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Why Do They Hate Us?

by Jacob G. Hornberger

You'll recall that immediately after the 9/11 attacks, U.S. officials declared that the attacks had been motivated by the terrorists' hatred for America's "freedom and values." That refrain produced the "war on terrorism" and, more recently, the "war on radical Islamo-fascism."

Nonsense, said libertarians. The anger and hatred that Arabs and Muslims have for the United States is rooted in decades of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. Ending the U.S. government's decades-old policy of empire and intervention would bring an end to the threat of terrorism (and radical Islamo-fascism) against the United States.

The argument of the "freedom and values" crowd boils down to this: "The decades of U.S. supplying of advanced weaponry and foreign aid to the Israeli government, which is now being used to kill people in Lebanon, and the U.S. government's obeisance and submissiveness to the Israeli government, have had no adverse effect on how Arabs and Muslims feel about the United States. Their anger and hatred is caused by America's freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and rock and roll."

Therefore, the argument goes, the chants of "Death to Israel. Death to America" from hundreds of thousands of Shiites marching in Baghdad last week had nothing to do with U.S. foreign policy but were motivated instead by hatred for American principles and lifestyles.

(Reflect for a moment on the utter perversity of it all: U.S. soldiers in Iraq are dying to bring "freedom and democracy" to people who are screaming "Death to America" and whose radical Shiite government has aligned itself with Iran, which U.S. officials consider to be an arch-enemy of the United States.)

The same "freedom and values" argument was made with respect to more than a decade of [brutal sanctions](#) against Iraq, which contributed to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children — deaths that U.S. officials maintained were "[worth it](#)." People in the Middle East were indifferent to those deaths, the argument goes. Their anger and hatred were caused by the U.S. Bill of Rights and the gambling casinos in Las Vegas.

After 9/11, the greatest fear that U.S. officials had was that the American people would figure out that U.S. foreign policy was at the root of the terrorist attacks and thus demand a total reevaluation of U.S. foreign policy. That might well have meant an end to all foreign aid to the Middle East and a withdrawal of U.S. forces from the region. That could have obviously meant a significant diminution of the U.S. government's overseas empire and the military-industrial complex, along with the enormously high taxes needed to pay for it all. Thus, it's not surprising that U.S. officials immediately went on the propaganda attack after 9/11 in order to divert people's attention from U.S. foreign policy and toward the "freedom-and-values" motivation for the 9/11 attacks.

If there is another major terrorist attack on American soil, you can rest assured that the immediate response of U.S. officials will be: It has nothing to do with the U.S. government's unconditional U.S. taxpayer-provided support of the Israeli government, or with the brutal sanctions that contributed to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children, or with the callous position that such deaths were worth it, or with the invasion and occupation of Iraq, which have killed and maimed tens of thousands of Iraqi people. They'll say instead that it's all about anger and hatred for America's "freedom and values." And the sad part is that there will still be Americans who fall for it.

What would be wrong with terminating foreign aid not only to Israel but also to every other country in the world and abolishing the taxes that support such aid, leaving the American people free to keep their own money and decide what to do with it?

What would be wrong with letting Americans support Israel or Lebanon or the Palestinians or any other cause in the world with their moral support and their own money and leaving the U.S. government and U.S. taxpayer money out of it?

What would be wrong with ending the U.S. government's role as world policeman, intervenor, meddler, and interloper, not only in the Middle East but also in the rest of the world?

With the situation in the Middle East degenerating into ever-increasing violence, conflict, death, suffering, and destruction after decades of U.S. intervention, what better time for the American people to reevaluate U.S. foreign policy, not only in the Middle East but also in the rest of the world?

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