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America's Strategic Repression of the 'Arab Awakening'

North Africa and the Global Political Awakening, Part 2

by Andrew Gavin Marshall
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Overview

In Part 1 of this series, I analyzed the changing nature of the Arab world, in experiencing an uprising as a result of the 'Global Political Awakening.' Ultimately, I assessed that these could potentially be the birth pangs of a global revolution; however, the situation is more complicated than it appears on the surface.

While the uprisings spreading across the Arab world have surprised many observers, the same could not be said for the American foreign policy and strategic establishment. A popular backlash against American-supported dictatorships and repressive regimes has been anticipated for a number of years, with arch-hawk geopolitical strategist Zbigniew Brzezinski articulating a broad conception of a 'Global Political Awakening' taking place, in which the masses of the world (predominantly the educated, exploited and impoverished youth of the 'Third World') have become acutely aware of their subjugation, inequality, exploitation and oppression. This 'Awakening' is largely driven by the revolution in information, technology and communication, including radio, television, but most especially the Internet and social media. Brzezinski had accurately identified this 'Awakening' as the greatest threat to elite interests regionally, but also internationally, with America sitting on top of the global hierarchy.

This spurred on the development of an American strategy in the Arab world, modeled on similar strategies pursued in recent decades in other parts of the world, in promoting “democratization,” by developing close contacts with ‘civil society’ organizations, opposition leaders, media sources, and student organizations. The aim is not to promote an organic Arab democracy ‘of the people, and for the people,’ but rather to promote an evolutionary “democratization” in which the old despots of American strategic support are removed in favour of a neoliberal democratic system, in which the outward visible institutions of democracy are present (multi-party elections, private media, parliaments, constitutions, active civil society, etc); yet, the power-holders within that domestic political system remain subservient to U.S. economic and strategic interests, continuing to follow the dictates of the IMF and World Bank, supporting America’s military hegemony in the region, and “opening up” the Arab economies to be “integrated” into the world economy. Thus, “democratization” becomes an incredibly valuable strategy for maintaining hegemony; a modern re-hash of “Let them eat cake!” Give the people the ‘image’ of democracy and establish and maintain a co-dependent relationship with the new elite. Thus, democracy for the people becomes an exercise in futility, where people’s ‘participation’ becomes about voting between rival factions of elites, who all ultimately follow the orders of Washington.

This strategy also has its benefit for the maintenance of American power in the region. While dictators have their uses in geopolitical strategy, they can often become too independent of the imperial power and seek to determine the course of their country separate from U.S. interests, and are subsequently much more challenging to remove from power (i.e., Saddam Hussein). With a “democratized” system, changing ruling parties and leaders becomes much easier, by simply calling elections and supporting opposition parties. Bringing down a dictator is always a more precarious situation than “changing the guard” in a liberal democratic system.

However, again, the situation in the Arab world is still more complicated than this brief overview, and American strategic concerns must take other potentialities into consideration. While American strategists were well aware of the growing threat to stability in the region, and the rising discontent among the majority of the population, the strategists tended to identify the aim as “democratization” through evolution, not revolution. In this sense, the uprisings across the Arab world pose a major strategic challenge for America. While ties have been made with civil society and other organizations, they haven’t all necessarily had the ability to be firmly entrenched, organized and mobilized. In short, it would appear that America was perhaps unprepared for uprisings to take place this soon. The sheer scale and rapid growth of the protests and uprisings makes the situation all the more complicated, since they are not dealing with one nation alone, but rather an entire region (arguably one of, if not the most strategically important region in the world), and yet they must assess and engage the situation on a country-by-country basis.

One danger arises in a repeat in the Arab world of the trends advanced in Latin America over the past decade: namely, the growth of populist democracy. The protests have brought together a wide array of society – civil society, students, the poor, Islamists, opposition leaders, etc. – and so America, with ties to many of these sectors (overtly and covertly), must now make many choices in regards of who to support.

