam El-Qaddafi, "No 'Hero's Welcome' in Libya," *The New York Times*, August 30, 2009.

<sup>381</sup> Michael Slackman, "Still Chafing After 40 Years, Qaddafi Baffles the West With His Behavior," *New York Times*, August 26, 2007.

Human Development Index of any country.<sup>382</sup> Nevertheless, the Libyan regime had long been accused of brutally suppressing calls for political reform as well.<sup>383</sup>

Likewise, “In the name of his ‘permanent revolution,’ Qaddafi also prohibited private ownership and retail trade, banned a free press, and subverted the civil service and the military leadership.”<sup>384</sup> Thus, aside from those closely allied to the regime, few in society had the opportunity to have any sort of serious influence on life in Libya at all.<sup>385</sup> And if Qaddafi was not removed from power, it was extremely doubtful that would ever change.<sup>386</sup>

Yet, despite all of these converging factors, if there was ever the belief that Qaddafi’s ouster would come easily, those hopes would quickly be dashed. Unlike the situations in Tunisia and Egypt in which their leaders were brought down by demonstrations, the protests in Libya rapidly collapsed into all out civil war.<sup>387</sup> As a result, Qaddafi ordered the launch of a brutal counter insurgency campaign against

---

<sup>382</sup> Richard Baxley, “Shifting Loyalties: Libya’s Dynamic Tribalism,” *Harvard International Review* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 6.

<sup>383</sup> Ronald B. St. John, “Libya and the United States: A Faustian Pact?,” *Middle East Policy* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 133-148.

<sup>384</sup> Lisa Anderson, “Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the Difference Between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (May-June 2011): 6.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>386</sup> Ronald B. St. John, “Libya and the United States: A Faustian Pact?,” *Middle East Policy* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 145.

<sup>387</sup> Lisa Anderson, “Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the Difference Between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (May-June 2011): 6.

his opponents.<sup>388</sup> And, soon, the Libyan opposition would be asking the outside world to establish a no fly zone over their nation.<sup>389</sup>

As the calls for outside aerial support increased, however, Defense Secretary Gates warned American lawmakers, some of whom were suggesting the United States should take part in such an operation, that an action of that magnitude would actually be quite a substantial undertaking.<sup>390</sup> As he explained, “A no-fly zone begins with an attack on Libya to destroy the air defenses. That’s the way you do a no-fly zone. And then you can fly planes around the country and not worry about our guys being shot down. But that’s the way it starts.”<sup>391</sup> In other words, taking the steps requested of it would in effect mean the United States was initiating an act of war. Still, despite Mr. Gates’ strong cautioning, a number of America’s political leaders remained undeterred.<sup>392</sup>

Ironically, though, perhaps the greatest boost in morale for those pushing for a strong U.S. reaction in Libya may have come days earlier from the very administration Secretary Gates worked for. On February 25<sup>th</sup>, just 10 days after the initial protests in Libya first began, the White House would close the U.S. embassy in Libya’s capital, Tripoli, and level harsh unilateral sanctions against Qaddafi’s regime,

---

<sup>388</sup> Colin Moynihan, “Libya’s U.N. Diplomats Break with Qaddafi,” *The New York Times*, February 22, 2001.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid.

<sup>390</sup> David E. Sanger and Thom Shanker, “Gates Warns of the Risks of Imposing a No-Flight Zone Over Libya,” *The New York Times*, March 3, 2011.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

instantly freezing billions of dollars worth of its assets.<sup>393</sup> Then, the following day, an official press release noted “The President stated that when a leader’s only means of staying in power is to use mass violence against his own people, he has lost the legitimacy to rule and needs to do what is right for his country by leaving now.”<sup>394</sup> Thus, it was clearly quite obvious to onlookers that the administration was becoming more aggressive. Vague appeals to simply begin an undefined transition period had suddenly transformed into talk of immediate exit, and idle threats to merely review future funding had given way to swift and severe strikes against vast existing financial resources. Hence, with the level of political ambiguity exhibited during the days of the anti-Mubarak protests plainly beginning to recede, it might have appeared to some that the United States was shifting toward an offensive.

Of course, it was naturally much easier for President Obama to take a stronger stance with Libya than he would with a regional linchpin such as Egypt. But still, it would be hard to deny, regardless of what the cause may have been, that his administration had indeed become a great deal bolder in its approach. In fact, even after Gates’ testimony, the president, obviously conscious of the criticism previously laid against him, attempted to reaffirm this new assertiveness, which he seemed to want to imply he had maintained all along, by stating

My approach throughout the convulsions that have swept through the Middle East is: number one, no violence against citizens; number two, that we stand for freedom and democracy. And in the situation in Libya, what you’ve seen is:

---

<sup>393</sup> Helene Cooper and Mark Lander, “U.S. Announces Sanctions in Bid to Deter Libya,” *The New York Times*, February 26, 2011.

<sup>394</sup> Barack Obama, *Press Release – Readout of President Obama’s Call with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany*, from The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=89583&st=libya&st1=now#axzz1VoPWAJCD> (accessed March 1, 2011).

number one, violence against citizens and the active urging of violence against unarmed citizens by Qadhafi; and number two, you have seen with great clarity that he has lost legitimacy with his people.

And so let me just be very unambiguous about this. Colonel Qadhafi needs to step down from power and leave. That is good for his country. That is good for his people. It's the right thing to do.<sup>395</sup>

Nonetheless, regardless of the president's decision to make a decisive break with Qaddafi, the act of openly severing ties with Libya's autocracy was still a far cry from going the added step of supplying the rebels with military support, as many were hoping he would do. And he would quickly find that in some quarters of the world his limited efforts were simply not enough.

In France, for instance, there was open criticism of the United States for its reluctance to take military action.<sup>396</sup> French President Nicolas Sarkozy had already been ahead of Obama in calling on Qaddafi to step down.<sup>397</sup> Now, the White House seemed to be lagging behind once again. It was beginning to look as though the prestige of the nation lauded as "the leader of the free world" might soon be tarnished by the charge that it was afraid to lead.

According to some policy analysts in America, however, there was clearly good reason for the United States to view the events in Libya differently than they were in France. As Richard Haas, President of the Council on Foreign Relations, and former Director of Policy Planning at the State Department under George W.

---

<sup>395</sup> Barack Obama, 141 - *The President's News Conference With President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico*, from The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=89712&st=libya&st1=#axzz1W4125Vmk> (accessed March 15, 2011).

<sup>396</sup> Steven Erlanger, "France and Britain Lead Military Push on Libya," *The New York Times*, March 19, 2011.

<sup>397</sup> Helene Cooper and Mark Landler, "U.S. Announces Sanctions in Bid to Deter Libya," *The New York Times*, February 26, 2011.

Bush, candidly explained at the time, in terms of direct U.S. interests, “Libya is by [sic] far from the most important country in the Middle East.”<sup>398</sup> Haas, therefore, argued that “To have a tremendous mismatch, to invest far more than our interests warrant, makes no sense.”<sup>399</sup> He, furthermore, noted, in regards to the rebels themselves,

We know we hate Gadhafi, or people do. But are we so sure that those we would be helping are good guys? Do we really think, if we went in, they’d all be reading the Federalist Papers in Arabic translation a couple of days later? We simply don’t know enough about Libya. One of the lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan, I would suggest, only intervene militarily if you really know the country well enough to know what you’re getting into. We clearly do not on Libya.<sup>400</sup>

Nevertheless, regardless of whatever truth there may have actually been to Haas’ rather frank comments, there was still a certain important factor he was plainly neglecting to bring into the conversation. And that was America’s power driven interest in ensuring Europe’s defense in the face of Libya’s domestic chaos.

### **The Prison of Preponderant Prestige**

To understand why Libya’s threat to European security was so important to the United States, it is first necessary to once again discuss the hegemonic strategy that actually underlies America’s rhetorical liberalism. As Layne explains,

The strategy of preponderance assumes that the United States has vital interest in maintaining “stability” (a broad and nebulous term) in the international system. Underlying the strategy is fear of what *might* happen in a world no longer shaped by pre-dominant U.S. power. Continued American hegemony is important because it is seen as the prerequisite for global stability. Instability is dangerous because it threatens the link that connects U.S. security to the strategic interests furthered by economic interdependence. Economic interdependence is an

---

<sup>398</sup> Richard Haas, interview by Jeffrey Brown, *PBS Newshour*, PBS, March 9, 2011.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*



overriding U.S. interest because it is viewed as both a cause and a consequence of peace and stability in the international system. Indeed, the role of interdependence in the strategy of preponderance is circular: interdependence is a vital interest because it leads to peace and stability (and prosperity); however, peace and stability must exist in the international system *before* interdependence can take root.

Geographically, the strategy of preponderance identifies Europe, East Asia, and the Persian Gulf as regions where the United States has vital security interests. Europe and East Asia are important because they are the regions from which new great power wars could occur; central to the functioning of an interdependent international system; and vital to U.S. prosperity. The Persian Gulf is important because of oil. Geographically, these three regions constitute America's vital interests; however, its security interests are not confined to these regions. The United States must also be concerned with the "peripheries" – regions that are geographically removed from the core – because turmoil there could affect the core.<sup>401</sup>

In fact, "The paradox of America's hegemonic grand strategy is that it compels the United States to risk war over strategically unimportant places to prove – to allies and adversaries alike – that it will defend stakes that are important."<sup>402</sup> Thus, as neoclassical realism would suggest, although Libya itself was relatively insignificant to the U.S., the fact that its instability could cause panic among its European neighbors made its situation a major concern because it endangered American prestige.

Indeed, prestige is so paramount in terms of U.S. protocol that in some cases the United States has actually been willing to watch scores of people die right in Europe's backyard simply because there was the impression that America's reputation had not sufficiently suffered yet. For example, during the early stages of the 1990s Bosnian war, in which around 250,000 Bosnian Muslims were killed in interethnic strife, the Clinton administration did little more than issue hollow threats

---

<sup>401</sup> Christopher Layne, "Rethinking American Grand Strategy: Hegemony or Balance of Power in the Twenty-First Century?," *World Policy Journal* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 10.

