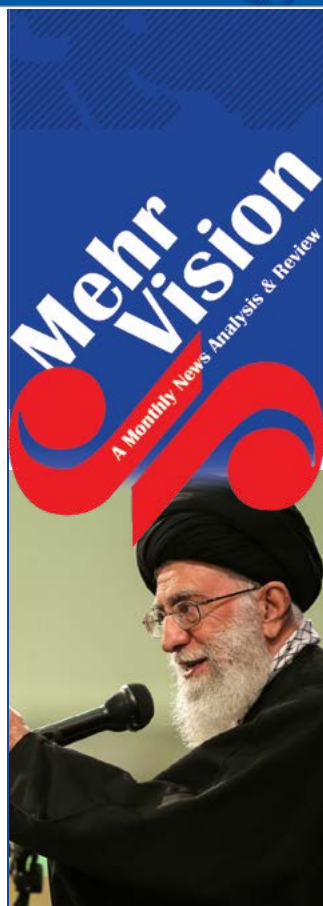


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**Mehr
Vision**
A Monthly News Analysis & Review



Iran-US negotiations
impossible
at any level



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News

Iran ready to establish sci. parks in Syria: minister

Iranian Minister of Science, Research and Technology, Mansour Gholami expressed readiness to build science and technology parks in different regions of Syria.

He made the remarks in a Tuesday meeting with Syrian Minister of Higher Education Atef Nadaf in Tehran.

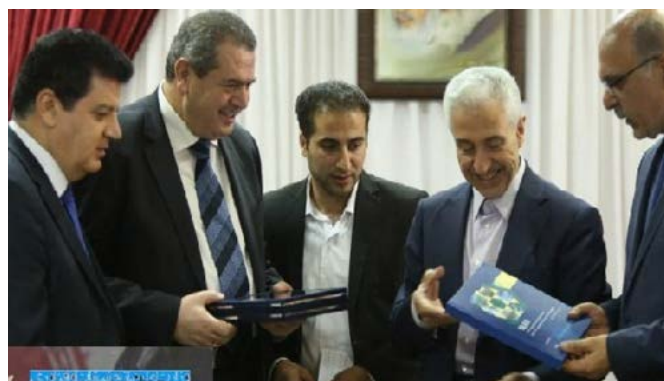
Establishment of science and technology parks in Syria can significantly help the country to boost its scientific productions, he highlighted.

Taking into account the pressures and damages which have been imposed to Syria, Iran is ready to cooperate with the country to reinforce Syrian scientific and research institutes, Gholami added.

He went on to say that Iran tops in the region regarding scientific productions and has the average rank of 16 in the world in this regard, based on statistics of different international organizations.

There are 43 science and technology parks active in the country, the Iranian minister said, adding that these parks prepare the grounds for turning scientific researches to applicable products in industry and society.

Nadaf, for his part, toughed upon strong ties between the



two nations and Iran's support during Syrian crises.

The main objective of the enemy in war against Syria is to keep back its history, culture and science, he said, adding, "that's why they have destroyed schools, universities and cultural centers."

He hoped that these meetings would lead to increased academic ties between the two countries.

The Syrian minister also invited his Iranian counterpart to visit Syria and its universities.

Iran not to block Instagram mobile app: ICT min.



"Instagram will not be filtered," Iranian ICT Minister Azari Jahromi told reporters in the sideline of Wednesday's cabinet session.

Asked whether Instagram is going to be filtered or not, the Iranian minister highlighted that the social app won't be filtered.

This is while Iran's deputy attorney general Mohammad Mosaddegh told Fars News Agency on Wednesday that filtering of Instagram is on the agenda.

The reason behind this decision is that some celebrities which are active in the social media are asking for donations to underprivileged or sick individuals and this has led to many cases of fraud till date, he explained.

These kind of acts have created distrust in real charity institutions, he highlighted.

Iran's judiciary issued an order in late April to completely ban Telegram app, citing citizens' complaints and illegal activities of the Telegram against the country's national security.



Iran appoints second female envoy in its history

Iran's Foreign Ministry has appointed Parvin Farshchi as new ambassador of Iran to Finland which is the second female envoy of Islamic Republic in its 40 years history.

Farshchi has served as the deputy head of the Iran's Department of Environment (DOE) for marine affairs for five years.

The first female Iranian ambassador is Marzieh Afkham who represents her country in Malaysia.

Iran's Foreign Ministry also appointed Masud Eslami as Iranian ambassador to Ireland. Eslami has a PhD in International Relations and was the dean of Foreign Ministry's School of International Relations.

Also, Manouchehr Moradi has been named as ambassador of Iran to Ukraine. He has the experience of being Iran's envoy to Kyrgyzstan.

Iran achieves secure quantum communications technology



The new technology of Iran in the field of secure quantum communications was unveiled on Wednesday in Iranian National Laser Center (INLC).

The unveiling ceremony of the first laboratory for quantum entanglement was held on Wednesday in the Karaj-based INLC with head of Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Aliakbar Salehi, Minister of Science Manour Gholami and Vice-President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari in attendance.

Reviewing the world's latest developments in the field of nuclear science is among the responsibilities of AEOI and one of the technologies that the world has recently focused on is that of quantum, said Salehi.

Two years ago, necessary orders for moving towards quantum technology was issued and now, Iran is not far behind advanced countries in this field, he highlighted.

Quantum technology occurs at the atomic and subatomic levels and it is incompatible with how humans perceive natural issues today, he said, adding, "for example, naturally, if a rock falls in the well, we expect that it won't come out, but in the quantum field, we expect the stone to come out."

The key to entering this technology is to separate atomic particles such as electrons and photons, he said, adding that regardless of the distance between them, whatever happens on one particle will affect the other particle simultaneously.

"We have separated the entangled photons in the lab and hopefully by the end of the year we can exchange photons at 7 km distance," Salehi added. The benefit of this technology for transferring data is that it does not require a cryptographic device, and no one can access the data, he noted.

Salehi went on to say that Chinese scientists launched the first quantum communications satellite to the space and manage to exchange photons from over 600 miles distance.

The technology also has applications in other domains such as computers, sensors, and simulations, he further added.

Scientists of this center managed to establish the first laboratory for quantum entanglement and separate photons, head of AEOI said, adding that Islamic Republic of Iran is the first Islamic country and probably the first developing country which has achieved this technology.