Another incredibly important factor to take into consideration is military intervention. America has firmly established ties with the militaries in this region, and it appears evident that America is influencing military actions in Tunisia. Often, the reflex position of imperial power is to support the military, facilitate a coup, or employ repression. Again, this strategy would be determined on a country-by-country basis. With a popular uprising, military oppression will have the likely effect of exacerbating popular discontent and resistance, so strategic use of military influence is required.

This also leaves us with the potential for the ‘Yemen option’: war and destabilization. While presenting its own potential for negative repercussions (namely, in instigating a much larger and more radical uprising), engaging in overt or covert warfare, destabilizing countries or regions, is not taboo in American strategic circles. In fact, this is the strategy that has been deployed in Yemen since the emergence of the Southern Movement in 2007, a liberation movement seeking secession from the U.S.-supported dictatorship. Shortly after the emergence of the Southern Movement, al-Qaeda appeared in Yemen, prompting U.S. military intervention. The Yemeni military, armed, trained and funded by the United States, has been using its military might to attempt to crush the Southern Movement as well as a rebel movement in the North.

In short, the ‘Arab Awakening’ presents possibly the greatest strategic challenge to American hegemony in decades. The likely result will be a congruence of multiple simultaneously employed strategies including: “democratization,” oppression, military intervention and destabilization. Again, it could be a mistake to assume one strategy for the whole region, but rather to assess it on a country-by-country basis, based upon continuing developments and progress in the ‘Awakening’.

Interview with Andrew Gavin Marshall and Adrienne Pine, *Russia Today*

The Council on Foreign Relations Strategy to “Democratize” the Arab World

The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) is the premier U.S. foreign policy think tank in the United States, and is one of the central institutions for socializing American elites from all major sectors of society (media, banking, academia, military, intelligence, diplomacy, corporations, NGOs, civil society, etc.), where they work together to construct a consensus on major issues related to American imperial interests around the world. As such, the CFR often sets the strategy for American policy, and wields enormous influence within policy circles, where key players often and almost always come from the rank and file of the CFR itself.

In 2005, the CFR published a Task Force Report on a new American strategy for the Arab world entitled, “In Support of Arab Democracy: Why and How.” The Task Force was co-chaired by Madeleine Albright and Vin Weber. Albright was the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations for the first term of President Bill Clinton’s administration, and was U.S. Secretary of State for his second term. As such, she played crucial roles in the lead up and responses to the dismantling of Yugoslavia and the Rwandan genocide and subsequent civil war and genocide in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and she also oversaw the UN imposed sanctions on Iraq. In a 1996 interview with 60 Minutes, when asked about the sanctions resulting in the deaths of over 500,000 Iraqi children under the age of five, Albright replied, “we think the price is worth it.”[1]

Albright got her start at Columbia University, where she studied under Zbigniew Brzezinski, her professor who supervised her dissertation. Brzezinski, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, co-founded the Trilateral Commission with banker David Rockefeller in 1973. When Jimmy Carter became President in 1977, he brought with him over two dozen members of the Trilateral Commission into his administration, including himself, but also Brzezinski as his National Security Adviser. Brzezinski then offered Madeline Albright a job on his National Security Council staff.[2] Brzezinski also had several other key officials on his Council staff, including Samuel Huntington and Robert Gates, who later became Deputy National Security Adviser, CIA Director, and today is the Secretary of Defense in the Obama administration. As David Rothkopf, former National Security Council staff member wrote in his book on the history of the NSC, “Brzezinski’s NSC staffers are, to this day, very loyal to their former boss.”[3] Today, Albright serves on the board of directors of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Board of Trustees for the Aspen Institute, as well as chairing the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, an organization dedicated to promoting and funding US-supported “democracy” around the world. Recently, she chaired a NATO committee which developed NATO’s new “strategic concept” over the next decade.

