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The Globalization of Militarism

Egypt, Path to the Future?

by NORMAN POLLACK

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Events in Egypt take on cosmic significance as the forward edge of world counterrevolution. Not simply an eruption, a slightly more strident form of business-as-usual, but indicative of a sharper rightward turn in which governments and peoples turn away as state-sponsored murder is conducted with impunity. Egypt is not even a civil war, in which case one might choose sides and read into the situation matters of principle and ideology. In this case, massive force confronts an essentially unarmed populace, raising issues which transcend mere side-taking and reflect instead the elemental question, Can the individual survive, grow, expand, within an international system in which national self-interest trumps human needs and legitimates repression as the means to achieving hierarchically imposed goals? Here Egypt is really a *pawn*, internally military-dominated, but that itself predicated on an hegemonic framework of world capitalist penetration, starting with regional and not solely Egyptian proportions, under American leadership. Gen. Sisi is a foot-soldier in the Western Capitalist army of geopolitical dominance engaged in undercutting and permanently holding at bay the seemingly peripheral intruders, notably, China and Russia, with Japan and India made certifiably “Western” because of fulfilling a potential strategic role as stabilizing and containing the other two.

Militarism must not be allowed to fail. Releasing Mubarak (whether or not realized) is like exhumation of the war criminals of the recent past, a reminder that evil deeds, under stress of revision, not only go unpunished, in that the social forces which made them possible are back in business, but also become celebrated. Whether authoritarianism is a vehicle for capitalism, or capitalism, for authoritarianism, we see that advanced capitalist-industrial states, perhaps integral to their mature stage of development, require the total rationalization of the productive system and the human counterpart to that system—a purposely dry formulation of Max Weber’s rational-legal framework in his *Theory of Social and Economic Organization* in order to suggest (beyond Weber in this one respect) that human beings necessitate the same degree of control and predictability, which is what we mean by rationalization, as the productive order itself. As capitalist development increases in complexity everything must be seamless, nothing permitted out-of-kilter, machine production and the individual fused as one, lest fissures occur which expose greater strains, which in turn promote business-cycle volatility, all to the detriment of order, stability, predictability, on which, it is mortally feared by ruling groups, social unrest is stimulated and thrives.

Capitalism is a system on tenterhooks, social disturbance magnified out of all objective proportion in fear—not wholly irrational—of complete unraveling. What is true for the domestic society is equally if not more true for the international order in which it operates, the latter’s first priority, even condition for existence, being the preservation, stabilization, and, it hopes, guidance of, and leadership within, that order. Egypt, admittedly, seems a dot on the political-economic-ideological hegemonic landscape; actually, it is more—although circumstances have thrust it forward for purposes of analysis. Possibly another hot spot would have dramatized as well the aforementioned dynamics of the world situation, yet the nakedness of the repression provides, given Egypt’s geographic location, a good departure point. For a moment, it seems we are back to the falling-domino theory central to the Cold War mental-set. If Egypt falls, here, to the Muslim Brotherhood, and, implicitly, al Qaeda hiding behind it, the whole of the Middle East will follow (including the extinction of Israel), thence expanding every which way: Europe, Africa, the world conquest of jihadists-Islamism through universal infiltration. Nonetheless, however genuine the Western fear, assisted by a somewhat ingrained, systemic, cultural xenophobia, this is at best secondary to world, particularly US, capitalist imperatives of trade, investment, natural-resources flow, and OIL.

Militarism trumps social justice in the global capitalist paradigm. Brazil and Chile came before, Egyptian generals the Pinochets of a still more decisive geostrategic sphere of influence. In the region, the US has a self-defined obligation to Israel, non-negotiable, even were it to be tested by a preemptive Israeli air strike on Iranian nuclear facilities, or tested, through military and intelligence backup, should Israel and its neighbors go to war. What now emerges, because of the Israeli public-relations campaign through its embassies and consulates in world capitals on behalf of the Egyptian military (atrocities and all), known to analysts anyway, is the close ties between the two military commands. Israel has, not so privately, taken sides, yet more important than its immediate defensive needs is its assisting role in carrying out US goals starting with the region, and expanding to political-economic infinity (i.e., the restoration of unilateral financial-commercial-military dominance). Without the US, Israel would be if not a pastoral backwater then a more diverse society not unlike Lebanon or Jordan of, say, the 1970s-80s. But without Israel, the US would still operate according to its core definitions of self-interest, thereby making

Israel complicit but passive in policy execution. Capitalist expansion via projecting market fundamentalism on the world, including widening the rationalization of industry in bottom-fishing for the lowest labor costs, and, as usual, securing the most advantageous terms for trade, investment, raw materials, sums up the self-interest core.

