



The Arab Revolt and the Imperialist Counterattack

James Petras

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When the popular uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia overthrew the public faces of the imperial-backed regimes in the region, it inspired supporters of popular democracy worldwide. However, as the Arab revolt spread from North Africa to the Gulf and deepened its demands, the Empire struck back. The ruling military junta in Egypt cracked down on the prodemocracy movement as its autocratic “partners” in the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula drowned the civil society movements in blood. While standing by the crumbling dictatorships elsewhere in the region, the United States, France and the United Kingdom seized the opportunity to intervene in Libya under cover of a new “responsibility to protect” doctrine authorizing humanitarian intervention. But instead, NATO took sides in the Libyan civil war, unleashing a savage bombing campaign against the very people it purported to protect, reducing the Libyan capital and surrounding cities to rubble, and opening itself to charges of war crimes. These essays chronicle the growing militarization of US policy in North Africa and the Gulf and the historic confrontation between the Arab democratic revolts and the imperial backed satraps. Bearing witness to the ragtag rebel victory enabled by NATO in Libya and ongoing chaos throughout the region, Petras disassembles America’s collapsing Middle East policy.

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