The other co-chair of the CFR Task Force report on Arab democracy is Vin Weber, former U.S. Congressman, who has served on the board of the CFR, and is also a member of the board of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the premier U.S. organization dedicated to “democratic regime change” around the world in advancing U.S. strategic interests. Other members of the Task Force Report include individuals with past or present affiliations to Human Rights Watch, First National Bank of Chicago, Occidental Petroleum, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the World Bank, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), the Brookings Institution, the Hoover Institution, the National Endowment for Democracy, the U.S. State Department, National Security Council, National Intelligence Council, Goldman Sachs Group, the American Enterprise Institute, AOL Time Warner, and the IMF.[4]

It is very clear that this is a highly influential and active group of individuals and interests which is proposing a new strategy for America in the Arab world, which makes their recommendations not simply ‘advisory’ to policy, but integral to policy formulation and implementation. So what did the CFR report have to say about democracy in the Arab world?

The report stated that, “Washington has a chance to help shape a more democratic Middle East. Whereas emphasis on stability was once the hallmark of U.S. Middle East policy, democracy and freedom have become a priority.” The report posed two central questions which it explored:

First, does a policy of promoting democracy in the Middle East serve U.S. interests and foreign policy goals? Second, if so, how should the United States implement such a policy, taking into account the full range of its interests?[5]

The answer to the first question was inevitably, “yes,” promoting democracy serves U.S. interests and foreign policy goals in the Middle East. The report elaborated, “Although democracy entails certain inherent risks, the denial of freedom carries much more significant long-term dangers. If Arab citizens are able to express grievances freely and peacefully, they will

be less likely to turn to more extreme measures.”[6] However, the CFR report was very cautious about the process of democratic change, and recognized the potential instability and problems it could pose for American interests:

[T]he United States should promote the development of democratic institutions and practices over the long term, mindful that democracy cannot be imposed from the outside and that sudden, traumatic change is neither necessary nor desirable. *America’s goal in the Middle East should be to encourage democratic evolution, not revolution.*[7] [Emphasis added]

Further, they acknowledged that democracy promotion in the Middle East “requires a country-by-country strategy,”[8] meaning that it cannot be a ‘one-size-fits-all’ strategy, ultimately making the process all the more complicated and potentially unstable. The process is a delicate balancing act, where the report identified that if America’s democracy promotion is too “superficial,” it could “further damage relations between the United States and Arab populations,” or, if the United States pushes reform too hard and too fast, “this could create instability and undermine U.S. interests.” Thus, explained the report, they favour “a view toward evolutionary, not revolutionary, change. The dangers that accompany rapid change will still be present, but so will the opportunity to create a new and more balanced foundation for Arab stability, and a deeper and stronger basis for friendship between Americans and Arabs.”[9] In American diplomatic language, “friendship” should be read as “dependence,” thus we understand this strategy as aiming at promoting a more reliable dependency between Americans and Arabs.

The report, however, acknowledged the deep divisions within U.S. policy circles on the promotion of democracy in the Middle East, with several viewing it as potentially too risky, fearing it “may place U.S. interests in jeopardy,” or that it “could lead to ethnic conflict or the emergence of Islamist governments opposed to the United States and the West in general.” Further, “if Washington pushes Arab leaders too hard on reform, contributing to the collapse of friendly Arab governments, this would likely have a deleterious effect on regional stability, peace, and counterterrorism operations.” There is also the risk that with America actively promoting democratic change among Arab civil society and opposition groups, this could potentially damage “the credibility of indigenous groups promoting democratic reform,” or, alternatively, “Arab leaders could dig in their heels and actively oppose U.S. policies in the region across the board.”[10] The latter scenario could be referred to as ‘the Saddam option’, referring, of course, to America’s once-close ally and suddenly-new enemy, Saddam Hussein, who was armed and supported by America. But once he started to become too autonomous of American power, America turned on him and cast him as a “new Hitler.” The case of Saddam Hussein also shows that when a dictator “digs in his heels,” it can often take a very long time to be rid of him.

