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Ayatollah Khamenei:
**Curbing Irans missile
program a dream that
will never come true**





Mehr Vision

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Limitation on Iran's missile program dream never to come true



The Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei addressed hundreds of thousands of Iranian people gathered in the mausoleum of Imam Khomeini from across the country to participate in 29th demise anniversary of the founding father of the Islamic Revolution Imam Khomeini (RA).

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei every year in a special mourning ceremony scheduled at Imam Khomeini's Mausoleum in southern Tehran delivered speech to hundreds of thousands of Iranian and foreign lovers of the Islamic Republic of Iran participating in demise anniversary of the founding father of the Islamic Revolution Imam Khomeini.

Hundreds of foreign guests, including scholars and researchers, are attending the ceremonies. More than 300 foreign correspondents are covering the event.

Addressing participants leader compared Imam Khomeini with first Shia

Imam Ali (AS) and said, "Imam Khomeini acted in various situations based on priorities and faced enemies actively with courage."

Referring to the achievements of the Islamic Republic of Iran, leader asserted, "Enemies will never be able to halt progress of Iranian nation."

He went on to say, "Imam Khomeini never trusted enemies and believed if you act for God's sake you may never experience losses."

Leader stressed, "We should act following late Imam Khomeini's legacy."

Referring to US withdraw from the JCPOA and efforts made by enemies to put pressure on Iran, leader added that enemy's measures against the Islamic Republic show how desperate they are in their faceoff with Iran rather than being a sign of their power.

He went on to say that the measures taken by enemies of the Iranian nation may slow down the forward march of the nation, but cannot stop its progress. Imam never felt weak, nor showed

weakness in the face of enemies, but always stood against them with power, the Leader said adding that when dealing with enemies' plots, Imam Khomeini never gave in to pure sentiments, but made his moves through well-calculated plans.

Ayatollah Khamenei further noted that in dealing with enemies, the Islamic Republic of Iran give priority to domestic potentialities and capabilities of the nation and has absolutely no trust in the enemy.

Mentioning economic, psychological and practical pressures as three major components of enemy's plot against the Iranian nation, the Leader said, "We are well aware of the enemy's plot and disclose it to people."

The main goal they seek through economic pressure and sanctions is not just to mount pressure on the Iranian government, but is to make the Iranian nation disillusioned with the Islamic establishment, the Leader said, adding that with God's assistance and through efforts made by officials and people, the enemy will never achieve this goal.

Touching upon the recent developments in the region, ayatollah Khamenei said, Iran will continue to support oppressed nations and Palestinian, resistance force in the region and the integrity of the regional countries.

Referring the importance of the country's military deterrence and the US and its allies' pressure to force Iran to abandon its missile program said, "Enemy's plot for Iran to abandon its missile program is a dream that will not come true."

"Iran will attack ten times more, if attacked by enemy," he stressed, "enemies don't want independent Iran in the region, but they will fail."

The Leader said, "Atomic Energy Organization of Iran to must prepare to upgrade enrichment capacity to 190k SWU in accordance to the Nuclear Deal (JCPOA)."

Ayatollah Khamenei also called on young Arabs to take action and initiative to control their own future.



Interview

Trump rips up JCPOA to reduce Iran regional importance, foster internal division

Interview by: Lachin Rezaian

Internationally recognized strategist of the multipolar world and the founder of Difference Group Dan Steinbock said Trump pulled US out of JCPOA under the name of freedom and democracy, but in fact due to interest in Iran's energy resources, to reduce Iran's regional importance, and to foster internal division.

Leaders of two historically hostile countries for over half a century, shook hands on June as they posed for photographers in Singapore Summit; US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un pledged on Tuesday to work towards complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula while Washington committed to providing security guarantees for its old enemy.

This happened one month after Trump, according to his own words, tore an important international deal,

i.e. Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and announced that he was pulling the US out of the Iran nuclear deal.

Research Director of International Business at the India, China & America Institute Dr. Dan Steinbock pointed to pressing environmental concerns, Pyongyang's feeling about its strong hand for talks, and Trump's more willingness to talks than his predecessors, as three important incentives for North Korea to give OK to nuclear negotiations with US.

Regarding Trump's efforts to rip up a previously-signed deal, but to hold negotiations, on the other hand, with North Korea regarding the same issue, Steinbock noted that "unlike Iran, North Korea is not a major energy producer in a strategic region and lacks the kind of geopolitical clout Iran enjoys in the Middle East. In view of the Trump administration, it is these two factors – regional might and its energy resources - that make Iran very different from North Korea."

Here is the full text of his interview

with Mehr News correspondent Lachin Rezaian:

What was the most important incentive for North Korea to give OK to nuclear negotiations with US?

In Pyongyang's view, North Korea's quest for nuclear weapons has been completed. With requisite nuclear capabilities, perhaps Pyongyang felt it had the strong hand it needed for talks.

Reportedly, there were also pressing environmental concerns. Last September, after a test of a hydrogen bomb, a 6.3 magnitude earthquake was recorded as a result of the detonation. It was followed by a 4.1 magnitude quake, due to a suspected cave collapse. Chinese scientists have warned that North Korea's nuclear test site is at risk of imploding. So even if further tests were needed, they posed increasing risks.

Finally, nuclear talks require two parties. President Obama ignored the opportunity for talks when Kim signaled such an opening. Senator Clinton flirted with regime change in the region. These ➡



views have been shared by surprisingly many in the Congress. Setting aside the aggressive bilateral rhetoric of the past year, Kim knew that Trump would be more willing to talk than his predecessors. So, it was time to talk.

Why did Trump decide to rip Iran nuclear deal, but insist on nuclear talks with North Korea? Is it a kind of Trump's double standard? What are the consequences?

Despite nuclear parallels, North Korea's population is 30% relative to Iran, and its living standards are barely a tenth of those in Iran. North Korea's GDP is about 5% relative to Iran. In this view, Iran represents a difference of economic magnitude.

Yet there are odd parallels as well. For decades, both Iran and North Korea have been seen as threats in Washington. In both cases, US has favored regime changes. In North Korea, destabilization efforts were initiated during the Korean War in the early 1950s. In Iran, similar attempts began concurrently as the democratically-elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh was overthrown by the US CIA and British MI6. In North Korea, Washington failed to beat Kim Il-sung. In Iran, the coup d'état paved way to the Pahlavi decades.

Through the 1960s and 1970s, North Korea was on the backburner of US geopolitics, even as a state of war has prevailed between the countries. In contrast, the ties between the Shah and the US grew intimate, but at heavy cost to Iranian people, due to the terror regime, the brutal security apparatus (SAVAK), and development that mainly served the needs of a tiny oligarchic elite in Tehran.

After the Islamic Revolution, the US-Iran ties were frozen practically three decades until the multilateral nuclear deal (JCPOA). As the Six-Party Talks did not lead to parallel talks, North Korea pressed ahead with its nuclear program. Unlike Iran, however, North Korea is not a major energy producer in a strategic region and lacks the kind of geopolitical clout Iran enjoys in the Middle East. In view of the Trump administration, it is these two factors – regional might and its energy resources - that make Iran very different from North Korea.

There is thus a double standard that has prevailed through the postwar era.

While the rhetoric is for freedom and democracy, actions only reflect interest in Iran's energy resources, reduced regional importance, and efforts to foster internal division.

Do you believe that the US-North Korea joint statement in Singapore has the potential to take forward the objective of denuclearization?

The joint statement has potential to take forward the objective of denuclearization but whether, how and when that potential can be achieved is a different story. The four-point agreement seeks to achieve the "complete denuclearization" of the Korean peninsula. However, it does not include a "verifiable" and

posed talks, the less likely will be any actionable outcomes. It would be thus preferable for the two parties to focus only on the nuclear issue that may permit some compromise. That should be the immediate, short-term objective.

Even if Washington and Pyongyang could agree on procedures to avert nuclear weaponization in the Korean peninsula, that will not mitigate all tensions in the region. Only peace and demilitarization might.

Why the peace agreement

Pyongyang has seen America as an existential threat, for a reason. In 1951 – after Washington had lost its nuclear monopoly to the Soviet Union - the ear-



"irreversible" pledge by North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapon program.

The agreement is not a final or even an intermediate deal, but rather a "memorandum of understanding." This is not to downplay the importance of the US-North Korean rapprochement. US and North Korean leaders have never met before. So for these two leaders to sit down and outline a path to resolve those disagreements is a big deal.

The Singapore deal highlights a promising understanding. But that's all for now. A real peace and stability requires far more.

What do you think are included, and should be included, in US-North Korea talks other than nuclear issue; e.g. North Korea's human rights record, cyberattacks, bank heists, and missile technology?

The broader the scope of the pro-

ly setbacks in the Korean War prompted General MacArthur to consider using nuclear weapons against the Chinese and North Koreans until he was dismissed by President Truman.

Nevertheless, between 1950 and 1953, the US subjected North Korea to a devastating bombing campaign, which destroyed 85 percent of the country's buildings and caused one million civilians to perish. It set the standard for US interventions in Vietnam and the rest of Southeast Asia. Yet, since the 1953 Armistice Agreement, Washington has seen North Korea as a "rogue state." Even with the Soviet Union, Washington supported "peaceful coexistence", but with North Korea, only a "temporary ceasefire." Pyongyang's concerns for US intrusion are not without a basis.

As Washington insiders acknowledge, for a long time, Pyongyang has sought a peace treaty to replace the [1953] ➔



ceasefire. North Koreans want peaceful relations with the US and regional neighbors. The real question is what is that the US really wants in the region.

Why demilitarization is the key to neutralize tensions in the region?

In his 2013 New Year's address, Kim Jong-un advocated "a radical turn in the building of an economic giant on the strength of science and technology by fanning the flames of the industrial revolution in the new century."

Instead of seizing the transition in Pyongyang to work for the peace, President Obama opted for cooperation with the then-President of South Korea, Park Geun-hye, the conservative daughter of the controversial former President Park Chung-hee. Instead of rapprochement, Washington pushed for a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD); an anti-ballistic missile system in South Korea that is officially a means to subdue Pyongyang and, unofficially, to contain China. Yet, these plans complicated in early 2017, when President Park was impeached and sentenced to 24 years in prison. That paved the way to the presidency of the more moderate Moon Jae-in, who seeks reconciliation with North Korea.

The US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal is a serious breach in international relations and one that will tarnish

American credibility for years to come.

Nevertheless, Park's hawks were able to postpone the repeal of the Operation Control agreement (OPCON), which allows the Pentagon - not Seoul - to control its military fate. The mission of the South Korea/US Combined Forces Command (CFC) is to "deter hostile acts of external aggression" South Korea by a "combined military effort." The CFC is commanded by a US General and it has operational control (OPCON) over more than 600,000 active duty military personnel both countries. President Park managed to defer the transfer to 2022. In the event of war, US interests will thus override the interests of South Koreans - in their own country.

President Park managed to defer the transfer to 2022. In the event of war, US interests will thus override the interests of South Koreans - in their own country.

How do you evaluate the future scenarios for US-North Korea ties, regarding US breach of Iran deal?

The US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal is a serious breach in international relations and one that will tarnish American credibility for years to come.

In the short- to medium-term, denuclearization efforts alone will prove challenging. In the medium- to long-term, peace agreement and US withdrawal from the region are vital conditions. Yet,

it is hard to see how the White House would agree to them.

Worse, there are a series of very near-term challenges in US politics that have potential to undermine or dilute the agreement. The latter is predicated on a Trump administration that will continue to support the talks. It thus presumes failed impeachment efforts and minimal losses for the Republican incumbents in the US mid-term elections.

As Trump's tacit timeline suggests critical bilateral steps in the early 2020s, the US-North Korean agreement is predicated on another Trump election triumph in 2020 and continued support for the peace process in South Korea's 2022 election.

Any step toward peace is positive. However, a number of far more critical steps are required to denuclearization to peace agreement and US withdrawal, amid rapidly-fluctuating US politics that may change - as happened in the case of Iran.

Dr. Dan Steinbock is an internationally recognized strategist of the multipolar world and the founder of Difference Group. He has served at the India, China and America Institute (US), the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (China) and the EU Center (Singapore). For more, see <https://www.differencegroup.net/>

Brazilian amb. to Iran:

Brazilian govt. to help businesses continue trade with Iran



Interview by: Kamal Iranidoost and Payman Yazdani

The Brazilian government will spare no efforts to help Brazilian and Iranian firms develop relations after the US withdrawal from Iran nuclear deal, according to the Brazilian ambassador to Iran in an exclusive interview with the MNA.

Brazil's Ambassador to Tehran Rodrigo de Azeredo Santos visited Mehr News Agency headquarter in the center of Tehran on June 11 and sat down for an interview with journalists from the English desk.

During the interview, Mr. Santos kindly answered every question he was asked. He first talked about the possibility of more cultural cooperation between the two countries' media, and urged the MNA staff to visit Brazil and conduct interviews with Brazilian officials.

Next, in response to a question about his country's foreign policy, he underlined that his country always pursues political solutions for world problems and does not seek any aggressive policies as its history shows.

Then, he touched upon bilateral

trade relations between Iran and Brazil, urging for more economic ties.

In response to a question regarding Brazil's reaction to the US withdrawal from the nuclear deal with Iran, the ambassador said that Brazilian government believes that the JCPOA should remain in place and it will do its best to preserve bilateral trade with Iran despite risk of US sanctions. Meanwhile, he stressed that it is up to the Brazilian firms themselves to decide whether to continue business with Iran or not under the threat of US sanctions. But he added that only companies that engage in business in the US market will be at risk and there are many other Brazilian companies that have no relations with the US at all. Therefore, those companies can remain in Iran's market.

The following are the most important questions and Mr. Ambassador's answers:

We would like to start by asking a question about your country's foreign policy. To me, Brazil acts like an economic entity. Its foreign policy looks very much like that of China? It has never sought to engage in any political rift with other countries. It only pursues

its economic interests. Does Brazil as a leading country among developing countries and a member of BRICS want to protect third world countries against US unilateralism? Does it seek to do business in local currencies rather than the US dollar to put an end to dollar supremacy?

Well, Brazil as you said is a developing country. It plays a major role in the world economy also in the political sector as well because of the strength of its economy. But of course, we have many challenges, social challenges. There is a lot to invest in social development and this reflects in our foreign policy and the kind of relations that we are looking for.

With regard to nature of our country, as you mentioned, Brazil is not looking for any political supremacy or war or, let's say, a more aggressive policy. So, you are right. In Brazilian history, in Brazilian diplomacy history, let's say, all our problems were resolved by peaceful negotiations. Brazil has not been engaged in war maybe since 1860 when we had a war in the continent. And all our borders were defined through negotiations. We have never had war to conquer territories or to define our borders. Those were negotiated at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century through diplomacy. So, we have this tradition of working with diplomacy, with multilateralism. Brazil is very much in favor of multilateralism. So, when you talk about unilateralism of some countries, I agree. But Brazil pursues the right way. It pursues cooperation, seeks to solve the world problems through negotiations. We really believe in multilateralism.

Brazil was one of the founding nations of the United Nations and even before, the League of Nations. Therefore, we are very active in multilateral organizations and institutions. In many areas, in environment for example, Brazil has been always very active in supporting environmental policies. ➡

In economic area, Brazil is part of the G 20 that comprises G7 plus some developing countries. As a member of the BRICS, as you mentioned, Brazil has good cooperation with the nations such as China, Russia, India, and South Africa. So, Brazil's foreign policy has been very active in cooperation and coordination with other developing countries. Brazil has good cooperation to defend the interests of the developing countries in the WTO for example... So, Brazil has always been a good coordinator of the interests of the developing countries.

