

The War on Terrorism Provides the Basis for Demonizing the Muslims

Interview with Michel Chossudovsky

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TEHRAN (FNA)- A world-renowned Canadian scholar says that the project of War on Terror was launched with a view to demonize the Muslim nations and then dominate their vast oil reserves.

Prof. Michel Chossudovsky is of the opinion that the United States created the terrorist cult Al-Qaeda and is now pretending to be fighting and eradicating it while in effect funding and assisting it. He also believes that the United States has been responsible for the demise of democracy in several Asian and Latin American nations through waging unprompted wars and coups against the democratic governments in such countries as Chile, Argentina, Guatemala and Brazil.

According to Prof. Chossudovsky, the Western mainstream media uphold the United States as committed to democracy and human rights, "when in fact the United States in its various military interventions around the world, not to mention the numerous coup d'états in Latin America, Asia and elsewhere has been involved in crimes against humanity on a very large scale."

Michel Chossudovsky is a Canadian economist and a professor emeritus of economics at the University of Ottawa. He is the founder and director of the Montreal-based Centre for Research on Globalisation. He has extensively written on the US foreign policy, the War on Terror, human rights, the rights of ethnic minorities and nuclear proliferation.

Prof. Chossudovsky has authored several books the latest of which entitled "Towards a World War III Scenario: The Dangers of Nuclear War" was published in 2012. His articles and writings have usually been featured in the Project Censored's "Top 25 Most Censored Stories of the Year."

In an in-depth interview with Fars News Agency, Prof. Chossudovsky explained his viewpoints on the decline of the American democracy, the violation of human rights in the United States and the War on Terror scenario. The following is the text of the interview.

Q: Do you believe that the political establishment in the United States has been formed on the basis of liberal values? Is the US government committed to liberalism?

A: I think we have to distinguish between the doctrine of liberalism and democracy which is entrenched in the US Constitution and the actual practice of liberalism. In effect, the US state system even from the very outset was based on oppression. It was characterized initially by slave labor economy and subsequently, it led also to a process which some authors characterize as genocide directed against the indigenous people of North America

also known as the First Nation. If we look at more recent history, particularly in the post-9/11 period, we see a clear evolution toward a police state apparatus whereby fundamental civil rights are being derogated upon; we see the militarization of justice and law enforcement, and if we look at the economic dimensions, we see the adoption of policies which tend to violate the fundamental notions of liberalism namely the so-called neo-liberal reforms, which have been applied worldwide and are also applied in the United States and are now leading to the elimination of essential social services, health, education and impoverishment of the American population.

Q: So, you believe that the United States has failed to realize the ambitions of its Founding Fathers who wanted to create a democratic state in which people could determine their own fate in a free and liberal way and take part in the major decision-making process?

A: I think that those principles which were announced by the Founding Fathers, may have served to protect the rights of individuals and the cause of the human beings in certain regards, but essentially they constitute a smokescreen because the US government does not function in accordance with the principles laid out in the constitution, and I don't think they've ever functioned that way. When dealing essentially with what we might call authoritarian democracy, institutions of the US Congress, the judiciary and the executive branch with its various departments constitute the façade of the representative government, but in actuality, there's no representative government and we know that in the present context, most of the members of the US Congress, the Senate are there because they have been supported by powerful corporate lobby groups.

The same is true for the President of the United States. The US President doesn't actually take decisions, he obeys orders. He is doomed to serve the interests of the corporate establishment. So, there's no avenue whereby only citizens can be represented by the US government. Of course as a functioning of the political system, the head of state has to be very careful to serve or at least to appear to be serving the broad interests of the public, so it is what might be described as the populist elements that enter into the discourse, but essentially what I'm saying is that if you take President Obama, he doesn't decide on anything. He is the head of state, he is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, but the policies are decided elsewhere; they're decided in corporate boardrooms, in Wall Street, they're decided by what President Eisenhower called the military-industrial complex which are the large defense contractors.

These defense conglomerates ultimately also have a voice in the formulation of the US foreign policy and US foreign policy pertaining to military operations. So we have a political system that is overshadowed by very powerful corporate interests. We see in the area of finance how appointments to the Treasury or the Federal Reserve boards are from major financial institutions such as JP Morgan Chase or Goldman Sachs; we see how politicians in essence of serving of those interests, overlap with the economic interests, and I would say that in essence, we have the fiction of democracy and at the same time, we have a camouflage whereby the media primarily continue to portray the workings of the democratic system when in fact the choices offered by the so-called democratic system are extremely limited, whether it's a Republican president or it's a Democrat. And, in that regard, the media serve those as instruments of internal propaganda, which oppose the fiction of the American dream of equality and social responsibility, and internationally those media are instruments of war propaganda.

