

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپائی

<http://www.dailystar.com>

America is in search of a new enemy

By Rami G. Khouri
September 12, 2012

As the 11th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks against the United States approached, I noticed that the matter was not discussed very much by Americans I encountered or in media outlets. Perhaps that's because an 11th anniversary of any event is not particularly memorable. Or because the killing of Osama bin Laden removed much of the personalized anger and sense of looming threat that had driven the high-level of preoccupation with terrorism and Al-Qaeda in the United States in recent years. Or perhaps most Americans were simply tired of having their understandable rage and sense of vulnerability manipulated to unnatural levels of frenzy, as happened during the two George W. Bush administrations.

Whatever the reasons, the 9/11 anniversary in the United States this year passed with little fanfare, and so the American public and political system appeared to be searching around for a different foreign threat or enemy to focus on. "Terrorism" as a generic phenomenon or a specific threat emanating from known groups does not seem to fit the bill any more. The Russians, with their revived nationalism and assertive foreign policy, such as in Syria, are not an easy enemy, because they do not actually seem to threaten the U.S., but only occasionally compete with it for influence.

China is another candidate as the new enemy of the United States, but also not a convincing one. For one thing the Chinese do not speak belligerently, and instead always look to resolve problems through "mutual respect" and "understanding," and things of that sort. It's hard to fire up your public against an enemy that wants mutual respect, except if you happen to be a Republican, in which case the rules of common sense are discarded – though even there the Republican attempt to depict China as the great American nemesis has not gained much traction.

That does not leave many bad guys out there to hate or fear, as Venezuela, Cuba, the Taliban and North Korea do not evoke much genuine fear. This leaves only one candidate for the great threat that must be met and stopped: Iran.

Following the American mainstream media on Iran is a painful experience, because so much of what is said about the country is pure ideological frenzy embellished with pseudo-facts, incomplete information, unproven assumptions, and the wildest expectations that are almost never supported by verifiable truth or fact.

Only occasional glimmers of rationality, verifiable facts and truthfulness break this pattern (such as a noteworthy opinion piece by Bill Keller in the Sept. 10 New York Times, in which he analyzed the available facts and views, and concluded that it was probably less destructive all around to allow Iran to achieve its full fuel cycle based on uranium enrichment and then to contain it so it does not attack others, than to see an Israeli-American attack on Iran that would unleash terrible consequences in many arenas).

We are speaking almost exclusively of American politicians in Washington and New York who lead the political and rhetorical assault against Iran, while most other Americans around the country have little knowledge of the issue, and no real views other than those they hear the national politicians utter. The basic assumption in the American public arena – with only the occasional lone voice to the contrary – is that Iran's leaders are dishonest and cannot be trusted. They are working secretly to produce a nuclear bomb, and they will use that bomb to achieve hegemonic control over the Middle East and probably also to threaten or attack Israel.

Proof for these prevalent accusations and assumptions is usually provided only in the form of suspicions, or fears of unknown Iranian future intentions. There is little or no hard evidence, and instead there is much countervailing evidence from the ongoing International Atomic Energy Agency inspections of Iranian facilities that Iran has not diverted any enriched uranium to a bomb-making program.

It is frightening to watch the U.S. lurch from the great catastrophe for the Middle East that it unleashed by attacking Iraq in 2003 on the basis of lies and unverified assumptions, to the current hard stance and war-talk on Iran that is similarly based on strong sentiments and fears but no verifiable facts. Whether this is due to homegrown American immaturity in foreign policy, or the influence of pro-Israeli fanatics who have honed the art of shaping American foreign policy, is unclear for now.

It may also be irrelevant, should war break out against Iran. It remains disturbing for now to witness the United States conduct foreign policy in this manner, so soon after it created such a mess for itself and for the world in Iraq and Afghanistan.