Moslem Disunity

February 15, 2011

For a movement to be a serious threat to the imperialist West, it must be coherent and united, which is simply not the case of what is termed "Radical Islam." A united, militant Islamic world would indeed be a serious threat to the West, but nothing like that is in the offing, with the result that "Political Islam," divided, remains weak and ineffectual. So much for the Clash of Civilizations theories, based on ideology rather than concrete history. To be sure, Islamicist terror is a very serious daily threat to its principle victims, Moslem civilians in the ME/A lands, as well as to its more occasional victims, civilians in Western cities. But the actually existing Islamisms within the divided Moslem world represent no serious threat to U.S./Western hegemony, only obstacles to its control of the extraction and transit of petroleum. The most dramatic evidence of continuing Moslem impotence is the freedom and impunity with which Israel was able to invade first southern Lebanon in 2006 and then Gaza in 2008-09, deploying massive bombardments of civilian areas and scandalous attacks on schools, ambulances, and hospitals. Ostensibly Moslem pro-Western authoritarian states like, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco et al. responded to these brutal aggressions "by tacitly supporting Israel"s offensive in the hope of weakening a resistance movement which they see as a proxy for Iran and Syria." Moslem Egypt has even closed its border with Gaza to humanitarian aid. Only when faced with huge spontaneous pro-Palestinian street demonstrations at home did these U.S.-propped "Moslem" despotisms eventually consent to send some aid for the rebuilding of Gaza. Similarly, the U.S. occupiers in Iraq have successfully played the imperial divide-and-rule game by paying off Sunni militias to "keep order" and serve as a counterforce to the restive Shiite majority. Likewise in Afghanistan, the victorious 2001 US invasion was made possible by the divide-and-rule tactic of arming the Northern Alliance of Islamic warlords from the ethnic Tadzhik, Usbeck, Hasara nations against the Taliban government, whose ethnic base is the Pashtun nation, large but still a minority. I am not asserting here that all, or even a majority of Pashtuns supported or now support the Taliban. But when U.S. drones bomb Pashtun civilian villages or compounds on "intelligence" provided by locals (who might be personal enemies) asserting that "Taliban" (including relatives and fellow tribesmen) might be present there, the Pashtuns can only see this as a war against them as a nation.Moreover, the Pashtuns' territory bleeds far into Pakistan, and the U.S.-supported Pakistani government quietly supports the Pashtun/Taliban cause in Afghanistan (though not within its own borders) so as to undermine a rival Afghan state allied with Pakistan's arch-rival and nuclear nemesis India. This is a situation of immense complexity in which regional inter-state conflict and ethnic/national rivalry on the ground apparently trump religion.Thus, put to the empirical test, the concept of the "Islamic threat" as a Unified Actor simply falls apart – or rather dissolves into a nebulous. The word "nebulous" is apt, because it suggests a swarm of bees, in this case angry Islamic bees, including heavily armed Shiite wasps and Sunni hornets. Now the trick around bees is to move slowly and leave them alone. They become a "threat" only when you stir them up, which is exactly what Obama is doing in Afghanistan and now Pakistan and Yemen. It has become obvious to the world that every time the U.S. bombs Moslem civilians (or allows Israel to bomb Palestinian civilians) the imperialists create new Islamic militants who rise up and join the growing swarms of "political Islam." Indeed, news anchor Tom Brokaw recently described what the US was engaged in as the "war against Islamic rage." Would it not then be fair to conclude that in some non-metaphorical, non-ideological sense Western imperialism actually creates "the threat of political Islam"?