<sup>402</sup> Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 168.

to the Serbian forces instigating the violence.<sup>403</sup> As the conflict dragged on, however, the White House began to fear that its hesitance to enforce the peace might begin to ebb away at its credibility as guarantor of European security.<sup>404</sup> It was then, and only then, that “The president sent Richard Holbrooke, former assistant secretary of state for European affairs and former ambassador to Germany, to resolve the Bosnian war, backed by the threat of unilateral military action.<sup>405</sup> Soon, thereafter, NATO, now spurred on by America’s resolve, began its bombing campaign of Serb forces, which ultimately led the leaders of those forces to sit down at the negotiation table.<sup>406</sup>

Similarly, later that same decade, the Clinton administration would waste well over a year idly warning Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic that if he did not put an end to the program of graduated ethnic cleansing he was carrying out in Kosovo he would be faced with military reprisal.<sup>407</sup> Eventually, though, the administration realized “A failure to act upon those threats would undermine US prestige within NATO, lead the allies to question the future of Washington’s security commitment, and possibly set in motion an erosion of the hegemonic position of the United States in Europe.”<sup>408</sup> America, therefore, finally moved forward with the initiation of an aerial offensive to strike against Milosevic’s forces.<sup>409</sup> When that appeared not to be

---

<sup>403</sup> Jennifer Sterling-Folker, ed., *Making Sense of International Relations Theory* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006), 44.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid., 46-48.

enough, the administration, realizing it could not afford to lose, indicated it was prepared to escalate its direct involvement even further.<sup>410</sup> It was at that point that Milosevic at last agreed to capitulate.<sup>411</sup>

Unsurprisingly, one of the most significant aspects that both of these instances of U.S. intervention had in common was the use of normative rhetoric about humanitarianism and the protection of values.<sup>412</sup> U.S. hegemony demanded that Europe understand that NATO, with America at its lead, of course, was the only viable option for European defense.<sup>413</sup> But an argument based on such a reality would hardly fit in with America's liberal narrative. Thus, though the primary concern of the United States was letting it be known it would not allow a regional conflict to destabilize its allies, it was compelled to cite ethical concerns in order to justify the actions necessary to do so.

In much the same way, the greatest concern the Obama administration had in Libya was the fact that Qaddafi had committed the unforgivable crime of allowing instability, thereby, leaving his nation in danger of becoming a potentially destabilizing failed state.<sup>414</sup> In both Tunisia and Egypt, there were national institutions that could be relied upon to help maintain a degree of order after the removal of their heads of state.<sup>415</sup> But in Libya, this was not the case at all.<sup>416</sup> There,

---

<sup>410</sup> Ibid., 49-50, 71.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid., 49-50, 71.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid., 221-222.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid., 216-217.

<sup>414</sup> Neil MacFarquhar, "The Vacuum After Qaddafi," *The New York Times*, February 27, 2011.

<sup>415</sup> Lisa Anderson, "Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the Difference Between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (May-June 2011): 3.

the whole of the nation was structured around the regime, and if that foundation was abruptly destroyed there would be very little else to replace it.<sup>417</sup> Furthermore, according to testimony given by Hilary Clinton before Congress, many of the al-Qaeda activists the United States faced in combat over the years had come from the very region of Libya that was now leading the break from Qaddafi's rule.<sup>418</sup> There were, therefore, worries that if things were left to simply fall apart without guidance, and such extremist elements ultimately gained the upper hand, Libya could eventually turn into another Afghanistan.<sup>419</sup> Only this time, it would be located right on the doorstep of Europe.

Despite the evident danger, though, what was certainly clear was that there was very little chance the West would be able to simply build up the Qaddafi regime in order to return to the previous status quo. After all, French President Nicolas Sarkozy had already placed himself much too far out on a limb to allow that to happen. Indeed, not only had President Sarkozy given his support to the anti-Qaddafi rebel forces, but by March 10<sup>th</sup> he had, in fact, recognized them as Libya's legitimate government.<sup>420</sup> Thus, by the time James Clapper, America's director of national intelligence, reported later that same day in the United States that it looked

---

<sup>416</sup> Ibid.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

<sup>418</sup> *PBS Newshour*, "Libyan Rebels Fend Off Pro-Gadhafi Forces as Refugees Flood Borders," PBS, March 2, 2011.

<sup>419</sup> Neil MacFarquhar, "The Vacuum After Qaddafi," *The New York Times*, February 27, 2011.

<sup>420</sup> Steven Erlanger, "France and Britain Lead Military Push on Libya," *The New York Times*, March 19, 2011.

as though Qaddafi would in the long run prevail, France was all but locked into its position.<sup>421</sup>

Of course, some in Europe voiced the suspicion that in reality Sarkozy had only rushed to pledge his assistance to the anti-Qaddafi rebels because he was still embarrassed by his offer to help quell the pro-democracy revolution in Tunisia.<sup>422</sup> But regardless of how true that might be, once he had so publically made such a commitment, he was surely not in a position to just act as if he had never done so. If he had, the prestige of his own nation may have suffered. Thus, the only way things could end favorably for Sarkozy was if Qaddafi either acquiesced on his own or was forced to do so. Any resentful European nations would, unfortunately, just have to endure being dragged along for the ride.<sup>423</sup>

Ironically, not long before, the French were actually selling a good deal of military weaponry to the Qaddafi regime.<sup>424</sup> But now, as fate would have it, they would be worrying about the safety of those targeted by the very arms they themselves had made available. Fortunately for France, however, these concerns would not be theirs alone, for the British had already agreed to side with Sarkozy on

---

<sup>421</sup> David E. Sanger, "White House Announces Steps Against Qaddafi," *The New York Times*, March 11, 2001.

<sup>422</sup> Patrick Wintour, Ewen MacAskill, and Kim Willsher, "Front: Libya Britain's role: The Deal: Winning Over Obama Was Key Moment in Securing No-Fly Zone," *The Guardian*, May 19, 2011.

<sup>423</sup> Steven Erlanger, "Sarkozy Puts France at Vanguard of West's War Effort," *The New York Times*, March 21, 2011.

<sup>424</sup> Yahia H. Zoubir, "Libya and Europe: Economic Realism at the Rescue of the Qaddafi Authoritarian Regime," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 17, no. 3 (December 2009): 404, 408, 409, 412.

his ill planned venture.<sup>425</sup> And the United States, trapped by its strategic obligations, would quickly be sucked into the conflict as well.

### **For the Sake of Civilians**

On March 17, 2011, a vote from the United Nations Security Council authorized foreign military intervention into Libya.<sup>426</sup> The primary goal of the mission was said to be to protect Libyan civilians from harm.<sup>427</sup> France and Britain had worked together to map out the resolution, while the Arab League, long at odds with its unpopular North African member state, agreed to give the measure its full support.<sup>428</sup> For its part, America generally went along with the plan, but insisted the intervention force be given a robust range of options to fulfill its objectives.<sup>429</sup> All that was left was for the President to explain his decision to the American people.

Thus, the day after the Security Council's declaration, President Obama set out to make his case both against Qaddafi and for the intervention. As he explained,

Left unchecked, we have every reason to believe that Qadhafi would commit atrocities against his people. Many thousands could die. A humanitarian crisis would ensue. The entire region could be destabilized, endangering many of our allies and partners. The calls of the Libyan people for help would go unanswered. The democratic values that we stand for would be overrun. Moreover, the words of the international community would be rendered hollow.

And that's why the United States has worked with our allies and partners to shape a strong international response at the United Nations. Our focus has been

---

<sup>425</sup> Patrick Wintour, Ewen MacAskill, and Kim Willsher, "Front: Libya Britain's role: The Deal: Winning Over Obama Was Key Moment in Securing No-Fly Zone," *The Guardian*, May 19, 2011.

<sup>426</sup> Scott Wilson and Joby Warrick, "Obama's Shift Toward Military Action," *The Washington Post*, March 19, 2011.

<sup>427</sup> Steven Erlanger, "Sarkozy Puts France at Vanguard of West's War Effort," *The New York Times*, March 21, 2011.

<sup>428</sup> Patrick Wintour, Ewen MacAskill, and Kim Willsher, "Front: Libya Britain's role: The Deal: Winning Over Obama Was Key Moment in Securing No-Fly Zone," *The Guardian*, May 19, 2011.

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid.*

clear: protecting innocent civilians within Libya and holding the Qadhafi regime accountable.<sup>430</sup>

Notably, though, perhaps Obama's greatest ally in his indictment of Qaddafi was Qaddafi himself, for the vitriol exhibited in the Libyan leader's speeches made him at certain points seem poised for wholesale massacre. For instance, after weeks of fighting, Libya's woefully outgunned rebel forces had largely been beaten back to their stronghold in the eastern city of Benghazi.<sup>431</sup> Nevertheless, as the president pointed out during his speech, once in position to take the city, Qaddafi wrathfully insisted he would have no mercy upon those held up there.<sup>432</sup>

Seizing upon such belligerence, the president presented the situation as if all 700,000 of Benghazi's residents had been in danger of being indiscriminately slaughtered, and that thus, given the circumstance, he and his allies had no choice but to intercede.<sup>433</sup> Of course, what Mr. Obama failed to mention was that at the same time Qaddafi had also offered amnesty to those who laid down their weapons.<sup>434</sup> Surely, many would have still been killed in the assault. But, it is hardly

---

<sup>430</sup> Barack Obama, *182 - Remarks on the Situation in Libya*, from The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=90162&st=Libya&st1=#axzz1WfCuOYc3> (accessed March 30, 2011).

<sup>431</sup> Steven Erlanger, "Sarkozy Puts France at Vanguard of West's War Effort," *The New York Times*, March 21, 2011.

<sup>432</sup> Barack Obama, *182 - Remarks on the Situation in Libya*, from The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=90162&st=Libya&st1=#axzz1WfCuOYc3> (accessed March 30, 2011).

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>434</sup> Dan Bilefsky and Mark Landler, "Military Action Against Qaddafi is Back By U.N.," *The New York Times*, March 18, 2011.

clear that any sort of mass genocide on the scale the president seemed to want to imply was about to occur.<sup>435</sup>

Besides, it is difficult to see how the White House could try to use concern for Libyan civilians as a defense for its actions anyway. After all, according President Obama himself, Qaddafi had been know for savagely terrorizing his citizens for decades.<sup>436</sup> Yet, after he no longer appeared to pose a major threat to the West, the United States, which itself was not even bound by a dependency on Libyan oil, seemed perfectly content to overlook such human rights issues for the sake of furthering its own interest.<sup>437</sup> No threats of attack were made, nor were there any sanctions.

Naturally, these inconsistencies once again left the administration open to charges of hypocrisy. As Zawahiri would later argue,

Why didn't America mobilize against al-Qadhafi before the uprising of the Libyans [sic] people? Wasn't America handing the prisoners to al-Qadhafi in its war on Islam under the name of 'terrorism,' in order to be tortured, beaten and killed? And from them – as we consider him – the martyr Sheikh Ibn al-Sheikh al-Liby, and from them leaders of Islamic fighting groups.

And why did America and the West go silent over the massacre of Abu Sleem prison, where more than 1,200 martyrs were killed? And why didn't it freeze the accounts and investments of al-Qadhafi and his family before?<sup>438</sup>

---

<sup>435</sup> John Harwood, "Opportunities and Perils for Obama In Military Action in Libya," *The New York Times*, March 28, 2011.

<sup>436</sup> Barack Obama, *182 - Remarks on the Situation in Libya*, from The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=90162&st=Libya&st1=#axzz1WfCuOYc3> (accessed March 30, 2011).

<sup>437</sup> Ronald B. St. John, "Libya and the United States: A Faustian Pact?," *Middle East Policy* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 143-145.

<sup>438</sup> Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Message of Hope and Glad Tidings to Our People in Egypt, Episode 5*, Flashpoint Partners, [http://globalterroralert.com/images/documents/pdf/1110/flashpoint\\_zawahir0411.pdf](http://globalterroralert.com/images/documents/pdf/1110/flashpoint_zawahir0411.pdf) (accessed June 11, 2011).