So while clearly there are a number of potentially disastrous consequences for U.S. interests in promoting democracy in the Arab world, the CFR made their position clear:

While transitions to democracy can lead to instability in the short term, the Task Force finds that a policy geared toward maintaining the authoritarian status quo

in the Middle East poses greater risks to U.S. interests and foreign policy goals... If Arabs are allowed to participate freely and peacefully in the political process, they are less likely to turn to radical measures. If they understand that the United States supports their exercise of liberty, they are less likely to sustain hostile attitudes toward the United States... The overwhelming empirical evidence clearly indicates that the best kind of stability is democratic stability.[11]

One pivotal area through which the CFR report advocated implementing the “democratization” of the Arab world was through the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), established in 2002 by the Bush administration “with the express purpose of coordinating and managing the U.S. government’s reform agenda in the area of economics, politics, education, and women’s issues.” Much of this work had previously been done through the United State Agency for International Development (USAID); however, “while USAID’s work has focused to some extent on creating constituencies within Arab governments for change, the rationale for MEPI was to work with independent and indigenous NGOs and civil-society groups, as well as with governments.”[12]

Another avenue was the Broader Middle East Initiative (also known as the Partnership for Progress), which emerged from a 2004 G8 summit, of which a main priority was the “Forum for the Future,” which is “designed to foster communication on reform-related issues.” It held sessions that brought together civil society activists, business leaders, emphasizing economic development and job growth. The Partnership for Progress also established the “Democracy Assistance Dialogue,” which brings together development institutions in the Middle East, foundations, international financial institutions (the World Bank and IMF), “to coordinate the use of resources to support political and economic change.”[13] In other words, it is a process through which America is seeking to ensure that democratic “transition” in the Arab world maintains American and Western political and economic hegemony. In effect, a change of ‘structure’ without a change of ‘substance,’ where the image of the state alters, but the power and purpose remains the same.

However, further problems for the democratization strategy were presented in the unwillingness of European nations to support it or take it seriously. As the Task Force report explained, “European reluctance undermines the potential efficacy of pursuing reform.” The report further explained the importance of having Europe as a partner in the project:

Despite a history of European colonial domination, the perception of Europe in the Arab world is better than that of the United States. Consequently, it may be helpful for the European Union to take the lead in promoting human rights in the Arab world.[14]

The Task Force recommended that it would be best if funding for Arab civil society organizations did not come directly from U.S. government institutions, but rather funneled through U.S. democracy-promotion groups like the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), as “many Middle eastern NGOs are reluctant to accept direct transfers from an arm of the U.S. government, fearing that this would taint these organizations in the eyes of their constituencies.”[15] In the conclusion, the report stated that:

Although a policy predicated on political, economic, and social change in the Arab world may present some short-term risks to Washington's interests, these risks are worth taking. The long-run benefits of a more democratic and economically developed Middle East outweigh the potential challenges Washington might confront in the foreseeable future.[16]

We must acknowledge, however, that this strategy is not aimed at promoting democracy for the sake of democracy and freedom, but rather that it is acknowledging the reality that is the 'Global Political Awakening,' and taking efforts to address and manipulate this 'Awakening' in such a way that serves U.S. interests. Thus, it amounts to a scenario akin to saying, "Let them eat cake!" If the Arab world screams out for democracy and freedom, give them the American-sponsored brand of democracy and freedom, and therefore America is able to undermine and co-opt the ever-increasing desires and forces for change in the region. As a result – if successful – it would have the effect of pacifying resistance to America's hegemony in the region, legitimizing the new puppet governments as "democratic" and "representative" of the people, thus creating a more stable and secure environment for American interests. In short, this is a coordinated strategy to confront, manipulate and pacify the emergence of the Global Political Awakening in the Arab world; an assault against the 'Arab Awakening.'

In my last essay on the subject, I identified these protests as an organic growth, a rallying cry for freedom from the Arab world which must not be simply discarded as a covert U.S. plot to install new regimes. However, the situation requires a much more nuanced and detailed examination, not to frame it in either a black or white context, but rather seek to explain the realities, challenges and opportunities of the 'Awakening' and the 'uprisings'.

