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The U.S. Military Empire Meets Dictatorship in Bahrain

by Jacob G. Hornberger

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The U.S. Empire includes 750-1,000 military bases in more than 130 countries. The reality of that extensive military empire has come to the forefront in Bahrain, where the authoritarian government in that country is cracking down on protestors with round-ups, jail, torture, and even extra-judicial execution.

Of course, it's a familiar story, one that is confronting Americans every day. People are risking their lives in the attempt to oust brutal authoritarian dictatorships from power — dictatorships that are partners, allies, friends, and loyal members of the U.S. Empire ... and recipients of billions of dollars in U.S. foreign aid that has been used not only to line the personal pockets of the dictators and their henchmen but also to fund the instruments of torture and pay the salaries of the jailers and torturers themselves.

Now, in Bahrain, we see another factor involved in the U.S. Empire's support of dictatorship — U.S. foreign military bases — one of the many hundreds all across the world. The dictatorship in Bahrain has permitted the Empire to establish and maintain a base there for the Empire's Fifth Fleet.

So, why should it surprise anyone that the U.S. government, especially the Joint Chiefs of Staff, would favor the "order and stability" that comes with dictatorship? Hey, democracy

is unpredictable. People might not like the idea that a foreign regime maintains a huge military base within their nation. Look at the people of Okinawa, who are trying their best to end the longtime U.S. military occupation of their land. Wouldn't most Americans resent it if foreign regimes, including Muslim ones, maintained enormous military bases here in the United States?

Dictators are easier to deal with when it comes to U.S. military bases, especially when billions of dollars of U.S. taxpayer money and military armaments (which can be used to suppress dissent) are placed into his hands of the dictatorship by the Empire. It all makes for a cozy relationship. We'll line your pockets with cash and give you military armaments to maintain your dictatorship, and you'll let us keep our military base.

The imperialists say that the Fifth Fleet ensures the flow of oil to the West. That's inane. It's sort of like the fly on the automobile wheel that convinces himself that his presence on the wheel is what is propelling the car. Or like the rooster who crows every morning and is convinced that his crowing is bringing up the sun.

It's no different with respect to the U.S. Empire and its massive overseas military establishments. The Empire is convinced that its presence in the Middle East is what is ensuring the flow of oil needed by the West (including the U.S. government's massive military machine that consumes so much of the oil).

Not so. The world would function quite well without the Empire's presence. Owners of oil would sell their oil into the marketplace, just like people sell other things throughout the world. People sell things to make money. Venezuela, whose officials hate the U.S. government, nonetheless sells its own to the United States, not because the U.S. Navy is forcing it to do so but because Venezuela wants the money.

Anyway, if owners decide not to sell what they own, that is their right. That's part of what being an owner is all about — deciding whether to sell and on what terms.

The widespread protests in the Middle East are bringing the ugly reality of U.S. foreign policy into the consciousness of the American people. While most Americans are sympathizing with the people who are risking their lives in resistance to tyranny, Americans are also having to face the discomforting fact that their very own government is, in large part, responsible for the tyranny that those people are opposing. Through a combination of U.S. foreign aid and U.S. foreign military bases, the U.S. government has been partnering with, cozying up to, training, and supporting the tyrannical regimes that foreign citizens are now rebelling against.

Shouldn't all this give pause to Americans and cause them to begin thinking about rejecting the paradigm of empire and intervention that has held our nation in its grip for so long, including an end to all foreign aid, the closure of all foreign military bases, and the bringing of all the troops home from everywhere and discharging them? As the people of the Middle East rise up against the dictatorships that have brutally oppressed them for so long, hasn't the time arrived for the American people to restore the paradigm

of a constitutionally limited republic and non-interventionism on which our nation was founded?