Sadly, the answer to these questions was obviously quite clear. America had not acted before because America had not been concerned about Qaddafi's abuse of his people until it was perceived as a danger to the West. Apparently, the United States believed the democratic values Obama spoke of defending during his speech were only threatened when America's interests were as well. And all the liberal rhetoric in the world could not hide that fact.

Thus, it should really be no surprise that the polling data evaluating Obama's performance during the Arab uprisings was still woefully negative in spite of his decision to intervene in Libya's unfolding crisis. Indeed, for one to think it would be otherwise they would have to, as Scheuer expressed earlier, think Muslims were stupid people. America was doing what was in America's interest, plain and simple. The Libyan opposition was merely in position to benefit from that.

### **The War Plan**

At times, though, it was not exactly clear to onlookers what kind of help the rebels' benefactors would actually be. As the Jamestown Foundation, a Washington D.C. based research institute, reported several weeks after the conflict first began,

NATO's campaign might easily be called "The War of Contradictions," since it has said one thing and done another from the beginning. Its entire framework for intervention is based on a no-fly zone to protect civilians that was exposed as a cover for battlefield air support for the Libyan rebels almost immediately. While some NATO nations see the campaign as one intended to protect civilians, France, Britain and the United States are clearly set on regime change, a course that cannot be reversed at this point.<sup>439</sup>

---

<sup>439</sup> Andrew McGregor, "Special Commentary on Libya: It Didn't Start This Way, But It's a War For Oil Now," *Jamestown.org*, April 18, 2011, under "Conclusion," [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Bwords%5D=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx\\_ttnews%5Bany\\_of\\_the\\_words%5D=libya&tx\\_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=37808&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=3d0ab767cec9c06a807ce805e570c387](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Bwords%5D=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews%5Bany_of_the_words%5D=libya&tx_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=37808&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=3d0ab767cec9c06a807ce805e570c387) (accessed on May 7, 2011).

Unfortunately for America, however, the war would not work out as planned. The problem was, just “As in Iraq and Afghanistan, a Western coalition intervened in Libya with only a weak grasp of the local society.”<sup>440</sup> It grossly underestimated Qaddafi’s support in the Western part of his country.<sup>441</sup> And, therefore, falsely assumed the war would take only a matter of weeks.<sup>442</sup>

Only adding to the disorder was America’s rather odd role in the conflict. Initially, it was suggested that perhaps the French and British might be capable of executing the campaign against Qaddafi’s forces themselves.<sup>443</sup> However, unlike America, neither nation enjoyed the stockpiles of cruise missiles necessary to knock out Libya’s air defenses with efficiency.<sup>444</sup> Nor did they possess aircraft equivalent to America’s A-10 or AC-130.<sup>445</sup> Hence, there was simply no way they would be able to carry out the needed strikes with the same level of proficiency as the United States.

---

<sup>440</sup> Vladimir Socor, “Under NATO’s Flag: an Interim Assessment of the Mission in Libya (Part Three),” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, August 9, 2011, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5bswords%5d=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx\\_ttnews%5bany\\_of\\_the\\_words%5d=libya&tx\\_ttnews%5btt\\_news%5d=38295&tx\\_ttnews%5bbackPid%5d=7&cHash=6b593696c322eff5884e8fd64ac33726](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5bswords%5d=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews%5bany_of_the_words%5d=libya&tx_ttnews%5btt_news%5d=38295&tx_ttnews%5bbackPid%5d=7&cHash=6b593696c322eff5884e8fd64ac33726) (Accessed August 21, 2011).

<sup>441</sup> Ibid.

<sup>442</sup> Vladimir Socor, “Under NATO’s Flag: An Interim Assessment of the Mission In Libya (Part One),” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, August 5, 2011, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5bswords%5d=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx\\_ttnews%5bany\\_of\\_the\\_words%5d=libya&tx\\_ttnews%5btt\\_news%5d=38286&tx\\_ttnews%5bbackPid%5d=7&cHash=73660e6726f3fa39d7b9a8456e390380](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5bswords%5d=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews%5bany_of_the_words%5d=libya&tx_ttnews%5btt_news%5d=38286&tx_ttnews%5bbackPid%5d=7&cHash=73660e6726f3fa39d7b9a8456e390380) (Accessed August 21, 2011).

<sup>443</sup> Vladimir Socor, “Under NATO’s Flag: An Interim Assessment of the Mission in Libya (Part Two),” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, August 8, 2011, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5bswords%5d=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx\\_ttnews%5bany\\_of\\_the\\_words%5d=libya&tx\\_ttnews%5btt\\_news%5d=38292&tx\\_ttnews%5bbackPid%5d=7&cHash=d822f80d4aaba9c08bdedcdcfadef5f](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5bswords%5d=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews%5bany_of_the_words%5d=libya&tx_ttnews%5btt_news%5d=38292&tx_ttnews%5bbackPid%5d=7&cHash=d822f80d4aaba9c08bdedcdcfadef5f) (Accessed August 21, 2011).

<sup>444</sup> Editorial, “Discord Among Allies,” *The New York Times*, March 24, 2011.

<sup>445</sup> Editorial, “Keeping Ahead of Qaddafi,” *The New York Times*, April 8, 2011.

Furthermore, “The US objected to a Franco-British operation in Libya” because “It would bypass NATO and, thus, the US-headed chain of command.”<sup>446</sup> As already explained, American hegemony depended on its leadership role in Europe, and it could not allow that to be challenged even by its friends. Still, a battle fatigued United States could not help but be painfully aware of the fact that it already had major commitments in its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>447</sup> And as a result, it was ultimately concluded that America would merely head the critical opening stages of the war and then humbly pass the lead off to rest of its NATO allies.<sup>448</sup>

Nevertheless, even in this reduced capacity, the first two months of the war alone cost the United States \$716 million, and later estimates predicted that at its existing rate America’s back-up role would bring that figure to around \$1.1 billion by September.<sup>449</sup> Of course, the White House obviously understood how disastrous it would be for U.S. prestige if it were to completely withdraw from the conflict. But, not only was the administration facing an ever increasing price tag, some, noting the operation in Libya was not an officially declared war, had, in fact, begun to debate the very constitutional legality of the military’s continued involvement.<sup>450</sup> It appeared

---

<sup>446</sup> Vladimir Socor, “Under NATO’s Flag: An Interim Assessment of the Mission in Libya (Part Two),” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, August 8, 2011, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5bswords%5d=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx\\_ttnews%5bany\\_of\\_the\\_words%5d=libya&tx\\_ttnews%5btt\\_news%5d=38292&tx\\_ttnews%5bbackPid%5d=7&cHash=d822f80d4aaba9c08bdededcfbafdef5f](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5bswords%5d=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews%5bany_of_the_words%5d=libya&tx_ttnews%5btt_news%5d=38292&tx_ttnews%5bbackPid%5d=7&cHash=d822f80d4aaba9c08bdededcfbafdef5f) (Accessed August 21, 2011).

<sup>447</sup> Editorial, “Discord Among Allies,” *The New York Times*, March 24, 2011.

<sup>448</sup> Steven Erlanger, “Libya’s Dark Lesson for NATO,” *The New York Times*, September 4, 2011.

<sup>449</sup> Charlie Savage and Mark Landler, “White House Defends Continuing U.S. Role in Libya Operation,” *The New York Times*, June 16, 2011.

<sup>450</sup> *Ibid.*

that America's opportunity to play itself up as an active defender of political change might be slowly slipping away.

### **The Struggle for Bahrain**

Meanwhile, in another part of the Muslim world, the Obama administration would at the same time find itself facing a perhaps even greater threat to its chance to remake its image. On February 14, 2011, anti-government demonstrations were launched on the island nation of Bahrain to protest against the ruling monarchy's unwillingness to enact long sought after democratic reforms.<sup>451</sup> When a brutal crackdown followed, the White House, as usual, expressed its concern over the violence, but in general the United States, which happened to have its fifth naval fleet permanently hosted in Bahrain, did little more.<sup>452</sup> Unsurprisingly, with America willing to go so far as to take military action when it suited its purposes in Libya, its reluctance to make a stronger stance against the Bahraini royal family brought some to once more accuse it of acting hypocritically.<sup>453</sup>

This was certainly not the first time the White House responded in such a way when it came to Bahrain, however. In fact, just two months before the pro-democracy protests broke out, Secretary Clinton was actually in Bahrain defending the gulf nation's record on making steps toward a more democratic system.<sup>454</sup>

---

<sup>451</sup> Michael Slackman and Nadim Audi, "Police in Bahrain Clear Protest Site in Early Morning Raid," *The New York Times*, February 17, 2011.

<sup>452</sup> Nicholas D. Kristof, "In Bahrain, The Bullets Fly," *The New York Times*, February 19, 2011.

<sup>453</sup> Laura Kasinof and David E. Sanger, "U.S. Said To Seek Negotiated Exit of Yemeni Chief," *The New York Times*, April 4, 2011.

<sup>454</sup> Mark Landler, "U.S. Officials offered Rosy Assessments of Bahrain Before Recent Crackdown," *The New York Times*, February 19, 2011.

Similarly, the American Embassy in Bahrain had in the past both criticized the human rights group Freedom House for downgrading Bahrain's status from "partly free" to "not free" and cast doubt on a report from Human Rights Watch when it asserted Bahraini police at times used torture during interrogations.<sup>455</sup> Apparently, the United States was simply not prepared to truly recognize what political direction its close ally was headed in.<sup>456</sup>

The protesters in Bahrain, on the other hand, were clearly not in the mood to go along with such delusions. The small island nation of around one million residents was long known for the simmering tensions that existed between its Sunni ruling class and its disenfranchised majority Shi'i population.<sup>457</sup> Matters only became worse in the early 1990s when government programs designed to expand the state's economy marginalized working class Shi'i citizens to an even greater degree.<sup>458</sup> The al Khalifa family promised its subjects greater political inclusion to help rectify the nation's disparities.<sup>459</sup> But, in the years just prior to the February 2011 uprising, King Hamad, often cited by America as a reformer, abruptly began to allow the small

---

<sup>455</sup> Mark Landler, "U.S. Officials offered Rosy Assessments of Bahrain Before Recent Crackdown," *The New York Times*, February 19, 2011.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid.

<sup>457</sup> Michael Slackman and Nadim Audi, "Police Attack in Bahrain, Keeping Protests in Disarray," *The New York Times*, February 15, 2011.

<sup>458</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz, ed., *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 91-94.

<sup>459</sup> Mark Landler, "U.S. Officials offered Rosy Assessments of Bahrain Before Recent Crackdown," *The New York Times*, February 19, 2011.

progress his country made reverse itself.<sup>460</sup> Now he would be asked to answer for his behavior.

