
Purging the minds of academic creatures in “liberal” institutions of pre-established misconceptions about the Middle East

American Audacity

Afshin Azad

The English word audacity might as well have been invented specifically for Americans.

Half of their country rallied behind the slogan “*Make America Great Again*”. The slogan based on the assumption that America used to be great, isn’t anymore, and now needs to reclaim that greatness. That’s how shameless they are: they’re claiming that America used to be better than it is now! Meanwhile this is the country that only ended segregation decades after Reza Shah had already declared all Iranians equal under the law. Yet Americans still have the audacity to say that these past versions of America were “*great*.”

Of course, many of them interpret “great” as “the freedom to say whatever the hell we want.” Not because they’re passionate about free speech, but because they believe power means being able to say anything without consequence. **In foreign policy, that means they get to curse the British and the Germans and call the Ukrainians beggars, the Chinese thieves, and the Qataris pimps. In domestic policy, it means calling Black people the N-word, gay people fags, and fat people pigs.** Only if they can get away with saying all that, publicly and without repercussions, they believe they’ve achieved the founding fathers’ ideal great America. In the Middle East, Khamenei shares this mindset with the MAGA Americans: when he calls Saudi Arabia a “milking cow” in public, he thinks this alone is proof that he has restored Iran’s greatness.

The other half of America is just as shameless. They say, “Oh no! We’ve become too rude and mean to everyone, both at home and abroad! Where’s the America that was powerful and nice?” Don’t be surprised if in a decade or two they come out with a new slogan: “*Make America Nice Again*” and put it on election merch.

The underlying assumption here is just another form of gaslighting: that historically, America may have acted in its own interests, and sometimes bit people, but it was never like a wolf who kills sheep it doesn’t even plan to eat or stabs its own friends. But this assumption couldn’t be further from truth. America was supposed to help pro-Western allies in South America. It abandoned them. It was supposed to help secular Syrians. It abandoned them. It was supposed to help the Kurds. It abandoned them. (The betrayal of the Kurds deserves its own epic.) It was supposed to support Afghan tribes against the Pashtuns. It didn’t. It was supposed to support democracy advocates in Egypt. It let them fall. And that’s just in our region. What it’s done in Southeast Asia would need its own documentary.

Even with Iran, America has spent decades applying just enough pressure to make Iranians suffer, while making sure the clerics don’t suffer or, God forbid, lose power. When has America ever been “nice” to anyone?

And yet the American Left has the *audacity* to look us in the eye and say, “*We used to be nicer to you. Our previous vice president would never let you down! Sorry it’s like this now!*”

We shouldn’t fall for the gaslighting of either political faction in the U.S. We are capable of seeing the truth for ourselves. And the truth has always been this: either you attain the pillars of power yourself, or, if for whatever reason you can’t, you submit to those who do.

That’s not good news for a torn country like ours, but at least it’s old news.

American Curiosity

Sohrab Asemaanparast

After the 9/11 attacks, a distinct thirst developed in Americans to understand the Middle East. They became curious about who the Middle Eastern people were, what they were saying, and what they wanted. At the time, Iranians were still dazed by the recent exposure to the open flow of information online. Like a starving cat suddenly faced with a full dish of food, they were so overwhelmed by the abundance that they looked ready to swallow the bowl itself. They were in pure consumption mode, instead of content creation or active observation.

I was among a very small minority of Iranians who took on the task of explaining us, the Middle East, to Americans. And since they were thirsty for understanding us, they welcomed everything we shared about ourselves, as if they’d found specks of gold at the bottom of a river. Even within that small minority, there wasn’t much cohesion. We often had to remind some naive fellow countrymen not to try so hard to appear nice to win them over. But overall, it was a strange moment in history. It felt like some stranger had walked into a closed meeting room and everyone had gone quiet to hear what the newcomer had to say.

Back then, I had no clear vision of the next two or three decades. I was naiver. But I assumed these exchanges would gradually bring Middle Eastern and Western nations closer together. It turns out that assumption was completely wrong. Over time, that thirst faded, and the American people simply stopped caring. Some thought it was because America was too preoccupied with its internal issues. Others believed it was because the Middle East mission had ended, and the troops had come home. Some blamed it on the passage of time.

Purging the minds of academic creatures in “liberal” institutions of pre-established misconceptions about the Middle East

But none of those were the real reason. The real reason was that the reality of the Middle East and the severity of the situation here made them uncomfortable, and they chose to retreat into themselves.

When you operate under the assumption that “we’re the good guys, and the world agrees,” that confidence gives you the audacity to try and fix things that are way beyond your capacity. They thought that understanding the Middle East would enable them to fix it. But the more they learned about us, the more they realized they couldn’t. And that clashed with the idea that “good people can fix anything.”

