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With the West focused on Libya, Egypt, and Yemen, it may be in tiny Bahrain where Washington pays the piper for 35 years of intervention in the Arab world. A prolonged Sunni-Shia shooting war in Bahrain would make other regional events pale in importance to the United States and the West. Bahrain could well be the place where the world as we know it ends.

Since 1945, Washington has championed, funded (through oil purchases), and defended the Arab Peninsula's tyrannies. It has backed the Sunni regimes' suppression of Islamist firebrands, and those governments, in turn, defused some anti-regime ire among their senior clerics and militant Islamists by suppressing the hated Shia minority even more brutally.

The 2009-10 slaughter of Shia Huthi tribesmen in Yemen by the U.S.-trained and/or -armed forces of Riyadh and Sanna reveals the Sunni regimes' attitude toward Shia. In effect, Saudi Arabia and Yemen did to the Huthis what Gaddafi today is doing to Libyan rebels, though the Libyans are better armed.

-- Question: Why the differing U.S. and Western reactions to the two events?

-- Answer: (a) Washington needs Saudi oil and Riyadh's purchases of U.S. debt, and (b) Washington and its allies need Salih's regime to fight al-Qaeda in Yemen. In short, $A + B =$ *Destruction of the Huthi minority* with the silent acquiescence -- nay, silent approval -- of the virtuous Western advocates of freedom strugglers in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia.

The Sum of All Fears

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