Unfortunately for the demonstrators, however, this domestic civil rights struggle would soon be turned into a regional campaign of political suppression. Saudi Arabia, which built a 15 mile causeway between itself and its much smaller neighbor for just such an occasion, was quite concerned about Bahrain's sectarian-laced crisis due to the possible implications it had for its own stability.<sup>461</sup> The Saudi Shi'i community represented only a minority of the kingdom's overall citizenry.<sup>462</sup> Yet, they simultaneously constituted the majority of those residing in the nation's eastern provinces where the states' vast oil fields are found.<sup>463</sup> Recognizing the affinity this restive population felt with their adjacently located co-religionists in Bahrain, the royal family feared a Shi'i victory in such a closely neighboring country might easily inspire a similar mass uprising among its own Shi'i. Its Sunni led government, therefore, decided to offer authorities in Bahrain whatever assistance needed.<sup>464</sup> As far as it was concerned, defending the al Khalifas was essentially the same as defending itself.<sup>465</sup> And there apparently seemed to be no limits to what it would do for that sake.

---

<sup>460</sup> Ibid.

<sup>461</sup> Robert F. Worth, "As Unrest Encircles Saudi Arabia, a Sense of Insecurity Bubbles Up," *The New York Times*, February 20, 2011.

<sup>462</sup> Nada Bakri, "Saudi Forces To Withdraw From Bahrain," *The New York Times*, June 29, 2011.

<sup>463</sup> Ethan Bronner and Michael Slackman, "Saudis, Fearful of Iran, Send Troops to Bahrain to Quell Protests," *The New York Times*, March 15, 2011.

<sup>464</sup> Ibid.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid.

Indeed, when rumors of an impending day of protest within Saudi Arabia's own borders began to swirl, its foreign minister issued a stern warning in which "He said the regime will cut off any finger raised against it."<sup>466</sup> Clearly, the Saudi government had no intentions of going anywhere. Its message was straightforward. Acts of dissent would not be tolerated. And those who dared to attempt them would face severe consequences for doing so.

Thus, when Saudi Arabia volunteered to send its security forces into Bahrain, Bahraini Shi'i were quite understandably apprehensive about what would be headed over the causeway.<sup>467</sup> Saudi officials insisted their troops were entering the country only to help maintain order.<sup>468</sup> But, opposition groups did not see it that way at all. To them, the operation launched on March 14<sup>th</sup> was no more and no less than a foreign occupation.<sup>469</sup>

Also condemning the insertion of outside forces, which it referred to as an "invasion," was the Islamic Republic of Iran.<sup>470</sup> According to it, the move represented both a violation of international law and a threat to the safety of defenseless Bahraini men and women.<sup>471</sup> In return, however, Saudi and Bahraini officials accused the Shi'i dominated Iranian government of trying to spread its

---

<sup>466</sup> *PBS Newshour*, "News Wrap," PBS, March 19, 2011.

<sup>467</sup> Ethan Bronner and Michael Slackman, "Saudis, Fearful of Iran, Send Troops to Bahrain to Quell Protests," *The New York Times*, March 15, 2011.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>471</sup> Thomas Erdbrink and Joby Warrick, "Bahrain Crackdown Fuels Tensions in Gulf Region," *The Washington Post*, April 23, 2011.

influence by interfering in Bahrain's internal affairs.<sup>472</sup> In fact, though evidence was never provided to back up the claim, the Bahraini government would at one point accuse Iran of actually providing opposition groups with aid.<sup>473</sup> The demonstrators denied this claim, though, and insisted their struggle was about democratic rights, not sectarian politics.<sup>474</sup>

Of course, American officials in the meantime remained almost completely silent about the deployment because their interests lay with those of their Saudi allies.<sup>475</sup> Not only was Saudi Arabia a major supplier of petroleum to the United States itself, with the largest oil reserves in the world, it was essentially the anchor of the global market America had taken responsibility for.<sup>476</sup> Thus, in terms of U.S. interests, it was almost as if the circumstances in this situation were the complete opposite of those in Libya. As a result, in this case, not only would America not use military force to intercede on the side of its supposed values, even its rhetorical support of such ideals would be largely pushed to the side. Customary statements about the need for greater reform, such as the one made by Defense Secretary Gates just days before the entrance of the Saudis, would, no doubt, continue.<sup>477</sup> But, for

---

<sup>472</sup> Thomas Erdbrink and Joby Warrick, "Bahrain Crackdown Fuels Tensions in Gulf Region," *The Washington Post*, April 23, 2011.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

<sup>475</sup> Ethan Bronner and Michael Slackman, "Saudis, Fearful of Iran, Send Troops to Bahrain to Quell Protests," *The New York Times*, March 15, 2011.

<sup>476</sup> Helene Cooper and Mark Landler, "Interests of Saudi Arabia and Iran Collide, With the U.S. in the Middle," *The New York Times*, March 18, 2011.

<sup>477</sup> Ethan Bronner, "State of Emergency Declared in Bahrain," *The New York Times*, March 16, 2011.



the most part, Bahrain's pro-democracy activists would essentially be left to fend for themselves.

Unsurprisingly, Bahrain's government took full advantage of the blind eye that had been turned to it. Indeed, in their efforts to discourage the progress of the opposition's fledgling campaign, Bahraini authorities would do everything from destroying Shi'i mosques to beating and detaining young school girls who took part in demonstrations.<sup>478</sup> Even some doctors and nurses, who did no more than care for those injured during the protests, would be targeted for arrest and retaliation.<sup>479</sup> Perhaps most dramatic, though, was the razing to the ground of Bahrain's 300 foot Pearl roundabout sculpture on March 18<sup>th</sup>.<sup>480</sup> To the protesters, the structure had come to represent the focal point of the nation's activism just as Tahrir Square had been in Egypt.<sup>481</sup> To those in government, though, it was center of "terrorist activity."<sup>482</sup>

### **The End Game**

America, however, would not be able to merely dance around the Bahraini issue forever. On May 19, 2011, President Obama would be making a major speech addressing his administration's policy regarding the Arab uprisings.<sup>483</sup> He would,

---

<sup>478</sup> Liz Sly, "Blooms of Arab Spring Fading," *The Washington Post*, May 13, 2011.

<sup>479</sup> Clifford Krauss, "Strife in Bahrain Sweeps Past Front Door of a Central Hospital," *The New York Times*, April 13, 2011.

<sup>480</sup> Ethan Bronner, "A monument Leveled, Solidarity for Shiites and Large-Scale Demonstrations: Bahrain Tears Down Pearl Sculpture," *The New York Times*, March 19, 2011.

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>483</sup> Rami Khouri, Issam Fares, and Mona Eltahawy, interview by Jeffrey Brown, *PBS Newshour*, PBS, May 19, 2011.

therefore, have to find a skillful means of explaining away not only the contradictory stance the White House had taken on Bahrain's situation, but the many examples of double standards exhibited during its dealings with other nations as well.

Unfortunately for Mr. Obama, though, such a task would ultimately prove quite beyond his ability.

Two days before the president's speech, the *Pew Research Center* released its report highlighting the Muslim world's low opinion of his performance up to that point.<sup>484</sup> Hence, the White House was surely aware that its Muslim audience would be skeptical of what was to be said from the very outstart. Yet, despite having this prior knowledge, President Obama still seemed extremely ill prepared to even make a serious attempt to win them over. As Egyptian-American journalist Mona Eltahawy argued,

I think that President Obama was trying to catch up. And remember that Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire Dec. 17. So, it has taken several weeks of trying to catch up. But I don't think that the president really got there, because what I heard was a speech that perhaps was educational and was trying to realign U.S. foreign policy for a domestic audience.

But for an audience in the Middle East and North Africa, that is very fed up and has long been very fed up of a clear double standard in U.S. foreign policy, and a policy that would take the side of dictators, at the expense of the people, I don't think that the speech finally caught up, because, I mean, I heard many positive things, but there were many things that were glaringly missing.

For example, the United States gives the Egyptian armed forces \$1.3 billion in aid every year. The Supreme Military Council, which runs Egypt now, is endangering the very values and the revolution that President Obama praised today, because the Supreme Military Council in Egypt detains people, detains revolutionaries, tortures them, and puts them on military trial.

And then when it come to the most glaring omission of all, and the country that is the worst offender and strongest counter-revolutionary force, Saudi Arabia, the president didn't mention it at all. President Obama mentioned Iran

---

<sup>484</sup> Pew Global Attitudes Project, "Arab Spring Fails to Improve U.S. Image: Obama's Challenge in the Muslim World," Pew Research Center, May 17, 2011 Pew Global Attitudes Project <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1997/international-poll-arab-spring-us-obama-image-muslim-publics> (May 19, 2011).

as a potential threat in Bahrain. But remember, Saudi Arabia has actual troops on the ground in Bahrain.

And when it comes to religious freedom and women's rights, which the president mentioned -- and I praise him for that -- Saudi Arabia again is the worst offender, especially when it comes to its Shia minority and women's rights.

So, I heard -- for a domestic American audience, those missing sentences might not be important, but for the people on the ground, who have far outpaced the U.S., I think they will be disappointed that President Obama didn't mention that.<sup>485</sup>

Thus, whatever it was the president hoped to accomplish with his speech, he obviously was unable to hit his mark. Indeed, as Ms. Eltahawy noted, his address, though perhaps effective for a domestic audience, left many in the Muslim world only feeling more disillusioned. For example, when Egyptian student activist Noor Nour was asked by CNN host Fareed Zakaria what he thought of the president's speech he replied "I just -- all I could see was hypocrisy and the continuation of hypocrisy."<sup>486</sup> Once again, it appeared that America's words were doing it more harm than good.

There were, nonetheless, some fairly positive comments regarding Obama's address as well. Many Bahrainis, for instance, were rather pleasantly surprised that the president had actually mentioned their struggle at all.<sup>487</sup> They were particularly pleased that he had been willing to denounce the destruction of Shia mosques, call for dialogue between the two opposing sides, and candidly point out that it would be difficult to hold such a dialogue while opposition leaders were being held in jail

---

<sup>485</sup> Rami Khouri, Issam Fares, and Mona Eltahawy, interview by Jeffrey Brown, *PBS Newshour*, PBS, May 19, 2011.

<sup>486</sup> Noor Nour, interview by Fareed Zakaria, *Fareed Zakaria GPS*, CNN, May 22, 2011.

<sup>487</sup> Margaret Warner, interview by Judy Woodruff, *PBS Newshour*, PBS, May 19, 2011.

cells.<sup>488</sup> Still, even among Bahrainis who were to some degree happy with the president's speech, there remained the charge that the United States was plainly continuing to operate under a system of double standards.<sup>489</sup> Clearly, the president had been willing to go farther than anyone else in his administration.<sup>490</sup> But, not only had Saudi Arabia not been mentioned in his speech, Bahrain's own leaders had, in fact, been largely let off the hook as well.<sup>491</sup> Yes, a few of their transgressions were briefly mentioned, but there was essentially nothing said about the subject beyond that.

Predictably, with this sort of political climate to contend with, Bahraini opposition groups would ultimately be unable to bring about the peaceful democratic transition they had hoped for even months after their protests first began.<sup>492</sup> Government intransigence had proven far too unyielding, while American silence remained all too constant.<sup>493</sup> A low-level effort to maintain the struggle would, of course, carry on.<sup>494</sup> But the prospects for any significant change looked increasingly unlikely.<sup>495</sup>

---

<sup>488</sup> Ibid.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid.

