



A White House Nursery Rhyme President Obama and the Middle East

Humpty Dumpty is a character from an old English nursery rhyme. Thanks to his appearance with Alice in Lewis Carroll's *Looking Glass*, he has attained nearly universal recognition. Not unlike HD, President Barack Obama has isolated himself on a high wall, apparently impervious to all media scrutiny and criticism. Also similar to his nursery rhyme counterpart, Obama's policies toward the Middle East, when coupled with his incompetence in domestic affairs, seem to have set him up for a great fall.

An Arab Troika

In the wake of what the pundits are calling the *Arab Spring* it is increasingly apparent that the Obama regime does not have a consistent Middle East policy. The only times that Obama has looked anything like a world leader is when he followed the lead of the Bush administration. This has been especially true in Iraq and Iran. Even the timely assassination of long term nemesis, Osama bin-Laden, emanated from the intelligence operations of his predecessor.

Because of his woeful lack of experience in foreign affairs and his predisposition toward the Arab world, Obama has approached the region with the diffidence of a man about to walk through a minefield. Like the salesman in the movie, *The Music Man*, Obama *doesn't know the territory*. Columnist Charles Krauthammer describes Obama's foreign policy as one of *hesitation, delay and indecision*.

Obama does not fully understand the confusion instilled by the three major forces at work in the region. These forces include the ruling oil-rich family dynasties, such as the Saudis, the militant Islamists who wish a return to the Caliphate rule of the 7th century with its rigid implementation of Sharia laws and the rising tide of revolution among the educated youth.

The Arab situation resembles a *Russian Troika*, a three-horse team that is difficult to control and can pull the sleigh or carriage in several different directions. Like so many idealists in the West, Obama has based most of his hopes on the *new people in town*, the so-called *democratic revolutionaries*

who have violently provoked the kind of change that Wilsonian idealists like Obama cherish. Months later they are still virtual unknowns with little organized structure.

A Viral Revolutionary

The essence of the *Arab Spring* is difficult to grasp. According to author Michael Pablo the *Arab revolution is part of the colonial revolution of this post-war period and at times it becomes the dominant feature*. Revolution has gone viral among the 70 million Arabs and Muslims in Africa and the Middle East, and in particular Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, the Sudan, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq.

Arab national consciousness dates back to the 19th century when the modern capitalist nations in Europe were being formed, following the decline of the feudal empires of the West and the Ottoman East. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the West reneged on its promises of self-determination. This resulted in a jigsaw puzzle of artificial *countries* that festered with bitterness, resentment and parochial hatred that has poisoned them for almost a century.

During the recent *Arab Spring* the corrupt old Arab tyrants in Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen have fallen to the wave of nameless idealists, inspired by a spirit of democracy that has energized the world since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. According to the reports from the mainstream media, the events convulsing the Arab world are largely the result of popular discontent and networking among the alienated youth of the Facebook and Twitter generation.

A Militant Language

The American foreign policy elite, which has been schooled in the Wilsonian scheme of *making the world safe for democracy*, has been elated over the prospects that their cause of universal democracy will spread throughout the Middle East. What they fail to realize is that democracy involves a choice that could be for extreme Islam and the rigid code of Sharia law.

To appease Egypt's Muslim majority, the Mubarak regime allowed the Mosques to be open. They quickly became centers for political activism against their regimes. Islam thus became the militant *language of opposition*. That makes secular-minded and liberal people, both Arabs and Westerners, uneasy. So far these revolts have appeared to be largely secular in character. However a recent Pew poll found that a vast majority of Egyptians would welcome a rule by Sharia.

Just as the protests have empowered a long-quiescent Arab middle class, so they have released the Islamists, a multi-faceted, broad-spectrum current that runs deep throughout the region, but has for decades been repressed and manipulated by most Arab regimes. The Islamists and the more radical jihadists are now an integral part of the wave of protest and revolt that has spread across the Arab world.

Other writers, such as William Jasper and Christian Gomez of *The New American*, see more sinister forces at work. They believe *hidden managers* are responsible for the *planned chaos* in the Middle East that has provided the world with a ticking alarm clock. They fear that Marxist operatives plan to seize the baton of change from the democratic forces and replace the tyranny of royalty with a much more inhumane tyranny. These Marxists are waiting patiently in the wings to assume control of the revolution, just as Lenin and the Bolsheviks did to Alexander Kerensky and his Mensheviks in 1917.

