

Libya is a perfect example of why it is so difficult for the US to design a good foreign policy where one-size-fits-all. The lingering ugliness of what happened in Benghazi is just a small part of the problem. The Benghazi issue, as a matter of fact, is more unique to Libya than to other Middle East countries. Analysis of Libya involves the following issues:

What Libya has in common with other Arab countries:

\225 Islam. Islam itself is not a one-size-fits-all religion. The religion is responsible for the general lack of modernization in all Muslim-majority countries, but this backwardness depends upon the literalness of the believers. In all Muslim-majority countries, the educated sectors tend to be less literal, less accepting of religion and politics being one, and much more interested in joining the Western developed world.

Modernization is far less problematic for developing countries that are not Muslim (China, India, and the former Central Asian communist countries, even when Muslim). These other countries may have problems with governance, (dictatorships and authoritarian structures), but Muslim countries have problems with both authoritarian systems and an authoritarian religion.

? Religion as ideology. When a religion develops a militant strain, using force and violence to bring in new converts or control a population, it is little different from other militant ideologies, such as Nazism, Communism, and sects with cults of personality (North Korea). Islam is going through such a phase today, fueled by oil money and a literalist form of Islam. Religion as ideology governs Saudi Arabia, but without Saudi oil money, it would never have spread worldwide as rapidly as it has. Saudi-funded religious brainwashing schools now span the globe, from modernizing Indonesia to miserable Pakistan and Afghanistan. This training produces foot-soldiers willing to kill and die for their cult.

? Tribalism. Human development follows a trajectory from family clan to tribes (a collection of clans) to city-states when accumulation of wealth permits urbanization, to unification of many urban areas into a state with centralized governance. This process began 10,000 years ago and is still unfolding today. But the process is not linear. When central governments fall, the entire system can fall back into its lowest political structures, tribalism, which gives us warlords.

What Libya has that differs from other Muslim states:

? No population explosion. Unlike the rest of the Arab world, which has suffered from horrific population explosion, Libya is a large country with a small population (5 million) and oil wealth. It had a ferocious and batty mind-controlling dictator (Gaddafi) who kept the country under his boot. We had no idea just how much damage he had done to every institution of governance and economy. When he was violently overthrown, we watched the country disintegrate.

It fell into three parts: Tripoli (its ancient Roman city in the west), Benghazi (least damaged intellectually by Gaddafi and influenced by neighboring Egyptian intellectuals), and mountain tribes who are Berbers, a non-Arab group, persecuted and enforced converts to Islam. The size of this country and the distances between and among these sectors has added to the alienation created by destruction of the central government.

? The Benghazi Attack on the Consulate. This horror should not be a cause for party politics (blaming Hillary Clinton when Secretary of State). American policy demanded that we support and nurture democratic institutions, a well-intentioned bi-partisan policy since Woodrow Wilson. Libya's small population, vast size, and oil wealth fooled us into thinking that a reasonable democracy could be encouraged there.

What we did not know was how damaged that population was; how, when dictatorial force was removed, there would be no national identity. Libya came apart, violently. Our brave ambassador, Stevens, was lured to Benghazi to meet with young patriots; he was instead murdered by Islamist fascists. Consulates are not protected by Marine guards. Even embassies can be overrun if the host government doesn't protect them (Iran and

Pakistan).

We have too often broken a bad country and then left before fixing it. Congress was unwilling to debate intervention in Libya and Syria, leaving the President with a "mission impossible" that they can then criticize.

681 words

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