It’s like when a young person starts dating someone they know has red flags, but they move forward anyway, thinking they can change them. But through the failure, they realize they themselves weren’t who they thought they were either. Because otherwise they would’ve had a more positive impact. Americans crawled back into themselves, deciding it was enough to just be seen as “the good guy” within their own domestic sphere. They no longer cared whether the world saw them that way or not. As long as they approved of themselves internally, that was enough.

This belief of “we’re not the world’s police” that is becoming widespread again comes from that same American mindset.

Our mistake when analyzing these interactions was in how we interpreted the potential of connection. We assumed both sides of the connection were fixed entities. But both we and they changed: both sides developed disappointments, and both altered their views on many things. Another mistake was assuming that anyone who seemed curious to understand us was truly interested in understanding. Most people don’t actually want to know more. They want to hear things that ease their anxieties. And reality doesn’t care what people want to hear.

The List: New Year’s Edition

Every edition of the Navid comes with a short list of places where the Islamic Republic likes to spend its terror-earned money, to give the reader more insight on the ridiculousness of the herd of cows sitting on their blood-soaked thrones in Pasteur Street of Tehran. Since the official Iranian New Year is approaching (March 20), we decided to write a special report on the Islamic Republic’s annual budget. This budget is decided by the government before each Persian New Year. Each item includes the allocated budget in Iranian Rials and USD based on government exchange rate. This exchange rate is for government use only, and regular Iranians have to trade using a much more expensive rate. At the time of publishing this article, the actual exchange rate for Iranians is 1,040,000 Rials per 1 USD. The data is taken from the Islamic Republic Parliament website, and it is only a small selection of all their money-laundering entities. As always, you can read the complete list with previous entries on our website—Yusof Ruyanfar

- 1- Islamic Seminary Services Center, Budget: 140,000,000,000,000 Rials (~\$3.33 billion USD) (Persian: مرکز خدمات حوزه علمیه)
- 2- Supreme Council of Islamic Seminaries, Budget: 70,000,000,000,000 Rials (~\$1.66 billion USD) (Persian: شورای عالی حوزه‌های علمیه)
- 3- Policy Council for Women’s Islamic Seminaries, Budget: 14,600,000,000,000 Rials (~\$347 million USD) (Persian: شورای سیاست‌گذاری حوزه علمیه: زنان)
- 4- Al-Mustafa International University (sanctioned for recruiting fighters to support Bashar al-Assad in Syria), Budget: 17,560,000,000,000 Rials (~\$418 million USD) (Persian: جامعه المصطفی العالمیه)
- 5- Islamic Propaganda Organization, Budget: 50,000,000,000,000 Rials (~\$1.19 billion USD) (Persian: سازمان تبلیغات اسلامی)
- 6- Council for Coordinating Islamic Propaganda, Budget: 3,120,000,000,000 Rials (~\$74 million USD) (Persian: شورای هماهنگی تبلیغات اسلامی)
- 7- Secretariat of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, Budget: 958,000,000,000 Rials (~\$22.8 million USD) (Persian: دبیرخانه شورای عالی انقلاب فرهنگی)
- 8- Imam Khomeini Educational Institute, Budget: 4,500,000,000,000 Rials (~\$107 million USD) (Persian: موسسه آموزشی امام خمینی)
- 9- Holy Shrine of Imam Khomeini, Budget: 2,100,000,000,000 Rials (~\$50 million USD) (Persian: آستان مقدس حضرت امام خمینی)
- 10- Foundation for the Preservation of the Sacred Defense Values, Budget: 7,650,000,000,000 Rials (~\$182 million USD) (Persian: بنیاد حفظ (آثار و ارزش‌های دفاع مقدس))
- 11- Headquarters for Promoting Prayer, Budget: 1,290,000,000,000 Rials (~\$30.7 million USD) (Persian: ستاد اقامه نماز)
- 12- Center for the Islamic-Iranian Model of Progress, Budget: 370,000,000,000 Rials (~\$8.8 million USD) (Persian: مرکز الگوی اسلامی ایرانی (پیشرفت))
- 13- Headquarters for the Revival of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (Similar to Morality Police), Budget: 2,440,000,000,000 Rials (~\$58.1 million USD) (Persian: ستاد احیای امر به معروف)

Normally, during the weeks leading up to New Year’s, streets in Iran would be bustling with everyone shopping for celebration and food. But nothing under the Islamic Republic is normal. Iranian shopkeepers say: “We have goods, but no one can afford to shop anymore.” Iran International news channel invites Iranians to send videos of their Nowruz shopping. Iranians say: “What New Year? I can’t even buy fruit and vegetables anymore.” “We can’t afford any New Year’s shopping. We bought some meat bones for food, but even that cost 1,000,000 Rials.” In addition to the non-military entities mentioned above, the Islamic Republic increases the military budget, supplying Russia with more Shahed drones while continuing to supply its terror proxies in the region.