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NEW BOOK REVEALS BRITISH COLLUSION WITH RADICAL ISLAM DURING THE 'ARAB SPRING'

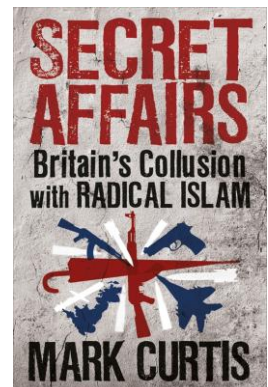
Britain has been colluding with radical Islamic forces during the revolutions in Egypt, Libya and Bahrain, shows a new book, released today.

The updated version of *Secret Affairs: Britain's Collusion with Radical Islam* by leading foreign policy analyst Mark Curtis reveals:

- recent behind-the-scenes British contacts with the Muslim Brotherhood intended to protect British oil investments in Egypt.
- that Britain worked alongside radical Islamist forces and their principal backer – Qatar – to overthrow Libya's Colonel Qaddafi.
- that Britain colluded with Saudi Arabia, revealed as the world's most significant funder of global terrorism, to crush the pro-democracy movement in Bahrain.

The book shows that British policy is motivated by a concern to prevent China extending its influence over Middle Eastern oil and an ongoing opposition to democracy in the region.

Secret Affairs shows that British governments have secretly connived with militant forces linked to al-Qaida to control oil resources, overthrow governments and promote Britain's financial interests. It draws on declassified government files to document how Britain has nurtured the rise of global terrorism. It reveals how Conservative and Labour governments have covertly supported radical Islamic groups in Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Libya, the Balkans, Syria, Indonesia and Egypt. It also exposes Britain's hidden strategic alliance with the two major state sponsors of radical Islam – Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The current terrorist threat to Britain is partly 'blowback'.





Key findings from the new research

The Egyptian revolution

Foreign Office officials have recently held various meetings with the Muslim Brotherhood, which have been unreported in the British media. The policy is one of 'insuring' Britain in the event of the Brotherhood playing a key role in Egypt's transition and protecting an \$11 billion investment by BP. FOI requests by the author for more details on these meetings have been refused by the Foreign Office on the grounds of the 'public interest'.

The Libyan revolution

The British campaign to remove Qaddafi has run alongside radical Islamic forces which played a key role in the war and were provided with training, troops and \$400 million in support by Qatar, Britain's key ally and co-chair of the 'Libya contact group'. *'We acted as the link between the rebels and the NATO forces'*, Qatar's chief of staff has said. Individuals from the UK and Libya in the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group – covertly supported by MI6 to overthrow Qaddafi in the 1990s and later tolerated in Britain as a lever over Qaddafi – played active roles in the war.

The crushing of democracy in Bahrain

David Cameron's David National Security Advisor and the Chief of the Defence Staff met Bahrain's king in Bahrain five days before the Saudi intervention in Bahrain in March 2011 that helped crush the pro-democracy movement. The Saudis used British military equipment in their intervention, which was followed by friendly meetings at No.10 between Cameron and King al-Khalifa. These meetings have taken place while hundreds of people wrongly detained following unfair trials languish in Bahraini jails.

Deterring China

Numerous speeches have been given by Ministers saying that access to existing oil resources is becoming more difficult and that global competition over them is increasing – especially with China. British policy has followed its energy interests in every aspect of the Arab Spring.

"There is an eastern dimension to the whole of what is happening in the Middle East. Chinese influence and investment are everywhere. Chinese warships are in the Mediterranean for the first time in several hundred years. The influence of the rising powers of Asia on the Middle East is heavy and growing". William Hague



Other Findings

- ❖ Two current **Taliban commanders** leading the fight against Britain in Afghanistan were covertly supported with arms and training by Whitehall in the 1980s.
- ❖ The **7/7 London bombers** had links with violent Islamist groups such as the Harkat ul-Mujahidin whose militants were previously covertly supported by Britain and by Pakistan, itself long armed and trained by Whitehall.
- ❖ Britain secretly funded **Ayatollah** Seyyed Kashani – a predecessor of Ayatollah Khomeini – to help overthrow the government of Iran in 1953.
- ❖ British covert funding was first given to the **Muslim Brotherhood** in Egypt in 1942. Britain made contacts with the Brotherhood in the 1950s to overthrow or assassinate then President Nasser.
- ❖ In the war in Kosovo in 1999 Britain **secretly trained militants** in the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) who were working closely with al-Qaida fighters; training was provided in secret camps where jihadist fighters also had their military centre.