Conceptualizing the 'Arab Awakening'

For years, arch-hawk American imperial geostrategist Zbigniew Brzezinski, an intellectual architect of 'globalization', has been warning elites across the Western world, and in particular in America, of the emergence and pressing reality of the 'Global Political Awakening.' He explains the 'Awakening' as essentially the greatest historical challenge to not only American, but global power structures and interests. He explained that, "For the first time in human history almost all of humanity is politically activated, politically conscious and politically interactive." Further, "the worldwide yearning for human dignity is the central challenge inherent in the phenomenon of global political awakening... That awakening is socially massive and politically radicalizing." As Brzezinski emphasizes, "These energies transcend sovereign borders and pose a challenge both to existing states as well as to the existing global hierarchy, on top of which America still perches." Brzezinski and others (as evidenced by the Council on Foreign Relations report) are intent upon developing strategies for 'managing' and 'pacifying' this 'Awakening' in such a way that maintains and secures American imperial interests and global power structures. Thus, the need to 'control' the Awakening is the most prescient problem in American foreign policy. However, as Brzezinski elaborated, it is not a challenge that can be dealt with easily:

[The] major world powers, new and old, also face a novel reality: while the lethality of their military might is greater than ever, their capacity to impose

control over the politically awakened masses of the world is at a historic low. To put it bluntly: in earlier times, it was easier to control one million people than to physically kill one million people; today, it is infinitely easier to kill one million people than to control one million people.[17]

In a 2008 article in the New York Times, Brzezinski emphasized a multi-faceted strategy for dealing with this ‘threat’ to elite structures and interests, explaining that, “the monumental task facing the new president is to regain U.S. global legitimacy by spearheading a collective effort for a more inclusive system of global management.” Thus, Brzezinski’s strategy rests on better securing and institutionally expanding the process of ‘globalization’ into the evolution of ‘global governance,’ or as he termed it, “global management.” Brzezinski unveiled a four-point strategy of response: “unify, enlarge, engage and pacify.”[18]

The response to ‘unify’ refers “to the effort to re-establish a shared sense of purpose between America and Europe,” a point that the CFR report acknowledged. To ‘enlarge’ refers to “a deliberate effort to nurture a wider coalition committed to the principle of interdependence and prepared to play a significant role in promoting more effective global management.”[19] He identified the G8 as having “outlived its function,” and proposed a widening of it, which ultimately manifested itself in 2009 in the form of the G20. The G20 has subsequently become “the prime group for global economic governance at the level of ministers, governors and heads of state or government.”[20] Herman von Rompuy, the President of the European Union, referred to 2009 as “the first year of global governance.”[21] So, these elites are intent upon advancing “global management,” which is the exact strategy Brzezinski also identifies as being the “solution” to managing the ‘Global Political Awakening.’

The next point in Brzezinski’s strategy – ‘engage’ – refers to “the cultivation of top officials through informal talks among key powers, specifically the U.S., the European Triad, China, Japan, Russia and possibly India,” in particular between the United States and China, as “without China, many of the problems we face collectively cannot be laid to rest.” In the final point – ‘pacify’ – Brzezinski referred to the requirements of “a deliberate U.S. effort to avoid becoming bogged down in the vast area ranging from Suez to India.” In particular, he advised moving forward on the Israel-Palestine issue, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Brzezinski explained that, “in this dynamically changing world, the crisis of American leadership could become the crisis of global stability.” Thus, from Brzezinski’s point of view, “The only alternative to a constructive American role is global chaos.”[22]

So, “control” is key to this strategy, with “global management” being the ultimate solution. However, as Brzezinski himself identified, which is important to keep in mind when assessing the nature, spread and mobilization of the ‘Awakening’: “To put it bluntly: in earlier times, it was easier to control one million people than to physically kill one million people; today, it is infinitely easier to kill one million people than to control one million people.”[23] Thus, while attempting to engineer, co-opt and ‘control’ the ‘Awakening,’ it is important to acknowledge that the United States is playing with fire, and while attempting to light a controlled fire to manipulate as it so chooses, the fire can spread and get out of hand. In such a situation, the “lethality” of America’s “military might” could potentially be employed. He said it himself, “the only alternative to a constructive American role is global chaos.”[24] The age-old imperial tactic

of divide and conquer is never off the table of options. If it cannot be “managed transition” then it often becomes “managed chaos.” Where ‘diplomacy’ fails to overcome barriers, war destroys them (and everything else in the process).

