

Khashoggi

& the Arab Winter

The 2011 uprisings of the Arab Spring seem now a million years away. 2011 was reminiscent of 1848 in Europe where peoples' revolutions over-turned autocracies and established democracies, sometimes fleetingly. It all fell apart in 2013, just as the 1850s Europe saw the rise of Napoleon II, and the return of traditional monarchies. The reactionary kings and princes of the Gulf did all they could to smother Egypt's democracy movement, funneling billions of dollars to the Egyptian military.

2011 represented a historic opportunity for the United States to reset a relationship with the Arab world that had been based on decades of support for dictatorships, and was the final chance to avoid re-embracing the same strongman pathologies that had led to revolts in the first place. The Obama administration failed both tests. A major source of this failure, it seemed, was a surprising void that had opened up at the core of Obama's vision of the world. The man who had come to Cairo in 2009 professing his desire to seek a "new beginning" and support human rights "everywhere" had, when the time came to lay down a marker for history, instead resigned himself to the cold comfort of realism. When Prince Salman launched the Saudis' disastrous military campaign in Yemen in 2015, the first indication of the crown prince's dangerous audacity, the Obama administration lent its support.

In Egypt, the breakdown of the Muslim Brotherhood-led government, helped along by an unreformed state apparatus that did all it could to ensure its failure, ended in a July coup led by then-Defense Minister Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. The following month in Syria, forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad launched rockets loaded with sarin gas into a rebel-held suburb of Damascus, killing at least 1,400 men, women, and children. In both cases, the Obama administration reacted with the ambivalence that defined its non-response to the Arab Spring writ large.

Ignoring the call of those who elected him, Obama did not initiate war crimes investigations on the responsible players in the GeeDub administration, providing an atmosphere conducive to an off-the-rails President. Democrats had once again preferred comfortable accommodation to the warfare state as they had in 2000. The Republicans stole the Presidency with the aid of the Supreme Court and acquiescence of the actual winners of the election - Gore and Lieberman. Similarly, by refusing to label Sisi's takeover in Egypt as a coup in order to avoid severing a useful decades-old relationship, Obama's top advisers accepted the emergence of a new military junta in the Middle East as a fait accompli. David Kirkpatrick, the New York Times correspondent in Cairo at the time, persuasively portrays the administration as an abettor of the counterrevolution, happy to see stability return at any cost. Weeks after the coup, Secretary of State John Kerry would infamously claim that the military was "restoring democracy." To the Egyptian military that translated into "extinguish any opposition." Sisi did just that, orchestrating the Aug. 14, 2013, massacres in Cairo that left more than 900 protestors dead, the worst such incident in modern history.

USA Who can forget the videos of GeeDub, hand in hand with the Saudi Prince of the moment? The first instinct of the Bush family after 911 was to get the Royal Saudis out of the country. People are remembering now that 11 out of 19 perps were Saudis. The criminal war in Yemen, where American aircraft rains down American explosives upon women, children, the elderly, is beginning to be resisted in the Halls of Congress. Before the strangling of Khashoggi in the Saudi Embassy in Turkey, and the subsequent dismembering, and dissolving of his body, the Saudis' long practice of kidnapping dissidents abroad and forcibly returning them to the country could be ignored.

Meanwhile, Businessman Trump would have us see foreign policy as a way to make money for the USA. Let the war crimes and the assassinations fall where they may. Saudis commit the war crimes, using weaponry they buy from the USA among others, but we especially there to make sure everything works. That raises a question - did we go so far in our complicity so as to "finger" Khashoggi? Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law, has reportedly such a close relationship with the Crown Prince, a fellow "princeling," that he shared the names of Saudis "disloyal" to the crown prince in a late-night meeting in October 2017. A report by the Washington Post on Tuesday that U.S. intelligence intercepted communications of Saudi officials discussing a plan to "capture" Khashoggi before his disappearance raises the disturbing possibility that our government may have known about the plot and not warned Khashoggi, as it is required to do. British intelligence in fact, admits it knew and warned the Saudis not to do it.

