

# 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](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/what-is-saudi-arabia-trying-to-do.aspx?pageID=449&nID=56721&NewsCatID=416>

## What is Saudi Arabia trying to do?

SEMİH İDİZ

October/24/2013

Saudi Arabia has grabbed the limelight by refusing its non-permanent membership at the Security Council to protest the U.N.'s inability to do anything against Bashar al-Assad. It has also let its displeasure with the U.S. over Syria and Iran be known and is reportedly on the verge of making a “major shift,” to use the words of the Saudi intelligence chief Prince Bandar bin Sultan, in ties with Washington.

The Guardian newspaper on Oct. 22 said “Saudi Arabia is understood to be upset at perceived U.S. weakness over Iran – and wants more aggressive steps taken to prevent Tehran’s development of nuclear weapons technology – and Egypt, where the U.S. has severed military ties with the new government in protest of crackdowns on demonstrators.”

It is clear that Saudi Arabia did not refuse the Security Council seat in the name of human rights and democracy. If so it should have shown its humanitarian credentials in this respect a long time ago, since the Middle East has always been rife with human rights violations, including Saudi Arabia itself.

The “support for democracy in Syria” argument is also not credible given who Riyadh is supporting in Egypt. What is more likely is what The Guardian said. Namely that Saudi Arabia is angry that it is losing ground against Iran, its regional rival, and its allies.

For one thing the status of al-Assad is being elevated as a result of the diplomatic track that has come to the foreground now, while the military option appears to have been dropped from the agenda. Riyadh, just like Ankara, wants to see al-Assad toppled by force.

This annoyance increased when the U.S. and Iran decided on a new approach to their ties, even if there is no guarantee this will work. The question now is whether Riyadh can go for a “major shift,” in ties with Washington. I believe this to be very unlikely given the almost symbiotic military relationship that has developed between the two countries over the decades.

Some reports suggest Riyadh is preparing to turn to France, which has followed a tough line on Syria, as a substitute for the U.S., but this contention is almost laughable given the depth of the U.S.-Saudi relationship.

The Saudi position on Syria, Iran and Egypt nevertheless goes to show what a strange place the Middle East is, and why developments there have defied the expectations of Foreign Minister Davutoğlu, who once contended Turkey was the country that knew this region best due to historical reasons.

For one thing it is becoming more and more evident that Israel is not the only country that has an obsession with Iran and considers this country’s going nuclear to be an existential threat. We see more clearly now Saudi Arabia and Israel are on the same page on this.

Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu has been trying to convince Washington the newly elected Iranian president Hassan Rouhani is a wolf in sheep’s clothing. It is very likely Saudi Arabia is trying to do the same. It is not beyond the scope of imagination that these two countries are cooperating against Iran with Washington.

In addition to this, bitter rivals as they may be, Washington and Tehran are closer on the question of how the Syrian crisis should be resolved, than Washington and Riyadh are. Then there is the fact that Saudi Arabia is annoyed with Washington for not supporting the military regime in Egypt which toppled a democratically elected government and leader.

This also puts it at odds with Turkey which is supporting the Muslim Brotherhood that Saudi Arabia and other see as a threat in the region. There is therefore nothing predictable in the Middle East. The environment is constantly changing and it is not clear who is bedding whom at the end of the day.

Washington knows this and is aware Saudi has little choice but to maintain its strategic ties with the U.S. In the end the Saudi stance will most likely prove to be no more than bluster.