



A Mideastern View of the Fourth of July

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Americans understand an intractable portion of the Islamic world opposes America and all she stands for. What many Americans do not know this Fourth of July weekend is how much Middle Easterners know about America's ideals, values, and revolutionary principles of liberty. What viewers and audiences in the U.S. were not told is the magnitude of political and social change America is provoking in the region, even beyond the wildest imagination of those planners who said they were entering a "war of ideas" a few years ago.

What students in this country are forbidden to learn - too often by their own college professors - is the intellectual and mental tsunami triggered east of the Mediterranean by the plain, clear, and powerful words spoken by leaders and activists from these shores. The dominant story in the mainstream media portrays the greater Middle East as a gigantic monolithic mass, fully absorbed by an inexplicable hatred of America. And if an explanation of this rage is warranted, it becomes -thanks

to these same academic and media "experts" - the "despicable policies" of the United States all over the world. But if you further analyze the arguments presented by the raging crowd and their sympathizers within the country, you'd discover that the "home of the free" is feared and hated just for that: for its liberty, a characteristic not welcomed by the dominant elites in the Middle East, nor by the fascist ideologies serving their purposes.

Revolutionary France was hated by the absolute monarchies of Europe, and today revolutionary America is hated by the absolute dictatorships and jihadi regimes of the Arab and Muslim world. It took a few decades in old Europe before French republican ideals storms the continent from Spain to Poland and beyond. A similar phenomenon is happening today from Morocco to Afghanistan. Students are discovering, women are learning, and masses are challenging the old order. And let's be clear: the rise of the democrats in the Middle East is caused by earthquakes hitting the fabric of the regimes and

their ideologies. And one cannot hide it anymore; the epicenters are in Kabul, Baghdad, Beirut - and soon in Damascus and Tehran.

The future of the region will belong to its younger generations, and they aren't interested in beards, chadors, and dar el Harb (making war on the non-Islamic world). They are interested in freedom, jobs, and revolution. Yes, the radical students of the madrassas are sinking in Salafism and locked inside jihadism. They look very angry on TV, and their numbers seem to be swelling, of course when they are shown on al-Jazeera or analyzed by angrier Western intellectuals. But the voice of the American-inspired youth is getting louder. From the new bloggers to dissident websites, all the way to the callers on TV shows, "they" are there, underdogs of all sorts, seeking change. Often, when asked by challengers, they say clearly: "We want what you call an 'average Joe and Jane' existence here in the United States." They simply wish to experience the freedoms everyone enjoys. They've seen our movies, documentaries, read about our political culture in our books, more than we know. But above all, and against all what the international elites are asserting, they - the normal people in the region - have understood the sacrifices of U.S. and Coalition soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Back in 2003, a distinguished American scholar of Arab descent told an Arab television audience that "Arabs and Middle Easterners should appreciate the blood shed by those young men and women from the Midwest and other parts of America. They have sacrificed for Iraqis and others enjoy liberty." Fouad Ajami of Johns Hopkins is not the only clear voice in academic America to break the thick wall of apologists. Marius Deeb of SAIS, Robert Rabil of Florida Atlantic University, and many other Mideastern American

scholars are setting the record straight: America's revolutionary values are inspiring the region's best, its youngest, and its brightest.

Back in October of 2004, more than 750 representatives of Mideastern American organizations launched the first American-Mideast Convention for Freedom: Arabs, Aramaic, Copts, Muslims, Christians, Lebanese, Iraqis, Syrians, Libyans, Chaldo-Assyrians, Kurds, Sudanese, and others praised the "extraordinary historical experience" their communities have had in this country. They wholeheartedly praised the sons and daughters of America for consenting to offer the highest sacrifice so that youth in Kabul, Baghdad, Basra, and Kirkuk lives an American dream of their own. Again in March 2005, a million-and-a-half demonstrators chanted freedom in Beirut. They acclaimed American journalists and asked them to send emotional messages to the "American people." Lebanese knows very well, that without the U.S. diplomatic action to produce UN Security Council 1559, asking for Syrian withdrawal, the Ba'athist diktat would have remained over their head today. The popular communication between the region's underdogs and America is wide open. But the still dominant elite in the Middle East and across the waters doesn't like this show of solidarity.

Since the removal of Saddam Hussein in 2003, all the forces opposed to democracy and freedom in the Arab world and their political and economic allies in the West are lashing back: Zarqawi's terror in Iraq, Hizbollah intimidation and Baathist assassinations in Lebanon, and the selection of a rabid radical to head the Iranian regime. In Europe and in North America, the old guard of oil interests is on a jihad to delegitimize the American push for democracy in the region. At the cross-

roads of any native success, pessimism and unfounded criticism spreads out to counter U.S. initiatives. Washington makes mistakes, to be sure, but the underdogs of the Middle East want more democracy in spite of them. They argue with a comparative mind: There were more horrors and mistakes that came with the French Revolution than immediate benefits, yet its values became widespread. The American Revolution wasn't without troubles (especially for the Loyalists), yet the greatest democracy on earth was born from its womb. Today, millions of underdogs in the region believe the U.S. is offering something they cannot refuse: a chance to reclaim their God-given liberties. American forces are seen by many – not the jihadists, not the Ba'athists, but by normal and peace loving people – as the Lafayettes of 21st century aiding their own burgeoning George Washingtons.

The Fourth of July is not just an American celebration of independence; it has

become a celebration of freedom across the plains, deserts, and mountains of the aching peoples of the Middle East. When they watched the movie “The Fourth of July” years ago, many from Beirut to Tehran identified with the good guys, i.e., America and its allies. Especially when the “president” in the movie asked the “aliens” about their intentions: The latter answered: we want to destroy you, all of you, all of the nations on earth. It was a reminder of dar al Harb, the jihadist war zone. Interestingly Hizbollah and its allies wanted the movie removed from the theaters. They identified with the bad guys but realized how common people identified with America, instead.

On this Fourth of July 2005, millions more are living freedom in the Middle East, thanks to the multiethnic country of George Washington – a fact that can be distorted by “ideological aliens” at will, but which cannot be changed by history.

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