Taliban/Afghanistan

- Two current Taliban military commanders were covertly supported by Whitehall in the 1980s. Jalalludin Haqqani - the Taliban's overall military field commander – was a leader in the Yunis Khalis militant group to whom Britain provided training and missiles. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, known as a ruthless killer, visited Whitehall officials in the 1980s and was covertly provided with aid and training.

London bombings

- The 'dirty secret' of the July 2005 London bombings is that the bombers had links with violent Islamist groups such as the Harkat ul-Mujahidin whose militants were previously covertly supported by Britain. These militants groups have also been long sponsored by the Pakistani military and intelligence services, in turn long armed and trained by Britain. The 7/7 bombings were partly the product of British foreign policy.

British involvement in 9/11

- Omar Saeed Sheikh, a militant Briton of Pakistani origin, is alleged to have wired money for the 9/11 attacks to the group's leader. British intelligence is believed to have tried to recruit him as an informer before 9/11; former Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf suggests he was already working for MI6.

"At dinners at embassies around the world I have suddenly discovered that somebody happens to be sitting next to me who is from the respectable end of a death squad from



somewhere. The ambassador has, with the best will in the world, invited that person along because he thinks that, under the new democracy, they will become the new government.”
Foreign Office Minister Kim Howells, March 2007

Afghanistan/al-Qaida

- Britain covertly provided aid to Afghan forces before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 and continued its largest covert operation since world war two throughout the 1980s. This support for mujahidin forces involved scouting and back-up roles inside Afghanistan, training and arms supplies, and secret operations inside the Soviet Union.
- From the Afghan mujahidin developed al-Qaida and the globalization of terrorism. Al-Qaida would likely not have emerged in its extent but for the covert military infrastructure in Afghanistan built with British support. Whitehall thus made a contribution to global Islamist terrorism.

Kosovo, 1999

- In the 1999 war Britain secretly trained militants in the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) who were working closely with al-Qaida fighters. One KLA unit was led by the brother of Ayman al-Zawahiri, Bin Laden's right-hand man. The British provided military training for the KLA at secret camps in Kosovo and Albania where jihadist fighters also had their military centre.

Londonistan

- The hosting of radical Islamic groups in Britain, including Bin Laden's London office during 1994-8, in effect sent a 'green light' from Whitehall for terrorism to be conducted overseas. Consistent with Britain's long-standing use of radical Islamic groups in foreign policy, 'Londonistan' was likely seen by Whitehall as a lever to undermine foreign regimes and foment tensions, dividing states from each other.

Iran, 1953

- The MI6/CIA operation to overthrow the government of Mohamed Musaddiq involved plotting with Shia Islamists, the predecessors of Ayatollah Khomeini. Ayatollah Seyyed Kashani - who in 1945 founded the Fadayan-e-Islam (Devotees of Islam), a militant fundamentalist organization - was backed and funded by Britain and the US to organize opposition and arrange public demonstrations against Musaddiq.
- Whitehall considered installing Kashani as Iranian leader after the coup; Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden held discussions to this end with CIA Chief, Walter Bedell Smith. Some officials supported the idea but it was rejected since the Foreign Office regarded Kashani as '*a complete political reactionary*'; '*He would conceivably accept Western money... [but would not follow] a reasonable line about an oil settlement*'.

Islamic revolution in Iran, 1979

- Britain dropped its support for the Shah before the 1979 Islamic revolution and instead sought good relations with the Iranian opposition, led by Ayatollah Khomeini.



In October 1978, Prime Minister James Callaghan wrote: *'I would not give much for the Shah's chances [of remaining in power]. I think Dr Owen [the Foreign Secretary] should start thinking about reinsuring!'* In late December 1978, British officials agreed to let the revolution take its course and do nothing to ensure the Shah's survival.

- After the Islamic revolution, Britain sought to sell arms to the new regime. Cabinet Secretary Sir John Hunt wrote in March 1979: *'We should lose no opportunity to foster our relationship with the new government'*. Even while Iranian militants were holding Americans hostage in Tehran, Britain continued to provide military training to 30 Iranian officers in Britain. In 1982, MI6 passed a list of Soviet agents operating in Iran to the Islamic regime, to curry favour with it and reduce Soviet influence; many were executed.

Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, 1940s to 1970s

- Britain began to covertly fund the Muslim Brotherhood in 1942. *'Subsidies... to the Ikhwan el Muslimin [Muslim Brotherhood] would be discreetly paid by the [Egyptian] government and they would require some financial assistance in this matter from the [British] Embassy.'* The Egyptian government *'would introduce reliable agents into the Ikhwan to keep a close watch on activities and would let us [British embassy] have the information obtained from such agents. We, for our part, would keep the government in touch with information obtained from British sources'*. The purpose of this funding was to create division in the Brotherhood, *'helping to disintegrate the Ikhwan'*.
- After Nasser seized power in 1952, Britain saw the Brotherhood as a useful counter to the nationalist regime. Officials held meetings with Brotherhood leaders as a lever over the regime in negotiations on the evacuation of British military forces.
- In 1956, when Britain invaded Egypt, it also made secret contacts with Brotherhood and other religious figures as part of plans to overthrow or assassinate Nasser. In March 1957, Trefor Evans, the British embassy official who had led earlier contacts with the Brotherhood, wrote: *'The disappearance of the Nasser regime... should be our main objective'*.
- In the early 1970s Britain viewed with favour President Anwar Sadat's use of the Muslim Brotherhood to counter secularists and nationalists. One British official described the organization as *'a potentially handy weapon'*. At the same time, Sadat's secret services were sponsoring the Jamaat Islamiya (Islamic Associations), militant jihadist groups, to counter nationalists.

Indonesia, 1957-8

- Britain provided covert support to Islamist insurgents to overthrow nationalist President Ahmed Sukarno. *'I believe it should be one of our aims to bring about his downfall'*, wrote Sir Robert Scott, Britain's Commissioner General in Singapore. Arms and aid were provided to the rebels, which included the Darul Islam (House of Islam) movement which had proclaimed Islamic states elsewhere in the Indonesian islands.

Saudi Arabia, 1964, 1973-75

- Britain played a covert role in the palace coup that brought King Feisal to power in March 1964, which threw out his older brother, King Saud. Two British military



advisers to the Saudi National Guard, Brigadier Timbrell and Colonel Bromage, were protecting Faisal and involved in plans for '*occupation of certain points*' and '*denial of the radio station to all but those supported by the National Guard*'.

In 1973-5 Britain made a series of extraordinary agreements with the Saudis involving the latter investing their oil revenues in the British economy, and ensuring a British dependence on the Saudis evident to this day. The government also provided a '*large Jaguar and an attractively leggy blonde*' for Mohammed al-Fawzan, of the Saudi Ministry of Information, for his visit to London in September 1973. '*Mohammed seemed in a thoroughly anglophile mood*' with these provisions, the Foreign Office commented.

Jordan, 1957

- Along with the Muslim Brotherhood, Britain backed King Hussein's coup against elected Prime Minister, Suleiman Nabulsi in April 1957. Britain's ambassador, Charles Johnston, wrote: '*I suggest that our interest is better suited by an authoritarian regime which maintains stability and the Western connection than by an untrammelled democracy which rushes downhill towards communism and chaos. There is something to be said for an honestly authoritarian regime such as now exists in Jordan*'.



SECRET AFFAIRS

Britain's Collusion with Radical Islam

MARK CURTIS

'Startling and deeply disturbing... Unearthing this largely hidden history is a contribution of the highest significance, and could hardly be more timely'

Noam Chomsky

'This valuable and important book by Mark Curtis, the result of painstaking and extensive research into declassified files on British policy towards the Islamic world over the last half century, presents a far more accurate and balanced picture than the shallow simplicities fed by Bush's so-called war on terror... This is a fascinating account which can change outlooks and deepen comprehension of a hugely misunderstood drama, and it should be compelling reading before any further Middle East wars are set in train'

Michael Meacher, Former Government Minister

'As much of history is appropriated by the media and we are beckoned into an era of endless war, this superb book could not be more timely. Sensational in the best sense, it examines the darkest corners of the imperial past to reveal the truth behind today's news'

John Pilger



Mark Curtis is an historian, journalist and author of six books, including the best-selling *Web of Deceit* and *Unpeople*. He was formerly Research Fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House), Director of the World Development Movement, and Head of Global Advocacy/Policy at Christian Aid and ActionAid. Website: www.markcurtis.info

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