Are the Saudis embarrassed in the least. Public beheadings in the capitol of Saudi Arabia are the educational tool of the Absolute Monarchy. Some consider Khashoggi's death is nothing less than a Global Public Beheading. The first Turkish reports spoke of Khashoggi's fingers being cut off, a clear message to other dissident journalists that the "punishment will fit the crime" when you type the Wrong Stuff. In that scenario, just survive the international consequences. They will fade away but the terrorizing message will remain.

Seven years on from the revolts that swept across the Arab world, it's now possible to see the shape of what's lurching out from the wreckage. European and U.S. foreign policies may have long been duplicitous, but norms and public opinion in earlier times forced them to treat murderous regimes, at least officially, as pariahs. Impunity for Khashoggi's killing ushers in a frightening and more brutal age, not from "foreign" countries like the Philippines, Brazil, Russia, Turkey but from one of our "closest" allies, the one that in the Trump strategy as in the previous Bush period, represents our Middle East policy.

A GREENFUSE HOTWIRE REMIX
Thanks to Evan Hill.

BLOWING BACK AGAINST THE EMPIRE

EPISODE 11

Niobite, tantalite, coltan! Where are we - searching for 'Unobtanium' on the set of Avatar? No, better yet, **Venezuela**, a fragile socialist country similarly under attack by the new world order and its elite establishment. Sanctions are raining down upon Venezuela. Its dependence on its oil riches have backfired. The opposition uses the same conservative **Hybrid** of *media, money and mass psychology* that worked in Chile of yore, of Brazil, today.

Give up? No! Fight fire with fire, says the socialist government that seems coup resistant. Venezuela is the first *government* in a long time to fight back economically against a green screen of corporate/fake/mass media and global economic meddling. Some of the strategies it uses have been tried: Drop the dollar, raise the Euro - that move cost Iraq big. The exigencies of the oil market have been finally disastrous after the Bolivarian socialists used their reserves to buy a better life for the lower third that loyally supports it and allies like Cuba. So that's not working, how about this hot shot - use *your oil reserves to back your own bitcoin currency* in a market outside the Bankers and Speculators!

Wow! But how's that working out? I'm not buying any. Maybe later. Right now this thrilling episode finds the beleaguered socialist republic suddenly discovering "significant" **coltan** deposits south of the Orinoco River, as well as proven gold reserves valued at \$100 billion. Isn't it a perfect plot touch that these reserves were located in eastern Venezuela as part of an aerial survey carried out with **Iranian** cooperation.

Coltan is a valuable black mineral that combines **niobite** and **tantalite** and is used in cell phones and computer chips - in sufficient quantities for export. *The Minister of Mining*, Rodolfo Sanz did not reveal the quantity of the **coltan** reserves nor their precise location, but he said that diamond, phosphate, titanium and lead deposits also were found. Sanz said **coltan**, also known as "blue gold," is an irreplaceable material in products such as cellular phones and electromagnetic instruments for aviation and other hi-tech industries. **"Without coltan, there are no cell phones,"** the minister said in illustrating the importance of that mineral. According to Sanz, Venezuela is number seven in the world's reserves of that *cell phone metal* and is second only to South Africa in gold reserves totaling some 15,500 tons valued at \$100 billion.

Separately, but perhaps more alarming to the US, *Science and Technology Minister* Jesse Chacon, said **Russia** will offer Venezuela the technological assistance it needs for the treatment of recently discovered **uranium** deposits. Chacon said uranium will be used for energy production "because oil will run out," and not for military purposes. The minister offered the revolutionary idea that Venezuela follow a domestic use of the country's natural resources and not sell them in their raw, unprocessed form, to international clients! "We have all the right to use our uranium for the benefit of Venezuelans and not sell it at bottom-of-the-barrel prices to the French or Americans," Chacon said, speaking the kind of heresy that has merited immediate Regime Change for other countries. The minister did not give a timeframe for the development of Venezuela's nuclear sector nor an estimate of the size of the country's available uranium reserves.

Venezuela announced last month its first-ever coltan ore concentration plant, the largest in Latin America.

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