With regard to US dollar supremacy, well, this is a fact... that the most of the world trade is financed through US dollars. Brazil is not different. Most of our exports and imports are traded based on the US dollar. But, there are other currencies that are becoming more important on our international trade. In euros, in Japanese yen, in Chinese yuan... but this takes time. I believe for many reasons, for financial reasons, you have to diversify your foreign currencies. So, you do not have to take so many risks. When there is a problem in one country, you can have part of your transactions in another currency, so it is good to diversify not only for political reason, but also for financial and economic trade reasons. You know, Brazil is considered a global trader. It has a very well-distributed trade. We have not concentrated on one market. Some countries depend a lot on the market of the United States, for example or depend a lot on the market of China or the European Union. Brazil has good distribution. You know, our main partner is China, with 23 or 24 percent of our bilateral trade. Then comes the EU with 21 or 22 percent and the United States with 20 percent, then Latin America with another 20 percent. So, our bilateral trade is very well distributed.

Therefore, we believe we would benefit if we have diverse currencies in our bilateral trade. With Argentina, we are dealing with our local currencies. We are also negotiating with China as well on using our currencies in our trade. So, step by step, we are finding other ways for our transactions, because of not only political reasons but also because of safer financial transactions it is important to diversify your currencies and your trade partners.

Would you please tell us about the bilateral economic relations between Iran and Brazil? In what fields, are the Brazilian companies active in Iran's economy? What are the prospects for bilateral trade relations?

Well, our bilateral trade with Iran is almost \$ 3 billion dollars. To be more precise, it has reached \$ 2.7 billion dollars. Most of this amount are Brazil's exports to Iran. And the main commodities are agricultural products like beef, soya, corn, sugar. But there are also other things for example medical equipment, buses, and trucks. ... So, there are other products, industrial goods, and we would like to see more industrial services.

Since I moved to Tehran, we have been working with different manufacturer associations and industries in Brazil... Brazil has very good and competitive technologies for medical equipment at reasonable prices. We are working with a lot of companies and hospitals here in Iran to be part of the investment projects in Iran... to modernize or build new hospitals, for example, with Brazilian equipment...

Also, in oil and gas sector, Brazil has a well-developed industry in manufacturing equipment and engineering services in oil and gas sector. In Brazil, we have developed the oil production very fast. We have a good group of industries that can cooperate with Iran. Iran as well has made progress in oil and gas sector and it can cooperate with Brazil. So, it is on the two ways... In terms of agricultural machines sector, Brazil is very good at agriculture. We have very good machines and equipment for agriculture... in the field of urban transportation like buses and trucks, we believe that we can cooperate more with Iran. Now, there are lots of contacts between Brazilian companies and their Iranian counterparts.... In agriculture area, there will be more bilateral cooperation... Iran used to import a lot of chicken and poultry from Brazil but it stopped 5 or 6 years ago, because it started to produce its own products. But it still needs corn to feed its poultry... so, they are buying more corn from Brazil and soya as well for different industrial use. Therefore, the agricultural cooperation will continue and you would like to bring more industrial products and services to Iran. Also, on

the other way around, in Brazil we can see a lot of interests in Iranian products such as chemicals, fertilizers. You know, there is a good room for Iranian petrochemical and fertilizers ... but, the Iran's exports to Brazil is very low. So, Iranian businessmen need to go to Brazil more, to have more contacts with Brazil... We have also Brazilian companies who want to import from Iran.

In terms of investment, maybe some of those projects result in investment in the long run. But for the time being, we are talking about trade. But in the medium and the long run, we talk about investment. Some of those projects are very big, urban transportation for example, or medical equipment, so if the deals are done in a good way and they see the good high potential as I see, they would be ready to invest... to establish long term partnerships... Therefore, we believe that some of those projects will result in good investment.

Given the fact that the US withdrew from the JCPOA, how do you see the prospects of business and cooperation with Iran? Will Brazil take some measures to confront the US?

Well, I would not say to confront with the US. Brazil is taking the measures to follow the JCPOA agreement. The JCPOA, for us is still valid. We follow the United Nations' resolutions. We do not follow other countries' unilateral decisions. I think it is very important to highlight that even before the JCPOA, Brazil was supporting Iran. You remember the Tehran Declaration when Brazil alongside Turkey and Iran were trying to find a good diplomatic solution for the nuclear dossier. At that time, few countries were on the side of Iran, but Brazil was here. You know, that is very important to highlight. After the JCPOA, everybody wanted to do business with Iran... So, it is not like that the US alone takes a decision and we are not going to support Iran. We have more reasons to support Iran because Iran has been fulfilling its commitments to the JCPOA... the IAEA has verified Iran's abidance by its commitments, other parties of the agreement are saying this. So, we believe the JCPOA is a very important agreement that has to be in place not only to the benefit of peace in the world but also it helps the non-proliferation regime. So, Brazil has always been in favor of nuclear negotia- ➔

tions...

We have very good relations with Iran. Meanwhile we also have very good relations with the US, but we think they are not right on this issue. We would like to follow the JCPOA.

In terms of measures, for us, the business is as usual. It did not affect us in terms of the government...For us in the government, we are still looking for developing economic cooperation with Iran in both ways... we are doing our best efforts in the banking relations, in financing, in bringing in new businesses in looking for cooperation, in science and technology, in every field. So, for us it is the same as usual and nothing will change for the Brazilian government.

On the other hand, for Brazilian companies it is the same as well. Meanwhile, they have some exposure to the US. They are thinking twice, because they have to check whether this makes a problem for them or not. In this case, we cannot intervene, because it is their decision... It is not the government that is doing business, it is the private sector to decide. Of course, we have to provide them with facilities and try to facilitate to promote, to have agreements, and we are doing these....

For us as the government, we are still looking for building bridges between Brazil and Iran not only politically, but also cooperation on trade, on economic and science and technology, on everything. So, people who want to cross these bridges will be welcome. Maybe, there are some people who hesitate to cross the bridge, we will help them to show them the way. But that is their own decision. You know, that's what I am saying... There are lots of Brazilian companies who engage in business with the US, so maybe they will have problems if they come to Iran, but there are many other companies that do not have any exposure to the US, and you can do a lot of business with them. So, I believe we have a good room to go ahead in all fields that I told you earlier, like oil and gas, engineering services, medical equipment, food and agriculture industries. Well, food and agriculture products were never under sanctions because of humanitarian concerns.

So, I believe our cooperation in agriculture field will continue. We will fol-

low up...We are also working on some financial mechanisms to facilitate our transactions. So, that is the job that we want to do...I am still optimistic about the level of economic cooperation that we can have with Iran.

We would like to ask about Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his large politico-economic delegation's visit to your country earlier this year? Was it a fruitful visit? What were the achievements?

His visit was very fruitful. It was very important to have Dr. Zarif in Brazil. We had been trying for some years [to have him there], but because of busy schedules here and there, we did not manage

met during Dr. Zarif's visit as well...There was a positive attitude shared by both countries' ministers of agriculture.

We also exchanged views on the political issues in our regions. What is going on in South America and the Middle East. We shared common views with Iran about the world politics, about what's going on in our regions. So, it was a very successful [visit]. Some agreements were signed in judicial cooperation, for example, and also on the cooperation between our academic centers for exchange of students, on the events that we can organize together. So, it was a very positive and very fruitful visit.

In response to a question about the Brazil's chance for winning this year's



MEHR NEWSAGENCY
Photo: Majid Asgarpour

to have him there. But finally we could have him there. It was an honor and pleasure to have Dr. Zarif there. We had very good talks between the two sides. He was accompanied by a large economic delegation. Some of those sectors that I mentioned above were represented. We had talks about our financial cooperation and mechanisms...our bilateral relations progressed even more during Dr. Zarif's visit to Brazil. We hope, we can establish a bilateral mechanism that can facilitate our business. We are working very hard on this and Dr. Zarif's visit really helped it.

And also we held talks on other kinds of cooperation. There was also a group that got together on science and technology. It was our first meeting of our working group in the field of science and technological cooperation. They

World Cup, the ambassador said that he was not so sure that Brazil could win the World Cup, adding that there were very good teams in the tournament that play very high level football.

He then wished success for national Iranian team, saying it can qualify for the next stage by securing a draw with Portugal and winning Morocco.

At the end of the interview and in response to a question as to what happened following the impeachment of former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff and sentencing another socialist president Lula da Silva, the ambassador said that their cases were a good test for the democratic judicial institutions in Brazil, stressing that they could put the country back on the right track and helped the economy recover from the political turmoil.

We would immediately establish diplomatic ties with Syria: Muharrem İnce

*Interview by: Kamran Ghaderi Azar
Translated by: Mohammad Ali Haqshenas*

In an interview with Mehr News Agency, Muharrem İnce highlighted that he would immediately establish diplomatic ties with Syria if he won the coming election.

Turkish people know him as one of the outspoken critics of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan policies. İnce's 10-minute speech at parliament in 2009, which was against the ruling party of Turkey, was significantly embraced by millions of people in social media.

İnce is a member of Republican People's Party (also known as CHP) and can be considered the main rival of Erdoğan in June 24 election. Once a physics teacher, he is concentrating in educational issues during his election campaigns.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan from the Justice and Development Party (AKP), Muharrem İnce from CHP, Meral Akşener from Good Party, Selahattin Demirtaş from Peoples' Democratic Party, Doğu Perinçek from Patriotic party and Saadet Temel Karamollaoğlu from Felicity Party are the candidates of this election.

Following is the full text of his interview with Mehr News:

As the candidate of the main opposition party, what changes will you introduce to Turkey's policy if elected as president?

In my administration, Turkey moves out of a system dominated by a particular person and will own a parliamentary system based on democratic values. We will create a new constitution so as to guide the country through development accordingly.

Our legal system will become a neutral, trustworthy and fair one. Our economy will solve the current crises. We will try to create a lasting peace inside and outside the country.

There are a lot of problems in the education system and we will find effective



solutions to these issues. In general, we will become a country that has freedom, peace and security.

While the ruling administration of Turkey have traditionally won Turkish religious groups votes in recent years, what are your plans for competing in this area?

I have never had problems with religious people during my life. My only problem is with those who use religious beliefs as a tool to exploit their policies.

Policies implemented in last 16 years have caused worries even for religious people. Now they are more concerned than me regarding damage imposed by the government to religious beliefs and feelings.

There is no need to do anything special to get the support of Turkish religious groups. The only thing I can do is to create a completely free and decent environment for them if elected.

Taking into account the results of elections held during the AKP government, what are the strategies for your election campaign this time?

Our main strategy is based on a culture of peace and understanding. We decide to find a general solution without

leaving anyone out. On this basis, we will strengthen all the institutions that are taking steps in this direction. My most important goal is to turn Turkey into a country which, by institutionalization of peace and reconciliation, achieves the aims set by Atatürk.

This does not mean any return to the former era, but the purpose is to correct previous mistakes, to inspire hope for the country's future, and to heal the wounds that the country have suffered during its history. To achieve these goals, we need democracy, rule of law, a powerful economy and an effective educational system.

What will you do in the context of Turkey's accession to the European Union if succeed in the upcoming election?

Accession to the European Union is one of our priorities and is a must for us since it is regarded as one of the main principles of establishing the country which states that we should be part of the growing global civilization

We are seeking to implement different values in Turkey, such as spreading democracy, boosting respect for individual and civil rights and adherence to the law, which altogether can bring us mem—→

bership in the European Union.

During my presidency term, no incident will happen which would lead to a conflict between us and Germany and the Netherlands, and we will enhance our business and friendly relations by all means. We will adopt all the required measures for Turkey's accession to EU and will achieve this aim.

What do you think about the peace process that was implemented by the government in solving the Kurdish problem but were not finished for some reasons?

From the very first day, I emphasized the wrong nature of what the government called 'developmental policies'. I also mentioned the related necessary points in the parliament and media.

To solve this problem, we should not address an armed group. In the above mentioned policies, the condition for laying down arms by the group should have been emphasized without any preconditions, however, this was not the

case. In general, it was shortly proved that something called the peace process does not exist, because we need to do something to differentiate Kurds issue with terror and its effects.

No government will negotiate with an armed group that threatens its sovereignty. In this regard, extra attention should be paid to the example of Colombia and what has happened in this country.

As long as this terrorist group continues its activities, it isn't possible to achieve a comprehensive social peace. The true meaning of peace is that not only the high-ranking officials, but all the people can reach an agreement.

In our view, the only place which can conclude this process is National Assembly of Turkey.

If the election goes to the second round, will you seek the support of other parties, and in particular the Peoples' Democratic Party?

Under these circumstances, I would

like to seek the support of all voters with any tendency. Of course, I will try to agree with different parties, but the final decision will be made by themselves.

If elected as the Turkish president, what will be your policies regarding the neighboring countries, Iran, Iraq and Syria?

We want to establish close and powerful relations with all our neighbors. Meanwhile, the status of Iran, Iraq and Syria is much more important.

We also believe that our neighboring countries' growing power is in Turkey's favor. And hence, any action that would undermine national sovereignty and peace in these countries is wrong in our view.

We will begin diplomatic relations with Syria immediately. We will do everything necessary to prepare the grounds for the return of 4 million Syrian refugees residing in Turkey whose hearts is full of joy and hope for their country.

We are not the PKK's political wing: Selahattin Demirtaş

*Interview by: Kamran Ghaderi Azar
Translated from Farsi into English
by: Kamal Iranidoost*

Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtas says that the Kurdish-focused People's Democratic Party (HDP) has no relations of any kind with the PKK.

Undoubtedly, political campaign is not an easy job in Turkey's political structure and requires a lot of experience and skills. A look at the political history of the Republic of Turkey shows that only experienced politicians have had the chance to lead the country's political affairs so far.

But Selahattin Demirtas a politician of a Kurdish descent who was initially underestimated by many Turkish politicians, soon proved that they were wrong. The story of Demirtas's rise to power and fame in a country where it is not easy for Kurds to enter politics is a testimony of political

transformation in Turkey.

Now, the former HDP (People's Democratic Party) co-leader is a political figure that not only represents a large number of Turkish Kurds, but also a part of the leftists in the country.

Demirtas, who is currently jailed on different political and security charges is running his election campaign from behind the bars.

While in prison, Demirtas who is currently serving his prison sentence being convicted on different political and security charges, is running his election campaign from behind the bars answered question that were put forward by MNA Turkish Department staff member Kamran Ghaderi Azar through his lawyers.

The questions and Demirtas's answers are as follows:

What opportunities and difficulties have you faced during your presidential campaign from prison? Are you hoping

that you will be released soon?

My imprisonment is totally illegal and politically motivated. I not only am a lawmaker, but also a presidential candidate. I have been in jail for 20 months now while my trial could have been done without me being imprisoned. Now they do not even allow me to conduct my election campaign freely, and the letters and messages that I am sending outside prison through my lawyers are the only way that my voice is being heard. Under these conditions, it has become almost impossible for me to conduct my campaign because the prison atmosphere is quite unfair to me. It is clear now that the upcoming election is not going to be fair. This is taking place while Erdogan is using all the public facilities in his campaign.

If you are elected the Turkish president, what will you do with the peace process between the Turkish government and →



the Kurds that was initiated by the AKP but failed very soon?

We are looking for a solution to the Kurdish question through democratic and peaceful methods. We support any means to end violence in Turkey and any means that will lead to recognize the Kurds' legitimate rights, especially our civil rights. I am sure that we can achieve that goal in a short period of time.

Is solving the Kurdish question the only HDP's goal or it also represents non-Kurds?

The HDP is a movement that has been supported by non-Kurdish citizens as well in addition to a large number of Kurds. We represent not only the Kurds but all the beliefs and ethnicities. We do not consider ourselves to be a solely Kurdish party, but a party that insists on democracy for all ethnic groups based on multicultural beliefs. Meanwhile, I have to emphasize that in line with our democratic goals, we will courageously pursue the demands of the Kurds through political methods.

