

Arab Revolts: a Symptom of Decline of US Hegemony

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"When there is a general change of conditions, it is as if the entire creation had been changed and the whole world been altered." - Ibn Khaldun

"History is ruled by an inexorable determinism in which the free choice of major historical figures plays a minimal role" - Leo Tolstoy

"What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such... That is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." US Prof Francis Fukuyama

"The war in Iraq is a historic strategic and moral calamity undertaken under false assumptions – undermining America's global legitimacy – collateral civilian casualties, – abuses, – tarnishing America's moral credentials. Driven by Manichean impulses and imperial hubris, it is intensifying regional instability." Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Adviser to US President Jimmy Carter.



The world at large, especially unpopular leaders are now watching with a mixture of anticipation, apprehension and concern massive revolts by aroused Arab masses from Morocco to Bahrain, suppressed since decades by their West supported dictators or feudal kings. The upsurge first ignited in Tunisia has now engulfed Algeria (where Muslim fundamentalists have been kept under duress since the 1992 elections which they would have won) up to far off Bahrain and even in Morocco. Mostly spontaneous, the uprisings have been met with violent counterforce by the rulers mostly aligned to USA to whom Washington has been providing overt and covert protection.

Modern day Pharaoh Hosni Mubarak, president of Egypt for 3 decades and a former Air Force General, fled the presidential palace, making it the biggest and the most vital and central piece of the authoritarian jigsaw puzzle in the Sunni Arab world to crumble. Faced with defiant peoples sit-ins in Meidan-e-Tahrir (Independence Square) in capital city Cairo and elsewhere the bloody confrontation with security police and hired hoodlums left over 300 people dead, but the soldiers, mostly conscripts, remained neutral. But there are reportedly dissensions between lower-middle and top military leadership, the latter closely associated with loot with Mubarak, who himself accumulated reportedly a fortune between 30 to 60 billion US dollars. Apart from military controlled ventures in industry and trade as in Turkey, Pakistan, Iran and elsewhere, top military leadership in Egypt also benefitted from the US military aid amounting to over 1.5 billion every year. The Pentagon would try to leverage its close relationship with the top military brass.

Tunisia, where it was sparked by a suicide, provided the spark and inspiration to masses across the Arab world. Elsewhere sit-ins and protests continue apart from Algeria, Bahrain, Libya, Yemen, and Jordan. Over two hundred demonstrators have been reportedly killed in Benghazi and even Tripoli by armed forces and groups loyal to Libyan ruler Col Kaddafi, almost turning the conflict into a civil war. The maverick Colonel has ruled Libya since his 1969 military coup d'état. His minister of Justice and some key ambassadors have left the sinking ship. Col Kaddafi seems to be on his way out but his son promised on Sunday night a prolonged fight. BBC and CNN are circulating all kinds of rumors.

Rioting, firings and demonstrations by opponents and supporters of the regime in place since four decades have taken place in many towns in Yemen leading to many deaths. Many deaths have also been reported from Manama, Bahrain's capital, a majority Shia mini Sheikhdom ruled by a feudal Sunni family for over four decades. The outcome here will be crucial for the region since it is next door to Saudi Arabia, where its Shia minority has remained marginalized and ill-treated, but which sits atop major oil resources and adjoins South Iraq. Following the 2003 US led illegal invasion a Shia regime has come into power in Baghdad, thus strengthening Tehran's influence in the region, contrary to what Washington had hoped to achieve.

Across the Arab world, 2011 appears set to be remembered as the "year of revolutions". In Iraq, ravaged by eight years of bloody US occupation, plunder, destruction and death, protests have burst forth in Baghdad, Kut, Basra, Kirkuk, Ramadi, Sulaymaniyah and tens of other locations. Iraqis will organize on 25 February, Iraq's "Day of Peaceful Anger".

The protests in Tehran began in sympathy and solidarity with Egyptians (since 1979 Iran and Egypt have been at daggers drawn), but soon those who are against the ruling regime in Iran converted it into an anti-regime demonstration. US led Western media has given biased and exaggerated coverage to

these protests as has been the case since Western gendarme the Shah was forced to flee Tehran in 1979 in the wake of Ayatollah Khomeini led Shia revolution. To add insult to injury to the US concept of its manifest destiny to rule the world, the revolutionaries imprisoned US diplomats and other Americans for more than a year. Since then US led West has tried its damndest to change the Clerics regime in Iran.

