

US & allies should beg Syrian people for forgiveness

By John Wight Thursday 28 August 2014

After a decade when inordinate amount of resources have been applied to the Middle East, the end result has not been the spread of democracy and human rights, as claimed by the champions and apologists of this crusade.

Instead, the billions of dollars spent, tens of thousands of troops, support personnel, and contractors deployed resulted in the eruption and spread of brutality and barbarity on a grand scale.

The mountain of dead bodies erected in the name of Western hegemony in the region since 2003 – the millions maimed, traumatized and displaced, the turning of an Arab Spring into an Arab Winter as a direct result of the West's attempt to co-opt and direct it – has led only to the erection of another mountain of bodies as the blowback continues apace in 2014.

In other words, the disaster of Western intervention across the region over the past decade – both direct and indirect – has resulted in the unleashing of the most regressive and reactionary forces the world has seen since the Khmer Rouge emerged in Cambodia in the wake of the mass bombing of the country of the US in 1975.

The self-proclaimed Islamic State (formerly ISIS) now controls territory larger than Britain with a population of 7 million plus. They have managed to amass enough finance via donations, revenue from their control of oilfields in eastern Syria and northern Iraq, and the looting of banks to fund a sustained military campaign with the objective of consolidating their presence. It is hard to believe they will succeed, given the brutality they have employed in service to an ideology that seeks to wind the clock back centuries with the goal of forging a pure Islamic state, one it has to be said which bears little if any relation to either Islam or the real world.

Yet both the existence and brutality of this group is no new phenomenon. They have been committing atrocities in Syria for over a year now, while marginalizing and/or subsuming rival opposition groups. Here we need to take a moment to disabuse ourselves of the myth of a “*moderate opposition*” in Syria. This myth has been worse than a mistake. It has been a crime when we consider that, for the past three years, weapons and foreign jihadists have flooded into the country via Turkey with the connivance of Western governments on this very basis.

The much vaunted Free Syrian Army (FSA) has the same blood on its hands as any of the various ultra-reactionary Islamic factions that have been running rampant in parts of the country over the same period. FSA members have been responsible for atrocities every bit as outrageous as their Islamist counterparts; on one infamous occasion an FSA commander even had himself filmed disemboweling and taking a bit out of the internal organs of a dead Syrian soldier. The support this organization has received from the West, as a consequence, has been morally reprehensible.

Witnessing the panic that has gripped the British and US governments in response to the recent beheading of American journalist James Foley has been to witness the unraveling of the West's approach to the region since 9/11. The arrogance and mendacity that has been at the heart of the attempt to implement a hegemonic agenda will not be forgiven in the court of history. The sheer scale of human suffering that has been wrought as a result of continuous war, invasion, occupation and intervention is immeasurable, with the end result the emergence of a veritable Frankenstein's

monster in the form of IS, rather than the flowering and proliferation of liberal democracy, as claimed.

How to combat IS the key question now.

The carrying out of airstrikes combined with arming the Kurds to resist IS on the ground is the preferred mode of intervention at present. As a strategy it is doomed to failure, for it does nothing to reach the Sunni population, whose disaffection has allowed IS to make the gains they have thus far, and in fact will most likely further alienate them.

Retired British general Richard Dannatt has come out publicly in favor of cooperating with the Syrian government in an effort to combat IS in eastern and northern Syria, as has the former Foreign Secretary and Defence Secretary Sir Malcolm Rifkind. However the response by the British government to this suggestion has been negative, evidence of the political myopia that continues to afflict Downing Street.

Meanwhile, when it comes to Washington, the latest wheeze is the possibility of carrying out US airstrikes against IS in Syria without either the cooperation or permission of the Syrian government. Here it doesn't take a genius to understand that any such violation of Syrian sovereignty would only compound the disaster that has engulfed the region rather than alleviate it.

In a world in which something called morality plays a part, the US and its allies would be approaching the Syrian government and people on bended knee to beg forgiveness for the suffering they have supported, funded, and prolonged over the past three years. Yet instead they are contemplating adding insult to injury with a blatant violation of the country's sovereignty.

The one possibility that has yet to be raised is the convening of the United Nations Security Council with the objective of gaining a UN resolution mandating a military response to the growing spread and threat of IS, involving the full participation of Russia, China, Brazil, India, Syria, Iran and Egypt.

The credibility of Britain, France and the United States when it comes to the Middle East is non-existent.

Pressure must be exerted on Turkey to close its border and stem the flow of arms and jihadists into Syria and Iraq. There also has to be a concerted effort to interfere with the funding IS receives from wealthy donors in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and other nations. The nauseating hypocrisy of the US and Britain's relationship with the Saudis in particular has been exposed. This rotten clan of potentates is long past its sell-by date.

Like an out-of-control juggernaut, the West has fomented nothing but destruction and despair, creating the chaos from which IS has emerged. Enough is enough. The Middle East is not their backyard and the days of them treating this part of the world as their property must come to an end, or else it will never recover.

John Wight is a writer and commentator specializing in geopolitics, UK domestic politics, culture and sport.

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