It upholds the United States as committed to democracy and human rights when in fact the

United States in its various military interventions around the world, not to mention the numerous coup d'états in Latin America, Asia and elsewhere has been involved in crimes against humanity on a very large scale, if we look at the history of the post-World War II period starting with the Korean War, not to mention the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima, the Vietnam War, the mass killings in Indonesia which was ordered by CIA, the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and not to mention Syria, all these wars are parts of the foreign policy agenda of the US government and they are presented as being projects of democratization whereby the US in essence is responding to the notion of "responsibility to protect" which is a pretext for military intervention. We saw how that notion was adopted in relation to NATO's intervention in Libya.

Q: You know that the US Presidents usually use the term "the beacon of freedom" to refer to their country and to say that the United States is a promoter of human rights, democracy, freedom and liberal values across the world. Has the United States been successful in exporting these values which it deems belong to it?

A: The Presidents claim that the United States is expanding democracy across the world. But if you look at the history, you see exactly the opposite. As a fact that that idea still sustained in people's minds, it's because the media have camouflaged the actual undertakings of US foreign policy around the world, including its various military operations. Now, we don't need to go back too far in history; we could refer to the Korean War. 30% of the population of North Korea was killed during the Korean War. We could mention the Vietnam War. But we can also mention the numerous coup d'états which were implemented in different countries, especially in Latin America and Central America, whereby democratic governments were displaced as a result of CIA-sponsored military coups.

In effect, you could look at Guatemala, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, etc. In all these countries, the United States intervened to install what vividly were non-democratic forms of government, or in other words, military governments. And that should provide an indication of what the United States is actually doing. It's not supporting democracy; it's intervening to actually crush democracy and crush any sovereign government which might emerge. And this is the systematic *modus operandi* throughout the world which has been implemented either through military interventions or through covert means by attempting to overthrow a government and replace it with a proxy government which would obey all the orders of the United States.

Chile in 1973 is a good example of a democracy which was overthrown and a military regime was installed under President Augusto Pinochet. I'm familiar with that period and how the events unfolded. I can also mention that in the immediate coup on September 11, 1973, the price of bread went up from 11 to 40 as a result of the implementation of new liberal reforms, namely strong economic medicine, and so there's always an economic counterpart to these regime changes.

In Argentina, in 1976, when I was also teaching in a northern city, in the immediate wake of the coup, the wages were frozen, the people were impoverished and fundamental human rights were violated. This was a US-sponsored coup and in the wake of the coup, we had the launching of what was called the "Dirty War" which consisted of assassinating people who were against the dictatorship, especially people on the left, and that was described as the process of disappearing which took place in several Latin American countries under the CIA operation called Operation Condor. Now, if we acknowledge the history of US interventionism, we can see the criminal nature of this agenda.

The issue is that, the United States had never shown its face directly in the military coup. In the military coups in Argentina and Chile, the United States officially had nothing to do with them, but its intelligence agencies have been involved and they would also establish links with the new government as occurred in many Latin American countries. Then you have the killings in Indonesia which led to a regime change and the demise of the Sukarno government at a time when many examples in the history showed that the United States had supported non-democratic forms of government, and that the United States has been involved in illegal forms of violation of international law leading to the destruction of the entire country which is certainly true in Afghanistan and Iraq and that it has also been conducting and supporting devastating economic measures which have led to the impoverishment of millions of people. I'm talking about the so-called IMF and World Bank reforms which have been spearheaded by the US and also through the links to Wall Street, and the fact that the creditors have imposed devastating reforms on those countries which have served essentially to destroy those countries. Now if we look at Africa, we may have democracies in name, but in fact we have a whole continent which is impoverished. I should mention that as of 1980s and 1990s, the United States ceased to install dictatorships as it has been the case in an earlier period, and started to install so-called democracies that in effect have only been a façade. It was called regime change, and subsequently called color revolution, including intervening in the election process; you co-opt the candidate, you have the right candidate elected and essentially, what the United States was doing was installing the contours of a new colonial form of government whereby countries would be integrated into the US sphere of influence, and the heads of state of these countries would obey orders from Washington.

And if we look at the world today, with a few exceptions, most countries of the world, particularly in the developing world, have lost their sovereignty. They've lost their political sovereignty but also their economic sovereignty, because they have to obey the orders of the creditors and have to implement the reforms which are proposed to them by the IMF and the World Bank.

