

A MaozNews Bulletin

In the wake of unrest in Egypt and the Muslim Arab world

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A Brave New World? Think Again

People in the West seem to be willfully naïve, almost to the point of irresponsibility.

President Obama has expressed US support for the Egyptian people and for its government, calling upon the government to affirmatively respond to the demands of the angry crowds running amok in the streets of Egypt's major cities. The Foreign Secretary, Mrs. Hilary Clinton has stated, "We support the universal rights of the Egyptian people including the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, and we urge the Egyptian authorities not to prevent peaceful protests or block communications, including on social media sites. We believe strongly that the Egyptian government has an important opportunity at this moment in time, to implement political, economic and social reforms to respond to the legitimate needs and interests of the Egyptian people."

Informed by the same unrealistic worldview, President Carter in his day advised the Shah of Iran to give in to at least some of the demands the Shah's opponents were posing as they protested his regime. Carter spoke up for people of Iran and for its present government. The results of that unrealistic policy are still with us, and with the suffering Iranian people.

Egypt is the largest of the Muslim Arab countries, with the largest, best equipped army (with modern American weaponry). It has thousands of tanks, hundreds of fighter plans

and scores of modern attack vessels. If it turns against the West, the results could be horrendous. We would do well to carefully weigh the implications of present convulsions in the Arab world, Egypt included.

Salman Shaik, a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, the Director of the Brookings Centre in Doha (Qatar), and a special adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General on the Middle East has recently insisted on CNN (Jan. 28, 2011), that the uprisings in Arab countries herald a new Arab, post-Islamist people's revolution. He called upon the West to "support democracy and ensure peace in region".

Democracy is the last thing that will bring peace to the troubled Middle East, or secure the liberties of the still-free West. Democracy cannot be achieved in autocratic countries without costly, long-term internal and international turmoil. Such turmoil will demand its price in terms of human suffering, the loss of civic freedoms and the weakening of affected democratic systems. It is to be doubted if the end result will be a more humane, freer, happier social system.

As has happened throughout history, in the course of the expected turmoil, radical leaders will arise and lead their countries toward even more extreme views. In an effort to find a scapegoat for their failures to deliver on their people's hopes, to deflect criticism and consolidate support, they will resort to rousing passions against the West and against, Israel, which is widely perceived in the Muslim world as the West's outpost.

Lebanon (Hezbollah), Gaza (Hamas), Iran the Ayatollahs), Iraq (The Shiites), Afghanistan and Pakistan (the Taliban) are all cases in point. Wherever democracy has been foisted on an unprepared population, the radicals were strengthened and – at best – unstable, corrupt regimes were established. The democratic process was used to destroy itself.

The only way to avoid such turmoil is through the establishment of principled, morally-motivated, benign autocracies that will work toward their own demise through long-term education and the construction of national political infrastructures through which democracy can function. To expect the emergence of such autocracies is worse than naïve. To expect their emergence in a Muslim environment is recklessly irresponsible.

Democracy is the product of a particular worldview. It cannot emerge from, nor function in, a society in which the masses are willingly subservient and the ruling class is viewed as above the law. Most of Africa, Eastern Europe (including Russia) and the Far East do not share the components of a worldview that will allow for and enable the function of a democratic society. This is true to a more limited extent in Latin America and Russia for reasons to be indicated shortly.

Of course, there are various versions of a democratic system. These systems are nuanced by the different cultural worldviews in which they developed: French, Italian and Spanish democracy differs fundamentally from Scandinavian. British, Dutch and US democracy differ still again. Of course, there are differences of nuances between, say, Scandinavian, Dutch, British and US democracies, but the differences are less fundamental and less extensive than those between this cluster and any of the fore-mentioned. So too do the autocracies in China, Uruguay and Egypt differ one from another; but their similarities are far more extensive and fundamental.

What distinguished these clusters of democratic systems one from another are the foundations on which the varying versions of democracy were established. France, Italy and Spain are catholic, The Netherlands, Britain and the US are Protestant. Scandinavia is Lutheran. The extent to which a view is informed by evangelical Christian assumptions is the extent of their similarity (taking into account differing historical environments and a different historical process). The more Evangelical and Christian are the foundations, the greater are the freedoms allowed and the more successful are the economies.