What is the relationship between the HDP and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK)? Is there any cooperation and coordination of any kind between the two?

Unlike PKK, which insists on violence and armed struggle, we are a party that acts legally under the Turkish constitution. We never agree with violence at

all. There is a fundamental difference between us and the PKK. We are not the political wing of the PKK.

What measures have you taken to have a healthy and fair election in the Kurdish areas?

The AKP-MHP coalition's only strategy is to use the state-owned facilities to prevent us from passing the 10% electoral threshold to enter the parliament to pave the way for their own majority in the parliament. Of course, we have no doubt that we will succeed in the upcoming elections based on the public support we can see. However, factors such as electoral fraud, Erdogan's decree that the HDP must lose the elections, as well as manipulating and relocating the ballot boxes are going to hinder the democratic process of elections. Anyway, our party accompanied by the people are working together to make the elections fair and democratic as much as possible. We will do our best to protect even single vote. I think the people will protect the ballot boxes and voters will be vigilant to represent their national will.

If the election goes to a run off, will you form a coalition with other parties?

We are ready for any kind of political cooperation within based on our own principles and the history of our political activities shows that. We will announce our decision later when the time arrives.

Given the fact that populist politics and demagoguery play an important part Turkish election, to what extent your party's slogans match with your actions?

Our political slogans are designed to reflect our political goals and projects the best. While I am still in jail, the slogans and the modern discourse of our party are popular with the people and we have great effect on them.

If you are elected as the Turkey's president, what approach will you take to tackle problems your country is facing in the Middle East now, and how your relations with Iran, Iraq and Syria will be?

We will have an effective dialogue with neighboring countries and the entire Middle East. We certainly will not support interventionist policies with imperial goals in Iran, Syria and Iraq. Our foreign policy will be letting alone every country solve its problems through relying on its people within the framework of democracy. We will establish friendly relations with the people of those countries in addition to their governments. We will take big steps especially in economic, cultural, sports and social fields. We believe that Turkey can have very close relations with its neighbors while seeking to join the EU. We will pursue more courageous and more friendly politics in that regard.

Polish envoy: No individual positions among EU on Iran nuclear deal

Interview by: Marjohn Sheikhi

Speaking to Mehr News, Polish Ambassador to Tehran Jaroslaw Marcin Domanski dismissed reports on Poland's break with EU on Iran nuclear deal, stressing that his country has fully subscribed to the EU declaration on preserving the JCPOA in the aftermath of US pullout.

Western media have been reporting on Poland's deviation from the official EU stance on expressing full support for the 2015 Iran nuclear deal whose fate has been hinging on EU's ability to provide Iran with "solid guarantees" that the agreement would continue to serve Iran's economic interests in the wake of US withdrawal and renewed sanctions.

Speaking to Mehr News Agency in an exclusive interview, Polish Ambassador to Tehran Jaroslaw Marcin Domanski dismissed the reports, saying his country, along with the rest of EU Member States, are fully committed to preserving the JCPOA.

This comes as EU leaders gathered on May 16 in Bulgaria, which currently holds the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union, to declare their unanimous support for the Iran nuclear deal and put into effect a number of measures, including the 'blocking statute', that would protect European companies doing business with Iran from the US extraterritorial sanctions.

The ambassador also dismissed reports on suspension of a gas project in Iran by Poland's major gas firm PGNiG, saying the embassy is in contact with the PGNiG office in Tehran and the office is operating normally; "This is a very serious project to us ... [because] it responds to the policy of the Republic of Poland on energy diversification," Mr. Domanski stressed.

"I think that as far as the objectives of



the JCPOA are concerned, while keeping our alliance we disagree [with our American partners]," said the ambassador, adding that despite certain differences there is a unity among the 28 EU Member States on preserving the JCPOA.

"This unanimous support among the leaders of 28 Member States of the European Union is not always the case," he said.

The following is the full text of Mr. Domanski's exclusive interview with Mehr News:

EU says it is going to reactivate the blocking statute, a 1996 law that would allow the bloc to shield European companies doing business with Iran from US extraterritorial sanctions. Is this measure, if put into effect, enough to save the Iran nuclear deal and protect the sides' economic interests?

First of all, let me tell you that there is full unity within the European Union on preserving the JCPOA. We had a very important summit on May 16 in Sofia, Bulgaria, attended by the heads of states and governments of all the 28 EU Member States. During the summit, the Iranian issue and the JCPOA was number

one on the agenda and all the leaders unanimously agreed on the importance of the JCPOA, on doing everything possible to preserve the deal, and on the measures which the EU has decided to adopt as a response to the Iranian request to a) protect the companies, and b) to do all possible to preserve the full implementation of the JCPOA as long as Iran implements its commitments. According to all 10 reports published by the IAEA so far, it is clear that Iran has been fulfilling its commitments. Therefore, the EU agreed to do everything possible to fulfil ours. So in this respect, certain measures have been promised; not yet adopted, but promised, because the process takes time.

The political deceleration of the summit, and the European Commission's President Jean-Claude Juncker – to which Poland fully subscribes – is that the formal process to activate the blocking statute has been launched and the aim is to have that measure in practice before the 6th of August, when the first batch of US sanctions will take effect. This will require some work at the EU-level in Brussels, but it will also require some legislative work at the EU ➔

Member States' level. So all countries including Poland will have to do some legislative work in order to make this blocking statute operational.

What other plans does Poland, in particular, have in mind to protect Polish companies from US sanctions and prevent them from abandoning Iran's projects?

The EU summit in Sofia proposed other measures in addition to the blocking statute to preserve the interests of European companies investing in Iran and show its commitment to the Iran nuclear deal. One such measure, which the heads of the EU governments agreed upon, is to launch a formal process to remove obstacles for the European Investment Bank (EIB) to finance EU investment in Iran. The first steps have been made, and the next more technical ones will be made by the 6th of August. There is a strong political will from all the 28 heads of states and governments to activate this mechanism. This mechanism also foresees the guarantees for the European companies which are investing in Iran.

Another measure involves sectoral cooperation, such as in the energy sector, development of energy efficiency in Iran, development of renewable technologies, development of health, with regard to small and medium-sized enterprises. That's why Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy, Miguel Arias Cañete, came to Iran with a group of experts dealing with energy, and he brought some proposals in these areas, which Iran could potentially adopt and we believe that it will do so.

Another important issue on which we will be working is related to the guarantee for bank transfers to the Central Bank of Iran, which is not restricted to oil-related revenues. Here, the heads of states and governments mandated the institutions, including the Commission, but also to certain extents, the Member States, to look for a possibility to guarantee bank transfers through the European central banks and the central bank of Iran.

This situation requires non-standard solutions. We have not encountered before such a complicated situation. So certain measures which we are planning and willing to implement have not been

implemented in the past; but there is a strong will to go forward. We know that what is important for Iran is to ensure the export of oil and we are fully committed to continue importing the Iranian oil. Given the new circumstances, we just need to find some mechanisms to protect all companies on the one hand, and ensure the bank transfers on the other.

How optimistic are you, personally, about the effectiveness of all these measures you mentioned, to save the JCPOA and continue to serve the economic interests of both sides?

Of course as a diplomat I am optimistic. I assure you that we are doing everything possible. That unanimous support among the leaders of 28 Member States of the European Union is not always the case. We are 28 countries and sometimes we have different views, but on preserving the JCPOA there is full unanimity among us. The EU Member States are fully committed to preserve the deal. We proposed what we were able to do in the short term period in order to ensure that all companies and the security of businesses and investments are protected. It may sometimes look that [the measures] are insufficient, but we are doing everything possible and we are fully committed. So yes, I am optimistic, but then again, certain things depend not only on us, but other factors as well.

While EU leaders have vowed to protect the companies from US sanctions, the companies do not feel too much reassured; there have been reports that Poland's major gas firm PGNiG (PGN.WA) has suspended a gas project in Iran because of the risk from US sanctions. Do you confirm this?

On this particular case, we are not aware of such a decision. We've only seen the reports in the press. The embassy is in contact with the PGNiG office in Tehran and the office is operating normally. They are not aware that the project has been suspended. Let me tell you that this is a very serious project to us. It responds to the policy of the Republic of Poland on energy diversification, which is like a key strategic policy of the Polish government to ensure the diversification of supplies of crude, oil and gas. We perceive this project as very important. The negotiations are at a very advanced

stage. We have received no confirmation on the suspension of the project that was covered in that report.

Well, what Polish projects in Iran are currently under threat from US' renewed sanctions?

Now, you have touched on the biggest issue. Many of the European companies are private, and the European governments do not have the power to persuade or order them to remain in the Iranian market. Thanks to the counter-measures that might be adopted against the sanctions, the companies may feel reassured to remain in the projects. But we do not have a mechanism [to persuade them against their own decision]. We are trying to give them reassurance by adopting these measures, but we cannot force them to remain.

How have Trump's unilateral actions regarding the withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal and his threats to impose sanctions on any company that does business with Iran affected the so-called "transatlantic partnership"? Will the EU continue to fight back for its own economic interests, or submit to Washington's in the end?

We showed [our unified stance] during the Sofia summit and through other subsequent declarations of unity on preserving the JCPOA. We are of course in contact with our American partners as many of the European countries are members of the NATO alliance. So, while we are in contact with our American partners, we do not always have the same opinion concerning the Iran deal, as simple as that.

But is this commitment only economic-wise, or does it also expand into the political issues surrounding the nuclear deal? A recent Washington Post report has cited Poland's Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki as saying that Warsaw defends the US position and concerns about the JCPOA, which indicates a break with Brussels' position that the JCPOA cannot be modified or have any additions, regarding Iran's regional influence or missile program.

As I said, the Polish government is fully committed to preserve the JCPOA. Our Prime Minister Morawiecki was in Sofia last week where he subscribed to the full declaration. We see many →



benefits from the JCPOA, not just economic-wise. There is also a clear political benefit for us, as the deal secures peace in the Middle East, which is a very volatile region and poses certain risks to Europe, including the proliferation of nuclear arms, or the refugee crisis that we witnessed over the last years.

We are 28 different Member States with different interests, threats, histories, trajectories and different degrees of cooperation with American partners. But as far as the JCPOA is concerned, we are all committed on preserving it. The countries within the EU can be perceived as sometimes closer or farther to the United States. I would suggest you to stick to the facts, and the facts are as they are: All 28 Member States are obviously talking with the American counterparts; we are listening to their arguments. Sometimes we agree with some of their arguments, sometimes we disagree. I think that as far as the objectives of the JCPOA are concerned, we mostly disagree. And we showed this in Sofia.

We are subscribing to all the declarations of the EU leaders, fully supporting the declarations by Ms. Mogherini and President Juncker. As far as the JCPOA is concerned, there are no individual positions. All Member States are acting unanimously together. I cannot guarantee you that it will last forever, but I strongly believe that it will.

Last year, while talking to Polish Deputy Minister of Economy Tadeusz Kościński,

we touched upon a project called 'Go Iran', which was basically Poland's incentive package for companies doing business in Iran. Whatever became of that project, especially now in the light of the recent developments on the JCPOA?

The project is still going on, stronger than before. It is based in Warsaw at the Ministry of Economy, and was further strengthened by the opening of the Polish trade office in Tehran. I would say that we are now at the second stage of our presence in the Iranian market. Polish businesses are very interested in the Iranian market, not only major oil and gas companies but also the SMEs. Of course it is not always easy. I think the expectations on both the Iranian side and the Polish side sometimes do not match. Certain elements of this infrastructure and this business reality are basically unknown to the Polish businessmen who intend to come here. But we are only talking about two years of the opening of the Iranian market. I think it is very early to judge the degree and the success story of these activities. I think we need a little bit more time.

But I do see a positive trajectory, here. I also believe that the involvement of bigger oil and gas companies would encourage SMEs to intensify their activities in the Iranian market. As you know, it is not an easy task but I think time is needed, and I am confident that with the presence of this trade office and in case bigger investments start to become

operational here, we will also have some results in other sectors of economy. I think there is a huge potential for the participation of Polish businesses in certain sectors other than oil and gas.

What other sectors, in particular?

We are already present in the Iranian market in the mining technology sector with the Polish FAMUR Group, which supplies a substantial share of the equipment to the Iranian mining sector. We also have a very strong position in the copper industry and technology. Poland is one of the biggest producers of copper in the world and we have very advanced experience in the sector. We are also thinking about the export of agricultural products, which in terms of quality and parity price, would be quite attractive for the Iranians.

There are also our high-quality and reasonable-priced pharmaceutical products, medical equipment, cosmetics, new technologies, renewable energies, and water management ... and here is a very important message I would like to pass: all Polish products meet exactly the same standards as the French, Italian, German or any other European products, in order to access the European Single Market, but our products are much cheaper. So, I would like to encourage Iranian customers to buy Polish products as they are of a good quality and respect high EU standards, all the while as they are much cheaper than other European products.

Trump's strategy toward Iran at expense of US credibility: Costello

Interview by Payman Yazdani

Ryan Costello NIAC assistant policy director is of the view that Trump's apparent strategy is to punish Iran at the expense of nonproliferation, security in the Middle East, relations with European allies, the efficacy of future sanctions and the diplomatic credibility of the US.

The US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo laid out the Trump administration's new strategy for Iran on Monday two weeks after the US President Donald Trump walked away from the Obama administration's Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA).

Repeating lots of baseless accusations against Iran, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in his speech at the Heritage Foundation on Monday made 12 demands on Iran including to:

- Declare to the IAEA a full account of the prior military dimensions of its nuclear program and permanently and verifiably abandon such work in perpetuity.
- Stop enrichment and never pursue plutonium reprocessing, including closing its heavy water reactor.
- Provide the IAEA with unqualified access to all sites throughout the entire country.
- End its proliferation of ballistic missiles and halt further launching or development of nuclear-capable missile systems.
- Release all US citizens as well as citizens of US partners and allies.
- End support to Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Just hours after Pompeo's speech many EU officials and international figures rejected his demands on Iran as unrealistic and futile.

Some experts from CNN and FT called the Pompeo's demands "pipe dream" that indicates the US administration has not any new strategy towards Iran after its withdrawal from the JCPOA.

To discuss the issue we reached out to Ryan Costello NIAC assistant policy director.

Here is the full text of interview with him:



He has promised very tough sanctions on Iran. Considering the fact that even the US closest allies in EU have announced they will be committed to the JCPOA and will keep on business and trade with Iran, how realistic and feasible are Mr. Pompeo's promised sanctions?

U.S. sanctions have tremendous power, particularly over European businesses with ties to the American economy. If fully implemented, as the administration has vowed, European companies will be forced to choose between doing business in Iran or the United States. The Obama administration brought Europeans on board with sanctions previously, though that effort was eased by shared concerns regarding Iran's nuclear program. This time, the Trump administration will be attempting to use brute force alone to enforce sanctions, which will have bite. The main question is how far Europe can go to protect its companies in order to try to sustain relief under the JCPOA.

Will other global powers like Russia and China follow up possible US unilateral sanctions against Iran?

Russia and China seem well positioned to swoop in and take business from European companies forced to depart Iran as a result of U.S. sanctions.

Russia, in particular, is likely watching happily as the U.S. targets its European allies over sanctions – weakening the North American Treaty Organization (NATO) and the future efficacy of U.S. sanctions in the process, and potentially paving the way toward another disastrous war of choice in the Middle East.

How do you assess the consequences of Trump's unilateral policies? What can his policies lead to consequences for the US and the world?

Trump's apparent strategy is to punish Iran at the expense of nonproliferation, security in the Middle East, relations with European allies, the efficacy of future sanctions and the diplomatic credibility of the United States. The Iranian people are likely to once again bear the brunt of the sanctions, not the Iranian government or the Revolutionary Guard Corps that are the supposed targets. I'm also deeply concerned that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and National Security Advisor John Bolton will be pushing Trump for military confrontation, as they've advocated in the past.