Q: You mentioned the history of the US military interventions in other countries and that it has planned several revolutions and coups across the world; however, the US statesmen usually justify these interventions with the idea of "humanitarian intervention", that is to launch a military strike against a country at war in order to prevent it from "killing its own people." This is what happened in Syria, Libya and other places in the recent history. What do you think about this notion, its basis, legality and justifiability?

A: There's absolutely no legality in intervening militarily in a sovereign country, irrespective of the conduct of the governments in relation to their own people. That's a basic tenet of international law. But I should mention that the United States intervened in Libya, with a view to destabilizing Libya as a nation-state and steal its oil reserves. Libya has 3.5% of global oil and gas reserves while the United States has barely 2%. Their objective was ultimately to establish a proxy regime using the so-called Islamist forces but in effect the so-called rebels were trained by CIA. They are presented as Al-Qaeda affiliated entities but actually we know that Al-Qaeda is a creation of the US intelligence going back to the Soviet-Afghan War.

So, in effect what has been done was to initiate an insurgency which was backed by Western Special Forces, bomb the country and then present it as a humanitarian endeavor. The only way we can portray this as a humanitarian endeavor is through the Western corporate media to present it that way and convey the idea that killing people is a

humanitarian undertaking. And that's precisely what happened. The Western media and main corporate news outlets including print press and television presented and demonized the head of state, in this case Muammar Gaddafi, and upheld the terrorists as freedom fighters and they then presented the transition as a move toward democracy when in fact everything in Libya indicated that this was a move toward the destruction of an entire country, its institutions and in other words, its transformation from a country into a territory and then into an object of investment as well as looting its natural resources, which in this special case is oil. That's the background.

In Syria, the United States and its allies have supported an insurgency right from the day one. In Daraa, middle of March 2011, this was not a protest movement, it was not the case that they were opposition groups within Syria; this was an insurrection. The mercenaries were trained and recruited in the Persian Gulf states, financed by the Western military alliance and were involved in countless atrocities which were casually blamed on the government. That, in essence, has been the modus operandi of the United States. It supports these Al-Qaeda affiliated rebels, sends them in, they kill people, and then the government is blamed and the actual architects of this military operation and intelligence operations are never identified.

The Al-Qaeda affiliated rebels, who committed atrocities in Syria, are not responsible for those acts. They are hired-killers; I think we have to understand that very carefully. Previously, they wouldn't say that they were responsible. They would simply say that it was the government that is responsible for the killings. Now, they will acknowledge because the information is getting out that it is the rebels who are responsible. I would say that the rebels are the instruments of the Western military alliance; who is behind the rebels is the United States and its allies, operating through various complex channels? But essentially the notion conveyed by the US government, which is picked up by the media, that the United States is intervening with a view to restoring democracy to save the people's lives is an absolute fallacy. It's a big lie, because those lies have been lost as a result of the failure of the US interventionism; in the case of Syria, the objective is not only to destabilize the government; it's to destroy the country, to destabilize the whole country and then take it as a territory. That's what is stated.

If we go back to the liberal doctrine of the United States of America and its commitment to democracy, we find it a fallacy and a fig democracy. In fact the tendency, in America and many Western countries, is toward the militarization of justice and derogation of fundamental human rights, both nationally and internationally. That is something which has emerged now and it's a motif and an object of debate in the United States, when the decision taken by the US Congress to the effect that the head of state, President Obama, can actually order the assassination of US citizens. In other words, the process of extrajudicial killings is allowed by the US Congress under the guise of the so-called War on Terrorism. So, the War on Terrorism which in effect constitutes an ideological construct to justify all these actions permits the head of state to designate individuals who can be killed. And we see that the United States is now involved in drone assassinations in north of Pakistan under the pretext that this is a War on Terrorism while in effect it's killing the civilians.

So in effect, for the US Congress to actually allow the head of state to order the extrajudicial assassination of American citizens means that we are in effect within the contours of a police state where literally the more fundamental issues of law, justice and human rights have been scrapped.

Q: What do you think about the rights and civil liberties of the ethnic and religious minorities in the United States especially the Muslims and the African Americans? What's your assessment of the way the government treats them? Are they enjoying equal rights with the other strata of the society?

A: First of all, the rights of the African American population have historical roots. There's of course discrimination in the workplace, but there's fundamentally discrimination in the sense that the African Americans don't have access to the same education and healthcare as the white population has. I think that is one issue.