Now turning our attention to the ‘Arab Awakening’ and uprisings, we must examine the range of strategies that are and could be employed. The preferred route for American power is “democratization,” but the scope, velocity and rapidity of recent developments in the Arab world present an incredibly unstable situation for American strategy. While ties with civil society and opposition groups have been or are in the process of being well established (varying on a country-by-country basis), the rapidity and confluence of these uprisings taking place has American power stretched thin.

Engineering, co-opting and controlling revolutionary movements or “democratic regime change” is not a new tactic in the American strategic circles; however, it has in the past been largely relegated to specific pockets and nations, often with significant time in between in order to allow for a more delicate, coordinated and controlled undertaking. This was the case with the U.S.-sponsored ‘colour revolutions’ throughout Eastern Europe and Central Asia, starting with Serbia in 2000, Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004, and Kyrgyzstan in 2005, where America’s premier democracy promotion organizations (the National Endowment for Democracy, the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, USAID, Freedom House, the Albert Einstein Institute, as well as major American philanthropic foundations) were able to more securely establish themselves and their strategies for “democratic regime change.” Further, all the incidents of democratic “regime change” listed above took place in the context of a contested election within the country, giving the organizations and foundations involved a precise timeline for managing the process of organization and mobilization. This required a focused and nuanced approach which remains absent from the current context in the Middle East and North Africa.

Further, a similar strategy was undertaken in Iran for the summer of 2009, in which the ‘Green Movement’ arose in response to the contested Presidential elections. This was, in fact, an attempt at a highly coordinated and organized effort on the part of a covert American strategy of “democratization” to install a U.S.-friendly (i.e., ‘client’) regime in Iran. The strategy was developed in 2006, largely organized covertly by the CIA, at a cost of approximately \$400 million, and involved the State Department coordinating efforts with social media such as Twitter, Facebook and Youtube. However, as posterity shows, the strategy did not ultimately succeed in imposing “regime change.” At the time, Zbigniew Brzezinski explained that the strategy would require “patience, intelligent manipulation, moral support, but no political interference.”

So we can see that even with \$400 million and a highly coordinated attempt at “intelligent manipulation,” the strategy did not succeed. However, it must be acknowledged that the U.S. could not overtly fund opposition and civil society organizations in Iran as it could in Eastern Europe. In the Arab world, while America has and continues to engage with opposition groups and civil society organizations, these efforts have been consistently thwarted and hampered by the domestic Arab regimes, which are well aware of the threat to their own power this could pose. Managing such a strategy in countries run by authoritarian regimes that are very suspicious of civil society and opposition groups presents an incredibly challenging scenario for American

strategy. Further, authoritarian regimes generally do not hold elections, unless it is simply a sham election in which the leader wins by a margin of 97%, presenting a difficult scenario in which to mobilize opposition forces. Moreover, the ‘colour revolutions’ throughout Eastern Europe were largely organized through a strategy of bringing together all the opposition groups to stand behind one leader, to make the effort much more coordinated and cohesive. No such strategy seems to have emerged in the Arab world, and has appeared as a patched-up effort of attempting to promote particular opposition figures, but nothing that is evidently well-organized and pre-planned. While many opposition groups are working closely together to oppose the regimes, they are not necessarily being mobilized around any clear and absolute leaders, thus presenting the potential for a power vacuum to open up, making the situation all the more dangerous for American interests.

Another major problem inherent in this strategy in the Arab world is the role being played by the domestic militaries. The militaries within the authoritarian Arab regimes are largely supported, funded, trained and armed by America, and have become powerful political, social and economic actors in their own right (more so in Egypt than Tunisia). Thus, America must balance the process of supporting civil society and opposition groups with that of continuing to support and secure the military structures. If the militaries feel that their position is insecure or threatened, they may simply overtake the entire process and engineer a coup, which is ultimately counter-productive to the American strategy in the region, especially since it is widely known that America is the principle sponsor of these military structures. This implies that America must undertake a delicate balancing act between the military, civil society and opposition groups in coordinating the removal of the entrenched despots. This strategy seems to be materializing itself in the form of constructing “transitional governments,” which the militaries in both Tunisia and Egypt are supporting.