He has talked about forcing Iran to accept a new security architecture for the region. what kind of architecture possibly he means and aims for?

The idea of a new security architecture for the Middle East is a good idea. For it to be sustainable and inclusive, Iran would need to be a participant and not a subject. President Obama hinted his preference for such an arrangement, indicating that Saudi Arabia and Iran need to learn how to share the region and make some sort of cold peace.

The problem is this isn't the sort of security architecture that Trump and his team are looking for. After reneging on America's word on sanctions relief under the nuclear deal, Pompeo demanded additional Iranian concessions well beyond what nations endorsed under the JCPOA in addition to far-reaching concessions on regional security concerns and the release of imprisoned dual nationals in Iran. ➔

In return, Pompeo offered relief from all sanctions. However, given Iran's experience under the JCPOA and the hawkish delivery, this was an almost impossible speech to take seriously. It is a shame, as well, because the release of imprisoned dual nationals should not be tied to the resolution of all geopolitical disputes between the U.S. and Iran.

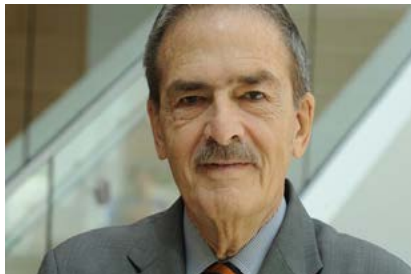
I would, however, caution that nothing is ever preordained under the Trump administration. Advisors are hired and fired on whims, and Trump clearly wants a big foreign policy win that he is willing to re-write the political rule book in order to get. Even though his administration has done everything possible to alienate Iran away from the negotiating table, I wouldn't rule out engaging the Trump administration at some point to see if they'd be willing to meet in the middle on some of their demands. We've already seen Trump go from threatening "fire and fury" on North Korea to praising Kim Jong-Un as "honorable." It's not impossible that Trump could similarly flip if he perceived engagement with Iran to be politically beneficial.

Some believe what Mr. Pompeo asked for yesterday somehow is declaration of war against Iran. What do you think of this?

Pompeo and Bolton appear ideologically inclined to use force against Iran. Pompeo was careful to demand almost everything conceivable from Iran, thereby making a deal on any issue almost impossible, while also stopping short of openly calling for war or regime change which would be politically toxic. Their goals appear to be to limit diplomatic prospects and provoke Iran into actions that will help justify their disastrous policies.

Where Trump stands, however, is anyone's guess. He clearly has internalized antipathy toward Iran, as has been made evident through his Muslim ban and his repeated attacks on the deal. The danger is that even if he wants to avoid war in the Middle East, at least in theory, he is surrounded by hawkish advisors who are trying their hardest to push him toward military confrontation.

Pompeo speech an exercise in idiocy: Prof. Zonis



Interview by Payman Yazdani

Marvin Zonis, Professor of international political economy believes that the Pompeo speech was an exercise in idiocy that only provides Trump with excuse to pressure the government in Iran in any way possible to bring about regime change in Iran.

The US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo laid out the Trump administration's new strategy for Iran on Monday two weeks after the US President Donald Trump walked away from the Obama administration's Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA).

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Just hours after Pompeo's speech many EU officials and international figures rejected his demands on Iran as unrealistic and futile.

Some experts from CNN and FT called the Pompeo's demands "pipe dream" that indicates that the US administration has not any new strategy towards Iran af-

ter its withdrawal from the JCPOA.

To shed more light on the issue we reached out to Marvin Zonis, Professor of international political economy and leadership in the University of Chicago.

Here is the full text of his interview:

He has promised very tough sanctions on Iran. Considering the fact that even the US closest allies in EU have announced they will be committed to the JCPOA and will keep on business and trade with Iran, how realistic and feasible are Mr. Pompeo's promised sanctions?

Despite the eagerness of the Europeans to figure out a way around the new sanctions so that European firms can continue to do business in Iran, they will find it difficult to do so. The US can deny European firms access to the US banking system and dollars and most European firms will not wish to take the risk of being shut out of those systems. On the other hand.

Will other global powers like Russia and China follow up possible US unilateral sanctions against Iran?

China and Russia have demonstrated their willingness to violate the sanctions in the past and can be expected to do so again.

How do you assess the consequences of Trump's unilateral policies? What can be his policies consequences for the US and the world?

The Pompeo speech was an exercise in idiocy. The only rational explanation is that the Trump administration knows that Iran cannot comply with the 12 demands and that, therefore, Trump will have an excuse to pressure the government in Iran in any way possible. Trump and his advisors would like to bring about regime change in Iran. The US invasion of Iraq ought to be a lesson for them. But it does not appear to be.

He has talked about forcing Iran to accept a new security architecture for the region. What kind of architecture possibly he means and aims for?

This is an empty phrase which has Iran retreating to its borders and essentially abandoning any foreign policy.



Opinion

EU-US conflict; temporal or permanent?



By Hanif Ghaffari

Lately, many of the media, news sources, and even European politicians have emphasized that the time has come for putting an end to the United States' unilateral policies in the international system.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel recently stated that Europe can no longer rely on the United States to protect it. For the past few days, the French officials have taken a seemingly determined stance against the United States.

French finance minister Bruno Le Maire has criticized the Trump government and the United States politicians in the strongest possible terms, calling for a European economic separation from Washington. "Unjustified, unjustifiable and dangerous" – these are the terms that France's finance minister has said to identify the tariffs on steel and aluminum the US has planned for its closest allies.

"We cannot understand being hit by American tariffs. We are close allies to the United States. And we cannot understand that decision." Le Maire then continued: "I think that Trump's administration has to be aware that the signal that has been given by the tariffs on the EU is a very negative and very aggressive one. So we do not have any other choice

but to respond to Trump's decision. So we will take all necessary measures to protect our industry. We will also introduce an action at the WTO. We deeply regret the fact that we are obliged to do so. But we do not have any other choice."

Has the US-EU Trade War Already Started?

At this moment, the key question is whether the "trade war" between Washington and the European Union has begun. Regarding Trump's unilateral and restrictive policies on the international trade, the answer seems to be determining. Indeed, are we about to see the formation of two different economic fronts in the West? Should the European troika be considered as a political entity apart from the United States? Well, the answer to these questions is not positive!

Although the withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and beyond that, imposing tariffs on steel and aluminum imported by the EU member states have created gaps between Washington and Europe, and even strengthened the idea of a "bypassing Trump and the US" among European citizens, but European politicians are trying to direct the existing dissatisfaction among their people to a certain point. This "point" is the

"peaceful economic coexistence of Europe and America"! The truth is that middle-right activists and Social-Democrats in Europe are driving the system towards being dependent on the United States, thus bypassing US is never going to happen under such circumstances, no matter what the desire of the European citizens will be. One of the main missions of Macron and Merkel at the current time is to prevent the deepening of the gaps created between the United States and Europe.

In an article published by Guardian, Bruno Tertrais writes: "Trump's decision (on pulling out of the JCPOA) is not only extraordinarily brutal, it affects a project whose origins are found in a European initiative taken in the autumn of 2003, when the UK, France and Germany sent their foreign ministers to Tehran for talks... It took 12 years of international diplomacy, in which Europe played an important role, to reach the nuclear deal that Trump has now decided to tear up."

Then he adds: "So is it time for Europe to seek a divorce from the US? Well, not quite. For several reasons, we should refrain from entering into confrontation. Europe may be the largest trade bloc in the world, but in truth it does not have the capacity to tackle 21st-century challenges on its own, and it would have even less capacity to do so if its relationship with the US came fully apart. ...Certainly, US -Europe relations are now entering troubled, uncharted waters. But this could be a phase. Trump will be there for another three or seven years. But by historical standards, that's a short period of time.... We need to think about the future."

European Authorities' Terrible Mistake

At first glance, it may seem logical for European leaders to argue with the United States about recent economic and political conflicts! They believe that the presence of a "Democrat" in the White House and even the conquest of the US Congress by Trump's opponents and the containment of his policies by the House of Representatives and the Senate will increase the solidarity between the United States and Europe. ➡

And this is what will happen sooner or later!

It seems that the European leaders are making a terrible mistake in terms of “separating Trump from the American political structure”! A mistake that could lead to the collapse of the European Union in the future. In this case, the European Union will no longer have power and even a defined entity in 2020 or in 2024 to witness the return of the United States towards Europe as its “key Ally”! The fact is that many of the measures taken by Trump against the European Union, and his attempts to enforce economic protectionist policies against Europe have been supported by the ruling structure in the United States. In this equation, many traditional Republicans and even Democrats agree with the US President’s policies in confrontation with the United Europe.

Beyond that, Trump and his companions are now seeking a “break-down of Europe” and returning to the time before the formation of the United Europe. That’s why Trump called the Brexit “a great thing”, and has even encouraged other European countries to model the UK in this regard. Trump has started a perfectly organized confrontation with the European Union and the Eurozone. In this dangerous game, the silence and accompaniment of those like the German Chancellor and the French President will lead to nothing but the fall of the European Union. With no doubt, the next president of the United States will happily welcome a “weakened Europe”! And In this equation, there’s basically no difference between Democrats and Republicans!

At this time, Merkel and Macron are hardly trying to prevent the intensification of the trade war with the United States. They are even willing to sacrifice the JCPOA in order to achieve this short-term goal. But in the long run, they can’t stand against the political-economic blows of the White House on the weakened body of the European Union; something that the French President and the German Chancellor have not yet understood.

Trade war intensified between US, Europe



By Hanif Ghaffari

Donald Trump, President of the United States, continues to pursue his protectionist policies in international trade. This has led to concern and frustration among the US European partners.

Many international economic analysts are now talking about the conflicts raised between the United States and Europe over imposing steel and aluminum tariffs as the transatlantic “trade war”, conflicts that may widen in the near future, and affect the widespread relations between Washington and Europe.

Although the European authorities such as Emmanuel Macron, Angela Merkel and Theresa May are seeking to manage this situation and prevent tensions from escalating with Washington, the anger raised among citizens, businessmen and opposition parties towards Trump and the US government is to the extent that these politicians can’t hide it.

The German Chancellor has recently sent an indirect and meaningful warning to Trump about his free commerce and counterbalance trade threats. On her 11th China trip since becoming chancellor in 2005, Merkel

sought to show Chinese-German solidarity over free trade. The German Chancellor stressed that the United States should permanently exempt the EU from the unfair steel and aluminum tariffs. However, it seems that Trump doesn’t intend to retreat against its European partners. It’s possible that Trump may consider temporary exemptions for Europe in this regard, but there will be no sign of permanent exemptions. In the latest US trade move that has alarmed Beijing and Berlin alike, the US President Trump announced a national security investigation on car and truck imports that could potentially lead to tariffs. The fact is that Germany as an exporting country, runs large trade surpluses with the United States, but now it has found itself in Trump’s firing line.

Merkel signaled that her government will support European Union retaliation if necessary, though she prefers talks on between EU and US Authorities to lower tariffs and defuse the conflict.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel also warned that “nobody will win” a global trade conflict after with the US President Donald Trump approving tariffs on foreign steel and aluminum.

“I don’t want to use martial language -- that doesn’t help us get any ➡

further," Merkel told reporters. "It would ultimately be detrimental to everyone. No one would win such a competition."

Merkel's implicit threat, of the "European countermeasures" and "retaliation" against the United States may include setting tariffs on the American imported goods, which is subsequently going to lead to the increased export costs in the United States.

Though over the last months, European officials have been in intensive discussions with the US President on steel and aluminum tariffs, it became clear that Trump is hardly going to withdraw from his position. The continuation of US-EU talks on steel and aluminum tariffs will increase the dissatisfaction and anger among European citizens from the United States. It will also affect the performance of American companies in Europe.

Many American economic analysts have warned that the implementation of compromise policies towards Washington can't help at this period, a warning that Merkel and Macron chose to ignore.

Poland Playing on the US Ground

Recent statements by senior Polish officials in confirming the US government's approach in pulling out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), have once again raised ambiguities and complexities in the actual formulation of the "JCPOA minus America". It should not be forgotten that Poland, as one of the main European allies of Washington,

is a member of the European Union, and it is necessary for all of the EU member states to vote for a law to be approved.

However, Poland has expressed its opposition against the European Union. The statements made by the Polish Foreign Minister which indicated his support for the decision of the United States, made it clear that Washington and Warsha consider the nuclear deal as a dependent variable which is affected by particular security equations. Currently, the European Commission has taken a series of measures to support European companies cooperating with Iran against US sanctions.

However, unless all of the 28 EU member states support such decisions, they won't be put into effect in practice. The decision-making structure in the EU is such that all 28 members of this bloc are involved. Thus the final decision of the European authorities calls for a "total consensus" of all the member states.

Jacek Czaputowicz's recent stance suggests that Warsaw is busy with preparing the ground for defending the US interests under the situation which Trump had withdrawn from the JCPOA. Of course there has been hidden deals between Warsaw and Washington in this regard.

Poland's Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz said that Warsaw had not decided yet whether to back the ban, or namely "the blocking regulation", a decision that needs unanimous backing from the EU's 28 members.

"We need to think, there is still time," Czaputowicz said. "This doesn't mean we don't feel part of the EU community in these discussions ... We will see what other EU members think."

Referring to European companies doing business in Iran since the nuclear deal was put in place, Czaputowicz said Poland felt "economic considerations appeared to take precedence" in EU talks.

"During discussions (within the EU), we will emphasize the need to consider the motives of the United States and a greater empathy towards them."

The decoding of the Polish Foreign Minister words is not really difficult. Warsaw is considered to be the most important piece of the United States in Europe and NATO.

Under such conditions, Warsaw's absolute support for Trump's government was not unpredictable. It should not be forgotten that the United States has always played the role of Poland's patron in NATO. Trump government's officials have pledged to Poland to provide more security guarantees to the country (within NATO).

Undoubtedly, in the near future, Poland's play on the United States' ground will become more apparent. However, the adoption of such an approach by Warsaw would lead to disputes between Poland and some other European players, the disputes that Poland and its supporter, the United States, will try to manage and limit.



US-adopted tactics to contain EU as 'regionalism model'



By Payman Yazdani

In the early 20th century when the Europeans were busy with their frustrating internal differences and conflicts, the Americans managed to rise as a global hegemon. Long standing conflicts in Europe which resulted in the Europeans weakness is one of the key reasons that paved the way for the US political, economic and military rise as a global power and its domination on Europe.

After the World War II during the Cold War, economic and military weakness of the Europeans and common goals like containing the former Soviet Union led to increasing economic, political, cultural and security transatlantic cooperation and partnership.

Besides transatlantic cooperation, Europeans tendency to avoid another possible conflict in Europe resulted in further inter-European cooperation despite many differences. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and end of Cold War, inter-European cooperation accelerated and entered a new phase. Finally increased social, economic and political cooperation resulted in formation of the European Union (EU) which for the first time let Europeans to adopt a unified integrated foreign policy.

Despite the EU weaknesses in the field of security and its dependence on the US for its security the Union in two decades managed to be the best model of regionalism and turn

into an economic superpower.

According to World Bank figures in 2017, representing 24.3 percent of the global economy the United States is still the largest in the world and respectively the EU and China are the second and third biggest economies of the world representing 21.37 and 14.8 percent of the world economy. A report by Forbes on February 29th in 2016 indicates gradual decline of the US economic hegemony and domination on world economy over the past 4 decades. Since 1960 to 1964 the US represented 40 percent of the world economy but in 2014 following the rise of the EU and China economies the US just represented 22 percent of the world economy.

The rise of the EU as an economic power as a serious rival of the US and in addition, some tendencies inside the EU member states to gain more military and security independence from the US is not something that can be ignored by Washington.