<sup>493</sup> Anthony Shadid, "Bahrain Boils Under the Lid of Repression," *The New York Times*, September 16, 2011.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid.

In Libya, on the other hand, where American interests led the situation in the opposite direction, the story would be quite different. By August, its capital city Tripoli would be in the hands of NATO backed rebels, while both Qaddafi and his family members would find themselves abruptly forced into hiding.<sup>496</sup> Soon thereafter, Western countries would begin to press for the release of frozen Libyan assets, and preliminary discussions regarding lucrative oil contracts with allied nations like France, Britain and the United States would start.<sup>497</sup> Naturally, there would still be some problems, such as the tensions that arose between the rebels and their patrons when the former refused to extradite convicted Pan Am bomber al Megrahi, who obviously had not passed away as expected.<sup>498</sup> But, all in all, things seemed to be concluding relatively well.<sup>499</sup>

Unfortunately for the Obama administration, however, there would be very little chance that the accomplishments of the Libyan rebellion would in the end do much to improve the Muslim world's perception of the United States. After all, its handling of the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt had already cast serious doubts on its commitment to opposing authoritarianism, and its silence on the Bahrain issue surely only gave its critics more reason to be skeptical. Thus, though there would certainly be many who would be pleased to see Qaddafi go, his departure would in

---

<sup>496</sup> Rod Nordland and Rick Gladstone, "Rebels Say They've Cornered Qaddafi, but Son Rejects Surrender," *The New York Times*, September 1, 2011.

<sup>497</sup> Steven Erlanger, "Libya's Supporters Gather in Paris to Help Ease New Government's Transition," *The New York Times*, September 2, 2011.

<sup>498</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick and Rod Nordland, "For Lockerbie Planner, Near Death, No Extradition," *The New York Times*, August 29, 2011.

<sup>499</sup> Mark Lander, "For Obama, Libyan Endgame Is a Moment to Savior, if Only Briefly," *The New York Times*, August 23, 2011.

no way leave America looking like a paragon of international political justice.

Indeed, it would likely only highlight the fact that the United States had been willing to work so long with a man it clearly knew to have tyrannical tendencies.

America's trouble with its reputation in the Muslim world was clearly not its only problem, though. In fact, as shall be explained in the remaining pages, it was, in reality, only a very small aspect of a much greater crisis. Over the decades, U.S. policy makers had slowly allowed their hegemonic practices to work their nation into a position of grave danger. And now, trapped in a costly, and essentially futile, battle for hearts and minds, it seemed as though they might not ever quite get around to even acknowledging they needed to save it.

CHAPTER 5  
FOR THE FUTURE

As explained earlier, the Muslim world, or more specifically the Persian Gulf and its expansive periphery, is important to the United States because the vast natural resources found there help to power the world system America strives to command. With the ongoing passage of time, however, the United States has found it ever more difficult to maintain its control over not only this particular region, but, more importantly, the broader global structure it is vital to. As Layne explains,

The United States emerged from World War II in a position of global dominance. From this unparalleled military and economic power came a Pax Americana that has endured for more than six decades. It seemed the sun would never set on the U.S. empire.

But America is increasingly unable to play the hegemon's assigned role. Militarily, a hegemon is responsible for stabilizing key regions and guarding the global commons. Economically, it offers public goods by opening its domestic market to other states, supplying liquidity for the world economy, and providing the reserve currency. A hegemon is supposed to solve international crises, not cause them. It is supposed to be the lender of last resort, not the biggest borrower. Faced with wars it cannot win or quit and an economy begging rescue, the United States no longer fits the part.<sup>500</sup>

Unfortunately, though, many in the United States refuse to acknowledge America's new circumstances.<sup>501</sup> Instead, rather than accept the obvious, they stubbornly maintain that the nation has merely hit a temporary downturn that it will soon likely recover from.<sup>502</sup>

What such people sadly fail to recognize, however, is that America's current difficulty with maintaining its hegemony is not simply the result of a bout of bad luck

---

<sup>500</sup> Christopher Layne, "Graceful Decline: The End of Pax Americana," *Amconmag.com*, May 1, 2010, <http://amconmag.com/article/2010/may/01/00030/> (accessed December 10, 2011).

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*

that will eventually pass with time. Indeed, “One of history’s few incontestable lessons is that the pursuit of hegemony invariably is self-defeating, because it provokes counter-balancing efforts by other states and leads to what Paul Kennedy famously called “imperial overstretch.”<sup>503</sup> Political economist Robert

Gilpin has outlined succinctly the causal logic supporting this conclusion. As he points out, the overhead costs of empire are high: “In order to maintain its dominant position, a state must expend its resources on military forces, the financing of allies, foreign aid, and costs associated with maintaining the international economy. These protection and related costs are not productive investments; they constitute an economic drain on the economy of the dominate state.” Ultimately, the decline in its relative power leaves a waning hegemon less well placed to fend off challenges to its system-wide strategic interests.<sup>504</sup>

Hence, with this being the case, to promote the idea that the United States need only wait patiently while maintaining its current course is not only naive, it is, in fact, dangerous to America’s future.

Still, some optimists may attempt to find hope in the fact that “Much of America’s decline can be attributed to its own self-defeating policies, but as the U.S. stumbles, others – notably China, India, and Russia – are rising.”<sup>505</sup> Consequently, even if the United States were to try and quickly formulate some radical new strategy to perpetuate its supremacy, it would almost certainly be too late because challenger states, which Gilpin warns of, would clearly have no rational incentive to give up strategic ground they have painstakingly fought to gain. Thus, as heartbreaking as it may be for U.S. policymakers bent on global hegemony, the harsh cold reality is that

---

<sup>503</sup> Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 6.

<sup>504</sup> Christopher Layne, “Rethinking American Grand Strategy: Hegemony or Balance of Power in the Twenty-First Century?,” *World Policy Journal* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 23.

<sup>505</sup> Christopher Layne, “Graceful Decline: The End of Pax Americana,” *Amconmag.com*, May 1, 2010, <http://amconmag.com/article/2010/may/01/00030/> (accessed December 10, 2011).



inevitably “The epoch of American dominance is drawing to a close, and international politics is entering a period of transition: no longer unipolar but not yet fully multipolar.”<sup>506</sup> What this means is that America will either take advantage of this brief period of transformation to prepare for a more modest future or it will soon be doomed to become a thing of the past.

Of course, the choice would appear to be quite clear. Obviously, “Global dominance is a prescription for endless trouble – especially in its neoconservative variant.”<sup>507</sup> So one would think, then, that there would really only be one option. But, “Unfortunately, the Obama administration is populated from top to bottom with liberal imperialists who remain committed to trying to govern the world, albeit with less emphasis on big-stick diplomacy and more emphasis on working with allies and international institutions.”<sup>508</sup> And, regrettably, since it actually does make an effort to place a more multilateral face on its imperialistic policies, many may have come to believe the Obama White House, in fact, *is* trying to bring about a change.

Nothing, however, could be a greater misunderstanding of what modern internationalism actually represents in practice. As Samuel P. Huntington, creator of the famous “clash of civilizations” theory, explains, “Most of the principal international institutions date from shortly after World War II and are shaped according to Western interests, values, and practices.”<sup>509</sup> Yet, “Decisions made at the

---

<sup>506</sup> Ibid.

<sup>507</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, “Imperial by Design,” *The National Interest*, January-February 2011, 19.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid.

<sup>509</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996; repr., New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2003), 317.

U.N. Security Council or in the International Monetary Fund that reflect the interests of the West are presented to the world as reflecting the desires of the world community.”<sup>510</sup> Indeed, “The very phrase ‘the world community’ has become the euphemistic collective noun (replacing “the Free World”) to give global legitimacy to actions reflecting the interests of the United States and other Western powers.”<sup>511</sup> Thus, despite its use of crafty rhetorical rationalizations, the global imperialist system essentially remains the same as it always has been. While normative international organizations may constrain the weak, America, as the world’s greatest power, normally gets whatever it wants, and “If it does not, it ignores the institution and does what it deems to be in its own interest.”<sup>512</sup> Therefore, though ostensibly universalistic, the Obama administration’s decision to make greater utilization of this useful cover reflects nothing other than its shrewd appreciation of the advantages associated with imperialism’s more diplomatic forms.

The problem, though, as demonstrated by the administration’s Libya campaign, is that, even in America’s seemingly humbler role in ensuring geostrategic stability, it is still in danger of incurring highly significant hegemony costs by being dragged by self imposed obligation into situations that could, in reality, be handled by others, though perhaps not with the same level of proficiency. What is more, things are only guaranteed to get worse. This is due to the fact that

The United States continually is forced to expand the geographical scope of its strategic commitments. Core and periphery are – or, more correctly, are perceived to be – interdependent *strategically*. However, while the core is

---

<sup>510</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 39.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid.

<sup>512</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 364-365.

constant, the “turbulent frontier” in the periphery is always expanding. U.S. policymakers fear what *might* happen – falling dominoes and closure – if the United States does not intervene and broaden its defensive perimeters. Thus, the United States finds itself extending its security frontier ever farther into the periphery. There is, however, no obvious stopping point to this process, which tends to become self-perpetuating, because “expansion tends to feed on itself in order to protect what is acquired.” Each new defensive perimeter is menaced by turmoil on the other side of the line which requires yet another outward push of the security frontier.<sup>513</sup>

Unfortunately, with every new challenge being perceived as a crucial test of America’s credibility, its hegemony obsessed leaders will have no choice but to continue along with this process because “The entire fabric of American grand strategy would unravel if U.S. allies no longer felt reassured by Washington’s security umbrella.”<sup>514</sup> Thus, trapped by the fear of losing its international standing, the United States will be forced to march off to battle time and time again with an ever decreasing return on its investment until eventually this suicidal way of life results in America’s downfall.

Ironically, there was perhaps no one who understood the dynamics of this convoluted quandary better than al-Qaeda’s late leader Osama bin Laden. In fact, being so keenly aware of it, he would consciously do all he could to spread American forces as thin as possible. As he once bragged following an operation in Asia,

All we had to do was send two mujahidin to the Far East to raise up a rag on which “al-Qaeda” was written, and the generals came running. This inflicted human, financial, and political losses on America without them even achieving anything worth mentioning, apart from providing business for their private corporations. In addition, we gained expertise in guerilla and attritional warfare in our struggle against the great oppressive superpower, Russia, in which we and the mujahidin ground it down for ten years until it went bankrupt, and decided to withdraw in defeat, praise and thanks be to God. We are continuing to make

---

<sup>513</sup> Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 128.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

America bleed to the point of bankruptcy, by God's will. For God is able to do that.<sup>515</sup>

Similarly, in October of 2008, the *Washington Post* reported "Al-Qaeda is watching the U.S. stock market's downward slide with something akin to jubilation, with its leaders hailing the financial crisis as a vindication of its strategy of crippling America's economy through endless, costly foreign wars against Islamist insurgents."<sup>516</sup> Of course, for the organization to have actually believed the entirety of such a claim it would have had to overlook quite a few of the other factors that contributed to America's financial woes. But it was, nevertheless, at any rate correct in thinking that its strategy had at least found some degree of success in bringing harm to the U.S. economy.