The situation is intensely complicated and conflicting, presenting America with one of its greatest challenges in recent history. While the obvious intent and even the means of organizing “democratic regime change” in the Arab world are present, I believe the rapidity in which the protest movements and uprisings have emerged could have taken America somewhat off-guard. No doubt, from the beginnings of the Tunisian protests in December of 2010, America was paying detailed attention to the situation, attempting to influence the outcome. However, Western media coverage of the first four weeks of protests was minimal, if not altogether absent. This is an important point to address.

For all the other organized efforts at “democratic regime change” and “colour revolutions,” Western media played a critical role. From the moments protests began in these countries, Western media outlets were covering the events extensively, espousing the righteousness of the aims of “democratization” and “freedom,” in full and active support of the demonstrators. This was absent in Tunisia, until of course, the President fled to Saudi Arabia, when suddenly Western media cynically proclaimed a monumental achievement for democracy, and started warning the rest of the Arab world of the potential for this to spread to their countries (thus, applying public pressure to promote “reforms” in line with their strategy of “evolution, not revolution.”). This could imply that America was trying to quietly manage the protests in Tunisia, which did not arise in a pre-coordinated and previously established timeline, but rather sprung up as a rapid response to a suicide of a young man in a personal protest against the

government. The spark was lit, and America advanced on Tunisia in an attempt to control its growth and direction. Meanwhile, however, sparks ignited across many nations in the Arab world, including Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan and Yemen.

Subsequently, America took advantage of these sparks to ignite the process in a direction it would seek to control. For the first few days and even weeks of protests in many of the other nations, appearing by and large to be organic reactions to events in Tunisia and within their own countries, a more coordinated response was undertaken, with the massive organized protests emerging suddenly. Yet, America is potentially stretching itself very thin, possibly risking as much or more than it has to gain. Like a cornered animal, America is simultaneously incredibly vulnerable and incredibly dangerous. Remembering Brzezinski's words regarding the problem of 'control' is an important factor to take into consideration: "in earlier times, it was easier to control one million people than to physically kill one million people; today, it is infinitely easier to kill one million people than to control one million people." [25] This could potentially be referred to as the 'Yemen Option,' in which the strategy entails an effort to promote destabilization, military intervention, covert and overt warfare. In such a scenario, it is essential for America to maintain and, in fact, strengthen its contacts and relationships with domestic military structures.

So, clearly the situation is not and should not be addressed in a black-and-white analysis. It is intensely complicated, multi-faceted and potentially disastrous. No outcome is preordained or absolute: thus, while acknowledging and examining the evidence for America's deep involvement in the evolution and direction of the protests and opposition, we must keep this analysis within the context of the 'Global Political Awakening.' I argued in Part 1 of this essay that it does, in fact, seem as if we are seeing the emergence of a global revolution; yet, this is likely a process that will stretch out certainly over the next one, if not several, decades. We cannot simply dismiss these protests as American machinations and covert operations, but rather as an effort for America to control the 'Awakening'. As the Council on Foreign Relations Task Force Report emphasized, *"America's goal in the Middle East should be to encourage democratic evolution, not revolution."* [26] It seems as if this strategy either changed in the intermittent years, or America has been thrown out of its incremental strategy of "evolution" and into the strategy of being forced to respond to and seek to direct "revolution." This makes the situation all the more dangerous for American interests. Thus, we cannot dismiss the uprisings as entirely "orchestrated," but instead understand them in the context of the 'Global Awakening.'

Taking the position that everything is organized from on high in the corridors of power is a flawed analysis. Alternatively, taking the position that America was caught entirely unaware of this situation is naïve and the evidence does not support this assessment. However, we must not see this as an either-or development, but rather a congruence of over-lapping and inter-twining developments. Society, after all, while being directed from above, must react to the responses and developments from below; and thus, society itself and the direction it takes is a highly complex interaction of different, opposing, and conflicting social processes. The claim that the uprisings are the lone result of American strategy neglects the reasons behind the development of this strategy in the first place. The "democratization" strategy did not emerge due to any humanitarian qualms on the part of the U.S. elite for the people living under authoritarian regimes, but rather that the strategy was developed in response to the emergence and growth of

the 'Arab Awakening' itself. Indeed, in this context, this does mark the beginnings of a global revolution (which has been a long time coming); however, it also marks the active American strategy to control the process and development of the 'revolution.'