A Philosophy of Terrorism

Most people in the West seem only to see the superficial or obvious forces at work, but should understand that there is a religious ferment going on in this region. The Muslim Brotherhood, which has branches all over the region, is the best-run opposition movement in Libya and Egypt. It stands to profit because they are well established and best organized. Though they deny it, they would like to see the region transformed into a Sharia theocracy replete with oppressive rule.

The Muslim Brotherhood was created in Egypt by Hasan al-Banna in 1928. According to author Ira M. Lapidus the Muslim Brotherhood platform is *Restoration of Islamic principles, and a return to the Qur'an and Islamic piety...the reform of morals, education, economic projects, and the creation of a Muslim state*. Islam in their minds provides the blueprint for a total modern society and has served as a religious and political alternative to liberalism and communism. The Muslim Brotherhood was on the verge of power in Egypt, when Nasser and Sadat did an end-run, overthrowing the king, creating the Egyptian army *Free Officers* regime.

The Brotherhood believes the Qur'an and Sunna, the derivative sayings of the prophet Muhammed, must be the basis of individual morality, and stress application of the Sharia in all relevant matters. In social policy they hold that the primary role of women should be care of the family. The Brotherhood

believes that society's secularism has corrupted society and only a return to Islamic principles will restore morality, economic health, and political power. The Brotherhood has as its stated goal *eliminating and destroying Western civilization from within*.

The Obama Doctrine

Since the early days of his regime, Obama has given off ambiguous vibes about his Middle East policies. While he has shown an intense desire to establish friendly ties with the Islamic world, it has been his uncritical stance toward Islamic organizations which included American groups with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood that has worried the American people. When the *Arab Spring* quickly turned into violence, Obama's reaction deepened people's concern about his competency for the presidency.

Despite his timid response to the smoldering cauldron in the Middle East, Obama's cheerleaders in the press have tried to elevate his presidential status by concocting a suitable *doctrine* that will fully express his *vision* for the volatile region. American history is replete with leaders and senior policymakers who have sought to be identified with a grand strategic policy. The country's foreign policy has been driven by such intellectual constructs, such as the Monroe Doctrine, the Truman Doctrine, American Eisenhower Doctrine and the Bush Doctrine. Since most of Obama's leadership has been passive and definably muddled, the task has been a formidable one.

After two years of searching for something resembling a grand Obaman global strategy, some pundits believe that the *Obama Doctrine* started taking shape with his outreach to the Muslim states during his controversial speech in Cairo in 2009. Obama's commitment to *respect the Arab and Muslim world* means in fact that the United States will respect the integrity of the authoritarian regimes existent in Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen—all governments that have already fallen during the Arab Spring, thus contradicting his inchoate doctrine before the ink was dry on the parchment. Since then Obama has vacillated between an almost *laissez faire* attitude and stern words of regime change in the region in favor of and support for the forces in the democratic revolution.

His failure to act swiftly and decisively against Libya also taints his *doctrine*. After days of coaxing from advisors, allies and public opinion, Obama finally used American air power. Perhaps wisely, Obama has been reluctant to commit *boots on the ground*, given the over-extension of American military in Iraq and Afghanistan. But with his ad hoc approach to foreign policy, it is an option that cannot be ruled out. His wavering has also damaged American credibility throughout the region, particularly with other governments that considered themselves friendly to the United States.

The eponymous *Obama Doctrine* is not about innocent people or brutal regimes. This is not a war doctrine, or a blueprint for

the US to pattern action. It is about Obama and his re-election. The *Obama Doctrine* is nothing *more than a slippery political eel that slithers away in the oceanic darkness for fear of exposure*. It is a politically based calculation that is designed to take credit for any positive outcome while avoiding blame for any failure. Such has been the nature of his presidential addresses.