As the *New York Times* noted in 2010, "The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have cost Americans a staggering \$1 trillion to date, second only in inflation-adjusted dollars to the \$4 trillion price tag for World War II, when the United States put 16 million men and women into uniform and fought on three continents."<sup>517</sup> Granted, with the vastness of the U.S. economy, that figure only comes to around 1.2 percent of America's gross domestic product.<sup>518</sup> But, with the country struggling through financially difficult times, it can hardly afford to simply dismiss this sort of significant dollar amount. In fact, the crippled U.S. economy has become such an important

---

<sup>515</sup> *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden*, ed. Bruce Lawrence, trans. by James Hawarth (London: Verso, 2005), 241.

<sup>516</sup> Joby Warrick and Karen DeYoung "On al-Qaeda Web Sites, Joy Over U.S. Crisis, Support for McCain," *The Washington Post*, October 22, 2008.

<sup>517</sup> Elisabeth Bumiller, "The War: A Trillion Can Be Cheap," *The New York Times*, July 25, 2010.

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*

strategic concern that in 2010 military planners for the first time in American history mentioned the nation's debt and deficit in the U.S. National Security Strategy report.<sup>519</sup> Hence, though in another era al-Qaeda's financial threat may have been somewhat easily rationalized away, today it could very well end up being the relatively large straw that breaks the weak camel's back.

Nonetheless, even with this being the case, it must not be forgotten that "Terrorism is not the most pressing national security threat facing the United States. Great powers can be defeated only by other great powers – not by nonstate terrorists or by minor powers."<sup>520</sup> Bin Laden's network may be capable of killing a good number of people, but it is certainly not an existential threat in and of itself.<sup>521</sup> Indeed, the only reason comparatively insignificant organizations like al-Qaeda can even be said to be a serious danger to the United States at all is because America has unwisely chosen self-destructive policies that makes itself vulnerable to such actors. Thus, "The U.S. needs to be careful not to pay more attention to Islamic terrorist than to emerging powers."<sup>522</sup> Al-Qaeda may assist America down its self-selected path to slaughter, but ultimately it will be powerful rival states that serve as the final executioners.

Of course, to avoid such a fate, U.S. policy makers need do no more than be honest. Clearly, America's strategy of preponderance is not based on the overly

---

<sup>519</sup> Margaret Warner, interview by Jim Lehrer, *PBS Newshour*, PBS, May 27, 2010.

<sup>520</sup> Christopher Layne, "Graceful Decline: The End of Pax Americana," *Amconmag.com*, May 1, 2010, <http://amconmag.com/article/2010/may/01/00030/> (accessed December 10, 2011).

<sup>521</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, "Imperial by Design," *The National Interest*, January-February 2011, 22-23.

<sup>522</sup> Christopher Layne, "Graceful Decline: The End of Pax Americana," *Amconmag.com*, May 1, 2010, <http://amconmag.com/article/2010/may/01/00030/> (accessed December 10, 2011).

optimistic liberal normative system its leaders publically endorse. Rather, as has been shown, it is based on a realist understanding of the primacy of power and self-interests. Liberal rhetoric may help to mask this inclination toward realpolitik, but it certainly does nothing to change it. Realist policymaking, however, does not have to be rooted in unending absolute hypocrisy. Furthermore, and indeed “More important, preponderance is not the only *realist* option available to the United States.”<sup>523</sup> Thus, if America wishes to find a practical means of escaping the trap it currently finds itself in, all it essentially must do is shed its façade of liberalism and forswear its desire for global hegemony.

### **A New Path**

Once again, the decision should not be that difficult. As even Huntington argues, attaining a sustainable “global empire” is in the end just not possible.<sup>524</sup> On the other hand, there is good reason for U.S. officials to believe they can ensure solid national security without trying to attain global domination. Fortunately for America, “Insular great powers (that is great powers that are geographically separated from great power rivals) are substantially less likely to be affected by instability than are states that face rivals close to home.”<sup>525</sup> Indeed, “Because of the interlocking effects of geography, nuclear weapons (which enhance insularity’s strategic advantages), and formidable military and economic capabilities, the United States is

---

<sup>523</sup> Christopher Layne, “Rethinking American Grand Strategy: Hegemony or Balance of Power in the Twenty-First Century?,” *World Policy Journal* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 20.

<sup>524</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996; repr., New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2003), 318.

<sup>525</sup> Christopher Layne, “Rethinking American Grand Strategy: Hegemony or Balance of Power in the Twenty-First Century?,” *World Policy Journal* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 22.

virtually impregnable against direct attack.”<sup>526</sup> Naturally, as history has shown, there will always be the possibility for exceptions to this rule. But for the most part, “The risk of conflict, and the possible exposure of the American homeland to attack, derive directly from overseas commitments mandated by an expansive definition of U.S. interests.”<sup>527</sup> Thus, if the United States pursues a new grand strategy that works to maximize its many advantages while simultaneously minimizing the dangerous practices that increase the chance of disaster, it will find that most of its current concerns will largely disappear.

As most realists today would agree, the best choice for carrying out this special task is a strategy of “offshore balancing.”<sup>528</sup> As Layne explains,

Offshore balancing is based on the assumption that the most vital US interests are preventing the emergence of a dominant power in Europe and East Asia – a ‘Eurasian hegemon’ – and forestalling the emergence of a regional (‘oil’) hegemon in the Middle East. Only a Eurasian hegemon could pose an existential threat to the US. A regional hegemon in the Middle East could imperil the flow of oil upon which the US economy, and the economies of the advanced industrial states depend. As an offshore balancer, the US would rely on the tried and true dynamics of the balance of power to thwart any states with hegemonic ambitions. An offshore balancing strategy would permit the US to withdraw its ground forces from Eurasia (including the Middle East) and assume an over-the-horizon military posture. If – and only if – regional power balances look to be failing would the US re-insert its troops into Eurasia. Offshore balancing contrasts sharply with primacy because primacists fear a world with independent, multiple poles of power. Primacy is based on the belief that it is better for the US to defend its allies and clients than to have them defend themselves. Offshore balancers, on the other hand, believe for an insular great power like the US, the best strategy is to rely on a balance of power approach that devolves to other states the costs and risks of their defense.<sup>529</sup>

---

<sup>526</sup> Ibid.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid., 5, 25.

<sup>529</sup> Christopher Layne, “America’s Middle East Grand Strategy after Iraq: The Moment of Offshore Balancing has Arrived,” *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 1 (January 2009), 8.

Furthermore, “As an insular great power in a multipolar world, the United States would retain a free hand strategically: although it might need to enter into temporary coalitions, America would disengage from permanent alliance relationships.”<sup>530</sup> The natural result of this will be that America’s assistance will quickly come to be viewed as infinitely more valuable.

As Walt insists, “Instead of bending over backward to convince the rest of the world that the United States is 100 percent reliable, U.S. leaders should be encouraging other states to bend over backward to keep us in their corners.”<sup>531</sup> Yet, this will only be possible when these states come to realize U.S. assistance is based on certain conditions.<sup>532</sup> Thus, “The United States would not withdraw from world affairs under this strategy, and it will still retain potent power-projection capabilities.”<sup>533</sup> But the world will, nonetheless, be placed on notice that America’s inclination toward intervention, which during its bid for global domination was a virtual given, is no longer to be taken for granted.

An additional benefit of this approach is that, “Over time, a strategy of offshore balancing would make it less likely that the United States would face the hatred of radicals such as Osama bin Laden, and thus would make it less likely that the United States would have to intervene in far-flung places where it is not

---

<sup>530</sup> Christopher Layne, “Rethinking American Grand Strategy: Hegemony or Balance of Power in the Twenty-First Century?,” *World Policy Journal* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 22.

<sup>531</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (2002; repr., New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 242-243.

<sup>532</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.



welcome.”<sup>534</sup> Granted, there will almost certainly remain those in the Muslim world who will continue to disapprove of what they see as Western vices, but “Anger and hatred toward the United States among Arabs and Muslims is largely driven by Washington’s policies, not by any deep-seated antipathy toward the West.”<sup>535</sup> Hence, a change in grand strategy will eventually lead to a change in the strategic calculus of the region altogether. Consequently, it can once again be noted that

Offshore balancing costs considerably less money than does global dominance, allowing America to better prepare for the true threats it faces. This is in good part because this strategy avoids occupying and governing countries in the developing world and therefore does not require large armies trained for counterinsurgency. Global dominators naturally think that the United States is destined to fight more wars like Afghanistan and Iraq, making it essential that we do counterinsurgency right the next time.<sup>536</sup>

But in an age of offshore balancing, such concerns will gradually fade into the past like the bad memories of so many other bygone eras. No longer will U.S. presidents need to be afraid that someone else’s country might be “lost” to America. The focus will simply be on the need to secure the United States itself.

Similarly, there will also be little reason to fear that radical forces abroad might one day seize a fuel rich nation and cut off U.S. petroleum supplies. To begin with, as bin Laden himself once explained, he certainly never had any intentions of drinking the oil.<sup>537</sup> Thus, as one should really only expect, even if America’s retrenchment was to allow al-Qaeda linked zealots to somehow come to power in a

---

<sup>534</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>535</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, “Imperial by Design,” *The National Interest*, January-February 2011, 24.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>537</sup> Michael Scheuer, *Through Our Enemies’ Eyes: Osama bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Dulles, VA: Potamac Books, 2006). 52.

country like Saudi Arabia, the commodities they came to control would be sold to the world market in conformity with the normal laws of supply and demand.<sup>538</sup> What is more, “In an integrated, global oil market it is immaterial whether a hostile regime would sell oil directly to the US. Because oil is fungible, all that matters is that such a regime makes its oil available to the market.”<sup>539</sup> Finally, if an occasion ever arose in which some kind of broader unforeseeable crisis occurred, it would ultimately be a problem for the entire world, not just America. The costs and dangers, therefore, could justifiably be divided evenly among the whole of the international community. And, perhaps more importantly, so could the blame.

### **Concluding Comments**

Naturally, however, if it likes, the United States can always ignore such advice and continue to take all of the blame upon itself. It can close its eyes to the realities of the increasingly dangerous world that it inhabits and simply push forward in a self-destructive struggle against a ghostly adversary, which is made victorious by the very actions taken to bring about its demise. In the end, though, if it does choose this course, it will one day soon come to realize that all of its efforts were for not. Unfortunately, by sheer odds alone, the wide-ranging war America hopes to win is simply unwinnable. According to polling data, only seven percent of the Muslim world’s population can be classified as “politically radicalized.”<sup>540</sup> Yet, with an overall population of more than a billion people, the actual number that percentage

---

<sup>538</sup> Ibid.