Recent global developments in the world and Europe has made the Americans to make efforts to change the post-World War self-created regimes and orders that no longer serve the Washington interests. Many believe that Donald Trump is the result of political engineering of the US establishment to this end. In fact, the process of containing the EU and changing self-created old orders and regimes to guarantee the US global economic, military and political hegemony started when then US President Georg W Bush divide Europe into old and new Europe. Later Barak Obama followed the same

policy softly and paved the way for Donald Trump who is bold enough to follow the policy without respecting international law, norms and curtsy.

Washington has adopted the following tactics over the past couple of years to contain the EU as its rival and maintain its military and economic domination on the Union:

- Creating more tensions between the EU and Russia and imposing more and more sanctions against Russia to push Moscow out of EU energy market which will mean more EU economic dependence on Washington.

- Intensifying tensions between the Europe and Russia in East Europe to maintain Washington's military presence in the continent to guarantee its military hegemony and continuation of arm sale.

- Supporting the UK exit from the EU to reduce the EU's military and global economic weight. The UK exit from the Union as a country representing one sixth of the EU economy, enjoying veto power in the UNSC and nuclear weapons means a serious blow to the EU's global economic, political and economic stances to the benefit of the US.

- Withdraw from Paris Climate treaty and triggering trade war with the EU contrary to international law and WTO regulations which aim to impose Washington's political and economic will on the Union and at the same time to create differences among the Union member states.

- Prolonging crises intentionally in the EU neighboring regions like Syria and Libya which has created a lot of economic, political and social problems for the EU member states and gaps among them.

Pondering the US approach toward the EU shows that the policy and tactics adapted by Washington toward developments in East Europe, Ukraine, imposing sanctions against Russia, crises in Syria and Libya resulting millions of refugees, withdrawing from some international treaties like Iran's Nuclear Deal and triggering a trade war is after two main aims:

- Sending a message to the world that even the EU as the most successful model of regionalism is not able to challenge Washington and finally has to give up to the US will.

- Deepening existing differences and creating new gaps and differences among the Europeans by adopting the approaches which finally will indirectly and softly help the re-rise of the rightists in Europe, the main factor as I mentioned above for the rise of the US as an economic and military power at the beginning of the 20th century.

US strategy in cybercrime operations

By Sajad Abedi

The United States has made progress in coordinating cybercrime operations; however, creating a coherent national strategy for support and deterrence is out of reach.

Donald Trump, immediately after he was elected president of the United States, made information security a top priority for his programs, and he sought to make significant improvements to cyber defense and security. Of course, in previous administrations, there were also innovative plans and solutions to intensify the capacity of services and agencies in this field, which was also reaffirmed in Trump administration.

The first cornerstone of this area during the Terra period, in 2016, was to prepare and publish the "Strategic Review of Cyberspace", in order to strengthen the cyber-security intelligence architecture. Since then, there have been other documents and reports on specific aspects of information development, including the issue of identity support, but in the first document there were key findings that applied key changes in subsequent American projects.

Each of the various ministries, services and agencies of varying degrees are required to provide security related areas for their skills. The former administration has been monitoring the division of activities in this area since 2008 by overseeing all cyber-security intelligence activities and coordinating the activities of all agencies with the US Department of Homeland Security, thereby providing public infrastructure and support for people.

In January 2008, the United States decided to expand the coordination spectrum of measures by adding "inclusive national cyber security measures" by adding intelligence and invasive dimensions. In 2016, the US government mandated the Department of Homeland Security to set up a national center for follow-up and monitoring of cyber-security activities. The center is named "Integrated National Cyber Security Communications and Security Center",



and its mission is to provide a common operational view of the state of cyberspace to all of the federal services. All US services, including the Pentagon, the National Security Agency and the FBI, are involved in equipping this permanent operational center.

In addition, a Memorandum of Understanding was inked between the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense, which, at the time of approval of the center, allowed the merger of a group of "National Security Agency" into the organization.

Following the publication of the Strategic Review Document 2016, the US president appointed a national interface in the executive branch and assigned two responsibilities:

1. Develop a coherent strategy at the level of ministries, agencies and services.
2. Enhance national security with the private sector.

International aspects are another priority of the Trump government in the field of cyber-security intelligence. The 2016 Strategic Review Document presents a plan for developing an international strategy that emphasizes the development of a judicial staffing and strengthening partnerships with US allies. The plan also refers to the need to improve relations with emerging countries in order to develop a multifaceted norm and transnational equipment to respond to cyber-security threats.

However, it is a question of what level of intervention (nature, severity, frequen-

cy, and purpose) is considered as a warrant. In fact, by highlighting this risk, experts point out that red lines, which may be easily and simply violated, reduce the credibility of deterrence. Such a situation will not only reduce the threshold for a counter-attack response to an attack, but also may even create a risk that makes managing progress difficult with potential attackers.

However, cooperation with all actors in this area is essential, but does not exempt the government from its security duties. In fact, the "2016 Strategic Review Document" emphasizes the need to develop new links with the private and participatory sectors, but also points out that in the event of significant accidents, the White House will be responsible for coordinating and implementing a counter-responsive response.

In addition to national reflections, at the heart of the US Department of Defense, measures are being taken to better coordinate military and service interventions, as well as to create a strategic cadre for cybercrime operations. Similarly, in 2008, Starter Com's command published a concept of cybercrime operations. Finally, the Quartet Defense Review Document cites the ability to operate in cyberspace as one of the priorities of the Department of Defense and US forces in support of defense equipment and systems and outstripping other rivals in this event.

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Will Europe give in to Washington's demands?

By: Hanif Ghaffari

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's remarks on the nuclear deal with Iran have been widely reflected in the world's political circles. Many of the international affairs analysts consider these statements to be "the White House full confrontation with Iran," and they argue that terms stated by the new US Secretary of State are not to be realized.

Pompeo's speech was delivered as the negotiations between Iran and the European troika on maintaining the nuclear deal are going on. Although the United States seemingly doesn't play any roles in these talks, but behind the curtains, the American authorities are busy negotiating with European officials in opposition to Tehran's interests. In recent days, many American media and international affairs analysts have warned Trump about his biased approach towards Iran; warnings that have not been taken seriously so far by the president of the United States and his administration members like Nikki Haley and John Bolton, but can turn into their Achilles' heel in the near future.

Many of international affairs analysts believe that Pompeo's remarks are in fact the White House's absolute and explicit opposition to Iranian government and nation, and are considered as the official announcement of the US attempt to overthrow the Islamic Republic of Iran. This is while such a goal was followed by Jimmy Carter, Donald Reagan, George Bush, Bill Clinton, George W Bush, and Obama, and ended up with no results but failure for Washington. In this equation, Mike Pompeo has become a messenger for Trump's defeating government against the Islamic Republic of Iran. It seems that the US Senators' initial disagreement with Pompeo's being the US Secretary of State wasn't without a reason!

A recent New York Times' article on Pompeo's remarks reads: Mr. Pompeo promised to bring "unprecedented financial pressure on the Iranian [government]... and to inflict "bigger problems than they'd ever had before... There are many things wrong with this approach, but let's start with this: It's not a strategy.



It's wishful thinking that will make regional tensions worse, if not lead to outright conflict.

The author then continues: It's no coincidence that John Bolton, one of the George W. Bush administration's architects of that disaster, is now at the center of American policymaking as Mr. Trump's national security adviser.

The next thing to note is about the European troika's real approach to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The European troika is at the same time negotiating with Mike Pompeo and other American diplomats, and holding talks with our country's foreign ministry officials on "maintaining the JCPOA".

In a speech to the conservative Heritage Foundation, Pompeo said the administration intended to use all of America's economic and military strength against Iran. The demands contain 12 points in all including inspection of Iran's military sites, termination of our country's missile program and releasing American prisoners; demands that are basically unrealistic.

However, by adopting a paradoxical approach, the European troika is attempting to persuade Iran to accept a new agreement with the United States. As noted above, since the very moment that the United States pulled out of the nuclear deal, Mike Pompeo began his negotiations with European foreign ministers on how to deal with the atmosphere formed in the international system after the US unilateral withdrawal. In a formal statement, the US State Department emphasized on Pompeo's talks with his British, German and French counterparts over the Iran deal.

Obviously, if the European officials are incapable to provide the necessary safe-

guards to ensure the realization of the JCPOA (as mentioned by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution), and continue to play by the US rules, the consequences of Iran's withdrawal from the nuclear deal is going to struck them as well. We can well see that the talks between the United States and the European troika resulted in nothing better than the joint emphasis of the German Chancellor and the French President on the inclusion of our country's missile capability and regional activities in the nuclear deal. The European authorities' insistence on "changing the JCPOA" can be analyzed in the same vein.

The fact of the matter is that the European authorities are well aware that due to the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the nuclear deal, there can't be any more arguments over "changing the JCPOA". But US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and the foreign ministers of the European countries are all after managing a common plan in this regard; a plan whose final outcome is not going to be to our country's benefits. At this period, Iran is standing at the one side of the equation while Washington and the European troika are cooperating together on the other side. Thus distinguishing between America and Europe in this game would be the biggest strategic mistake by our country.

The US Secretary of State stated that despite withdrawing from the JCPOA, Washington has called for continued cooperation with Europeans on a new agreement with Iran. In other words, European officials, while speaking of resistance against the US measures, are in talks with the White House to form a new nuclear deal with Iran. Under such circumstances, the only remaining option for the European troika is to take an utterly separate way from that of the United States in this game towards the JCPOA, and attempting to realize the rightful demands of the Islamic Republic of Iran in all the aspects which were previously mentioned in the nuclear agreement. Undoubtedly, as far as the European Union is concerned about playing by the US rules and for Trump's satisfaction, the cost of the Brussels' defeat will go higher in this equation. This is what many analysts of European affairs has warned about.

Is Europe really struggling to maintain JCPOA?



By: Mohammad Ghaderi

The equations which affect the nuclear agreement are getting more and more complicated. Many analysts predict that European authorities can't practically provide necessary guarantees for the continuation of the nuclear deal.

Many analyst believe that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) isn't actually an independent variable in EU policies and actions, and at any moment, the European troika and other EU member states may change their approach to this agreement. On the other hand, we had lately witnessed the leaders of Europe's two most powerful countries — France and Germany — visiting the White House and trying to convince Donald Trump on their back-to-back trips. The French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel consolidated their diplomatic efforts with several calls between the European leaders, including British Prime Minister Theresa May. After their failure in convincing the US President to remain as part of the JCPOA, EU officials were hopeful that diplomacy and the promise of economic benefits could keep Iran committed to the nuclear deal in spite of the US withdrawal.

"We will be looking at a package of measures we may be able to devise as Europeans to encourage Iran to stay in," British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson noted. "We will look at potential options for supporting continued sanctions relief for Iran to ensure we meet our commitments under the deal."

News sources revealed that the European Commission has been looking for measures

to counter the introduction of any US sanctions that may harm European businesses, including the possible use of an EU "blocking regulation" which would, in essence, ban European companies from respecting American sanctions where those sanctions might damage EU interests, notably trade and the movement of capital. Anyhow, the question is raised here that why France, Germany and UK are eager to preserve the deal. For sure, they pretend to be peaceniks who care about other countries, but the fact is that their support and that of the European Union for the JCPOA is basically rooted in self-interest. Yes! For them, the JCPOA translates into dollars and valuable trade with Iran. It should be noted that the European Union was Iran's largest trade partner before the imposition of sanctions and clearly has an interest in recovering that position.

Several EU countries have benefited from the restoration of business and trade relations with our country. Trade between Iran and France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Austria grew when sanctions were lifted.

All these indicate that EU's attempts for saving the JCPOA is not solely out of a concern for Iran's interests. Contrary to their characterizations, Macron, Merkel and May, may not be "honest brokers" in this deal, rather, they are partisans campaigning for what is best for France, Germany and Britain, or better to say, for raising the possibility of remaining in power in future.

However, what counts in this equation is the real capability of EU member states in resisting against the US threats under such circumstances: The EU have to stand against Donald Trump, the US controversial President and his hideous attempts to

challenge the JCPOA. From the outset, Trump didn't accept the JCPOA, and made the nuclear deal with Iran an instrument for raising hostility against our country.

He spoke as if our country had to answer for other issues such as its missile capability, while accordingly there's no link between that subject with lifting the unfair sanctions put on Iran by the US government. It's crucial to analyze The European countries' words and measures in such an atmosphere. The European countries have failed to fulfill their obligations to the JCPOA, and in questioning the United States for not being committed to its obligations under Iran's nuclear deal. Instead, they pushed Iran to accept a secondary and complementary agreement, and to accept further restrictions on its missile program and its regional activities. In any case, the withdrawal of the United States has actually led to the failure of the nuclear deal. This is while European countries are currently trying to maintain the nuclear deal so that it would contribute their interests. In general, the JCPOA has different strengths and weaknesses. The Achilles heel of this agreement is about paragraphs 11-13 of UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which states that if the United States withdraws from the nuclear agreement unilaterally, this agreement will no longer be valid in the previous manner. The other parties involved (other members of the P 5+1) play a less central role in this equation, and haven't had an independent strategy towards this issue. And this rule is true of the European troika as well.

On the other hand, the United States has invested heavily in major industries in the world, including the aircraft industry. Now Washington is using this massive investment to put these companies and other pressure. Meanwhile, Airbus and Boeing have explicitly stated that they are subject to US decisions on the JCPOA.

Therefore, according to the type of these international agreements, Iran should demand compensation for the cancellation of the agreements with these two enterprises, and this issue should be pursued by our country and the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development. This was the first test of European companies in confrontation with the United States (after Washington's withdrawal from the JCPOA).

This is while our country has taken a flexible stance in response to Europeans' continuous requests after the United States announced that it's no longer part of the nuclear deal. In return, Iran has called on the European authorities to stand up to the United States in practice against sanctions against our country. However, the stance taken by Airbus and Boeing companies reflects Europe's lack of resistance to the United States.

The story of Elysees Palace and nuclear deal with Iran

By: Hanif Ghaffari

The paradoxical Macron game against a nuclear deal with Iran has reduced the credibility of Paris and its role in the international system.

Today, few speak of France as an independent player in the world, since after the end of the presidency, Jacques Chirac, all three current French presidents have become one of the White House actors in Europe. Emmanuel Macron, the young and new president of France, also goes on to lead his ancestors. He was the main European politician who agreed to “change the nuclear deal with Iran” at the request of Trump. Macron, Trump and Netanyahu (prime minister of the occupying regime of Jerusalem) promised to meet all their demands for a nuclear deal. Undoubtedly, this French attitude was contrary to their obligations in the international system.

It was for the first time that the French President Emmanuel Macron insisted that the nuclear deal could be amended in some parts, including Iran’s missile power and the introduction of new time limits (after 2025). During the meeting between Macron and Trump in New York (2017) and on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, France’s opposition to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the Islamic Republic of Iran became more and more evident. In the joint project conducted by the White House and the Elysee Palace, the French are tasked with focusing on Iran’s missile power, providing the ground for simultaneous restriction of Iran’s nuclear and missile capabilities. In other words, Paris’ main goal here was to link Iran’s missile program to the JCPOA and turn the existing equation into a two-variable equation. In their latest position against Iran, the French have accused our country of violating United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231. The French authorities have also explicitly stated that the use of ballistic missiles by the Islamic Re-



public of Iran is unacceptable and that it should be negotiated with Tehran.

Today, after the departure of the United States of America from a nuclear deal with Iran, Macron continues to play its paradoxical game with Iran. He argued last week that a more complete agreement with Iran (including missile and regional concerns) would be inevitable. However, the French President during a meeting with the Russian president has emphasized the adherence to the current nuclear deal!

