

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://original.antiwar.com/eland/2016/02/29/back-future-afghanistan-iraq-now-libya/print/>

Back to the Future: Afghanistan, Iraq, and Now Libya

By Ivan Eland
February 29, 2016

The 2016 presidential campaign so far has given us a Hillary Clinton, the former Secretary of State, who takes no responsibility for Islamic State's rapid gains in Libya in the wake of the American-led "coup-by-air" to remove Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, and a Republican Party who wants to blame President Obama for the continuing messes in Afghanistan and Iraq. Although there are many things to worry about with Donald Trump – a neo-fascist tendency to scapegoat Muslims and immigrants and just general demagoguery – he did do the country a great service by reminding it of George W. Bush's responsibility for allowing the 9/11 attacks to happen on his watch, for retaliating with a war in Afghanistan that got bogged down in "nation-building," and then for lying the country into an unrelated aggressive invasion of Iraq that ultimately led to the creation of al Qaeda in Iraq and its successor – the even more brutal Islamic state. Now President Obama, who foolishly caved in to Hillary's pressure to oust Gaddafi in the first place, is now thinking about going back into Libya, as he has into Iraq (adding a bombing campaign against the Islamic State in Syria to boot), to clean up a previously American-made mess.

Have we cited enough idiotic decisions from American politicians yet? No, we really need to start back at the beginning of the encouragement of modern radical Islam and its propagation. Militant strains of Islam have existed for centuries in faraway reaches of the globe but never really bothered the United States too much. However, during the Cold War, it seemed like a great idea at the time to use any movement with a distaste for communism to counter the U.S. archrival Soviet Union. The Saud family, who runs Saudi Arabia, had long made a pact with

fundamentalist Wahhabi strain of Islam in order to stay in power. Saudi Arabia has exported this militant Islam overseas by creating madrassas, or Islamic schools, in many Sunni Islamic countries around the world. The anti-communist Saudis were a staunch U.S.-ally during the Cold War; they helped the United States – under presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan – fund and support the militant Islamic Mujahideen guerrillas fighting the Soviet-backed government in Afghanistan during the 1980s. The Soviets were concerned about radical Islam spreading to the oppressed Muslim populations within their own empire. Emboldened by the victory of the Mujahideen against a superpower and as an outgrowth of that strengthened movement, Osama bin Laden created al Qaeda, the perpetrator of 9/11 and other substantial anti-U.S. attacks. Bin Laden had seen how a terrorist attack by the Shi'ite group Hezbollah on the U.S. Marine barracks in Lebanon had caused Reagan to retreat under fire by withdrawing U.S. forces from that nation in the early 1980s (Reagan never should have sent U.S. forces there in the first place). Bin Laden's primary gripe with the United States – and also the burr in the bonnet of derivative groups, such as al Qaeda in Iraq and the Islamic state, and other Islamist groups that have attacked the United States, such as Hezbollah and the Pakistani Taliban – is non-Muslim attacks or occupation of Muslim soil. Thus, U.S.-led military interventions in the Islamic world are a magnet for retaliation by radical jihadists everywhere, just as the non-Muslim Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was during the 1980s.

U.S., Western, and Soviet/Russian intervention in the Middle East didn't create radical Islam but it does cause its retaliatory attacks to boomerang on these countries. For example, it was no coincidence that Paris was recently chosen as the focus of Islamic State attacks. France – a former colonial power in Africa and the Middle East, including Syria – has recently been a U.S.-sidekick in military meddling in those regions. France invaded Mali to put down Islamists and pressured the United States to do the behind-the-scenes heavy lifting in getting rid of Gaddafi in Libya. The fact that Western, usually U.S.-led, military interventions in Islamic countries – in at least seven such nations since 9/11 – lead to blowback terrorism from the increasing, and increasingly radical, hordes of willing jihadists streaming into these conflicts is conveniently swept under the rug by Western, and especially American, media.

Such media complicity occurs because of their buy-in to America's maintenance of an informal global empire through the use of armed intervention and their reluctance to tell the people what they don't want to hear – that their own government has endangered them by being responsible for the growth of increasingly militant radical Islamic terrorism. The popularity of candidates Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, and Bernie Sanders, who are somewhat less interventionist than their "mainstream" brethren, and the success of non-interventionist Ron Paul in the previous election cycle indicate that the continuing quagmires of Afghanistan and Iraq/Syria and the potential new U.S. quagmire of Libya are raising the eyebrows of at least some Americans.

Perhaps more Americans should be awakened about the Libyan situation. Radical Islamist recruits from Africa now are being channeled by the Islamic State's Syrian leadership away from Iraq and Syria and into Libya to form another "caliphate" around the town of Surt. (This whack-a-mole problem of ever-mobile terrorists is similar to the U.S. government's futile attempts to interdict ever-changing drug shipment routes into the United States.) American intelligence now says that the Libyan branch of Islamic State is the most dangerous of its eight affiliates. Obama is already considering escalatory U.S. military options in Libya after an American air strike there

to kill militants who had murdered tourists in neighboring Tunisia. Like Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, Libya is not a real country – with the eastern part having an historical affinity to Egypt and the western part to Tunisia. So then why did the non-Muslim United States attack these Muslim dictatorships – which was the only way they could be held together – thus inflaming ever more radical jihadists to "fight the (super)power"?

If we ignore all that went before (we shouldn't), after 9/11, George W. Bush had the best excuse in attacking Afghanistan, but had he been smart he would have continued surgical attacks and raids to decimate al Qaeda, but would have avoided overthrowing the Taliban and occupying the country to remodel that chronically unstable nation. And of course, he shouldn't have waved a red flag in front of the Islamists by perpetrating an unrelated and unnecessary invasion of the Islamic nation of Iraq. And President Obama and Hillary should have looked at the chaos in Iraq caused by overthrowing the dictator holding it together and avoided making the same stupid mistake in Libya.

All water under the bridge as many Republicans say? Yet we need to understand the water so that we don't continue to drown in ever deeper currents. The Islamic State is only a limited threat to the United States; it has had difficulty recruiting American Muslims to go to Iraq and Syria for military training and thus has to rely on inspiring amateur and often incompetent "lone wolf" attackers already in the United States. If the United States wants to reduce the limited threat of blowback anti-American terrorism from radical Islamists, it should drastically reduce, not increase, its military interventions in Islamic countries. If doubt exists about whether a less interventionist policy overseas will work in lessening this threat to America, remember that Hezbollah of Lebanon, perhaps still the most capable Islamist group in the world, gradually attenuated its anti-U.S. attacks after the United States withdrew from Lebanon in the early 1980s.