European Commission adopts support package for Iran

The European Commission today adopted a first package of €18 million for projects in support of sustainable economic and social development in Iran, including €8 million assistance to the private sector.

The announcement was made in a press release by European Commission on Thursday.



According to the report, today's projects are the first of a wider package of €50 million for Iran, aiming to support the country to address key economic and social challenges. They are part of the renewed cooperation and engagement between the European Union and Iran following the conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"Since the renewal of the EU-Iran relations as a result of the Iran nuclear deal, cooperation has developed in many sectors. We are committed to sustain it and this new package will widen economic and sectoral relations in areas that are of direct benefit to our citizens," High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini said.

Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, said, "with these measures, the EU demonstrates its support to the Iranian people and their peaceful and sustainable development. It encourages stronger involvement of all actors in Iran and in particular the private sector."

Activities supporting the private sector will include support to high-potential Iranian Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), the development of selected value chains, and technical assistance to Iran's Trade Promotion Organisation.

As part of the €18 million, the Commission will also provide technical support in the area of environmental challenges for €8 million and support drug harm reduction for €2 million, according to the press release.

The projects will be implemented by the International Trade Centre, EU Member State agencies, and other organisations in close cooperation with Iranian counterparts.

The move comes as US President Donald Trump withdrew from the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement on May 8, and reinstated sanctions, including extraterritorial ones, against Tehran. US' unilateral and unlawful pullout from the nuclear agreement prompted the EU to come up with a package of proposals to encourage Iran to stay committed to the JCPOA despite US sanctions.

We are closer to you than you think: Gen. Soleimani to Trump

The IRGC's Quds Force Commander Ghasem Soleimani in reaction to US President Donald Trump's recent tweet against Iran said "we are closer to you than you think", rebuking Trump for threatening Iran.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force Commander Major General Ghasem Soleimani made the remarks on Thursday in the city of Hamedan.

His remarks came in reaction to Donald Trump's tweet on Sunday, in which the US president threatened Iran with what "few throughout history have suffered before."

Trump's tweet was in turn a reaction to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's remarks in which he reminded Washington that peace with Iran will be the mother of all peace while war with the country will be the mother of all wars.

"Although Trump has been running the office for a year, his speech resembles that of a gambler," said Gen. Soleimani. "When he talks with European countries, China, Russia or Korea, one feels like it is a gambler talking, and this means demeaning a nation's dignity."



The Quds Force commander then noted Trump's "baseless" threats to hurt Iran in a way "few throughout history have suffered before", telling Trump to ask US intelligence and security agencies about the country's inability to hurt Iran; "what could you have done against Iran in the past 20 years that you haven't done already? At the end, the victory belonged to the Iranian nation," said Soleimani.

"We are ready," said the Quds Force commander, adding "you know that this war would mean the destruction of all of your resources. You might start the war, but we would be the ones ending it."

"Ask your then commander about whom he sent to me to beg for cover-

age for the American troops against the attacks of Iraq's Mujahideen Army until they could leave the country. Have you forgotten that you used to get adult diapers for your soldiers operating US tanks? Now you are threatening the great country of Iran? On what background are you exactly basing your threats?"

Soleimani went on to stress that the US committed the most horrid crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan, adding "what you did in Abu Ghraib prison will forever be your stigmata."

The Iranian commander then counted the US' many failures in the wars it waged or backed against Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Gaza.

"There is no need for Iran's Armed Forces to get involved," said Soleimani. "I myself and the IRGC's Quds Force are enough to face you as an adversary."

"Mr. gambler Trump! I'm telling you that we are close to you exactly where you wouldn't think [that we are]," said Soleimani.

"Don't threaten us with killing," he said. "We are thirsty for martyrdom and eradicating Arrogance."

Five new ATR jets enter service in Iran

The latest five ATR turboprop aircraft entered service on Friday starting on busy domestic routes such as Tehran to Mashhad.

IranAir took delivery of five more ATR turboprop aircraft only a day before the return of US illegal sanctions that have already torpedoed Iran's plane purchases with other major providers. The planes that had left France's Toulouse earlier in the day landed in Tehran's International Mehrabad Airport on August 5, Sunday morning, after a short stop for refueling in the northwestern city of Urmia.

IranAir signed last year a contract to buy 20 ATR 72-600 aircraft, joint-owned by France-based Airbus and Leonardo of Italy, worth \$576 million.

ATR - which had delivered 8 planes to Iran under the deal and started building another 12 - has been lobbying the US Treasury to allow it to take advantage of the normal wind-down period for Iran business by giving it temporary new licenses.

Airbus said last month it would not attempt to deliver any more planes to Iran in the wind-down period. It has delivered just three of 100 ordered by IranAir.

Boeing, which had sold 80 jets to IranAir under the 2015 nuclear deal, does not plan any deliveries.



Complaint against US to prove Iran's legitimacy; Hague's ruling not binding



Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Seyed Abbas Araghchi, stressing that The Hague's ruling is not legally binding, said Iran's complaint against US was simply aimed at proving our legitimacy to the international community.

Speaking in a Radio program on Wednesday, Araghchi asserted that JCPOA has earned Iran the title of a powerful country in international and regional arenas, adding "US pressure against Iran is because of the power of the Islamic Republic of Iran; if we were not strong, there was no such pressure on us."

"Our policy is establishing all-encompassing ties with the East and the West; except for one or two countries, we have relations with all the countries; to counteract US efforts to

confront the Islamic Republic of Iran, we also need to take a global move against US policies and establish special interactions with the world," he said, referring to Leader's remarks in a meeting with the ambassadors and foreign ministry officials.

According to Iran's agreement with the United States in 1950s, he added, a lawsuit has been filed at the International Court of Justice against the country, and based on the treaty, re-enforcing sanctions is against the Law.

He added that ICJ's jurisdiction over the issue must be recognized; "this process may take a long time, and the ultimate decision is not binding under international law."

"We are not seeking a proof over US condemnation at the Hague Court, so that the United States might be forced to take action; in fact, we are seeking to show the legitimacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the international community, to prove that the Islamic Republic of Iran has been committed to its obligation in this regard and the United States is the wrong-doer," he noted.

Araghchi said the process will impose political and psychological pressure on the United States, adding that the "international law is such that it would not be possible for a country like the United States to be condemned and forced to respect the rules, however, the pressures would be effective."

"Iran's policy is to focus on all geographical areas; we will make our attempts to favor our national interests and, in every corner of the world, we will seek our own national interests and we will try to secure them," he concluded.