Egypt is manna from heaven. The US has been losing the struggle for world-capitalist virility because its single-minded focus on profit-maximization (not even long-term, but more desperately, grabbing where possible, as in the short-cut to the financialization of capitalism through creating and marketing exotic financial instruments) reveals signs and strains of structural senescence, as in a decaying industrial base, high levels of unemployment and foreclosure, and ever-widening class differentials, resulting in endemic underconsumption. How, then, get back into the ball game, especially after becoming accustomed to a position of first place for so long? Egypt is *one*, but not the only, way. Obama's incremental approach: Through drone warfare, keep up targeted assassinations. Whether or not Al Qaeda operatives are hit is irrelevant, so long as the world knows America is gunning for its "enemies," whomever and wherever they may be—America's selective use of terror (more bang for the buck), striking terror into the hearts of the presumed terrorists. But even he knows better. As he and Brennan worked out, constantly revising and adding to the hit list will compel subsequent administrations to follow the same protocol, leading to the acceptance of the doctrine of permanent war. Binding others to targeted assassination has the advantage of preventing America's slide into permanent obscurity, but since it is impossible to vaporize everyone the strategy is at best temporary. And his long-term approach, pursued in tandem with the armed drone, is the exercise of true US muscle-power: the Pacific-first strategy draws upon the entire arsenal of military resources, now pivoted to Asia, naval power to the front, for the purpose of cordoning off China so to prevent its military-economic challenge to American dominance. This already appears futile, for without resorting to intervention or war, China has successfully gained entrance into world markets, has an investment record, as in Africa, second to none, and has undertaken massive projects in infrastructure, obviously at home, but also throughout the Third World. Because there is no contest, the Strangelovian juices are flowing in Washington more than ever, augmented by the spirit, Let no opportunity go unnoticed, with Egypt the soft underbelly for a geostrategic push on several fronts at once.

The Egyptian massacres endeared the generals to our own government. They have proven that they can be trusted allies. By the world's indifference, they have certified open season on Islamists, popularized repression itself as, with its close relative, regime change, preferable to the messiness thought to inhere in democracy, and, highly pertinent, provided America access to expanding its arc of influence to cover critical areas of Europe, Asia, and Africa. With all eyes now on the Pacific, Egypt offers protection on the other flank, the chance to stop the Arab Spring in its tracks, while securing a greater hold on Middle East oil. Italy, Spain, North Africa, only a stone's throw away, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, within distance of long-range aircraft equipped with nuclear weapons, a veritable feast of hegemonic retention and aspiration! The Egyptian military, however, on its part must earn the respect of Washington, more rather than less bloodletting, as in the summary execution of protesters in government hands, or the skyrocketing rate of casualties who are themselves unarmed. \$1.5 B buys a lot of butchery, money not to be wasted, if the message is to go out: resist the Americanization of the world political-military system at your peril, whether real or imagined jihadist, real or imagined socialist, real or imagined

whistleblower who might divulge the secrets of inner fear propelling the drive for global domination. *That* military must succeed, or all militaries will lose status. Coups feed on each other; whom next, in the service of totalitarianism, the ideal ground for the flourishing of advanced/mature capitalism?

My *New York Times* Comment (Aug. 19) on the article discussing Mubarak's possible release follows:

They will kill us, I know, everybody knows, but it doesn't matter." Tawab's words, his brother killed in Ramses Square shortly before, should haunt the waking hours of all us. We have demonized Islamists as though the West were engaged in a Holy War, preparatory, under the name of counterterrorism and national security, to embark on a bloodbath if not campaign of extermination. Political dialogue is a joke because we want no part of it, and instead, military repression as the sole guide to safety and stability. Safety for whom?

Release of Mubarak would signal to the world, because few outside Egypt would protest, a symbolic step toward ascendant fascistic currents. Militarism has become infectious. The US wraps Sisi's knuckles, but refuses to cut aid. Israel, per your report, is leading a campaign in world opinion on behalf of the Egyptian massacres, exposing itself for what it has become: a pariah state because of its disregard for social decency and the rights of others.

Cynicism reigns supreme in world councils. The little people, like Tawab and his deceased brother, should be what and whom really matter, not ground up in hate-machines and spewed out. It is sad that no one has intervened to stop the massacres, not the UN, not the EU, and, of course, not NATO and the US, who believe the status quo is good for business. How much further slaughter? And why?