<sup>539</sup> Christopher Layne, “America’s Middle East Grand Strategy after Iraq: The Moment of Offshore Balancing has Arrived,” *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 1 (January 2009), 14.

<sup>540</sup> John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam: What a Billion Muslims Really Think* (New York: Gallup Press, 2007), 97.

represents rests at somewhere around 91 million.<sup>541</sup> Of course, being politically radicalized does not mean that each and every one of these individuals has engaged, or indeed ever will engage, in acts of violence.<sup>542</sup> Still, they do, nonetheless, present organizations such as al-Qaeda with a huge pool for possible recruitment.<sup>543</sup> In fact, if al-Qaeda is able to successfully wage a media war that persuade just a small percentage of this small percentage, it could quite easily bog the United States down until greater forces within the international system finally rise up to deliver America a death blow. And, sadly, if thing continue as they are, it is quite possible that this is exactly what is to happen.

The launch of the so-called Arab Spring protests may have been truly historic, but as of now the United States has, regrettably, neglected to take advantage of this auspicious opening to make any significant changes to its policies. As a result, the available polling numbers shows America still struggling to make inroads in the battle for hearts and minds. Rhetorical spin may aid political leaders in trying to present the situation as some sort of contorted victory. But, as the data suggests, it is unlikely that many in the Muslim world will be fooled by such propaganda. Rather, it is more probable that like Zawahiri most will see such attempts as “Open deceit, unique hypocrisy, and unprecedented opportunism.”<sup>544</sup> And that, of course, is a formula for diplomatic disaster.

---

<sup>541</sup> Ibid.

<sup>542</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>544</sup> Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Dawn of Imminent Victory*, Flashpoint Partner, [http://globalterroralert.com/images/documents/pdf/0110/flashpoint\\_zawahiri091211.pdf](http://globalterroralert.com/images/documents/pdf/0110/flashpoint_zawahiri091211.pdf) (accessed September 27, 2011).

On the brighter side, however, U.S. military and intelligence services have at least been able to eliminate al-Qaeda's chief spokesman. Though the killing of Osama bin Laden may not technically be a victory in the media war, it does obviously represent a clear chance for America to seize control of the overarching narrative. Yet, here again, its leaders have failed to properly capitalize on this opportunity. Perhaps justifiably, few would have likely wanted to announce a major shift in U.S. strategy from what many may have been considered a position of complete failure. But with the death of bin Laden, coupled with the wave of changes taking place in the Arab Muslim world, the United States could have initiated a transition to offshore balancing from a rather respectable rhetorical position.

As Mearsheimer explains, many great powers have made the collapse of their empires look as though they were the result of virtue.<sup>545</sup> For instance, during its World War II struggle with rival great power Germany, Britain held tightly to valuable imperial colonies such as India.<sup>546</sup> However, once "The fighting finished, England faced pressing business at home: tending her wounds and mending her economic fences. She had neither the mood nor the might to frustrate India's will to liberty."<sup>547</sup> Making matters worse, militant organizations such as the Hindu Mahasabha formed paramilitary wings designed to launch insurgent attacks against

---

<sup>545</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 370.

<sup>546</sup> Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* (1987; repr., New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 367-368.

<sup>547</sup> Louis Fischer, introduction to *India Wins Freedom*, 1<sup>st</sup> American ed. by Abulkalam Azad (New York: Longmans, Green, 1960) xv.

British forces.<sup>548</sup> It, therefore, quickly became rather clear that Britain would soon have no choice but to depart.

Fortunately for the British, alongside organizations like the Hindu Mahasabha, there was also another movement led by a man named Mahatma Gandhi. During the years of British strength, Gandhi's non-violent protest philosophy had for most part been shown to be unproductive.<sup>549</sup> Indeed, by the '40s, a pledge he made in 1920 to remove British forces from India's soil within a year had proven exceedingly hollow.<sup>550</sup> Nevertheless, as the decade neared its close, Britain's Labor government, facing serious post-war difficulties, eventually came to the conclusion that its only option was to withdraw from Indian Territory immediately.<sup>551</sup> Thus, Indian independence was declared in 1947, and Gandhi, who the British naturally preferred over the "terrorists," was left to be viewed by historians as the saintly figure whose peaceful ways miraculously persuaded Britain to allow India its freedom.<sup>552</sup> In turn, Gandhi, who was reportedly said to have been touched by what he perceived as British altruism, commended his former colonial masters for their supposedly unprecedented act of selflessness.<sup>553</sup>

---

<sup>548</sup> Walter K. Andersen and Shridhar D. Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 43-44.

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>551</sup> Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* (1987; repr., New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 368.

<sup>552</sup> Dennis Dalton, Preface to *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), xiii-xiv.

<sup>553</sup> Arthur Herman, *Gandhi & Churchill: The Epic Rivalry That Destroyed an Empire and Forged Our Age* (New York: Bantam Dell, 2008), 577.

Today, America finds itself in a similar situation. The only difference being the fact that the United States is now in a position of imperial strain even before it has faced a challenge from a rival great power. What this means, obviously, is that once it finally does, all may be lost. Conversely, the United States can instead choose to become an offshore balancer and have its act of necessity be viewed as virtue. It can allow the political change in the Middle East to serve as the catalyst for political change within its own borders and thereby save itself by simply placing the destiny of others in their own hands.

Of course, this is not to say in any way that America should continue the game of pretending to be what it actually is not. Indeed, it is very important that the United States actually avoid such a trap. Often, over the course of human history, situations arise in which the goals of realism and the goals liberalism converge.<sup>554</sup> Naturally, “Under these circumstances, realist policies can be justified with liberal rhetoric without having to discuss the underlying power realities.”<sup>555</sup> Hence, “This coincidence makes for an easy sell.”<sup>556</sup> What such concealment does, however, is bypass a nation’s opportunity to have a truly democratic debate. Thus,

There is serious potential for backfire with cover-ups of this sort, because whenever leaders cannot sell a policy to their public in a rational-legal manner, there is a good chance that the problem is with the policy, not the audience. This is especially true if a substantial number of outside experts oppose or are likely to oppose the policy in question.<sup>557</sup>

---

<sup>554</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 26.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

<sup>557</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *Why Leaders Lie: The Truth About Lying in International Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 93.

Therefore, if America hopes to be credited with any virtue, it should be the virtue of honesty. Admittedly, the shift from the use of romantic liberal rhetoric to a much more straightforward realist alternative may initially seem rather disconcerting to some. But regardless of how attached they may have become to the propaganda of old, it is incumbent upon those in society to not only grow comfortable with realism, but to, in fact, demand it. The only way the nation's citizenry can ensure against being emotionally manipulated is if they insist on having policies conveyed to them in politically pragmatic terms. Otherwise, they may soon one day find that the very future of their country has fallen victim to the shrewd deceptiveness of a power-hungry political elite.

Obviously, America's decision to come clean with itself will also be quite important to those in the Muslim world as well. They may not praise the United States for its lackluster commitment to democracy abroad, but they will at least be able to respect the fact that after being shown by anti-autocracy protestors that its hypocrisy would no longer be tolerated even by moderates, America was willing to candidly acknowledge the error of its ways and change its approach. A fairy tale ending it surely is not. However, in an anarchic international system dominated by power politics, it is perhaps the closest the world will ever come to seeing one.

The important thing is that America's media war with bin Laden's network is not unwinnable. All U.S. officials have to do is eliminate the underlying duplicity that led to the media war to begin with. Al-Qaeda, though dangerous, is, as it has been for some time, largely unpopular. Its only strength is U.S. weakness. But if the United States does not alter its path, al-Qaeda's message will continue to have resonance in the Muslim world, and it will continue to pose a threat to U.S. security.

Even if every one of its leaders, and indeed every one of its operatives, is killed, there will always be other, perhaps far more dangerous, organizations that are both in agreement with al-Qaeda's argument and willing to pick up its mantle. Thus, for the future, it would behoove the United States to implement a grand strategy that will isolate al-Qaeda and its line of thinking as much as possible. Offshore balancing allows America to practice what it preaches. It, therefore, takes away from groups such as al-Qaeda their most powerful ammunition. Yes, a certain level of contradiction is to be found in every system humanity creates.<sup>558</sup> But, offshore balancing minimizes these contradictions to perhaps the greatest extent that can be reasonably achieved. Al-Qaeda's principal messenger has already been killed. Now, if America would only agree to adopt an offshore balancing grand strategy, along with the frank realist dialogue that must accompany it, al-Qaeda's very message can be put to death as well.

---

<sup>558</sup> Martha Finnemore, "Legitimacy, Hypocrisy, and the Social Structure of Unipolarity: Why Being a Unipole Isn't All It's Cracked Up to Be," *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (January 2009): 82, 84-85.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ajami, Fouad. *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967*. Updated ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- American Civil Liberties Union. "Iranian American Refugees Will Continue Fight Over Contributions to Opposition Group, April 30, 2009." American Civil Liberties Union. <http://www.aclu.org/national-security/iranian-american-refugees-will-continue-fight-over-contributions-opposition-group> (accessed May 29, 2009).
- The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>. Barack Obama. 24 - *Statement on the Situation in Tunisia*. January 14, 2011.
- . Barack Obama. 47 - *Address before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union*. January 25, 2011.
- . Barack Obama. 57 - *Remarks on the Situation in Egypt*. January 28, 2011.
- . Barack Obama. 63 - *Remarks on the Situation in Egypt*. February 1, 2011.
- . Barack Obama. 141 - *The President's News Conference With President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico*. March 3, 2011.
- . Barack Obama. 182 - *Remarks on the Situation in Libya*. March 18, 2011.
- . Barack Obama - *Press Release – Readout of President Obama's Call with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany*. February 26, 2011.
- . Barack Obama. *Remarks in Cairo*. June 4, 2009.
- . George H.W. Bush. *Open Letter to College Students on the Persian Gulf Crisis*. January 9, 1991.
- . George W. Bush. *Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the United States Response to the Terrorist Attacks of September 11*. September 20, 2001.
- . Harry S. Truman. 56 - *Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine*. March 12, 1947.
- . Mike McCurry. *Press Briefing by Mike McCurry*. October 9, 1997.
- . Robert Gibbs. *Press Briefing by Press Secretary Gibbs*. January 28, 2011.
- . Robert Gibbs. *Statement From White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs on Violence in Egypt*. February 2, 2011

- . William J. Clinton. *Remarks on the Observance of International Women's Day*. March 11, 1998.
- Andersen, Walter K. and Shridhar D. Damle. *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1987.
- Anderson, Lisa. "Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the Difference Between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya." *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (May-June 2011): 2-7.
- Baxley, Richard. "Shifting Loyalties: Libya's Dynamic Tribalism." *Harvard International Review* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 6-7.
- Bin Laden, Osama. *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden*. Edited by Bruce Lawrence. Translated by James Hawarth. London: Verso, 2005.
- Borstelmann, Thomas. *The Cold War and The Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena*. 2001. Reprint, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Byman, Daniel. "Terrorism After the Revolutions: How Secular Uprisings Could Help (or Hurt) Jihadists." *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (May-June 2011): 48-54.
- Carlsnaes, Walter, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons, eds., *Handbook of International Relations*. London: Sage Publications, 2002.
- Clinton, Hillary R. "Remarks on the Killing of Usama bin Ladin, May 2, 2011." <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/05/162339.htm> (accessed May 8, 2011).
- Clinton, Hillary R. "Remarks With Spanish Foreign Minister Trinidad Jimenez After Their Meeting, January 25, 2011." <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/01/155280.htm> (accessed February 5, 2011).
- Coll, Steve. *The Bin Ladens: An American Family in the American Century*. New York: Penguin Books, 2009.
- . *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 11, 2001*. Updated ed. New York: Penguin Books, 2005.
- Corman, Steven R. Angeka Trethewey, and H. L. Goodall, Jr. *Weapons of Mass Persuasion: Strategic Communication to Combat Violent Extremism*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008.
- . Preface to *Weapons of Mass Persuasion: Strategic Communication to Combat Violent Extremism*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008.