Mounesan:

Foreign tourists' passports not to be stamped in Iran

In a move to alleviate tourists' concerns over US sanctions on individuals visiting Iran, the Islamic Republic will soon start a program to not stamp the passports of the tourists arriving in Iran.

Ali Asghar Mounesan, Iranian Vice President and Head of Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHTO), reassured hotel owners and those active in tourism industry that the Iranian government will provide protectionist measures to support the industry in the face of US unilateral sanctions on Iran.

To counter US sanctions and ease the tourists' concerns, the passports of foreign tourists visiting Iran will not be stamped according to a bill which has been drafted and approved by the head of the ICHTO, the minister of industry, mine and trade, the Iranian police, and



foreign ministry but not yet tabled at the council of ministers, according to Mounesan who made the point at Hotel Espinas in Tehran.

With entry and exit stamps not to be put on the passports of the visiting tourists, we are after removing tourists' concerns about visiting Iran because of

US sanctions, he added.

The proposal has been approved by the Iranian police and foreign ministry and it will be put into practice after gaining the approval of the council of ministers.

"While the statistics provided by immigration police of Iran show that the number of foreign tourists visiting Iran has increased by 38 percent in the first four months [of the current Iranian year of 1397], the number of European visitors show a slight decline which has affected the functionality of our 4- and 5-star hotels," Mounesan said, reassuring that this temporary period will pass as Iran will take the necessary measures.

He further reassured hotel owners that the government is preparing protective packages to support them.

Iran to file complaint against US for carpet-related sanctions

US decision to put carpet on sanctions list is against international protocols and Iran will lodge a lawsuit against US in international bodies, said Fereshteh Dastpak, head of Iran National Carpet Center.

She made the remarks on the sideline of the inauguration of the first Tabriz carpet exhibition in Tehran on Saturday.

Hand-woven Iranian carpet belongs to the Iranian nation and is a symbol of Iranian culture, she said, highlighting that according to international protocols, sanctions cannot be imposed to whatever belongs to a nation.

US President's decision to impose sanctions against this iconic Iranian handicraft is a mistake, Dastpak told IRNA.

Iran National Carpet Center will pursue the lawsuit in international organizations, she said, hoping that the related bans would be lifted soon.

Nearly a month ago, the US Treasury Department announced it had revoked licenses to trade in Iranian carpets, pistachios and caviar.



Iranian hand-woven carpets are exported to 80 different countries, with US being one of the leading markets by a total share of 30 percent. The value of this export was around \$424 million in the past Iranian fiscal year, corresponding to March 2017 – March 2018.



Syria reconstruction, next level of Tehran-Damascus ties

Iranian MP Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh said that the next level of cooperation between Tehran and Damascus will be the reconstruction process of Syria.

Syrians have repeatedly noted that they trust Iran both during the period of fighting terrorism and during the reconstruction process, the Chairman of the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of the Iranian Parliament said on Thursday.

Touching upon the remarks made by the Putin's special envoy to Syria, who had said that Russia and Israel have reached an agreement to have Iranian forces pulled back from Golan Heights, the Iranian MP said that Iran's presence in Syria is upon the official invitation of Damascus and it doesn't depend on decisions of third-party countries, rather, it depends on the joint decision of Iran and Syria.

He stressed that Iranian forces would withdraw as soon as both Iran and Syria arrive at that decision, which would then prompt the next level of cooperation between the two countries. The decisions made by the Zionist regime has no effect in Syria, and Iran will act independently, he added.

Iran test-flies 1st homegrown fighter/trainer jet 'Kosar'



Iran has successfully test-flown the first indigenous advanced light attack and training jet 'Kosar' concurrent with the National Day of Defense Industry.

The domestically-made fighter/trainer jet 'Kosar', mainly developed by the Iran Aviation Industries Organization, was unveiled back in July 2017, and showcased to international audience at MAKS air show in Moscow.

The twin-engined, two-seat Kosar jet was successfully ran through test-flights this morning in the presence of President Hassan Rouhani. The event was part of the programs planned to commemorate Iran's Day of Defense Industry, during which the president is scheduled to deliver a speech.

'Kosar' enjoys many advanced features including an indigenous avionic and fire-control system, multi-function digital displays, ballistic weapon calculator, an advanced HUD system to increase strike precision, and an advanced multifunction fire control radar to boost the identification of targets and threats.

'Kosar' is an advanced fighter jet with a Close Air Support (CAS) role that has made Iran one of the few countries with the know-how of designing and manufacturing such jets equipped with 4th generation avionic and fire-control systems.

The jet will be mass-produced with one-seat and two-seat, the latter of which can be used for both military and training purposes.

No Green Card issued for nuclear talks team: Zarif

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif highlighted that no Green Card has been issued for Iranian members of 2015 nuclear talks.

He made the remarks in a meeting with members of National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of the Iranian Parliament on Monday.

He went to the commission to clarify some issues including Caspian Sea legal regime, the status of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), US Green Cards, formation of 'Iran Action Group' by US and economic diplomacy of Iranian ambassadors.

Regarding the claims about US Green Cards, he stressed that not only this has not happened, but also the Iranian team had also refused other proposals from US officials as well. Zarif then asked parliamentarians who framed this question to provide Foreign Ministry with any available information in this regard.

Touching upon rumors about the decrease of Iran's share in Caspian Sea after signing the legal regime, he said that a Russian video clip has been recently gone viral in Iran's social network. The clip has been translated by expert Russian translators and it is clear that not even a word is being mentioned about



Iran's share, he said, adding that the name of Iran has been two times mentioned in the clip which refers to the country's Caviar production.

Regarding John Bolton's remarks, Zarif said that Bolton and the US government should see the reality of the region and the results of the pressures that have been imposed to Iran, adding that, these pressures have been only placed on Iranian people.

Americans are after psychological warfare and are trying to foment this psychological war with the world and Iran, he said, adding that they are bullying in the world and they use all their means to compensate their isolation and will surely fail in this route.

The Iranian administration is aware

of the pressure that has been imposed to the people and it uses all of its power to neutralize US sanctions at the lowest cost, he highlighted.

Regarding Iran's talks with European countries, Zarif said that Europeans did well in proclaiming their stance, but their move to turn words into action had a slower trend. No benefit in the world can be obtained without paying its costs, he highlighted, adding that Europeans must also be prepared to pay for their long-term benefits. "Of course, they have limited time for taking decision."