At a recent meeting between the Russian and French presidents, Putin stated:

“We can not make preserving the Iranian nuclear deal dependent on these three parameters because if we do, it means that we too are withdrawing from the accord because the deal that exists foresees no additional conditions.”

As Reuters reported, a Macron adviser hailed Putin’s comments as a “key” point of convergence between Paris and Moscow as the Trump administration urges its European allies to sever economic ties with Iran.

After talks that ran long over schedule, Macron and Trump entered the news conference looking relaxed and smiling. Macron acknowledged Paris and Moscow disagreed on a range of issues but called for “strong multilateralism”.

Another point is that in this equation,

the main difference between the French and the American officials is the “tactic” employed by the White House and the Elysee Palace. Since the presidential campaigns of 2016, the JCPOA was called “the worst deal ever” by Trump and called for “changing” it or “withdrawing” from it. However, the French have chosen the policy of “playing with ambiguous words”. The vocabulary used by the French authorities is wider than Americans in this regard: from “commitment to the JCPOA” to “completing the JCPOA”! Therefore, the French game is more complicated than that of the Americans. Many analysts of international affairs believe that France hasn’t played a transparent game considering the nuclear accord. Sometimes it is said that this lack of transparency is due to the French’s confusion over Iran’s nuclear deal, but by looking at the positions of the American and French officials towards the JCPOA, we can clearly see that they are trying to complete the same puzzle in opposition to Iran.

Ultimately, the actions of French President Emmanuel Macron and other officials of the country, in contrast to the nuclear deal, will never be a reminder of the Iranian nation. Obviously, in the event of a complete cancellation of the nuclear deal, there will be no difference between the presidents of the United States and France.

Pompeo's special mission, shadow of US secret diplomacy over Europe

By: Mohammad Ghaderi

Ever since America's withdrawal from the JCPOA, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has been busy negotiating with his European counterparts over the Iran deal, trying to make them heel to the US move and even threatening European business that trade with Iran with economic sanctions.

Intense negotiations between the US and Europe over the Iran nuclear deal are ongoing.

And you couldn't be more wrong thinking that with Trump's exit from the Iran nuclear pact, the three European countries - namely Germany, the UK and France- wouldn't be holding talks with the US over the JCPOA any longer.

Ever since America's withdrawal from the JCPOA, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has been busy negotiating with his European counterparts over the Iran deal, trying to make them heel to the US move and even threatening European business that trade with Iran with economic sanctions.

Prior to Pompeo's recent speech at the Heritage Foundation, and the patently absurd White House demands over the Iran nuclear deal, the US Department of State announced that Pompeo had already had talks with his British, French, and German counterparts over the JCPOA.

Part of the statement reads "the United States and its European allies have strong interests and share common ground in preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapon and its destabilizing roles in the region. The Secretary of State has stressed the good measures taken against the common threats in the past few months and hopes to continue our solid partnership and move forward."

What is puzzling here is that the European officials have no interest in revealing the content of the behind the scene talks with their American counter-

parts on the JCPOA. This is an issue that cannot be overlooked.

The most important fact here is that the output of the US and European Troika negotiations, which have been mostly shaped in the form of hidden diplomacy, points to Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron's stress over the abrogation of the Iran deal with the inclusion of Iranian missiles and regional issues related to Iran.

European officials know all too well that the US's unilateral exit from the Iran deal will certainly rule out the possibility of any "change to the deal", but Pompeo and his European counterparts are apparently devising and steering a plan for

and address the consequences of the US exit, they still are negotiating with the White House over formulating a "new deal" with Iran. It does indeed appear that they are running with the hare and hunting with the hounds at the same time.

The purpose of such talks is clear: limiting the Iran nuclear deal permanently and threatening Iran's defensive missile capabilities.

Thus, miscalculations about the realities of the situation and the potential for a widening divide between the US and Europe over the US abrogation, can also damage our realistic sense about what goes on in our country's foreign policy.

Although maintaining the JCPOA has



that purpose.

This time around though, the American, British, French and German authorities, just like in the year before, are putting together a jigsaw puzzle of modifications that its final iteration presents no benefits for our country.

Pompeo has announced that despite Washington's withdrawal from the JCPOA, the US is willing to work with the Europeans to devise a new plan. In other words, while European officials seem to stand by the Iran pact as it has been

economic and political benefits for Europe, the White House's unilateral bullying has practically changed the game.

In any case, although Europe's extant dependency on the US is nothing new in the international arena, reopening negotiations over the nuclear issue and the prospect of brutal sanctions imposed on Iran won't be to Iran's interest as the Supreme Leader has said repeatedly, and plus it does require careful consideration to figure out the best path forward.

Saudi Arabia's desperate alliance moves



By: Javad Heirannia

Mehr News Agency (MNA) staff member has written an article on the Saudi Arabia's hostile approach towards Iran that is published in the American website 'Lobe LOG.' The MNA republishes his contribution.

The establishment of security pacts and alliances among countries demands high levels of cooperation from its member to deal effectively with different threats. Saudi Arabia and Egypt, for instance, have called for an "Arab NATO" to "wipe terrorism from the face of the earth." This proposed alliance already faces various internal and external challenges, for instance over the future of the Assad government in Syria and how to deal with conflicts in Libya and Yemen. This can make the long-term survival of such arrangements quite difficult in environments that are fast changing and under tremendous stress.

Alliances require weaker countries to accept the leadership of stronger countries. Saudi wealth, however, has not been able to buy it security and safeguard its interests. For example, the parliament of Pakistan voted not to join the Yemen War despite Saudi's pressure. Islamabad declared that it would join the war only if the Houthis directly attacked Riyadh. In another case, Egyptian Presi-

dent Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who enjoys financial assistance from Riyadh, refused to provide the Saudis with air attacks in the Aden Gulf, only agreeing to deploy ground forces to Yemen. As a result of its limited powers of persuasion, Saudi Arabia's alliance are generally unofficial and tactical, not strategic.

Saudi Arabia has tried to create multilateral alliances with Arabs, Muslims, and some other nations. The first formation was the Arab Alliance in Yemen in March 2015. Subsequently, the Islamic alliance for the fight against terrorism was created in December 2015. The latest, which came together in June 2017, was an alliance to force Qatar to make a strategic deal with the dominant Saudis in the GCC.

All three alliances under the leadership of Saudi Arabia are getting weaker, and the participating countries don't expect the bonds to improve. These alliances don't really function day to day, and not all the members agree in equal measure about the purposes. There is no limitation on the term of these alliances, but their cancellation is always possible. The Yemen Alliance includes Morocco, Senegal, and the US, all of whom are thousands of miles from the battlefield. A number of the members for the 40-member Islamic alliance against terrorism are located very far from the command center in Riyadh.

Containing Iran

Preventing Iran from penetration westwards is one of the cardinal aims of the current foreign policy of Saudi Arabia. The Saudis fear Iran's expansion and regional influence.

Saudi Arabia has also created an unofficial alliance to prevent the penetration of Iran and Qatar into Africa. To this end, Saudi Arabia has reached out to Mauritania and Senegal on the one hand and Libya and Chad on the other. The presidents of Senegal and Mauritania travelled to Riyadh to discuss this issue in April 2015. They committed sending thousands of their troops to join the fight against Yemen under the leadership of Saudi Arabia. Later visits by Muhammad bin Abdulaziz, the president of Mauritania, were dominated by the goals of the Saudis.

Although the countries share a common Islamic identity, not all the 41 members of the Islamic alliance against terrorism are actually Muslim. For example, most citizens in Gabon are Christian. None of the members is a Shia-dominated government, such as Iran, Iraq, or Syria. Also, none of the members of these alliances is willing to accept the dominance of Saudi Arabia. After all, Saudi money is not able to prevent direct threats against their interests. In the end, such alliances are contingent on financial support from and absolute

obedience to Riyadh.

Riyadh has tried to change the GCC into a collective security alliance ever since its creation in the 1980s. Riyadh's allies—Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and even the UAE—rebuffed these attempts. Saudi Arabia also tried to upgrade the level of military cooperation between GCC members and the US and mold the organization into a Common Defense System like NATO. But relations between the GCC and Washington have not always been rosy. For instance, the United States damaged its credibility among GCC members when Barack Obama told Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak to step down following the public protests in 2011. Also, when GCC members were trying to reach an agreement with the United States on new missile defense systems, Obama demanded that the GCC maintain a cold peace with Iran.

By going to war in Yemen—ostensibly to combat forces aligned with Iran—Saudi

Arabia has shown little interest in such a cold peace. Saudi forces have been engaged in Yemen for such a long time with little success, despite having superior technology and weapons, thanks to the United States. Riyadh is unlikely to confront Tehran directly—as opposed to indirectly in Yemen—without a green light from Washington. So far, the US policy in the region has been based on preventing outright war against Iran.

Balance of Power against Iran

Saudi attempts to challenge Iran's regional power have encountered several obstacles. First of all, Iranian influence has expanded to Iraq, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen, and some parts of Lebanon. Second, Iran's missiles have considerable deterrent power.

In response, Saudi Arabia has tried to expand its influence into states such as Iraq and Syria, both of which have been aided by Iran. This process has targeted

the strategic depth of Iran by supporting opposition groups in Syria and attacking the Houthis in Yemen. Despite Saudi attempts, however, Tehran has established itself in the political future of both Iraq and Syria. Nor, despite interventions by the GCC, have popular movements been eliminated in Bahrain. In Yemen, Saudi Arabia appears to have gotten bogged down in a costly war with few if any gains.

So, Iran remains the main player in the region despite the various alliances against Tehran. Friendship between Saudi Arabia and Israel is something of an embarrassment in the Muslim world, and may be a futile attempt by Riyadh to shore up its waning power regionally. If Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman decides to continue with his brinkmanship and "friendship" with the Israelis, the result will probably be rejection of the Saudis by many Muslims.

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US-EU possible soft tactic to contain Iran

By Payman Yazdani:

The US withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) has created a new rounds of speculations about the three European major players' (the UK, France and Germany) capabilities and abilities to keep the deal alive without the US.

Following the US President's unilateral move to withdraw from the Iran's Nuclear Deal, lots of diplomatic and political efforts have been made both by the European and Iranian officials to keep the internationally achieved deal alive.

Islamic Republic of Iran has announced that it will remain in the JCPOA just if the EU can guarantee Iran's benefits and interests under the JCPOA in the absence of the US, otherwise Tehran will leave the deal, too.

Despite all measures taken and political promises made by the European sides to keep the JCPOA alive, over the past ten days many big EU firms and international companies have announced their decisions to stop their activities and operations in Iran including Total,



Eni, Siemens, Airbus and Maersk.

Just couple of days after the US withdrawal from the JCPOA, French gas and oil giant Total has announced that due to return of the US sanctions against Iran it has to pull out of Iranian Southern Pars oil field.

Italian oil giant Eni has also decided to abrogate its agreement with Iran to study oil and gas in Iran.

Maersk as the biggest shipping company in the world has announced that due to its vast activities in the US and to avoid possible US punishments, it will stop its activities in Iran.

Considering the limited capabilities and potentialities of the EU to challenge the US hegemony and also the fact that

EU governments cannot force private sectors to work with Iran, it is not realistic to expect the EU to save the JCPOA.

As I mentioned in my previous writing, the possibility of job division between the US and EU to contain Iran should not be ignored.

All facts on the ground imply that all EU measures and promises to keep the JCPOA alive will only result in remaining of some small European companies in Iran. Big companies that can invest and transfer technology to Iran will leave Iran to avoid the US possible punishments. This possible soft and indirect US-EU tactic can help the joint goal of the US and EU to contain Iran.

By this tactic, firstly the EU can buy time and contain Iran so that not to leave the JCPOA. Secondly, the EU will pave the way for selling of its products and services in Iran's market without investment and transferring technology. Thirdly, Iran's incomes and revenues will be limited which Americans and the Europeans consider it as a good soft and indirect way to increase pressure on Iran to limit Iran's regional influence and missile capability.



Merkel lost the game!

By Hanif Ghaffari

German Chancellor Angela Merkel attacked Iran's regional policy in his most recent statement. This is while the German government is one of the main supporters of the terrorist and takfiri groups in the West Asian region.

Many analysts of international affairs believe that Germany will support the killing of the Yemeni people by exporting arms to Saudi Arabia. Also, many of Germany's export arms to the Middle East are in the hands of terrorist and takfiri groups such as ISIL and Jabhat al-Nusra. Angela Merkel knows well that German exports of weapons to Saudi Arabia were carried out by terrorist groups in the region, but it should not be forgotten that the goal of Germany is to insecure the West Asian region.

As Reuters reported, German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Thursday said European countries shared concerns over Iran's ballistic missile program and called for solutions to its "aggressive tendencies" in the Middle East. "Iran's aggressive tendencies must not only be discussed, but rather we need solutions urgently," she said after meeting Jordan's King Abdullah in Amman. She announced 384 million euros (\$445 million) of aid to Jordan this year. Germany has remained party to the Iran nuclear deal, which lifted sanctions on Tehran in exchange for curbing its atomic program, after U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from it in May.

The fact is that the Chancellor of

Germany has deliberately closed his eyes to the facts and facts in the world. Undoubtedly, Merkel must respond to Berlin's support for Saudi Arabia and the Zionist regime instead of condemning Iran. So far, many Palestinians, Yemeni people, Syria and Iraq have fallen victim to the Tel Aviv and Riyadh crimes in the region. Meanwhile, the German government has not only failed to take action against Saudi Arabia and Tel Aviv, but has supported its crimes.

On the other hand, these days, few people mention the German Chancellor as a powerful politician in the world. In his recent trip to Jordan, Angela Merkel also failed to analyze the realities of the world as an independent and powerful politician. The German Chancellor has given many concessions to his rival party in the formation of a coalition government with the Social Democratic Party. Undoubtedly, now no one else will remember Merkel as a powerful politician in Germany and Europe.

Another major error of the German Chancellor is his attempt to get close to the Trump government. So far, many European officials have shrugged Merkel for this inaccurate approach. Merkel's rivals Merkel and the Christian Democrat also criticized the German Chancellor's approach to Trump during the national election race last year.

The German Chancellor has now spoken out against the regional policies of Iran in order to satisfy Trump. Without a doubt, Trump will eventually quit power,

but no one will forget Merkel's remarks!

The president of the United States is extremely worried about his country's presidential election in 2020. Surveys in the United States show that his popularity has fallen to public opinion. In such a situation, the introduction of a credible Democrat nominee (whose popularity is more than Hillary Clinton) will lead to the victory of the rival Trump party in the upcoming presidential election.

Merkel lost the game during his trip to Jordan! He showed that he could not continue as an independent and powerful politician in his political life in Berlin. During his trip to Jordan, the Chancellor of Germany did not say the least of the crimes of the Zionist regime and Saudi Arabia in Palestine and Yemen because he is also a partner in these crimes! Angela Merkel's regional policy has repeatedly faced protests in Germany. The Green Party in Germany is among the parties that has challenged Merkel's regional actions. On the other hand, social democrats often criticized Merkel's foreign policy when they were not in coalition government.

Finally, the Chancellor of Germany and many European officials, as a result of their dependence on the United States and the Zionist regime, can not yet become independent actors in the world. Recent comments by Angela Merkel in Jordan have shown this very well. Will in the future see a change in the behavior of European politicians or the presence of independent European politicians in power?

Two politicians and three cases

By Hanif Ghaffari

In her latest remarks, the German Chancellor stressed on the serious disagreements existing between Europe and Washington on the imposition of tariffs on imported steel and aluminum from Europe to the United States.

"I will of course try to speak to the US president about the current problems that we have overall, in particular on Iran and on trade tariffs," Merkel told the Bundestag lower house of parliament during a question and answer session with lawmakers.

The June 8-9 meeting in Charlevoix, Canada, will begin on economic growth and trade - topical issues after Donald Trump infuriated Canada and European Union G7 members by imposing tariffs on steel and aluminum.