In spite of all the propaganda and lies from the West, Ahmedinjed's re-election a year ago was legitimate. Most of twitter and internet generated propaganda was by Washington, its poodle London and anti-regime Iranians now resident USA. Yes, there is sizable opposition even up to 40% of the population to the austere and killjoy regime of Mullahs especially from the young and educated and among the city bred but the regime remains legitimate. Yes, it is time the Clerics changed some of its internal policies to cater to the opponents wishes as well and remove some of the medieval era restrictions. But women have more freedom in Iran than many Sunni states, certainly compared to its ideological rival Saudi Arabia. Women drive cars and work in offices. And on Iran's right to enrich Uranium for power generation and even for a nuclear bomb, most Iranians, even those living in US, support the regime's policies.

Washington will try to foment trouble for Tehran's ally and Shia minority (12%) Assad regime in Damascus, where some protests were planned. Western machinations to undermine the popular Hezbollah party in Lebanon are unlikely to make much headway. In any case Western dominance and influence will be greatly weakened in the region, especially of the brutal US gendarme Israel which took over the role after the fall of the Shah of Iran. Tel Aviv has peace treaties with Cairo and Amman so the ongoing historic changes will be a setback for Israel and its backers in the West.

Western 'crocodile tears' for democracy in Middle East

"Every time I read an op-ed in the New York Times that was written by a 'senior scholar' from the Hoover Institute or a "fellow" from the Cato Institute, I want to scream, please replace that with "paid whore funded by psychotic right-wing billionaire." Which is significantly more accurate—"Larry Beinhart, an American author.

There is nothing more sickening than cacophony from Washington and Brussels by its leaders and its abject corporate media shouting themselves hoarse calling for 'democracy' in the region. Almost all the dictators, whose thrones are now shaking, have been kept in power by US led west in order to exploit the energy and other resources of the region and its strategic location. The rulers obeyed Washington's dictates on oil pricing, supporting the US dollar or entering peace treaties with the expanding Western implant Israel. The people of the region described the Arab street, now out in the open and facing bullets of the US supported dictators, have always despised US policies in the region specially its total support for Israel.

But Washington and Brussels have not given up and are making statements condemning Col Kaddafi of human rights violations and their readiness to help. British prime minister has visited Cairo to assess the situation and help out. Some nerve!

The author who started his diplomatic career from Cairo as assistant press attaché in early 1960s and was also posted at Algiers and Amman apart from a decade in two terms in Ankara. saw the decline and almost total fall of the mainline western media by 2003, which has now morphed in to disseminating spins, half truths and blatant lies led by the likes of arch lair Tony Blair, Dick Cheney, George Bush and others before the awe and shock treatment of Iraq and its brutal occupation since 2003. According to ICF website over 1.4 million Iraqis have been killed and the country has been divided, brutalized and destroyed.

Like hunting dogs in a chase prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, BBC gave in its overall coverage a mere 2% time to opposition's anti-war voices and 98% time was given over to war mongers. It was the worst of the leading broadcasters, including US networks, according to Media Tenor; a Bonn-based non-partisan media research organization. In a 4 July, 2003 comment in "the Guardian" titled "Biased Broadcasting Corporation", Justin Lewis, Professor of Journalism at Cardiff University confirmed the above results. Other western corporate outlets like CNN, ABC etc were no better. In US 90% of media is controlled by half a dozen corporate houses. Foreign funds have also acquired control over India's celebrity and trivia obsessed so called national TV channels.

But do not hold your breath. Democracy with free political parties and elections is not coming to take hold in the region any time soon. The men on the horseback, who provided the support to the rulers, would remain the main arbiters of power. (Watch this space for how it might evolve).

Great Britain and France colonized former Ottoman territories in North Africa in 19 century after its retraction with the final drawing of the arbitrary borders in Middle East after the WWI by London and Paris. Jewish Israel was transplanted in the heart of Arab world – a running sore since 1948. Iraq is already divided since 1991. It will take much bloodshed and time for the pacification and resolution of the problems of the region and adjustment and defining of the new borders.

