



Who Killed the Bush Doctrine?

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On January 20, 2005, George W. Bush outlined the goal of his second term. "It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world," he said. "All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you."

Less than a year later, the Bush doctrine is dead, the victim not of outside circumstances, but rather lack of will and ineptness. While Bush may be sincere, across the Middle East, his administration's willingness to sacrifice those seeking freedom has become legendary.

Take Libya: On March 12, 2004, Bush declared, "We stand with courageous reformers ... Earlier today, the Libyan government released Fathi el-Jahmi. He's a local government official who was imprisoned in 2002 for advocating free speech and democracy. It's an encouraging step toward reform in Libya. You probably have heard, Libya is beginning to change her attitude about a lot of things.

Actually, Libyan strongman Muammar Qadhafi had not changed. Two weeks later, Libyan security rearrested Jahmi. Across the Middle East, analysts saw Qadhafi's actions as a challenge to Bush. The President responded not by tying rapprochement to El-Jahmi's freedom, but with impotence. As El-Jahmi rots in prison, denied medical care for his diabetes, the

U.S. Treasury Department grants waivers to allow billions of dollars of U.S. investment in Libya. According to the London-based Al-Hayat newspaper, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will endorse Qadhafi's reign with a November visit to Tripoli.

The liberation of Iraq demonstrated that after years of effete diplomacy, the White House meant what it said. Bush reversed that victory.

It should be no surprise that Qadhafi has since gone on a rampage. In May 2005, he imprisoned dissident writer Abdul Razzaq al-Mansouri. In June 2005, regime elements tortured to death dissident journalist Daif al-Ghazal. Hundreds of political prisoners remain in Libyan jails.

The Bush administration also fumbled Lebanon. On March 8, 2005, Bush spoke at the National Defense University. "Today I have a message for the people of Lebanon," he said. "Lebanon's future will be in your hands. The American people are on your side." Perhaps many Americans were, but not the State Department.

When Condoleezza Rice visited Lebanon on July 22, she met not only with the new Prime Minister Fuad Siniora, but also with pro-Syrian President Emile Lahoud, the man whose quest for an extra-constitutional third term began the cascade that led to the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and sparked the Cedar Revolution. Syrian television, Hezbollah's Al-Manar channel, and the Arabic-language satellite station Al-Jazeera all broadcast her handshake with the symbol of tyranny.

The Lebanese were not alone in their betrayal. Egyptians were aghast when, on September 11, new U.S. Ambassador Frank Ricciardone appeared on Egyptian television and declared, "Let me just reiterate the congratulations of the United States of America to Egypt for this great accomplishment. As you know, President Bush has telephoned President Mubarak ... to congratulate him and Egypt on the accomplishments of this past election."

Four days earlier, Mubarak had declared victory in elections marred by harassment of opponents, fraud, and the state's refusal to allow international monitors access. The Egyptian people, in protest, boycotted the polls. Voter turnout was only 20 percent. Rather than support the Egyptian people, the President's representative fawned on a dictator. Sometimes, silence can be the best response.

Embrace of autocracy has become the rule rather than the exception in U.S. foreign policy. At the request of the Palestinian Authority, the State Department banned Issam Abu Issa, a Palestinian anti-corruption activist slated to testify in the House of Representatives.

Bush declared during his 2005 State of the Union Address, "To the Iranian people, I say tonight, as you stand for your own liberty, America stands with you." But Rice appointed an ExxonMobil advisor who advised against aiding dissidents to cover the State Department's Iran policy planning portfolio.

Against the backdrop of Bush's indifference, Turkish democracy has taken a step backward. Turkish Prime Min-

ister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has both ignored rulings of the Turkish Supreme Court and retaliated against plaintiffs. After Turkish businessman Mustafa Suzer won five lawsuits against the Turkish government for its illegal seizure of Kent Bank, Erdogan not only refused to abide by the court verdict, but he also ordered a travel ban on Suzer and, without any court order, sent bulldozers to demolish a restaurant on his property.

Emboldened by Washington's silence and frustrated at the constraints of an independent judiciary, the Turkish leader has used his parliamentary majority to lower the retirement age of judges so that he can replace nearly half of Turkey's 9,000 judges before the next election.

As they do with Bush, the chattering classes of Europe, Israel, and the American elite once criticized Reagan for his talk of the "Evil Empire" and his willingness to endanger detente for the sake of a few dissidents. Reagan was right, though, and more

than two hundred million Soviets had a chance at freedom because of it.

Bush might have been equally successful. Images of Iraqis, Afghans, and Lebanese voting are more powerful than any terrorist car bomb or Al-Qaida video. Armchair experts may say Iraq's liberation emboldened terrorists. But the pages of Arabic newspapers like Al-Sharq al-Awsat and Al-Hayat now carry an unprecedented debate about democracy, which experts said could not happen. Liberals may be a minority in the Arab world, but they have begun to find their voice.

Rice may echo the President, but by embracing dictators, she has undercut the spirit of his message. Dissidents should not be treated as ornaments, to be displayed when convenient but kept at arm's length. They are the foundation of freedom. While Bush might once have been remembered for bringing freedom to 30 million Afghans and 25 million Iraqis, his legacy is fast becoming one of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

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