- Dreyfuss, Robert. *Devil's Game: How the United States helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2005.
- Dudziak, Mary L., *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Esposito, John L. *Islam: The Straight Path*. Rev. and updated 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- . *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- . Preface to the paperback edition of *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Esposito, John L., and Dalia Mogahed. *Who Speaks for Islam: What a Billion Muslims Really Think*. New York: Gallup Press, 2007.
- . "Who Will Speak for Islam?" *World Policy Journal* 25, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 47-57.
- Finnemore, Martha. "Legitimacy, Hypocrisy, and the Social Structure of Unipolarity: Why Being a Unipole Isn't All It's Cracked Up to Be." *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (January 2009): 58-85.
- Fischer, Louis. Introduction to *India Wins Freedom*. 1<sup>st</sup> American ed. by Abulkalam Azad New York: Longmans, Green, 1960.
- Flashpoint Partners. <http://globalterroralert.com/>. Ayman al-Zawahiri. *And the Noble Knight Dismounts*. June 8, 2011.
- . Ayman al-Zawahiri. *Dawn of Imminent Victory*. September 12, 2011.
- . Ayman al-Zawahiri. *Message of Hope and Glad Tidings to Our People in Egypt, Episode 3*. February 27, 2011.
- . Ayman al-Zawahiri. *Message of Hope and Glad Tidings to Our People in Egypt, Episode 5*. April 14, 2011.
- . Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Message of Hope and Glad Tidings to Our People in Egypt, Episode 6*. Flashpoint Partners. May 21, 2011.
- Gates, Robert M. "Landon Lecture (Kansas State University), November 26, 2007." <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1199> (accessed August 13, 2010).
- Herman, Arthur. *Gandhi & Churchill: The Epic Rivalry That Destroyed an Empire and Forged Our Age*. New York: Bantam Dell, 2008.

- Hoge Jr., James F. "Media Pervasiveness." *Foreign Affairs* 73, no.4 (July-August 1994): 136-144.
- Horowitz, Juliana M. "Declining Support for bin Laden and Suicide Bombing, September 10, 2009." Pew Research Center Pew.  
<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1338/declining-muslim-support-for-bin-laden-suicide-bombing> (Accessed August 10, 2010). (Accessed August 10, 2010).
- Howe, Herbert. "Lessons of Liberia: ECOMOG and Regional Peacekeeping." *International Security* 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996-1997): 145-176.
- Huntington, Samuel P. "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 22-49.
- Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. 1996. Reprint, New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2003.
- Jervis, Robert. "An Interim Assessment of September 11: What Has Changed and What Has Not?" *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 37-54.
- , "The Impact of the Korean War on The Cold War." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 24, no. 2 (December 1980): 563-592.
- Jones, Joseph M. *The Fifteen Weeks*. New York: The Viking Press, 1955.
- Kennedy, Paul. *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*. 1987. Reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1989.
- Layne, Christopher. "America's Middle East Grand Strategy after Iraq: The Moment of Offshore Balancing has Arrived." *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 1 (January 2009), 5-25.
- , "Graceful Decline: The End of Pax Americana." *Amconmag.com*, May 1, 2010.  
<http://amconmag.com/article/2010/may/01/00030/> (accessed December 10, 2011).
- , *The Peace of Illusions*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006.
- , "Rethinking American Grand Strategy: Hegemony or Balance of Power in the Twenty-First Century?" *World Policy Journal* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 8-28.
- Marlar, Jenny. "U.S. Approval Gains Nearly Erased in Middle East/North Africa." Gallup. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/143294/Approval-Gains-Nearly-Erased-Middle-East-North-Africa.aspx> (accessed November 12, 2010).

- McGregor, Andrew. "Special Commentary on Libya: It Didn't Start This Way, But It's a War For Oil Now." *Jamestown.org*, April 18, 2011.  
[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Bsword%5D=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx\\_ttnews%5Bany\\_of\\_the\\_words%5D=libya&tx\\_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=37808&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=3d0ab767cec9c06a807ce805e570c387](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Bsword%5D=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews%5Bany_of_the_words%5D=libya&tx_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=37808&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=3d0ab767cec9c06a807ce805e570c387)  
 (accessed on May 7, 2011).
- Mearsheimer, John J. "Imperial by Design." *The National Interest*, January-February 2011, 22-23.
- . *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003.
- . *Why Leaders Lie: The Truth About Lying in International Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Mearsheimer, John J. and Stephen M. Walt. "An Unnecessary War." *Foreign Policy*, January-February 2003.
- Murphy, Emma. *Economic and Political Change in Tunisia: from Bourguiba to Ben Ali*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.
- Newman, Edward. "Human Security and Constructivism." *International Studies Perspectives* 2, no. 3 (August 2001): 239-251.
- Pew Global Attitudes Project. "Arab Spring Fails to Improve U.S. Image, May 17, 2011, 12." Pew Research Center. <http://pewglobal.org/files/2011/07/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Arab-Spring-FINAL-May-17-2011.pdf> (accessed May 19, 2011).
- Pew Global Attitudes Project. "Arab Spring Fails to Improve U.S. Image: Obama's Challenge in the Muslim World (Overview), May 17, 2011." Pew Research Center. <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1997/international-poll-arab-spring-us-obama-image-muslim-publics> (May 19, 2011).
- . "Egyptians Embrace Revolt Leaders, Religious Parties and Military, as Well, April 25, 2011, 24." Pew Research Center.  
<http://pewglobal.org/files/2011/04/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Egypt-Report-FINAL-April-25-2011.pdf> (Accessed May 19, 2011).
- Al-Rasheed, Madawi. *A History of Saudi Arabia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Roth, Ken. "War in Iraq: Not a Humanitarian Intervention, January 24, 2004." Human Rights Watch. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2004/01/25/war-iraq-not-humanitarian-intervention> (accessed August 9, 2011).

- Rose, Gideon. "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy." *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (October 1998): 154.
- Ruben, Barry. "Lessons from Iran." *The Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 105-115.
- Sadiki, Larbi. "Bin Ali's Tunisia: Democracy by Non-Democratic Means." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 29, no. 1 (May 2002): 57-78.
- Scheuer, Michael. *Imperial Hubris: Why the West Is Losing the War on Terror*. Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2004.
- . *Marching Toward Hell: America and Islam after Iraq*. 2008. Reprint, New York: Free Press, 2009.
- . Preface to *Imperial Hubris: Why the West Is Losing the War on Terror*. Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2004.
- . *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2006.
- Schwedler, Jillian and Laryssa Chomiak. "And the Winner Is...: Authoritarian Elections in the Arab World." *Middle East Report* 36, no. 238 (Spring, 2006): 12-19.
- Shehata, Dina. "The Fall of the Pharaoh: How Hosni Mubarak's Reign Came to an End." *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (May-June 2011): 26-32.
- Socor, Vladimir. "Under NATO's Flag: An Interim Assessment of the Mission In Libya (Part One)." *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, August 5, 2011.  
[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5bswords%5d=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx\\_ttnews%5bany\\_of\\_the\\_words%5d=libya&tx\\_ttnews%5btt\\_news%5d=38286&tx\\_ttnews%5bbackPid%5d=7&cHash=73660e6726f3fa39d7b9a8456e390380](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5bswords%5d=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews%5bany_of_the_words%5d=libya&tx_ttnews%5btt_news%5d=38286&tx_ttnews%5bbackPid%5d=7&cHash=73660e6726f3fa39d7b9a8456e390380) (Accessed August 21, 2011).
- Socor, Vladimir. "Under NATO's Flag: An Interim Assessment of the Mission in Libya (Part Two)." *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, August 8, 2011.  
[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5bswords%5d=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx\\_ttnews%5bany\\_of\\_the\\_words%5d=libya&tx\\_ttnews%5btt\\_news%5d=38292&tx\\_ttnews%5bbackPid%5d=7&cHash=d822f80d4aaba9c08bdedcdfbfadef5f](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5bswords%5d=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews%5bany_of_the_words%5d=libya&tx_ttnews%5btt_news%5d=38292&tx_ttnews%5bbackPid%5d=7&cHash=d822f80d4aaba9c08bdedcdfbfadef5f) (Accessed August 21, 2011).
- Socor, Vladimir. "Under NATO's Flag: an Interim Assessment of the Mission in Libya (Part Three)." *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, August 9, 2011.  
[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5bswords%5d=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx\\_ttnews%5bany\\_of\\_the\\_words%5d=li](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5bswords%5d=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews%5bany_of_the_words%5d=li)

bya&tx\_ttnews%5btt\_news%5d=38295&tx\_ttnews%5bbackPid%5d=7&cHash=6b593696c322eff5884e8fd64ac33726 (Accessed August 21, 2011).

- Sterling-Folker, Jennifer., ed. *Making Sense of International Relations Theory*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006.
- St John, Ronald B. "Libya and the United States: A Faustian Pact." *Middle East Policy* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 133-148.
- U.S. Congressional Research Service. "Afghanistan: Current Issues and U.S. Policy, June 13, 2003." 5. by Kenneth Katzman. Order Code RL30588. <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/21853.pdf> (accessed March 12, 2011).
- U.S. Department of Defense. "Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication, September, 23, 2004." <http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/ADA428770.pdf> (accessed July 1, 2010).
- VOA News. "Clinton Says US Losing Media War in Afghanistan, Pakistan, May 20, 2009." Voice of America. <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/a-13-2009-05-20-voa51-68815317.html> (Accessed June 19, 2009).
- Voll, John O. *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World*. 1982. Reprint, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994.
- Walt, Stephen M. *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy*. 2002. Reprint, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006.
- . "Testing Theories of Alliance Formation: The Case of Southwest Asia." *International Organization* 42, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 275-316.
- Wiktorowicz, Quintan, ed. *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004.
- Wright, Lawrence. *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006.
- Wynbrandt, James. *A Brief History of Saudi Arabia*. New York: Fact On File, 2004.
- Zoubir, Yahia H. "Libya and Europe: Economic Realism at the Rescue of the Qaddafi Authoritarian Regime." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 17, no. 3 (December 2009): 401-415.