Writing a year ago about possible US policy of exit from Afghanistan, Prof Paul Kennedy admitted that "the Afghanistan-Pakistan entanglement is an issue so vexed and complicated that it would have tested the wisdom of the greatest leaders and strategists of the past. It is not totally fanciful to imagine Augustus, William Pitt the Elder, Bismarck or George Marshall pondering over a map which detailed the lands that stretch from the Bekaa Valley to the Khyber Pass. None of them would have liked what they saw." Look at the distances, the awful topography, and the willingness of the other side to accept appalling casualty rates, make a limited war—a finely calibrated war—something of nonsense."

To that now add the ongoing uprisings across a vast arc covering North Africa and the Middle East i.e. from the Atlantic to the Gulf with different levels of development, histories, tribal customs and ruling systems. It makes for an explosive cocktail to sort out. It wills going to take a long time with much

bloodshed and changes with ramifications far beyond the region.

“Is Liberal capitalism the most tortuous way from socialism to socialism!”

Ever since the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the ideology of not only scientific socialism, but even other shades of socialism have been as if banished into the dustbin of history by western leaders and its so called thinkers and media .Washington has created a new entity and bogey i.e. terrorism ,in place of Communism ,socialism and nationalism with help from its new clients in East Europe and elsewhere , including India with help from captive corporate media .This is utter rubbish .

To fight nationalism and socialism of Nehru, Nasser and Tito ,US led West encouraged rightwing ideologies ,Islam and Islamic fundamentalism especially in the Arab world and South West Asia , with massive financial outlay from petrodollar rich Saudi Arabia , which wants to keep Muslims backwards and beholden to Riyadh for money for Quran, mosques and Jihadi activities.. The axis leveraged by the West to rule and exploit the resources in north Africa , west and south-west Asia , consists of US/UK/Israel-Saud dynasty /Wahabi ideology-Pak-military/ISI .It is now under great strain and stress and giving way to usher in epochal traumatic changes .Wait and watch.

If one looks at the sweep of history and time ever since human beings started building blocks from family unit into clans and tribes ,then hamlets ,villages ,towns , cities .kingdoms and empires and finally after centuries of warfare into republics and democracies , the post Fall of the Berlin era would be one of the most inhuman and cruel episodes where the gains of human endeavor for equality, equity and fraternity were sought to be eradicated by US led financiers and bankers through devices like liberal capitalism and globalization .

But does the trigger of revolts in the Arab world and elsewhere herald a return to a more egalitarian and just society .Will it usher a speeding of the end of rampant liberal capitalism , which is sinking fast in US and Europe .

While US and the West have tried to train and infiltrate into the suppressed anger and rebellion into the Arab masses specially in Egypt , aware that an ailing and much hated Mubarak and his regime were on the way out ,there are reports of trade unions and other such organizations coming together in Egypt raising hopes that the space vacated by liberal capitalism and globalization will not be occupied by Islamic and Muslim fundamentalist groups created ,used and exploited by London during the last century in Middle East and South west Asia and then by Washington since WWII . But the way towards equal rights and legality and fraternity would be hard and long .

To comprehend what might happen in the Arab world , let us see how the so called revolutions in East Europe have unfolded .

Revolutions in East Europe in late 1980s and early 1990s; a parallel !

Just recall the ‘Revolutions ‘of 1989 in Eastern Europe leading to the collapse of Communism. The revolts began in Poland and then spread to Hungary ,East Germany ,Bulgaria , Czechoslovakia and finally Romania. Only in Romania ,the Communist regime was overthrown violently and Nikolai Ceausescu and his wife were shot dead in cold blood after a Kangaroo trial.

Even earlier East Europeans had tried to overthrow the totalitarian regimes in Hungary , Czechoslovakia, Poland and elsewhere but were brutally suppressed.