In response to formation of 'Iran Action Group' by the United States, Iranian Foreign Minister said that Iran has set up the special committee for tackling US measure in the country's Supreme National Security Council long before 'Iran Action Group' establishment, adding that the committee has had great performance so far.

Elsewhere he went on to say that except for a few countries which follow the United States and the Zionist regime, no one in the world has supported US measures, and this reflects the success of Iran's foreign policy and the defeat of American foreign policy.

Trump made 8 requests for meeting Rouhani in NY

US President Donald Trump had requested a meeting with President Rouhani 'eight times' on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in Sep., according to Rouhani's chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi.

"During Rouhani's last visit to New York for the UN General Assembly session, Trump asked the Iranian delegation eight times to have a meeting with the president," Mahmoud Vaezi told reporters after a cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

Back in October, Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi confirmed speculations on Trump's request for a meeting with Rouhani on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, but added that the request was rebuffed by the Iranian president.

"We have a transparent policy and clear position with regard to our relations with the US," Vaezi added. "The char-



acteristic of this Establishment and [Iranian] people is that they will not yield to pressure. Trump should know that Iran and its people are different from North Korea and its people."

He went on to add, "since 40 years ago, the US has been threatening Iran for its Islamic principles and independence, also because the US used to have a hold on Iran's resources in the past."

"The difference between Trump and others is that some issues that he raises is because he is not a politician," he said. "We have no doubt that they have set up a psychological war room at the US Treasury and Department of State, but we are talking about a sophisticated nation here."

"Our people may have some demands from the government, but when it comes to US to decide for them, it is only natural that the people will make their own decisions free of [US] influence," he added.

Iran-US negotiations impossible at any level



Leader of the Islamic Revolution said with the current irreverent and rude officials who have expressed explicitly their hostility and animosity towards the Iranians, negotiations will not take place at all.

On the occasion of the Iranian Government Week, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei met with President Hassan Rouhani and his cabinet members on Wednesday.

At this meeting, Ayatollah Khamenei tapped on the economic problems caused by internal as well as external factors and stated the enemy has targeted the economy of Iran, because there already exist some economic problems and shortcomings. In the area of the economy, we should act vigorously and extensively, to fill all the gaps; these are all possible; there is no dead end in managing the country's economy.

Ayatollah Khamenei mentioned that economic corruption should be systematically confronted by "combating corruption and blocking corruption channels" which, "requires full alertness and awareness of the government managers."

Leader attributed the recent cri-

sis at foreign exchange markets in Iran to various factors, citing, in the recent issues of foreign currency and gold coin markets, even though some explanations were given [on what the factors are], ignorance and management reluctance also played a role.

Ayatollah Khamenei advised that today there are advanced methods for supervising foreign currency distribution. When foreign currency is to be allocated or enter the market, this should be done meticulously. Care must be taken so in the current difficult situation of the country, several billion dollars are will not end up at the hands of those who smuggle it or pretentiously demand it for importing certain products, but indeed use the money for other things; or that subsidized foreign currency will not be allocated for holiday travels to overseas.

He praised the government as being capable to manage the economic crisis and added the government is capable of managing the economy; and to do so, it is necessary to work seriously, enter the realm effectively, and extensively and continuously supervise in order to block channels of corruption, so there would be no need for the Judiciary's confron-

tation.

Ayatollah Khamenei went on to say negotiations with Iran is what all US governments need. They need to maneuver and pretend that, "we have even made the Islamic Republic of Iran sit at the negotiations table." So, like I previously elaborated and argued, no negotiations will be held with US officials.

Ayatollah Khamenei said negotiations with the Europeans are fine, but don't pin your faith on them regarding JCPOA or the economy.

Criticizing Europe's inappropriate behavior on JCPOA, Leader noted that "we should be careful about their suspicious-looking promises."

Leader underlined that JCPOA is not a goal but a tool, and if we come to the conclusion that it is not possible to maintain national interests by the deal, we will put it aside.

Excluding any chance of negotiations with the Americans, Ayatollah Khamenei said the result of negotiations with former US officials let to the destruction of JCPOA; now with the current irreverent and rude officials who have expressed explicitly their hostility and animosity towards the Iranians, negotiations will not take place at all.

Iran received special privileges in Caspian Sea Convention: Pres. Rouhani

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani asserted that the Islamic Republic has received special privileges based on the Convention on Caspian Sea legal status.

Speaking in the cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Hassan Rouhani expressed happiness over the improvement of security in the region compared to past years, saying "this year, we are witnessing more security than the past years, especially in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and even in northern Africa."

After 20 years of negotiations, only 30 per cent of the Caspian Sea issues have been solved and negotiations still continue, he added.

Rouhani expressed hope that the people of Yemen soon witness establishment of peace and stability and the aggressors learn that war and aggression are not the way to resolve the problems, but compromise, negotiation, agreement and political solutions.

Regarding Iran-Iraq war era, President Rouhani said "after the Imposed War, the effects of the war are still remaining, and unfortunately, they have not been completely healed even today. We have important legal issues with Iraq that have not been resolved and must be pursued."

"It's been over 20 years that negotiations on Caspian Sea issues are running between its five littoral countries. We resolved a part of the issues and a part is still remaining. In some issues, the countries on the north part of the sea could reach an agreement," continued Rouhani.

He added that "in the southern part of the sea, there are still issues between Turkmenistan, Iran and Azerbaijan. We had good agreements with Azerbaijan in this regard, some of which are being implemented, but a part of these issues has not been resolved yet."

"The conspiracies of the Americans and even NATO was to be present in these waters and deploy their soldiers, frigates, helicopters and bases on the coasts of Caspian Sea. In this agreement, the five countries agreed to ban the presence of foreign vessels in Caspian Sea," Rouhani said stressing that we had great achievements in national security as the result of the negotiations



and agreements.

"After 20 years of negotiation, only 30 per cent of the Caspian Sea issues have been resolved and negotiations still continue," said the president, adding "we have to continue negotiating because this is the only way. We must resolve the issues with dialogue and negotiation."

He continued "military and defense power, especially in military war and defending the country, is very important and has an important role. But the defending the country won't be possible without foreign policy, people's support, and cultural and economic issues. Powers and capabilities of the country must exercise synergy and stand together to make it happen."

