

The Arab Spring story in a nutshell: Fake springs, post-modern coup d'état

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Within the first few months of 2011, the United States and its allies lost three loyal “friends”: Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and Saad Hariri in Lebanon. While Mubarak and Ali were driven out of power by widespread popular uprisings, Hariri was ousted by the parliament.

Inspired by these liberating developments, pro-democracy rebellions against autocratic rulers (and their Western backers) soon spread to other countries such as Bahrain, Yemen, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

As these revolutionary developments tended to politically benefit the “axis of resistance” (consisting of Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas) in the Middle East, the US-Israeli “axis of aggression” and their client states in the region mounted an all-out counterrevolutionary offensive.

Caught off-guard by the initial wave of the Arab Spring in Egypt and Tunisia, the US and its allies struck back with a vengeance. They employed a number of simultaneous tactics to sabotage the Arab Spring. These included: (1) instigating fake instances of the Arab Spring in countries that were/are headed by insubordinate regimes such as those ruling Iran, Syria and Libya; (2) co-opting revolutionary movements in countries such as Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen; (3) crushing pro-democracy movements against “friendly” regimes ruling countries such as Bahrain, Jordan and Saudi Arabia “before they get out of hand,” as they did in Egypt and Tunisia; and (4) using the age-old divide and rule trick by playing the sectarian trump card of Sunnis vs. Shi’ites, or Iranians vs. Arabs.

1. Fake springs, post-modern coup d'états

Soon after being caught by surprise by the glorious uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, the counterrevolutionary forces headed by the United States embarked on damage control. A major strategy in pursuit of this objective has been to foment civil war and regime change in “unfriendly” places, and then portray them as part of the Arab Spring.

The scheme works like this: arm and train opposition groups within the “unfriendly” country, instigate violent rebellion with the help of covert mercenary forces under the guise of fighting for democracy; and when government forces attempt to quell the thus-nurtured armed insurrection, accuse them of human rights violations, and begin to embark openly and self-righteously on the path of regime change in the name of “responsibility to protect” the human rights.

As the “weakest link” in the chain of governments thus slated to be changed, Gaddafi’s

regime became the first target. It is now altogether common knowledge that contrary to the spontaneous, unarmed and peaceful protest demonstrations in Egypt, Tunisia and Bahrain, the rebellion in Libya was nurtured, armed and orchestrated largely from abroad. Indeed, evidence shows that plans of regime change in Libya were drawn long before the overt onset of the actual civil war. [1]

It is likewise common knowledge that, like the rebellion in Libya, the insurgency in Syria has been neither spontaneous nor peaceful. From the outset it has been armed, trained and organized by the US and its allies. Similar to the attack on Libya, the Arab League and Turkey have been at the forefront of the onslaught on Syria. Also like the Libyan case, there is evidence that preparations for war on Syria had been actively planned long before the actual start of the armed rebellion, which is branded as a case of the Arab Spring. [2]

Dr Christof Lehmann, a keen observer of geopolitical developments in the Middle East, has coined the term “post-modern coup d’etats” to describe the recent North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-Zionist agenda of regime change in the region. The term refers to an elaborate combination of covert operations, overt military interventions, and “soft-power” tactics a la Gene Sharp:

“A network of think tanks, endowments, funds and foundations, which are behind the overt destabilization of targeted sovereign nations. Their narratives in public policy and for public consumption are deceptive and persuasive. Often they specifically target and co-opt progressive thinkers, media and activists. The product is almost invariably a post-modern coup d’ tat. Depending on the chosen hybridization and the resilience of government, social structures and populations perceived need for reform, the product can be more or less overtly violent. The tactics can be so subtle, involving human rights organizations and the United Nations that they are difficult to comprehend. However subtle they are, the message to the targeted government is invariably ‘go or be gone’”. [3]

It is no secret that the ultimate goal of the policy of regime change in the Middle East is to replace the Iranian government with a “client regime” similar to most other regime in the region. Whether the policy will succeed in overthrowing the Syrian government and embarking on a military strike against Iran remains to be seen. One thing is clear, however: the ominous consequences of a military adventure against Iran would be incalculable. It is bound to create a regional (and even very likely global) war.

2. Revolts co-opted

When the Arab Spring broke out in Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen, the US and its allies initially tried to keep their proxy rulers Hosni Mubarak, Ben Ali and Abdullah Saleh in power as long as possible. Once the massive and persistent uprisings made the continued rule of these loyal autocrats untenable, however, the US and its allies changed tactics: reluctantly letting go of Mubarak, Ali and Saleh while trying to preserve the socioeconomic structures and the military regimes they had fostered during the long periods of their dictatorial rule.

Thus, while losing three client dictators, the US and its allies have succeeded (so far) in preserving the three respective client states. With the exception of a number of formalistic elections that are designed to co-opt opposition groups (like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt) and give legitimacy to military rulers, not much else has changed in these countries. In Egypt, for example, the NATO/Israel-backed military junta of the Mubarak era, which now

rules Egypt in collaboration with Muslim Brotherhood, has become increasingly as repressive toward the reform movement that gave birth to the Arab Spring as it was under Mubarak.