Besides, America's NATO allies in Europe and Canada have to increase defense spending by 4.3% in 2017, which led to Europe's dissatisfaction of Trump. Analysts on military and security affairs in Europe mention that this boost will be certainly discussed by Merkel and Trump on the sidelines of the G7 meeting, and it's going to be a subject for conflict.

Merkel is confused

During her recent visit to the United States, German Chancellor discussed all the three subjects with Trump. However, the results were completely at odds with the European Union benefits! After a meeting with Merkel in April, Trump pulled out of the nuclear deal with Iran. He then reaffirmed his positions towards other NATO members (raising the military budget of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization).

In his latest move, the United States President imposed tariffs on imported steel and aluminum from Europe- 25 percent on steel and 10 percent on aluminum, marking a major escalation of the trade war between the United States and its top trading partners. In short, Merkel's last visit to Washington was a completely failure. She is now planning to negotiate with the US President once again about their disagreements. This is while many analysts of the US and European affairs believe that the possibility of Trump changing his positions and orders is very little.



Over the last months, many Western politicians, including Angela Merkel's opponents, have challenged her reactionary approach towards the United States and the Trump government, calling for the German Chancellor's determined confrontation with the US President. In the course of the 2017 national electoral campaigns, her rival "Martin Schulz" called Merkel's approach to Trump's measures unacceptable.

In such a situation, Merkel faces two obstacles: One is the US government and its' President "Donald Trump", and the other is about her approach and performance being constantly observed and criticized by her political opponents inside Germany. These are contributing to Merkel's challenges, making her even more confused.

Will Merkel make a deal with Trump?

Another question that arises here is about the likelihood of Merkel and Trump making a deal on the three issues mentioned above. In this regard, Merkel's priority goes around "US-EU trade relations", and in particular the existing tariffs disputes with Washington. The German Chancellor knows well that the Trump government's protectionist policies is not going to be limited to steel and aluminum, and in the near future, there will be heavy taxes on imported cars from Germany and other European imported goods.

The German Chancellor intends to restrain this process at the White House (through a deal with the United States). However, Merkel knows well that she can't do much about NATO defense budget increase, because it has been approved since Obama's time. Meanwhile, the only remaining leverage is the nuclear deal with Iran. It seems that the German

Chancellor, like the French President and the British prime minister, is interested in getting advantages from Washington on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). It's not without a reason that Merkel has recently raised the issue of "extending the JCPOA"! The Chancellor of Germany is willing to sacrifice the nuclear deal in exchange for a reduction in US business and economic threats against Europe.

European leader bad mistake

"Europe's Passiveness towards the United States" is the most significant strategic mistake of the EU.

In this equation, politicians like Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel have a very important and highlighted role. International experts have noted that the European Union is currently more vulnerable in the international system than ever before. The fact is that senior European officials were incapable of standing independent from the United States, and this was their main weakness.

Although many of the Western news sources have reported the emergence of a full-fledged war in trans-Atlantic relations, the European authorities' special efforts to "manage tensions with the United States" will never let these tensions to turn into serious gaps between the two sides. The truth is Europe is going to continue to play for Washington's benefits, regardless of their existing disagreements over trade and politics.

This is while the only way to confront the United States is to form a real, full-blown and different confrontation with Washington. However, the kind of stance taken by Merkel, Macron and Theresa May has shown that they are not determined in this regard, and their lack of determination will lead to EU's increasing vulnerability against the United States. This is exactly what we have been witnessing over the past years. However, "Merkel" can't continue to play in the US ground as before, and then being referred to as a powerful and influential politician in Europe. The Chancellor of Germany shouldn't forget that the European citizens are seriously angry at her passive approach towards the US government and Trump, and this anger can lead to her and other EU authorities' complete failure in near future.



Report

By: Mahnaz Abdi

Players in Iran's capital market witnessed a historical record in growth of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE)'s main index (TEDPIX) which gained 3,306 points to hit 102,452 points on Sunday, something unprecedented in the 50-year history of the country's stock market.

As reported, 1.821 billion securities worth 5.49 trillion rials (about \$130 million) were traded through 100,000 deals in a day.

Also, IFX, the main index of Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), rose 37.6 points to stand at 1,191 points on Sunday.

As reported, 613 million securities worth 1.26 trillion rials (about \$29.8 million) were traded through 58,000 deals in a day.

Shares in different groups of commodities including base metals, chemical products, and minerals witnessed stable status of purchases on Sunday.

As reported, indexes of Mobarakeh Steel Company, Golgozar Mining and Industrial Company, and Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company were among those indices accounting for the highest amount of rise in the TEDPIX.

The historical increase in the stock exchange index had begun on June 13 (the last working day of the previous Iranian calendar year), which was named 'Golden Wednesday of Stock Market', when TEDPIX gained 2,767 points to stand at 99,146 points.

As reported, 1.66 billion securities worth 4.355 trillion rials (about \$103.19 million) were traded through 121,965 deals in a day. Also, IFX rose 37 points to stand at 1,153 points on Wednesday.

Some 412 million securities worth 1.856 trillion rials (about \$43.98 million) were traded in IFB in a day.

Index growth beyond anticipation

Rise in stock exchange indexes was anticipated given the recent issues related to the political and economic status of the country, but a 2,767-point growth in a single day was beyond the expectations.

The experts of capital market say some factors such as turbulences in the markets of foreign currency, gold coin,

TSE index hit 50-year record high of 102,000 points



and housing and also entrance of new liquidity is the main reason for such unprecedented rise.

In an interview with IRNA on Saturday, Ehsan Rezapour, an expert in economic and capital market issues, said: "Due to the high amount of liquidity in the country and existence of many risks for business during the recent months, many turbulences have been witnessed in different markets, as it happened in terms of foreign currency, gold coin, and housing."

For the index growth on the 'Golden Wednesday', the expert said: "In the past week, the officials announced their determination for controlling different markets, which brought the attention to the stock market. Also, on Wednesday morning, it was reported that the companies have been allowed to sell the dollar receive from exports at the price of over 60,000 rials, which could bring more profit for the bourse companies."

Also, Ebrahim Khalili, another capital market expert, told Tasnim news agency: "After turbulences in different markets such as housing, car, foreign currency, and gold markets, and increasing trend of prices in these markets over the past months, we are gradually seeing some

balance returning to these markets, therefore; some part of liquidity will come to the stock exchange market."

Delayed effect of inflation on capital market

"Moreover, after each period of inflation in the country, the effect of raised prices will be received by the capital market with some delay, and we are witnessing the effect of inflation imposed on the country's economy over the past months on the capital market now", Khalili further explained.

He also mentioned the decrease in the value of bourse companies' shares in the past months as one of the other reasons that the capital market welcomes entrance of liquidity at the moment and said: "Liquidity has enough excuses to enter the capital market now."

Now, while the stock exchange indexes are experiencing unprecedented growth, the experts say that as the capital market is one of the specialized markets that presence in it requires knowledge, experience, and consultancy, the investors should not make investment just based on the growth occurred in the indexes and they should also prevent from excitement in the capital market through proper information dissemination.

Some media have held a feast of lies about Nicaragua protests: envoy

By: Mohammad Ali Haqshenas

Some media and social networks are having a feast of lies or fake news about what is happening in Nicaragua, putting the protests almost at the same level of events as in Syria, said Nicaraguan Ambassador to Tehran, Mario Barquero Baltadano.

He made the remarks in a press conference held on Wednesday at the embassy of Nicaragua in Tehran. The meeting was organized to clarify recent protests in that country which started on April 18. Some 130 citizens and policemen have been reported dead during these six weeks.

The session started with Baltadano's describing the origins of protests and then highlighting the actions that the government has pursued to control the situation and finally he answered some

questions raised by the attending press.

During the liberal government of 1990s until 2007, the Nicaraguan Institute for Social Security (INSS) had experienced some financial problems, the envoy said.

Accordingly, President Dainel Ortega has been having meetings with officials of international bodies such as International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Central American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE) to solve these problems, he added.

He went on to say that Nicaraguan government seriously and thoroughly analyzed each of those organizations' proposals for INSS to the point that IMF recognized authorities' efforts to alleviate the financing needs in a report published in February 2018.

The government of President Ortega had the "honesty and courage" to present a proposal of reforms to solve the

budget deficit of INSS, he said, noting that the proposals were announced on April 16 and published on April 18.

According to the reforms, employees and employers would face 0.75% and 2% increase in their contribution to INSS while retirement pensions would decrease by 5%, the envoy highlighted.

National Workers Front (FNT) and National Union of Employees accepted the reforms while the employers' organization COSEP rejected it, he added.

IMF had proposed to increase the age of dedicating retirement pension from 60 to 65, however, the government didn't include this in new reforms, he stressed.

Employers stimulated students to hold demonstrations and what began as a social protest, soon turned violent and claimed lives from both protesters and national police, the envoy regretted.

After a few days, no one spoke of INSS →



issue anymore and protesters demanded the end of President Ortega government since the protests had abandoned their social character and became eminently political, he said.

Day by day, the protests became more violent which have resulted in increase of death tolls, destruction of public property, attacks on police stations, looting, kidnapping and a significant increase in crimes, he deplored.

Describing the situation as “a great pity and a great loss,” the diplomat highlighted that Nicaragua was known to be the most secure country of Central America and one of the most secure in the American Continent.

The first measure adopted by the government to address the issue was annulling INSS reforms, Baltadano added.

And then, President Ortega called for a national dialogue while inviting Episcopal Conference of the Catholic Church to play the role of mediator in the talks, he highlighted.

He went on to say that the government believed that any issue could be debated in talks without exclusions and preconditions, however the opposition did demand some prior conditions, including the release of all imprisoned protesters (even those who have committed crimes), the formation of a truth commission (which was rejected by the opposition upon being formed claiming that it is not consisted of suitable individuals), the invitation of Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and limiting police activities (which the government knew would lead to more chaos).

All these preconditions were accepted and implemented by the government, although they knew that absence of police would lead to chaos, the envoy stressed.

The dialogue kicked off on May 16 with President Daniel Ortega and Vice President Rosario Murillo in attendance, he noted.

In spite of establishing the dialogue, the violence has continued and crime has proliferated, he regretted, adding that the opposition claims that the violence is to exert further pressure on the government.

Accordingly, he added, many policemen have lost their lives, the daily life of Nicaraguan people have been disrupted;

universities are taken by students; many citizens cannot go to their jobs and are afraid to leave their homes; some criminals have blocked streets and ask for toll; children cannot go to school, markets cannot be resupplied which causes an artificial shortage of food; industrialists cannot transport their productions nor they can be supplied with the inputs to produce; tourism which was proliferating in recent years has drastically fallen; farmers cannot sow.

The government will continue to be totally committed to dialogue, even though some mediators are clearly biased in favor of the opposition, he emphasized.

The Episcopal Conference has stopped the talks from May 29 with this excuse that necessary conditions for talks isn't available, he said, adding that the dialogue would lead to establishing better conditions, not vice versa.

This incident prompted Nicaraguan government to refer the issue to Organization of American States which then published a report on June 1.

It is a timetable of the project named “Strengthening Democratic Institutions in Nicaragua through the Implementation of the Recommendations of the EAM/OAS Nicaragua 2017,” which can be accessed from the official website of OAS.

“The Government of Nicaragua expressed its willingness to continue working together with the OAS General Secretariat on the improvement of the Nicaraguan electoral system, strengthening its institutions and its representative, inclusive, participative and direct democracy for the benefit of all Nicaraguans,” part of this report notes.

The General Assembly of the Organization of American States issued a declaration on June 5 with the title of “Declaration of Support for the People of Nicaragua,” the ambassador added.

This declaration which is approved by all member states including US, doesn't condemn Nicaraguan government and generally condemns violence and invites people to have peaceful demonstrations, he said.

In spite of all these, there is still violence, regretted the envoy, adding that unfortunately 2 policemen who were returning home were killed on Tuesday.

“Despite all these problems that the

opposition has created, we are still optimistic. As Sandinista won the revolution on 1979, we will win again. We are sure that Nicaragua will soon and once again become a secure and peaceful country,” he highlighted.

When Mehr News correspondent asked about the truth of reports claiming that 130 individuals have been killed during these unrests, the ambassador said, “Unfortunately it is true.”

He also touched on the case of the murdered journalist, saying that police has arrested 2 people in this regard. This journalist was not anti-government, he said, adding that the opposition demands the release of these two prisoners with this claim that the government is arresting innocent individuals.

Another reporter asked whether these demonstrations are led by other political wings or not.

Answering the question, Baltadano reiterated that these demonstrations were started for a social cause but soon protestors demanded political reforms. Some groups demanded the resignation of President Ortega and even some others believed that he should leave the country, he added.

However, as OAS and the United States, which doesn't have friendly relations with Nicaragua, emphasize, every measure should be in line with the country's law and constitution, he noted.

He hoped that all tensions would soon be solved through democracy.

Finally, Mehr News correspondent asked whether holding early elections can be a solution to end these unrests or not.

“The issue is not holding early election, rather solutions have to be based on the country's constitution,” the envoy answered.

He again referred to the report published by OAS on June 1 regarding elections, adding, “democracy is not violence, rather it means reaching agreement through peaceful approaches.”

Nicaraguan government has honestly expressed readiness to talk about every possible issue during national dialogue, but the opposition doesn't want to solve this issue peacefully, he added.

If it is determined in the dialogue that there is need to hold early election, Nicaraguan government will accept it, he concluded.

What does Saudi Arabia want from Lebanon?



By Ramin Hossein Abadian

Al Akhbar, a daily Arabic language newspaper, announced the imminent visit of Sa'd al-Hariri, the Lebanese prime minister to Riyadh.

The trip was set for earlier time, but was postponed for unspecified reasons. Riyadh's Saudi charge d'affair Wahid al-Bukhari was in Lebanon the other day, but it remains unclear whether his trip has anything to do with Hariri's.

Al-Akhbar also wrote that Hariri is scheduled to form the upcoming cabinet of Lebanon, and it is not clear whether his trip to Riyadh would make the task any more difficult or easier. The newspaper also reported that Hariri's meeting with the Saudi Royal Court has been finalized, and it remains unknown whether the trip would involve Hariri's meeting with senior Riyadh officials like bin Salman.

What is puzzling here is the timing of Sa'd al-Hariri's traveling to Saudi Arabia. Considering Hariri's mission to form Lebanon's future cabinet, it is feared that Riyadh again plans to intervene in Lebanon's internal affairs and issue instructions on how Hariri's cabinet should be lined up. The public still remembers Saudis' malicious efforts that threw Michel Aoun out of Lebanon's presidential nomination and replaced Samir Farid Geagea, from the March 14 Alliance for the position.

Obviously, these interventions will continue until the formation of the Lebanese cabinet and the next presidential election which they hope to secure a place for Saad al-Hariri and the March 14 Alliance.

Lebanon's Foreign Minister Gibran Bassil had also referred to the involvement of Saudi ambassador Waleed Al-Yaqub on Lebanon's parliamentary elections and warned those in diplomatic career to know their limits and avoid interfering in Lebanon's internal affairs. In addition, the Al-Akhbar newspaper in a report also quoted Arab diplomats confirming Saudi Arabia's effort to influence Lebanon's elections with the goal of integrating the March 14 Alliance.

The newspaper also reported the imminent travel of a top Saudi delegation to Lebanon. They are scheduled to hold meeting with Prime Minister Saad Al-Hariri, in order to prioritize his March 14 Alliance as well as a meeting with senior party Lebanese Forces, led by Samir Farid Geagea.

Another point here is the issue of the guaranteed victory of Lebanese Hezbollah and resistance in the latest parliamentary elections in the country, a problem that has deeply worried Saudis. Therefore, they are in such a situation seeking the most exploitation of their influence in Lebanon, including al-Hariri, to hit the resistance and overshadow its decisive victory. Hariri's impending journey

to Riyadh is also around that topic.