Rouhani also pointed to the Iran-Iraq war, saying "after the war, we had secret negotiations with an Iraqi official who was close to Saddam Hussein. People didn't know anything about this, and even today, some may not know what happened in those negotiations. Those negotiations were under the supervision of the Supreme National Security Council and we were continuously guiding the negotiations."

"The late Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani had a very valuable role in managing the war and the political victory after that; may God rest his soul in peace," added he.

Rouhani also referred to the economic issues and the market, saying "today,

we need calmness in the market. We are in conditions that the enemies want to put pressure on the country and disrupt people's life, a situation in which the government has a very heavy responsibility. All ministers, vice-presidents and authorities in organs around the country have a heavy responsibility."

The government should help people and people should help the government, said Rouhani adding "we must join hands and cope with this situation together. We won't let enemies to bring us to our knees. The enemies will take the wish of defeating Iran to the grave. They cannot defeat the great Iranian nation by illegal, cruel and unlawful pressures."

Saying that Iran is negotiating with entire world, the President added "in the latest visit to Kazakhstan, we had good negotiations with our neighbouring countries and, at the same time, we are negotiating with Europe and elsewhere in Asia."

He also said that it was the Americans themselves who disrupted the process of negotiations; "If you wanted to pass through the bridge, why did you destroy it? If you wanted us to meet, why did you destroy the bridge?, he addressed Americans. "You yourself did it. If you want to prove it, you have to rebuild the bridge. Once you rebuild the bridge, meetings will automatically and naturally happen."

Iranian netizens urge Pompeo to stop meddling in Iran



Iranian social media activists have launched a Twitter and Instagram hashtag calling on American Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to stop interfering in the internal affairs of Iran.

Iranians have taken to the social networking services, venting their anger at the American government trying to frame domestic economic dissatisfaction as a sign for regime change in Iran.

Furious Iranian citizens have created a “#StopMeddlinginIran” hashtag on Twitter on the advent of a new Pompeo address for a small group of anti-Revolutionary opposition residing in and receiving financial support from US. The gathering to be addressed in comprises of people affiliated with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD).

Pompeo has claimed in a post on his Twitter account that US “supports the proud people of Iran in their struggle for freedom, justice and respect for their human rights.”

The gathering will be held on Sunday under the title of “Supporting Iranian Voices” at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Center for Public Affairs in Simi Valley, California.

This event is being held while many Iranian immigrants residing in the United States are hardly affected by Donald Trump’s policies against Iran, such as the US unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA, the reinstatement of sanctions and the enforcement of anti-immigration laws that make it difficult for many of them to travel to their homeland.

The Iranians who are going to attend Pompeo’s anti-Iranian speech are mostly those linked to the Zionist regime’s FDD Foundation. Iranian netizens consider these people as traitors to their homeland, and have repeatedly referred to the FDD link with Iran’s enemies in their writings.

According to remarks made by an official at US Department of State, Pompeo’s speech will be undoubtedly a continuation of hostile approach taken by the Trump administration against Iran and Pompeo is set to defend the country’s “maximum pressure campaign”.

‘Americans are more focused on psychological warfare against Iran’



Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Americans always resort to psychological warfare, especially against Iranians and their international partners.

Zarif made the remarks in an interview with Reza Rashidpour, at Hala Khor-

shid TV program, on Sunday morning.

“Americans are accustomed to remaining in a deal in favor of their interests, however regarding JCPOA, they said they could not meet their own interests; our distrust of the US remains untouched and is not the matter of before and after the JCPOA,” he underlined.

Iran is a different country compared to other countries in the region; they are dependent on others to secure their country, however, Iran guarantees its security relying on its nation; Today, Americans have made the greatest efforts to impose a psychological warfare and are trying to change the situation, he added.

Zarif underlined that in the field of international relations, we do not have a police officer who may fine anyone who is violating the rules; the United States possess the necessary tools at the UN and the Security Council to exert pressure against others, but today, US is left alone among its allies. The international reality is that the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Zionist regime violate all the rules, and this means a pressure mechanism by which a country like the United States stands against its closest allies, including Canada, which we hold no relationship with.

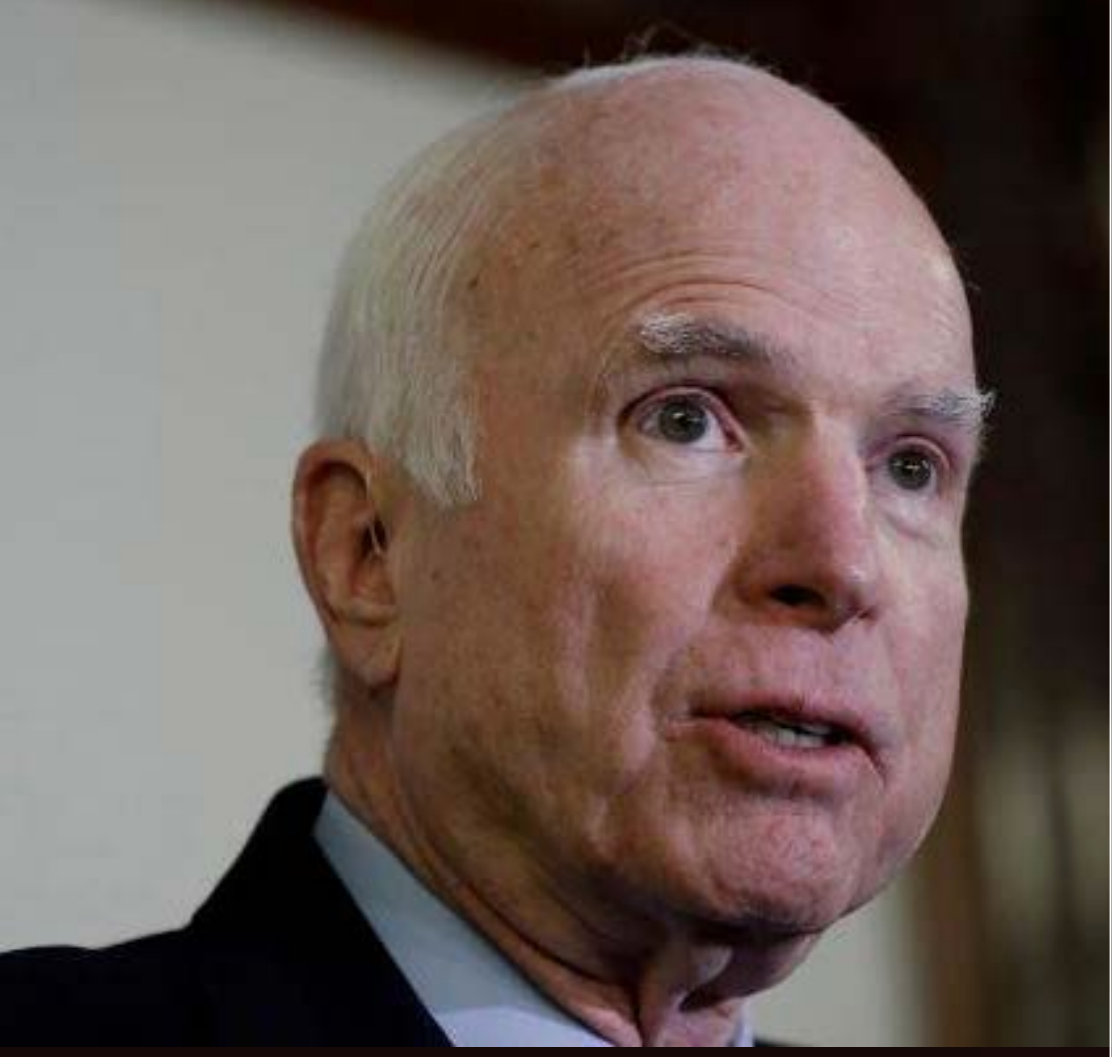
“From the time Trump announced pulling out of the nuclear deal, the Americans have not achieved any of their desired goals,” he said.