By end 1980s it was clear that the Soviet Union itself was ready and on the brink for a make over with resurgent Orthodox Slav nationalism with what many Russians felt unhappily carrying the heavy baggage of Turkic and other Soviet Socialist republics .US led West Human Rights and democracy promotion organizations (to suit western objectives) had been encouraging overtly and covertly groups in Communist states for change and freedom , by using civil resistance methods of Mahatma Gandhi adopted by Martin Luther King and others .In any case , an overall popular opposition had emerged against the one-party rule in East Europe enforced since WWII when Communism rolled in on the backs of Soviet tanks after the defeat of Nazi Germany ,which was accomplished basically by the Soviet resistance and very heavy sacrifice in men and treasure.

By 1989, the Soviet Union had repealed the Brezhnev Doctrine in favor of non-intervention in the internal affairs of its Warsaw Pact allies.

While the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989 failed to change or even dent Communist regime in China , the powerful images of courage and defiance sparked many and thus began the series of changes in East Europe and elsewhere in Russian Soviet republics.(Based on events in Cairo and elsewhere attempts to organize a ‘Jasmine revolution’ in China seem to have fizzled out so far.)

Seeds of Soviet collapse were sown by the policies of perestroika and glasnost by a naïve Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev , an agriculture engineer by training , who apparently did not comprehend fully either Communism or Capitalism .Western media flattered him by hailing him as a great democratizer. Gorbachev was followed by a Boris Yeltsin, remembered for being mostly drunk or drugged. They destroyed the Soviet state, undermined its ideology and the concept of scientific socialism. The break up and dissolution of USSR was achieved by the end of 1991.

Russian federation and 14 new nations emerged with little local fight or desire for independence in most of the new states except in the Baltics, who then declared independence.

Albania and Yugoslavia discarded the Communist ideology between 1990 and 1992. USA and Europe soon encouraged dissensions in Yugoslavia, with US led Nato troops bombing Yugoslavia illegally and helped break up the state in place since WWI. By 1992 five successor states emerged i.e. Slovenia, Croatia, Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina. But Russia friendly Orthodox Slav Yugoslavia was too much for the triumphal and hubris laden New Rome in Washington. Coastal Montenegro was detached from Serbia completely isolating Moscow's ally in the Balkans.

The Soviet Union's collapse was ruthlessly exploited by US led West while its capitalist controlled media sang praises and promoted economic reforms and so called democratization bringing economic disintegration and ruination to Russia and former communist states leading to the worst kind of depression in modern history with economic losses more than twice those suffered by USSR in World War II. Russian GDP was trimmed to half and capital investment fell by 80 percent. People were reduced to penury and misery, death rates soared and the population shrank. And in August 1998, the Russian financial system collapsed.

Wealth running into a trillion US dollar and more was transferred to the West from the former Soviet Union and socialist states in East Europe and Balkans under the charade of ushering in democracy, free market capitalism and globalization. In Moscow Vladimir Putin has stabilized the situation from rampant exploitation by the West. He remains very popular with his people unlike leaders in the West. In most of the East European states, groups aligned and in league with Washington and Brussels have captured power along with mafia groups, local and from neighboring countries. (Three years ago, in a poll Romanians voted West demonized Ceausescu as the most important leader in its history). Yes, elections are held, as they have been in Iraq and for that matter in 2000 in USA and with the bankers gifting nearly \$ 500 million to Barack Obama for his election fund. Now wonder, there is little of, "yes, we can" in a country ruled by financiers, bankers, and military-industry, energy and other corporate interests.

Conclusions

Twenty years after the Fall of the Berlin Wall, we are seeing the beginnings of the collapse of the other Wall (Street), financial nerve centre of till recently described the New Rome. The decline and coming fall of the US led Western hegemony was brought home by the 2008 September collapse of Lehman brothers, Merrill Lynch and other venerable US and Western financial institutions, thus beginning an era of power shift, perhaps, for the passing of the baton from the West to the East. Washington's debt amounts to almost \$ 10 trillion while its GDP is around 14 trillion. The creditors have discussed replacing US dollar as the reserve currency with a basket of currencies. US led West is deeply mired in the Iraqi quagmire and enmeshed into a non-winnable war in Afghanistan, the graveyard of many empires in history. In north Africa and Middle East, five/ten years ago US might have threatened sending an aircraft carrier to evacuate its citizens as it did against India in 1971.