The Saudis know well that the victory of Lebanon's Hezbollah and resistance group in the parliamentary elections is just one important and strategic message that the Lebanese people who are not affected by the participation of Hezbollah's military forces in trans-boundary wars, especially in Syria. They support Hezbollah and its military presence beyond the borders of Lebanon.

Saudi officials also know that Lebanese acceptance of Hezbollah means accepting Hezbollah's policy in confronting the Zionist regime. These are the same messages that Riyadh officials have received from the results of the Lebanese elections. Therefore, al-Hariri is the element that has always proved his dedication to the Saudis and is considered the best Lebanese figure Riyadh can count on.

Saudi Arabia and its allies have also recently banned Lebanese Hezbollah. This happened after the United States imposed economic sanctions on a number of Hezbollah senior officials. In fact, calling Saad al-Hariri to Riyadh at this time and on the eve of the formation of the cabinet is a piece of the same puzzle that confronts Lebanese Hezbollah and is part of the Hezbollah sanctions project.

One of the main goals of announcing the sanctions list against Hezbollah by the Saudis, a short while prior to the vic- ➔

tory of the resistance in the Lebanese parliamentary elections, was the deviation of public opinion from this great victory. The Saudis tried to convey the message to the Lebanese people that the continuation of support for Hezbollah was not a good option, and did not result in the isolation of Lebanon from the Arab and international community, while distracting the public from the great achievement of the resistance.

Another purpose of Riyadh to engage in hostile sanctions against Hezbollah is to influence the process of forming a future government in Lebanon, which is due soon. What the Saudis want from the Lebanese future government is to respect the interests of Riyadh.

The Saudis have warned Hezbollah with imposed sanctions that it should also focus on the benefits of building a new government. The warning is that the election results clearly indicate that Hezbollah can establish a cabinet in line with its own approaches, especially in foreign policy, due to its decisive victory during the parliamentary elections. According to the above, it is by no means possible to consider two issues of "sanctions on Hezbollah" and "calling Hariri to Riyadh" by the Saudis as separate and unrelated issues.

In any case, as it seems, Saad al-Hariri has neither learned from the failure of the Lebanese parliamentary election, nor from the bitter experience of arrest in Saudi Arabia, an incident confirmed by the French President Emmanuel Macron. In an interview with the BFM network, Macron pointed to this fact. However, Saad al-Hariri continues to be influenced by the indoctrination of the House of Saud who has no mercy on him or his political activities in Lebanon.

Undoubtedly, with the victory of Lebanon's Hezbollah and Lebanese parliamentary election resistance, the political equation in the country has changed completely, and the Saudis can no longer dictate their demands on their subordinate element, Saad al-Hariri, and change the political developments in Lebanon in their favor. Therefore, the conditions prevailing today in Lebanon are very different from what we witnessed before the parliamentary elections, and this is something that has been neglected by the Saudi authorities.

World Bee Day; what's the 'buzz' about?



By: Marjohn Sheikhi

For the very first time ever, World Bee Day was observed on May 20 across the planet in a bid to draw attention to the role these buzzing pollinators play in food security. Tehran was also invited to celebrate the occasion at the Slovenian embassy – the country that proposed the proclamation of World Bee Day to the UN.

If you are a fan of the British science fiction anthology television series 'Black Mirror', the final episode of the series' third season 'Hated in the Nation' must have definitely been in your top five list. The episode depicts a period in time (probably, alarmingly, in the not too distant future) in which Britain's native honey bee population has died out, prompting the UK government to fund a project that develops robotic bees (or the Autonomous Drone Insects – or ADIs, as called in the episode) in a bid to help pollinate British flowers and crops. The downside of this cutting-edge technology, true to the series' form, is that the bee drones are hacked and repro-

grammed to attack and kill specific people. The episode did nothing to assuage my apiphobia, but apart from its centerpiece warning against the consequences of cyberbullying, it had one sobering prediction: a world without bees.

According to recent reports by major international organizations, the world's bee population is really in decline. The 2015 IUCN report notes that "nearly 10% of bees are facing extinction, and around 5% of them are probably endangered, while no data is available for nearly 57% of species."

Bees are responsible for the pollination of nearly three quarters of the plants that produce 90% of the world's food. A world without bees is a world losing a third of its food production. Food shortage on such a massive scale should remind you of desperate, starving survivors scavenging for food during a zombie apocalypse. That image is horrific enough to send everyone with even a smidgen of common sense into frenzy.

One way to save the earth from such a harrowing fate is to build robo-bees that would cost a fortune and probably kill you if they fall into ➡

the wrong hands. Another way, is to raise awareness, which is considerably cheaper and does not run the risk of killing you, intentionally or otherwise. And that is exactly what the Slovenian embassy in Tehran did on May 20 – the day registered at the United Nations as World Bee Day, on the initiative of the Republic of Slovenia.

The embassy held the first observance of World Bee day on Sunday to send the message that “we are all united in the care and protection for bees ... to remind every single one of us how dependent and how interconnected are our lives with these incredible beings,” as said by Slovenian Ambassador Kristina Radej in her opening speech at the event.

The place was jam-packed with a number of ambassadors and heads of various beekeeping associations, representatives from FAO and UNIC, journalists and some interested public, all gathered at the embassy building in the upper class neighborhood of northern Tehran to be informed about the significance of bees for food security and the sustainability of human life.

“We hope that [the observance of World Bee Day] will become an important tradition with which we will step up the necessary efforts for their preservation and thus continue to a more sustainable agriculture and global food security,” said Ms. Radej of the importance of holding such events.

You may be wondering, ‘why Slovenia?’, and ‘why May 20?’

“Slovenia ranks among the best in the world regarding the number of beekeepers per capita,” said Ms. Radej. Indeed, with five beekeepers per 1,000 inhabitants, the country is at the very top of the list. Much like Iran, Slovenia has its own native bee species: The Carniolan honey bee, which is the only protected native honey bee at the EU due to its “non-aggressiveness, immunity to diseases, suitability for collecting forest honeydew” and many other qualities.

May has been picked as the month when development of bees in the Northern hemisphere is in full swing, and the 20th of May corresponds with the birthday of Anton Janša (1734-1773), the Carniolan apiarist credited as the pioneer of modern beekeeping in the world.

The ambassador went on to add, “World Bee Day is only the beginning of a challenging path to preserve pollinators. To achieve that, we first need to address the governments of all states, economists and non-governmental organizations; the voice on the urgency to preserve bees must reach every single person. We also need to perform concrete activities to enhance care for bees and the development of beekeeping.”

The gathering at the event was invited to taste different Slovenian and Iranian honey set on the tables, and to take a look at the embassy’s very own “Slovenian traditional urban beehome” in the terrace; a wooden house painted with colorful depictions of “everyday stories, superstitions, customs and love motifs”, distinctive to Slovenian ethnographic identity.

“I believe that at the moment, we are the only embassy in Tehran with our own beehome,” said Ms. Radej. “I would like to encourage my dear colleague ambassadors to follow us... to follow the bees and invite them to have their home at their embassies’ gardens as well.”

Also speaking at the event was FAO Representative ad interim to Iran, Mr. Rao Matta, who stressed that “bees are the sign of well-functioning ecosystems—



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Photo: Mohammad Khodabakhsh



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tems ... [and] the decline of pollinators is also a sign of the disruptions that global changes are causing to ecosystems of the world."

"Bees are increasingly endangered due to environmental threats ... shrinking habitat ... expanding monoculture areas ... [as well as] new bee diseases and pests," he said.

Mr. Matta referred to the "pollination crisis" – the continued decline in the population of pollinators in many ecosystems worldwide – saying FAO has coordinated the International Pollinator Initiative in order to "support countries in monitoring pollinators and better understand threats, information needs and data gaps."

The FAO official then turned the topic to Iran, and the country's over two-thousand-year tradition of beekeeping.

"The number of beekeepers and the amount of honey produced [in Iran] are increasing year by year," he said. "In 2016, the country was the seventh biggest honey producer in the world, producing up to 77,000 tons of honey. Last year Iran increased its honey production to 88,000 tones and now after

China and Turkey, is the third biggest producer in the world."

The figures are impressive when compared to Slovenia's annual honey production which stands at 2,500 tones. Iran also has the fifth largest number of colonies in the world, according to deputy minister of agriculture.

Mr. Matta further voiced FAO's intention to further its collaboration with the Iranian government in beekeeping sector to "contribute to global food security, eradication of hunger and malnutrition and preserving the environment from further losses in biodiversity".

Also present at the event was Maria Dotsenko, the UNIC Director in Tehran, who voiced her pleasure at seeing so many people involved or interested in the beekeeping sector at this special gathering.

"For centuries bees are known to have benefited people, plants and the planet. By carrying pollen from one flower to another, bees, butterflies and other pollinators facilitate and improve food production, thus contributing to food security and nutrition,"

she said of the importance of bees. "Pollination also has a positive impact on the environment in general, helping to maintain biodiversity and a vibrant ecosystem upon which agriculture depends."

Talking about the importance of observing Bee Day, Ms. Dotsenko noted that observing this occasion each year will draw the attention to the roles bees and other pollinators play in people and the planet's health; "It provides the opportunity for governments, organizations, civil societies, and concerned citizens everywhere to promote actions that will protect and enhance pollinators and their habitats. It improves their diversity and supports the sustainable development of beekeeping," she said.

As Ms. Radej said, this is just the beginning. The population of pollinators worldwide are in danger, and many steps need to be taken to ensure their continued existence. Next time you are about to bite into a tasty apple, or munch on a delightful piece of chocolate, just remember that without bees, there would be no apple or chocolate to savor.

Global refugee compact to mobilize support for protracted refugee situation in Iran: commissioner



By: Maryam Qarehgozlou

Global refugee compact will mobilize support for protracted refugee situation in Iran, UN Refugee Agency, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Volker Türk, said on Monday.

"Global refugee compact is an effort by all 193 members of the United Nations to design to protect those who are forced to flee and support the countries that shelter them more predictably and more equitably," the High Commissioner explained.

In 2016's historic New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, all 193 Member States of the United Nations agreed that protecting those who are forced to flee and supporting the countries that shelter them are shared international responsibilities that must be borne more equitably and predictably.

The Declaration gave UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, the task of building

upon the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), to develop a 'global compact on refugees'. UNHCR has been engaged in consultations with governments and other stakeholders to develop the compact, and the High Commissioner will propose the text of the global compact on refugees in his 2018 annual report to the General Assembly.

The global compact on refugees is a unique opportunity to strengthen the international response to large movements of refugees and protracted refugee situations. Its four key objectives are to ease the pressures on host countries; enhance refugee self-reliance; expand access to third-country solutions; and support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

"For instance Iran has hosted Afghan refugees for many decades, almost 40 years, and it's a longstanding issue in Iran. Iran has done tremendous work and has our full admiration, so in this case one would say why can't in-

ternational community support Iran more?", Türk said, adding that in a way that's what the global refugee compact about. To ensure that it mobilizes support for protracted refugee situation but also provide support conditions in countries of origin who are dealing with a large-scale crisis [for return of the refugees].

Türk who had also served as the UNHCR Director of the Division of International Protection went on to say that "We are the biggest UN operation in Iran, and also we have offices all around the country because we want to be close to the Afghan refugees but also to work closely with the Iranian authorities. We know we have always tried hard to ensure that we mobilize support and we have a lot of discussions with some of our donor countries so that we can provide more [financial] support, so our duty is to mobilize more support for the refugees but also for the host countries which is Iran."

Inquired about the Ministerial Con→

ference on Afghanistan which the UN would host with the Afghan Government in Geneva on November 28, Türk highlighted that the conference will focus on the Afghan situation in Afghanistan, "but also because we have millions of Afghans refugees living in Pakistan and Iran, so we want to use this as an opportunity to make aware the international community that we need to work on solutions for Afghanistan, meaning support peace process, conflict resolution and development in Afghanistan, but in the meantime we need to invest on the refugees outside so that countries like Iran are supported. So we use this opportunity to mobilize support for refugees and for Iran."

Elsewhere in his remarks he noted that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, will visit Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, to highlight how important it is not to forget the Afghan situation and the impact of refugees in Iran and Pakistan.

Türk is the UN's leading expert on international protection and his two-day visit to Tehran was meant to reaffirm UNHCR's commitment to continue its strong partnership with the Islamic Republic of Iran as one of the world's largest refugee hosting country.

Türk met with high ranking officials, refugee representatives, diplomatic

community and partner humanitarian agencies.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has remained an important global partner on refugee protection, currently hosting around a million refugees from Afghanistan for nearly four decades.

UNHCR in Iran

The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established by the UN General Assembly in 1950. The agency is mandated to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees.

UNHCR opened its first office in Iran in 1984 and expanded its presence in response to the influx of Iraqi refugees arising from the Gulf War in 1991, and the start of Afghans' mass return movement to Afghanistan in 1992.

The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to host one of the largest and most protracted refugee populations of the world, and has provided asylum to refugees for nearly four decades. The majority of refugees in Iran are Afghan refugees. There are an estimated 3.5 million Afghans residing in Iran, inclusive of registered refugees, passport holders and undocumented Afghans; since many arrived around 35 years

ago, a large number are second or third generation Afghans living in Iran.

Approximately 97% live in urban and semi-urban areas, while the remaining 3% reside in 20 refugee settlements which are managed by UNHCR's main government counterpart the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs (BAFIA) of the Ministry of Interior.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is responsible for refugee registration and status determination, as well as the issuing of refugee identity cards known as Amayesh cards. These require renewal on a regular basis and enable refugees to access basic services as well as access to work permits.

Voluntary repatriation continues under the auspices of tripartite agreements signed by UNHCR and the governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan. However, voluntary return has been witnessing a steady decline in recent years, largely due to continued instability in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In 2016, 2,426 individuals wishing to return to their country of origin were assisted by the Government of Iran and UNHCR. From 2002 to end 2016, UNHCR assisted 979,410 refugees (925,235 Afghans and 30,662 Iraqis) to voluntarily return to their homeland.





News in Vision



World Bee Day at Slovenian embassy in Tehran

The first observance of World Bee Day was held at the Slovenian embassy in Tehran on May 20. The event was attended by a number of ambassadors and heads of various beekeeping associations, in a bid to raise awareness about the significance of bees for food security.



Larijani re-elected as Parl. speaker

Conservative politician Ali Larijani was re-elected as Iran's Parliament speaker after beating the reformist candidate Mohammad Reza Aref in a run off.

Intl. Quds Day rallies across Iran

Millions of Iranians from various provinces across the country took part in nationwide rallies to show their solidarity with the Palestinians and condemn Israel's occupation and atrocities.



Commemorating victims of 2017 Tehran attacks

The ceremony on commemorating the victims of 2017 Tehran attacks which claimed 17 civilians' lives of left 43 individuals injured was held today in Shahid Motahari School, Tehran. Eminent political figures including Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani took part in this event.



Masouleh, must-see place for anyone visiting Iran

The village of Masouleh in Gilan Province is a must-see spot for tourists in any season. Founded in the 10th century AD, it is notable for its traditional wooden buildings, clustered on the northern slopes of the valley, in such a way that front yards and roofs both serve as pedestrian areas. Masouleh is registered as National Cultural and Natural Heritage in Iran.



Iran 1-0 Morocco at World Cup 2018

Iranian national football team beat Morocco 1-0 in their opener at the 2018 World Cup on Friday, making it Iran's second win in World Cup history, after their win against the United States in 1998.



Iran celebrates victory over Morocco

People across Iran took to the streets to celebrate Iranian national football team's 1-0 victory against Morocco in their opener at the 2018 World Cup.