There are only two or three regimes in US front. Unity of the countries will put pressure against the US; today Americans are isolated, he said, adding “Europeans have taken measures to protect JCPOA and enable small and medium-sized enterprises, among which is providing 18 million euros (\$21 million) in aid to help develop cooperation between Iran and Europe.”

The European Union agreed 18 million euros (\$20.6 mln) in aid for Iran on Thursday, including for the private sector, to help offset the impact of US sanctions and salvage a 2015 deal.

Underlining that the task of foreign policy is to prevent a global consensus against Iran, Zarif said when President Rouhani took office, the whole world was calling Iran “a security threat”. Today, there is no such global consensus against the country, however, Americans are bullying and are pushing for their policies.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian foreign minister said the “illegal” US withdrawal from the JCPOA not only violated the deal but also the Treaty of Amity and Economic Relations signed by the two countries in 1955.



Interview

McCain is gone now but he was hawkish to the end

By Javad Heirannia

Senator John McCain was one of the most influential figures in the American political and military structure. Washington's policies on Afghanistan, Iran, Russia and other countries was influenced by McCain's opinions. His influence on the Pentagon was also evident.

His continuing violation doctrine in Afghanistan and his hostile views on Russia have restrained Trump from improving relations with Moscow. In the case of Iran, McCain was an advocate of regime change.

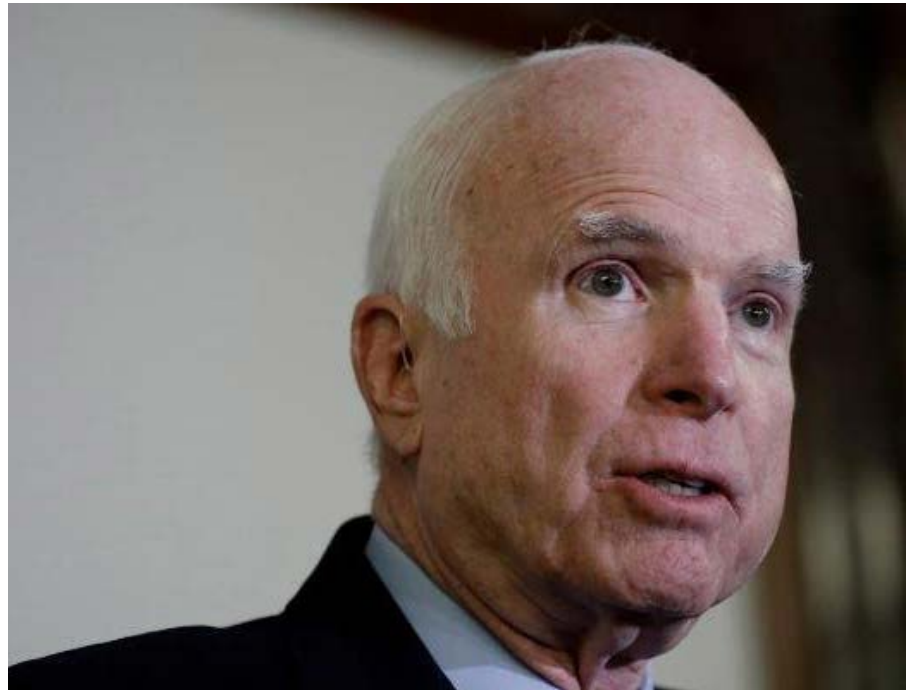
Mehr News Agency has had three talks with McCain over the past years. An outspoken critic of US foreign policy, it had written an analysis about Barack Obama's presidency addressed to Senator McCain. The logic of that analysis was based on several principles, including:

- The United States claims to support liberal democratic values. In the school of liberalism, domestic politics and foreign policy are not separate from one another, and foreign policy is the continuation of domestic politics. Why is foreign policy promoting and expanding its alleged liberal and democratic values beyond its borders contrary to the claims made by Washington itself?

- If the United States claims to support democratic systems, then the kind of security that they look at should prioritize "human security", but the country's approach is to emphasize state security. How is this this justified in US foreign policy?

In response to this note, Senator McCain said that he would consider it before making decisions and voting in the Senate, and will work with his colleagues in the Senate.

In his last interview of Mehr News



agency in August 2017 the topic was the JCPOA. McCain was a serious opponent of it and, in the shadow of the presidency of Donald Trump, he and his associates were hostile to the JCPOA.

The full text of Mehr's interview with Sen. McCain was before the US withdrawal from JCPOA by Trump:

After extensive negotiations for lifting sanctions on Iran in exchange for limits on its nuclear program, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action known commonly JCPOA was finally signed in July 2015 between Iran and the P5 + 1.

According to the agreement, the number of Iran's centrifuges has declined, uranium enrichment in key facilities is banned, and exploration and development of uranium in Iran are limited.