With the loss of dominance in the Middle East and north Africa and if Saudi Arabia gets embroiled in serious turmoil what will happen to US dollar as the reserve currency.

The confrontation and the wars for hegemony began with Indo-European chariot riders from East Central Asia and later horse riding tribes; the Turks, the Mongols, the Tatars and others galloping west and southwards in their victorious march. A safari by Alexander and his Macedonian hordes to Middle East, Central Asia and North India has little to show in Buddhist records in Asia. It only shows how Western propaganda exaggerates its achievements and misinforms, as is evident from its media exaggerations and misinformation now-a-days.

The world is now poised for paradigm change. US led Western attempts to enter and install NATO forces into central Asia and around the Caspian were stalled. US and Israeli puppet Georgia's attempts to take south Ossetia were rebuffed with Moscow inflicting heavy losses. Azerbaijan with its strategic location and energy resources firmly in the Western camp is having second thoughts about the tight Western embrace after the Georgian outcome. US installed puppet in Ukraine. Victor Yushchenko's was defeated last year. US is just about hanging on in Kyrgyzstan with Moscow watching Washington's discomfiture in Afghanistan and now in the Middle East. The shoe is on the other feet now.

End of History

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Communist ideology, regimes and economics in Eurasia was described as the 'End of History' and a victory for US style liberal capitalism (since 1978, China is more an authoritarian Communist state with capitalist methods of production).

It is Prof Francis Fukuyama who wrote "The End of History and the Last Man" in 1992, argued that the progression of human history as a struggle between ideologies was largely at an end, with the world settling on liberal democracy at the end of the Cold War and the fall of Berlin Wall in 1989. Fukuyama predicted the eventual global triumph of political and economic liberalism:

"What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such... That is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."

Soon he revised his thesis after the rampant capitalism and its excesses in Enron and elsewhere suggesting some kind of centralized direction.

Opposed to 'Operation Iraqi Freedom', Fukuyama in an essay in the New York Times Magazine in 2006 identified neo-conservatism with Leninism. He wrote that "neoconservatives believed that history can be pushed along with the right application of power and will. Leninism was a tragedy in its Bolshevik version, and it has returned as farce when practiced by the United States. Neo-conservatism, as both a political symbol and a body of thought, has evolved into something I can no longer support."

So much for thinkers in USA and their instant philosophies, the other being Samuel Huntington ,who wrote about the ‘Clash of Civilizations.’ What is happening is the struggle for power and hegemony by use of the Gods by followers of three revealed religions in the Middle East.

With the collapse of the liberal capitalism because of human nature i.e. rampant corporate culture of reckless greed in USA along with over spending on defense and imperial over-reach, there are clear symptoms similar to those which brought about the down fall of the Soviet Union two decades ago.

Ironically, it is the public money, used as stimulus, amounting to nearly \$ two trillion and 600 billion which is temporarily keeping private sector afloat in USA. (This money exists on computer screens only and is lent at little interest, sloshing around the world’s stock exchanges making them behave like casinos. It is also used to hoard up commodities which raise their prices.) Public shareholders ought to run the now effectively 'nationalized' banks and other institutions in USA. So much for the final triumph of the US neo-liberal model, defeat of socialism and the 'End of history'.

Is it the beginning of the end of the ‘End of History’?

Economist Hyman Minsky had predicted that “Keynes's collective work amounted to a powerful argument that Capitalism was by its very nature unstable and prone to collapse. Far from trending toward some magical state of equilibrium, capitalism would inevitably do the opposite. It would lurch over a cliff,”

Whatever be the outcome , the turmoil in north Africa and west Asia is like the historic shifting of sands in what can be called Washington’s ‘near abroad’.

In history, centuries of Roman -Byzantine and Persian confrontation and wars led to their exhaustion. Soon their territories were overrun by bands of Bedouins from the deserts of Arabia.

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..regarding your conclusion,I wonder whether, "because of human nature,"-explains much about the collapse of liberal capitalism. Perhaps the inherent contradictions at its heart, may be a more fruitful place to gain a deeper insight into the sources of the convulsive movements now in process, otherwise an informative read.

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