

How the Islamic "virus" broke out of the imperialist laboratory

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[Editor's note: This article continues Richard Greeman's series about Islamism.] Over the years, the British-backed Moslem Brotherhood's activities spread far beyond Egypt. Not by coincidence did the first Arabic translation of "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," still in circulation today, appear in Egypt the 1920's. This anti-Semitic forgery was created by the Imperial Russian secret services around 1905 in order to designate a scapegoat and divert the growing Russian revolutionary movement into reactionary channels (pogroms, Black Hundreds). Today, as in the 1920's, it serves to divert the anger of the Moslem masses away from their despotic governments toward Zionism and the Jew-dominated West. However, in the 1970's this did not stop the Israelis from encouraging and financing the Brotherhood's evangelical and social activities in newly occupied Gaza and the West bank through its "Moslem Center" front in a "tactical alliance" against the Palestinian resistance led by the secular PLO. These activities were directed by the Brotherhood's Palestine Apparatus as a base on which to prepare the creation in the 1980's of the Islamic political party Hamas and for its future armed struggle against both the PLO and Israel. Divide-and-rule continued to bear fruit for the Israelis in the Twenty-First Century, when actual armed hostilities broke out between Fatah- and Hamas-oriented militias in the West Bank, demoralizing the Palestinians and paving the way for fresh Israeli incursions. Similarly, the "Islamicist" tactic of attacking civilians by placing car bombs in front of mosques was first introduced by the CIA in Lebanon in the 1970's, according to award-winning journalist Allan Nairn. In the 1980's we find the CIA playing the Islamic card against the Communists in the Great Game between Russia and the West over control of Afghanistan. If Osama bin Laden didn't personally work for the CIA in the 80s (as did Saddam Hussein) his fighters received U.S. arms and money through the Pakistani secret services (ISI) to combat the Russians and the Afghani Communists (who incidentally had brought secular education, female equality and relative lack of corruption to Afghanistan during their years in government). Throughout ME/A history the imperialist West has consistently preferred to support pliant reactionary despots over democrats and nationalists for the simple reason that it is cheaper and more profitable to pay off a small ruling group and keep the lion's share of the profits than to submit to popular demands for better wages, local development and a fairer distribution of the oil revenues. By and large, these divide-and-rule tactics have worked. And although the Clash of Civilizations paradigm presents the Islamic world as an aggressive, expansionist, ideological and military threat to pacific Western democratic liberalism, the historical record shows that the Western governments have consistently crushed every attempt at democracy or secular nationalism in the ME/A lands. One needs only to recall the 1953 CIA-organized overthrow of the elected government of Iran and its mildly nationalistic prime minister, Mohammad Mossadegh, who had dared to impose partial nationalization of Iran's oil-fields (while offering to pay 25% royalties to the British). Or the 1956 French-British-Israeli invasion of Egypt, when the secular pan-Arabist government of Nasser threatened the Suez Canal. The reason secular strongman and former CIA "asset" Saddam Hussein suddenly got transformed from cherished ally in the war against the Ayatollahs into an Islamic "Hitler" had nothing to do with religion. As the surviving regional power after the defeat of Iran in their bloody 1980-1988 war, the Iraqi dictator got too big for his britches and tried to take a bigger cut of the profits. This would have set a very bad precedent, and it took the West two wars and an invasion to cut him down to size - naturally in the name of "democracy" and the "liberation" of the Iraqi people. And although the Bush II Administration attempted to link Saddam Hussein with the religious fanaticism of Osama bin Ladan as a pretext for invasion, Baathist Iraq was arguably the most secular, progressive, technically advanced state in the region. One recalls that under Saddam

women occupied roughly half the jobs in the Iraqi civil services as well as in education and medicine. Well-trained Iraqi engineers and administrators were able to successfully repair the infrastructure after the devastations of the first Gulf War, despite the continuing U.S. embargo - something Halliburton has been unable to do after spending billions. Not surprisingly, in 2003 the U.S.-British occupiers immediately pushed aside the actual democratic forces within Iraq - women, organized labor, and the educated middle class of doctors, lawyers, engineers - and based themselves exclusively on the reactionary religious and tribal elements whose reign of Islamic terror went viral and continues to this day. Another case of divide-and-rule imperialism playing with fire, "creating" Islamism - and then getting caught in the "blowback."