In July 2017, the Trump Administration confirmed that Iran had implemented commitments under JCPOA and announced that Iran was expected to remain committed to

the nuclear deal. At the same time, the Trump Administration punished Iran for a recent missile test, and the US Department of the Treasury imposed fresh sanctions on six Iranian companies linked to the ballistic missile program.

Also, the Senate augmented not only sanctions against Iran, but also against Russia and North Korea.

McCain said:

I believe that Iran should be held accountable for its actions by imposing new sanctions on its ballistic missile program, imposing sanctions on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, imposing sanctions on Iranians accused of human rights abuses and intensifying sanctions on Iran for its violations of the arms embargo.

It's time that the United States and the international community held Iran responsible for its dangerous behaviors! And I am very pleased that the bill was approved by a decisive vote of the two parties in the Senate.



US foreign policy against Iran has been plain for nearly forty years, including the following: Imposing limiting measures towards the Islamic Republic of Iran and its influence in the region, strengthening Israel and US's Arab allies, reducing regional tensions and preventing Iran from having nuclear weapons in the future.

I will work with my colleagues in the congress to pressure Iran to stop supporting terrorism around the world, to reduce all its abusive activities across the region and the release of American prisoners in Iran.

McCain also had a conversation with Mehr News Agency during the nuclear talks in 2015:

Over the course of several years, the US Congress has spoken out on Iran's nuclear program and has been leading the sanction initiative against the country. In the meantime, economic sanctions against Iran have increased the willingness of the country to negotiate. On November 23rd, 2013, the Iranian government agreed to stop its proliferation of nuclear programs for the temporary lifting of sanctions and enter into intensive negotiations for a nuclear deal that could ultimately lead to a peaceful nuclear program.

Although this agreement has been able to reduce the speed of Iran's nuclear program, I am worried about the serious issues in the proposed agreement, which includes continuing the growth of Iran's centrifuge program with high potential for producing atomic bombs. I also want to know the military dimensions of the program.

Moreover, this seems not to provide a long-term solution to Iran's nuclear intentions. If this "comprehensive agreement" expires, Iran may resume its nuclear weapons program.

Worse still, it's not a guarantee that, in the event of any nuclear agreement, Iran will cease to support terrorism and other negative activities that currently threaten our friends and allies in the Middle East and endangers our national security interests.

For these reasons, I support the so-called "S.269" plan to extend sanctions against Iran. The law enforces new sanctions against the country while negotiations are underway to reach a final agreement. In addition, the law allows Congress to monitor any agreement, and if Iran sanctions are to be re-enforced, or its failure to reach a final agreement or refraining it from complying with its commitments and continuing its efforts to build a nuclear bomb. This law was announced on January 27, 2015, and is currently under review at the Banking, Housing, and Urban Planning Committee.

I recently supported the "S.615" project, which included a Congressional review and monitoring of an Iran Nuclear Agreement. The bipartisan resolution requires the president to submit a full text of any agreement with Iran to Congress. It would also stop the government from suspending Congressional sanctions if Congress were to conclude that the agreement did not provide for our national security interests.

In addition, I am sending a letter to the President in line with the goals of Sen. Lindsey Graham and Robert Menendez, and I set out the fundamental principles that must be taken into account in any comprehensive agreement with Iran over the nuclear program. The conditions include the dismantling of Iranian enrichment facilities, the removal of concerns expressed by the UN Security Council and the approval of focused inspections to ensure that Iran does not seek to develop any nuclear weapons.

The deadline for reaching the comprehensive nuclear agreement was November 24, 2014. This deadline has now been extended to July 1, 2015 for another seven months. My concern is that these long-term talks have not yielded any result in stopping Iran's nuclear goals and have opposed the international community with the wrong security response.

I emphasize that I will continue to work with other colleagues in Con-

gress to continue the pressure on the Iranian government to prevent the consequences of its horrendous activities. I would also press the President to ensure that any nuclear deal with Iran will be completely transparent and accountable to the American people.

In international affairs, McCain was also a serious critic of Donald Trump's foreign policy in some areas. One of these areas was the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement. The Trans-Pacific Partnership is a defunct proposed trade agreement between Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam, and United States. Trump pulled out of the deal, and McCain was a critic of this decision.

McCain had an interview with Mehr News Agency in 2016 and explained his views on TPP:

"As you may know, the TPP Treaty is a free trade agreement between the United States and 11 Pacific countries, including Australia, Vietnam, Japan, Singapore and New Zealand. The talks on this important pact ended on the fifth day of October 2015."

I strongly support the reduction of barriers to trade and see this as an opportunity for the American workforce. The global economy continues to sustain itself and we have limited our capacities and potentials if we fence ourselves in and do not have foreign competition. In fact, the "competition" makes us stronger. We can compete and win. Or we can ignore this principle.

Lowering barriers to trade plays an important role in creating better jobs and higher wages. Free trade also helps consumers who are low or middle income to be able to afford more money and can buy more goods. For the reasons I've mentioned, I strongly support the TPP pact and I'm eager to see Congress approve it.

I also support TPP because the treaty goes beyond a trade treaty. It is in fact a treaty and strategic agreement between the United States and many countries in the Asia-Pacific region that is necessary and com- ➔



plementary to the continued security and welfare of the United States of America. TPP approval sends this message to both our allies and rivals that the United States will remain active as a strong and committed actor in Asia.

The treaty strengthens US security relations with countries such as Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam and Australia, and will provide a balance between China and the United States, if US fails to compete with it, China's supportive policies will dominate.

The TPP Agreement also provides an important opportunity to expand Arizona business relations at an international level worth \$19 billion, stimulating economic growth and employment, and lowering prices for US consumers.

At the moment, Arizona companies that are engaged in international trade with Asia-Pacific countries have a tremendous tariff of 70 percent and face other barriers to trade in export-

ing some products and services to many countries in the region.

The TPP Treaty will remove these barriers and enable Arizona's businesses to expand its exports to the Asia-Pacific region and motivate new producers to enter and emerge in these emerging markets.

Early estimates suggest that the trade agreement will create 17,000 new jobs for Arizona and will significantly increase foreign direct investment in the state. I am aware that some people are worried about President Obama's request for a TPA (Free Trade Promotion Act) -- also known as the fast-track authority facilitating trade, as a way to facilitate the adoption of TPP and other business agreements.

However, with the introduction of the TPA to President Obama, the Congress will influence the President and will set some parameters for business talks and determine the goals to be taken into consideration in the final

agreement.

I believe that TPA was an important rule that enabled the President to negotiate TPP in a transparent and accountable manner.