Economic, military and geopolitical policies of the new regimes in these countries are crafted as much in consultation with the United States and its allies as they were under the three autocratic rulers that were forced to leave the political scene. The new regimes are also collaborating with the US and its allies in bringing about “regime change” in Syria and Iran, just as they helped overthrow the regime of Gaddafi in Libya.

3. Nipping the buds

A third tactic to contain the Arab Spring has been the withering repression of peaceful pro-democracy movements in countries headed by US proxy regimes in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and other kingdoms in the Persian Gulf area before those movements grow “out of hand,” as they did in Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen. Thus, in collaboration with its Western patrons, Saudi Arabia has over the past year cracked down viciously against peaceful protesters not only within its own borders but also in the neighboring country of Bahrain. Leading the invasion militaries of the Persian Gulf kingdoms into Bahrain last spring, the armed forces of Saudi Arabia continue with the support of Western powers to brutalize peaceful pro-democracy protesters there.

While the Saudi, Qatari and other Persian Gulf regimes have been playing the vanguard role in the US-Israeli axis of aggression against “unfriendly” regimes, NATO forces headed by the Pentagon have been busy behind the scene to train their “security” forces, to broker weapons sale to their repressive regimes, and to build ever more military bases in their territories.

“As state security forces across the region cracked down on democratic dissent, the Pentagon also repeatedly dispatched American troops on training missions to allied militaries there. During more than 40 such operations with names like Eager Lion and Friendship Two that sometimes lasted for weeks or months at a time, they taught Middle Eastern security forces the finer points of counterinsurgency, small unit tactics, intelligence gathering, and information operations – skills crucial to defeating popular uprisings.

...

These recurrent joint-training exercises, seldom reported in the media and rarely mentioned outside the military, constitute the core of an elaborate, longstanding system that binds the Pentagon to the militaries of repressive regimes across the Middle East”. [4]

These truly imperialistic policies and practices show, once again, that the claims of the United States and its allies that their self-righteous adventures of “regime change” in the Greater Middle East are designed to defend human rights and foster democracy are simply laughable.

4. Divide and conquer: Sunni versus Shi’ite

One of the tactics to crush the peaceful pro-democracy movements in the Arab-Muslim countries ruled by the US client regimes is to portray these movements as “sectarian” Shi’ite insurgencies. This age-old divide-and-rule tactic is most vigorously pursued in Bahrain, where the destruction of the Shi’ite mosques is rightly viewed as part of the regime’s cynical policy of “humiliating the Shi’ite” in order “to make them take revenge on Sunnis,” thereby hoping to prove that the uprising is a sectarian one.[5]

Quoting Nabeel Rajab, who describes himself as secular with both Sunni and Shi'ite family relatives, reporter Finian Cunningham writes: "The government is attempting to incite divisive sectarian tensions, to intimidate Sunni people into not supporting the pro-democracy movement because it is being presented as a Shia [Shi'ite] movement."

Cunningham further writes: "The targeting of the Shia is a tactic by the regime to distort the pro-democracy movement from a nationalist one into a sectarian one. It is also a way of undermining international support for the pro-democracy movement by trying to present it as an internal problem of the state dealing with 'troublesome Shia'. In this way, the Bahraini uprising is being made to appear as something different from the uprisings for democracy that have swept the region" [5].

In brief, the magnificent Arab Spring that started in Egypt and Tunisia in the early 2011 has been brutally derailed, distorted and contained by an all-out counter-offensive orchestrated by Western powers and their allies in the Greater Middle East, especially Israel, Turkey and the Arab League. How long this containment of democratic and national liberation aspirations of the Arab/Muslim masses will continue, no one can tell. One thing is clear, however: the success of the Arab (or any other) Spring in the less-developed, semi-colonial world is integrally intertwined with the success of the so-called 99% in the more-developed, imperialist world in achieving the goal of defeating the austerity policies of the 1%, reallocating significant portions of the colossal military spending to social spending, and enjoying a standard of living worthy of human dignity.

In subtle and roundabout ways, imperialist wars of choice and military adventures abroad are reflections, or proxies, of domestic fights over allocation of national resources: only by inventing new (and never ending) enemies and engaging in permanent wars abroad can the powerful beneficiaries of war and militarism fend off the "peace dividends" and enjoy the substantial "war dividends" at home.

In the fight for peace and economic justice, perhaps the global 99% can take a cue from the global 1%: just as the ruling 1% coordinate their policies of military aggression and economic austerity on an international level, so can (and should) the worldwide 99% coordinate their response to those brutal policies internationally. Only through a coordinated cross-border struggle for peace and economic justice can the workers and other popular masses bring the worldwide production of goods and provision of services to a standstill, and restructure the status quo for a better world – a world in which the products of human labor and the bounties of Nature could benefit all.

Notes

1. Michel Chossudovsky, *When War Games Go Live*.
2. See, for example, Dr Christof Lehmann, *The Manufacturing of the War on Syria*.
3. Dr Christof Lehmann, *The National Counsel of Syria and US Unconventional Warfare*.
4. Nick Turse, *Did the Pentagon Help Strangle the Arab Spring?*
5. Finian Cunningham, *Bahraini Rulers Play sectarian card in Bid to Trump Pro-democracy Movement*.

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