Historically, revolutions are never the product of a one-sided development. That is, revolutions predominantly do not come about through the actions of one segment of society, often polarized as either an elite-driven or people-driven revolution, but rather they come about through a complex interaction and balancing of various social groups. The context and conditions for a revolution often do not emerge without the awareness of the upper classes, therefore, the upper social strata always or often seek to mitigate, control, repress, influence or co-opt and control the process of revolution. In this context, we cannot dismiss revolutions simply as a top-down or bottom-up process, but rather a mitigation and interaction between the two approaches.

American strategic objectives are aimed at ultimately repressing and co-opting the organic revolutionary uprisings in the Arab world. For the past six years or so, America has been developing and starting to implement a strategy to manage to 'Arab Awakening' by promoting "democratization" in a process of "evolution, not revolution." However, the evolution was evidently not fast enough for the people living under the Arab regimes, and revolution is in the air. America, naturally, is desperately attempting to manage the situation and repress a true revolution from spreading across the region, instead promoting an "orderly transition" as Hillary Clinton and President Obama have stressed. Thus, America has been extensively involved in the processes of organizing and establishing "transitional governments" or "unity governments." If the revolution took its own course, and sought true change, populist democracy and ultimate freedom, it would ultimately be forced to challenge the role and influence of America and the West in the region. As such, military "aid" would need to end (a prospect the domestic militaries are not willing to accept), American influence over and contact with civil society and opposition groups would need to be openly challenged and discussed, the IMF and World Bank would need to be kicked out, international debts would need to be declared "odious" and cancelled, and the people would have to control their own country and become active, engaged and informed citizens. The true revolution will have to be not simply political, but economic, social, cultural, psychological, intellectual and ultimately, global.

The protesters must challenge not simply their despotic governments, but must ultimately remove American and Western control over their nations. They must also be very cautious of opposition groups and proposed leaders who are thrust to the front lines and into the government, as they are likely co-opted. The true new leaders should come from the people, and should earn their leadership, not simply be crowned as 'leaders.' The best possible short-to-medium-term scenario would be to see the emergence of Arab populist democracies, reflecting the trend seen across Latin America (although, not necessarily imposing the same ideologies). The trouble with this scenario is that it is also the most unlikely. If there is one thing that American power despises, it is populist democracy. Since the beginnings of the Cold War until present day, America has actively overthrown, orchestrated coups, imposed dictatorships, crushed, invaded and occupied, bombed and destabilized or implemented "democratic regime change" in populist democracies. Democratic governments that are accountable to the people and seek to help the poor and oppressed make themselves quick enemies of American power. Over the past 60 years, America has repressed or supported the repression of democracies, liberation struggles and

attempts at autonomy all over the world: Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1954, Haiti in 1959, the Congo in 1960, Ecuador in 1961, Algeria, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Chile, Argentina, Afghanistan, Indonesia, South Africa, Palestine, Iraq, Venezuela, Lebanon, Yemen and on and on and on.

The situation is a dangerous and difficult one for the protesters, just as the struggle for freedom and democracy is and has always been. There is a large constituency which have an interest in preventing the emergence of a populist democracy, including many of the pro-democracy organizations and opposition leaders themselves, the great nations of the world – East and West, the World Bank and IMF, international corporations and banks, neighbouring Arab regimes, Israel, and of course, America. It is a monumental challenge, but it would be a great disservice to cast aside the protests as controlled and totally co-opted. If that were the case, they would have ceased with the formation of transition and unity governments, which of course they have not. While the outcome is ultimately unknown, what is clear is that a spark has been lit in the Arab world as the ‘Global Political Awakening’ marches on, and this will be a very difficult flame to control.

Notes

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