The issue of discrimination directed against Muslims, not only in the United States, but in different parts of the Western world, is another thing. I think the logic there is somewhat different. Because we are, first of all, dealing with an imperial agenda which consists of conquering the world's oil and gas reserves. Now it just so happens that more than 60% of the oil and gas reserves lies in the Muslim lands. If we look at the geography, we have 60% of these reserves in the Middle East which spans from the tip of Saudi Arabia to the Caspian Sea basin where major producers are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Iran, UAE and Qatar. There are oil and gas resources which are very large compared to those of the Western countries combined. That reaches more than 30 times the conventional oil reserves of the United States.

Now let me get back to the issue of discrimination against Muslims in the United States. That discrimination is based on a foreign policy objective, that is, to demonize the inhabitants of the countries where the oil happens to be. If those countries were inhabited by Buddhists instead of Muslims, they would demonize the Buddhists. The demonization of the Muslims is to essentially present Muslims as enemies of the States, and as enemies of the world. It's also to convey the notion that Muslims are terrorists, and that notion has been firmly ingrained into the Western thought while in fact terrorism is a creation of US intelligence. As I mentioned, Al-Qaeda which has its roots in Salafist and Wahhabi thought, in essence is a creation of intelligence operations and doesn't emanate from Muslim world. The War on Terrorism provides the basis for demonizing the Muslim population and we've gone through a period of transition in that regard because initially, the demonization applies to heads of state and government of the Muslim countries, and now it has become much more generalized where Western governments are in effect targeting Muslims in their respective countries with a view to demonizing them and portraying them as terrorists and so on, and all this is all a war propaganda.

This propaganda is there to divide people in these countries and create divisions within the United States. But secondly, it's to portray the notion that Muslims somehow are people who are committed to non-Western values, committed to dictatorship, don't accept democracy, are linked to extremists including terrorists; that is not directed against the heads of state of Muslim countries; it's directed against Muslims in general; that in turn serves as an ideological underpinning to which these wars against terrorists in different parts of the world are underway. And I just like to clarify in that regard, that wherever the United States has intervened, in the context of War Terrorism, whether in Somalia, Nigeria, Iraq, Afghanistan or Syria, they have intervened under the mandate of the War on Terrorism where in fact all those Al-Qaeda affiliated entities are the creations of the US intelligence, without exception. They create Al-Qaeda entities and then they proclaim that they have to intervene when these Al-Qaeda affiliated entities commit atrocities against the civilian population.

So, in effect, they're on both sides. They support the rebels, and fight the rebels, as well.

They support Al-Qaeda covertly with a view to destabilize the sovereign countries, and then they intervene under the pretext that they have a mandate to fight the terrorists. All of this is now leading to the re-colonization of African continent, establishment of proxy regimes and destruction of entire countries.

Q: So, my final question for you; we discussed the decline of the liberal values in the United States, including democracy, human rights and ethnic equality and concluded that the United States hasn't succeeded in promoting these values. Do you think that liberalism will have the same fate and destiny as Communism? Will it fade away as Communism did?

A: I don't think the two things are comparable, because Communism was a movement. It took on different forms, but was essentially a movement which emanated from the grassroots against the capitalist order. Neo-liberalism is an ideological construct to justify the capitalist world order, and I don't think that it's an ideological construct which determined the course of history. We can replace that ideological construct by something else. I think what has happened in post-World War II history is that in the course of the Cold War, the United States has heralded the battle or the war against communism. In effect, as a holy war, it was a confrontation between competing economic and social systems, but from the US standpoint, it was presented as an ideology of spreading Western democracy. But it was spreading Western democracy while also spreading American capitalism. In the post-Cold War era, a new doctrine was unfolded which is the War on Terrorism, and it is used as a pretext to wage war against countries for economic and geopolitical reasons.

I would suspect that the doctrine of neo-liberalism may be replaced by some other concepts, because these are in effect labels; the labels to justify a world order, and the world order has to be camouflaged. The nature of capitalism is its devastating impacts both from an economic and a social point of view, as well as its various wars that underlie the capitalist system; they have to be camouflaged. And the world capitalism system has to be presented as a viable humanitarian undertaking, and I think what is now happening is that this capitalist system has entered a period of advanced crisis whereby the so-called welfare state which developed in the post World War period in the Western countries is now being replaced by the most brutal forms of economic management whereby austerity measures are being presented as a solution to crises where in fact they are the cause of the crisis. They will to further impoverishment of the population.

Interview by Kourosh Ziabari

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