Blood in the Streets

On the eve of the Beatification of Pope John Paul II, writer Andrew Nagorski speculated in the *New York Times* that if the Pope were still alive, he would have found hope in the *Arab Spring*. Decrying all the surrounding acts of violence, Nagorski believes the Pope would have applauded the efforts of all the countries involved in employing all the new media technologies in their drive for solidarity and freedom from oppression.

However the late Pope would have deplored the persecutions of the region's Catholic and other Christian minorities that have accompanied the democracy movement in Middle Eastern countries. This has been especially true during the *Arab Spring*. According to blogger Sheryl Young, Coptic Christians in America *are concerned for their counterparts living in Egypt*.

A *Coptic* Christian is an Egyptian who believes in Jesus Christ. Coptic Christians follow either the Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant form of Christianity. Coptics are extremely concerned that while President Obama invited the Muslim Brotherhood to participate in forming a new Egyptian government, neither he nor others in our government specifically invited Egypt's Christian population or other religious groups to the table.

There are approximately 10 to 12 million Coptic Christians in Egypt. This is 15 to 20% of the population. The Coptics fear that if the Muslim Brotherhood makes Sharia the law of the land, their blood will run in the streets, just as had happened in Iraq and Iran. Over the New Year's holiday, more than 20 Coptic Christians were murdered while at worship services. Mubarak's regime had evidence that this was committed by al-Qaeda. But his government had proven inefficient or unwilling to punish perpetrators of such atrocities or protect the Coptics. With Mubarak gone, things can only get worse. Analysts compare this to Iran in 1979 when the Shah was overthrown.

A Great Fall

While hope for the Christian Coptics in Egypt is being seriously compromised in the Middle East, there is more cause for optimism among Obama's opponents with regard to his declining prospects for the 2012 election. They see as good news that once Obama's success in killing bin Laden eventually fades, he will eventually fall victim to his diffident leadership role in the Middle East during the uncertain times of their *Arab Spring*.

To combat his lack of confidence and experience in the Middle East, Obama resembles a modern version of his ideological mentor, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who often boasted that he was likened to a doctor who tried many different medications and elixirs until the patient was cured...*or died*. Unfortunately Dr. Obama's medical credentials are as identifiable as his Occidental College transcripts. He still remains, according to British historian Niall Ferguson, *a novice in foreign affairs... a president without a strategy*.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the linchpin to his ultimate success or failure in the Middle East. It has remained a festering sore that has poisoned Arab and Muslim attitudes toward America for more than 60 years. Obama's apparent indifference toward Israeli's future and the favorable predisposition toward the Arabs of many of Obama's key advisors such as Robert Malley, Dalia Mogahed, and Samantha Powers, do not instill any confidence in President Obama by the Israelis.

The good news for Obama's political opponents is that even if the *Obama Doctrine* enjoys a modicum of success, the Middle East is but a distraction from the pressing economic issues that dominate the daily lives of ordinary Americans. Any ultimate success of Obama's contribution to the *Arab Spring* will have little bearing on his re-election if he does not devote more than passive energy toward the *kitchen table* issues of oil prices, inflation, jobs and a run-away budget crisis. If he does not seriously address these salient issues, the oxygen of criticism will quickly break his vacuum-packed seal and like Humpty Dumpty, *he will have a great fall*.



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2011 Chicago Conference Highlights

The Chicago Conference was a smash! The CMF Conference on April 30, 2011, was a remarkable success with attendance over 300, many young people and families. Speakers received ovations and their books quickly snapped up. The program was opened with Mass and the Children's Choir of St. John Cantius, led by Brother Chad McCoy (below), added beauty and reverence.



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Keynote Speaker Lila Rose informed us of the activities of Planned Parenthood and their deceitful practices; Bruce Sullivan gave us insight on his journey into the Catholic faith; Robert R. Reilly enlightened us on the Muslim Crisis and his new book, *The Closing of the Muslim Mind*; Fr. Edmund McCaffrey spoke on Fatima: The Solution to the Modern Chaos.

The Evaluation comments were unanimous regarding the speakers and the Conference: ALL EXCELLENT!

Special thanks to the dedicated Conference Committee headed by Kevin Haney, Mary Ambuul, and Dorie Gruss, aided by other generous volunteers. Special thanks to Board Chairman, John O. Shields, who was an outstanding M.C. for the day's Program.

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