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The Financial Crisis: 9/11 Redux

by Michael Tennant

Perhaps the one bit of shiny interior in the black cloud of the financial crisis is that most mainstream conservatives, heretofore bootlicking worshippers of George W. Bush and the Republican Party, have come to realize that there's literally not a dime's worth of difference between the two parties when it comes to their willingness to bail out their Wall Street pals with taxpayers' money — or, more accurately, brand spanking new “money” that dilutes the value of what little they allow us lowly taxpayers to keep. Ron Paul excepted, Rush Limbaugh is absolutely correct when he says that “not one Republican” is offering a coherent alternative to the print-more-money-and-create-new-regulations scheme pushed by the Bush administration and legislators from both parties.

From the conservative commentators I've heard or read, the Right, with a few exceptions, seems to have settled on the correct narrative for the situation, to wit: The government created the financial crisis through its own interventions. Rather than admit that their interventions caused the problem, the politicians are blaming the problem on freedom and using the crisis that they created to aggrandize more power for themselves. They will then use this power to intervene further, producing additional problems that they will then have the opportunity to “fix” and again increase their power through additional interventions, and so on.

The challenge now is to get conservatives — and, indeed, all Americans — to apply this reasoning consistently to other crises, and what better place to start than with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001?

Despite Rudy Giuliani's incredibly foolish remark during one of the GOP primary debates that he'd never heard of the theory that the 9/11 attacks were blow-back from the U.S. government's interventions in foreign countries, there is no question that that was the case. Every time Osama bin Laden has spoken, he has stated quite plainly that his motivation to hit America is precisely that the U.S. government kills Muslims, props up repressive regimes in the Middle East, stations troops in Muslim holy lands, and provides unconditional support to the government

of Israel. Both the CIA and the ever-cautious, bipartisan 9/11 Commission reported the same thing.

Here are some examples of U.S. interventions that just might cause Muslims to hate the U.S. government:

- The 1953 overthrow of Iran's elected prime minister, replacing him with the tyrannical shah;
- The arming of both sides of the Iran-Iraq war — openly on the side of then-U.S. ally Saddam Hussein, clandestinely to Iran through Israel in the Iran-Contra affair;
- The inexplicable about-face in U.S. policy from Donald Rumsfeld's glad-handing of Saddam in the 1980s to the characterization of him as the new Hitler in 1991 and beyond, not to mention U.S. Ambassador April Glaspie's statement to Saddam prior to his invasion of Kuwait that "we have no opinion on your Arab-Arab conflicts, such as your dispute with Kuwait."
- The first war against Iraq and the subsequent sanctions, which directly led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children (possibly as many as 500,000, according to UNICEF estimates);
- The second war against Iraq and its subsequent occupation, which may have contributed to more than 100,000 civilian deaths;
- The invasion of Afghanistan and the thousands of civilian deaths it has caused;
- The stationing of troops in Saudi Arabia, near the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina;
- The billions upon billions of dollars in unconstitutional foreign aid sent to the governments of Egypt (number two on the list of foreign-aid recipients and hardly a model of democratic liberty) and Israel (number one on the list); and
- The continual cover provided for any action taken by the government of Israel, which treats all Palestinians as criminals, razes (or at least threatens to raze) entire villages because it suspects terrorist attacks originated there, is building its own Berlin Wall to keep the Palestinians out of its cities, invades and bombs neighboring countries, and refuses to come clean on its stockpiles of nuclear weapons.

None of this excuses terrorist attacks against innocent Americans, of course, but it does explain why some Muslims wish to lash out against the United States.

Intervention and blowback

When the inevitable blowback finally did occur, did U.S. politicians admit that their interventions had caused the problem and then vow to stop meddling in foreign countries? Of course not! Instead they blamed the crisis on freedom. The terrorists didn't attack America because the government's meddling in the Middle East had angered them, but because they "hate freedom," we were told.

As they have done with the fear caused by the current financial meltdown, the politicians then proceeded to use the fear generated by the 9/11 attacks to increase their own power. They created the Transportation Security Administration, passed the USA PATRIOT Act, instituted warrantless wiretapping and other unconstitutional searches, immunized telecommunications companies that had cooperated with the illegal wiretapping, declared people — including an American citizen arrested on U.S. soil — “enemy combatants” unworthy of due process of law, shipped others off to Guantánamo Bay or to foreign governments to be tortured, and generally did their best to finish off the Bill of Rights.

Refusing to recognize that their interventions had caused the problem in the first place, they next piled intervention upon intervention in the vain hope of bringing “an end to evil,” as former Bush administration figures David Frum and Richard Perle so modestly titled their 2003 manifesto. The Bush administration invaded two countries, one of which was in no way connected to 9/11 or al-Qaeda, and built the largest embassy in history in that same country. It sent billions of dollars of aid to Pakistan’s dictator and still couldn’t keep him in power. It continues to send billions to Egypt and Israel. President Bush was spotted holding hands with the king of Saudi Arabia. And the Bush administration continued to threaten Iran and Russia. Meanwhile, Osama bin Laden is still at large.

When these interventions come home to roost — and let us pray that it is nothing on the scale of 9/11 — how will Americans respond? Will they once again allow themselves to be gulled into believing that freedom, not government intervention, was the cause? Will they stand by idly as the politicians once more refuse to acknowledge their own responsibility for the crisis and instead use it as an opportunity to accumulate more power? Even worse, will Americans cheer on this power grab and denigrate those who oppose it as unpatriotic terrorist sympathizers? Or will they finally come to recognize that government intervention caused the problem and that only government withdrawal can solve it? The answers to these questions will determine the future of liberty in America.

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