It is tragic to witness the erosion of those views in the West today, and with it the consequent but inevitable erosion of the West's strengths.

The same frustrations that gave rise to El Qaida and to radical Islam lay at the source of the present unrest sweeping increasingly larger sections of the Arab world (Remember that El Qaida's attacks have been primarily directed at Muslim regimes. By far, more Muslims have died at the hands of Muslim radicals than those of other religious worldviews).

We have had cause to mention these frustrations in the past: a sense of disenfranchisement in the face of increasing visible freedoms and entitlements in the West; a sense of shame over the lethargy and backwardness of Arab Islamic societies in comparison with the West; the conviction that Islam, being the best of all religions, should have brought the best of all results, and the thought that perhaps a more consistent, more radical application of Islam will bring those results.

Another important factor is the phenomenal growth of the Muslim population in Europe and the weakening of western European national identities which are equipped and motivated to resist Islamic cultural influences. Many Muslims have a sense of impending victory. As one Muslim leader put it, "the Muslim weapon is the wombs of our Muslim women". Within democratic systems, autocracies will once again be established by democratic means.

At the same time, the growth in world population, coupled with the spread of aridity is reducing the availability of basic food commodities. Disaster in some of the world's

bread baskets (a widespread fire in Russia and the flooding Australia, destroying wheat crops) in is forcing food prices higher and higher, causing poverty, hunger, distress and still further frustration within relatively modern, pro-Western Arab countries. I dare post that, so long as China's dictators can provide the Chinese with an ever-rising standard of living, protest in that enormous country will be easily stifled. Once an economic crises sets in, the people experience shortages or their nurtured expectations are no longer met, China will face unrest.

Only the uninformed or the willfully naïve can echo Mr. Shaik's call for the West to support the "Arab, post-Islamist people's revolution" in the assumption that such revolutions will result in more benign regimes than those now reigning in fore-mentioned Arab and Muslim countries.

CNN quotes, "the respected Arab commentator, Rami Khouri", who "prophetically described late last year as the birth of Arab politics" and insists, *He was right. Politics in the region will never be the same again. Propelled by the young and the digital revolution, citizens will demand nothing less than the right to choose and change their representatives in the future.*

Assuming this to be the case, CNN states, *the long-term changes for Western policy in the region should be profound. Gone should be the reflex to side with those who willfully subvert the democratic and constitutional process out of fear of the Islamist boogeyman. The binary calculation between supporting stability on the one hand and the risks of unprecedented regime change, particularly the rise to power of Islamist parties, no longer holds. The people of the region are deciding ...*

Now is the time for policymakers to suggest an appropriate response to support a peaceful political transition in each country. Western policymakers must strike a careful balance between ensuring key interests ... It is time to break through the past fears that have guided Western policy with fresh hope for a better future for the people of the region. It is time to choose change.

The truth is that Muslim and Arab societies are not suited to democratic systems. They inexorably veer toward autocracy. Their revolutions will merely result in replacing one autocratic ruler for another. The best-organized, best-equipped, most-prepared bodies to take over the revolutions in those countries being convulsed by protest are the Muslim radicals, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan. Already, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, The spiritual leader of the Muslim Brothers movement and one of the world's most prominent Sunni clerics, has called upon Egyptian President Mubarak to leave the country: "He doesn't live in our world. He doesn't feel the anger and hunger of this people," al- Qaradawi charged. "He's detached from reality. Mubarak must give up his position and leave Egypt. There is no other solution, except for Mubarak's

departure." Addressing Mubarak he said, "On behalf of hundreds of thousands of religious clerics in Egypt and in the Muslim world I'm calling on you to leave your country."

An astounding 55% of the Egyptian population (compared to 3% in the US, for example) is made up of farmers. Most of these are uneducated scratch-farmers, inefficiently tiling the hungry soil with outdated agricultural methods in an effort to make ends meet. Corruption is as rampant as it is in most under-developed countries. It will take decades of patient, determined re-education, of principled leadership and of willing sacrifice to bring such a people to a state in which they choose think for themselves in political terms while being willing to alter their way of life and the modes by which they earn their livelihood.

Western democracies will labor for their own demise unless they are aware of this, prepare for it and bolster their own democratic systems, presently being threatened from within. Above all, the West is in need of a revolution of renewed values, of a renewed and biblical worldview.

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