Now the talks have come to an end, and Congress will fully examine the final treaty to ensure that TPP will provide America's economic priorities in the best possible way.

While there may be months before the final design of the agreement and negotiation on raising the standards of the agreement is done, I am looking forward to a strong TPP agreement to reduce barriers to trade and open new markets and promote US-made exports, and will be able to make American companies more competitive in one of the most important economic and high-growth regions, the Asia-Pacific.

McCain is now dead from brain cancer. His hawkish views had a lot of critics inside and outside the United States.

Turkish economy not to collapse due to US measures: Logoglu



Interview by Payman Yazdani

Referring to strong economy of Turkey, Senior member of Turkey's CHP member says the evangelical circles in the USA, have turned the Pastor Brunson issue into a show case to win the millions of evangelical votes in the upcoming mid-term elections in November.

The US has threatened to impose more economic sanctions on Turkey if it does not free a detained American pastor, Andrew Brunson who has been held in Turkey for nearly two years over links to PKK terrorist group.

The dispute over his release has seen the two NATO allies impose tariffs on one another's goods.

The row between Turkey and US worsened a crisis for Turkey's currency, the lira, which has lost about a third of its value against the dollar since January.

The crisis has prompted widespread selling in other emerging markets, sparking fears of a global crisis.

After a little recovery of Turkish lira, US President Trump on Friday again threatened Turkey with more economic punishment.

Many believe detention of Andrew

Brunson is just an excuse for US to punish Turkey and the real crimes of Ankara are buying the Russian S-400 missile system for Turkey, refusing to accept US support for America's Kurdish YPG.

In an interview we discussed the issue Dr. Osman Faruk Logoglu, a senior member of Turkey's Republican People's Party (CHP).

Here is the full text of interview with him:

What are the reasons behind recent tensions in Turkey and US relation? Are they mainly economic or political? Is there any relation between the US unfriendly approach toward Turkey and Ankara's regional policies?

The reasons for the recent escalation of tensions are both political and economic, each step in one domain triggering reactions in the other, resulting in a negative downward spiral. That is to say, political issues lead to economic sanctions which in turn exacerbate the political differences.

While Turkey's policies on Syria and Iran, its relations with Russia and its approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict do play a stage-setting role in shaping the Washington's attitude toward Ankara,

the immediate reason has more to do with American domestic politics. The case of Pastor Brunson on trial in Turkey for aiding and abetting terrorists in Turkey has been elevated to the top of the agenda by the Trump administration, demanding his release along with other Americans detained in Turkey. The evangelical circles in the USA, led by Vice-president Pence and Secretary of State Pompeo have turned the Pastor Brunson issue into a show case to win the millions of evangelical votes in the upcoming mid-term elections in November.

Is there possibility of deepening the crisis?

Yes, the crisis can get worse. It would first depend on the course the Turkish economy takes in the next few months. If the Turkish economy runs into more troubles, anti-American sentiments in Turkey would grow even stronger, compelling the Government to take an ever-stiffer stance against the USA. If on the other hand Turkey is able to ward off a deepening crisis in its economy, then there would still be a chance for diplomacy between the two allies.

Another reason is the prospect of ad- ➔

ditional American sanctions, particularly the exercise of a US veto against extending credit or providing facilities to Turkey in international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. This could have a deleterious impact on the Turkish economy.

Yet another reason would be further sanctions against Turkey in the US Congress, including but not limited to the sale of F-35 fighter jets.

At the end of the day however it would all depend on the actions and decisions of the leaders of the two countries. In this context President Trump, acting as a global bully, does not give much hope.

Is there possibility of collapse of Turkey's economy if the tensions continue? Can Turkey overcome the economic problems created by recent tensions? If yes, how?

No, Turkish economy will not collapse, despite the deep problems it is facing. The fundamentals of the economy are strong enough to avoid a melt-down. Indeed, Turkey has already taken a num-

ber of steps to shore up its economy. The free fall in the value of the Turkish lira has now been stopped. As the various structural and financial measures go into effect, the economy should start to recover despite the American sanctions. There is world-wide reaction against the US, east and west, leading perhaps to alternative international arrangements to mitigate the effects of American bullying. Europe has been supportive of Turkey not just because they oppose Trump policies, but also because they know a failed Turkey would have serious consequences on their economies as well. Turkish cooperation with Europe and with others will work to Turkey's benefit.

Iran has also been very understanding toward Turkey, criticizing American policies. Continuing cooperation and solidarity between Turkey and Iran are important for both countries and for stability and prosperity of the region.

How can to side settle their differences?

All alternatives to diplomacy, whether armed conflict or other variations of

war, end with diplomacy.

Can possible collapse of Turkey's economy result in political changes in Turkey? Or affect the regional developments to the benefit of the US regional goals?

As I said earlier, the Turkish economy will not collapse. The country has weathered economic crises before and it will do so this time again. On the other hand, there is a need for change in Turkish policies in the region irrespective of Turkey's relations with the US. On Syria, Turkey must open channels of communications with the Syrian government and invest more effort in the Geneva peace process. Ankara must also redefine a new relationship matrix with the Kurds of the region, one based on mutual respect and reciprocal benefits.

As for the US, the best course of action is for it to leave the region and let the peoples of the region determine the course of their lives on their own. The same applies to all other foreign actors operating in the region.

The story of how a Norwegian physician became a defender of Muslim rights

Interview by: Marjohn Sheikhi

Norwegian physician and human rights activist Trond Ali Lindstad says his time around Palestinians as a volunteer doctor at refugee camps helped open his eyes to the other side of the story: the side of the oppressed.

The fourth International Islamic Human Rights Award honored its winners on August 5.

The Award is given by Iran High Council for Human Rights to the Islamic human rights defenders who support and promote Muslim rights in innovative ways, regardless of their religions or beliefs. The Award is also granted to those Muslims whose rights are violated by the host countries. The recipients of the Award can be individuals, NGOs, organizations or institutions, that are invited

to use the cash prize to further increase their pro-human rights activities.

This year, the Award went to the former Grand Mufti of al-Quds (Jerusalem), Sheikh Ekrima Sa'id Sabri, human rights activist and principal of a Bangladeshi school for Rohingya children, Rokonzaman Ansari, and Norwegian physician and human rights activist Trond Ali Lindstad.

Visiting Mehr News Headquarters on Sunday, Lindstad, a 75-year-old physician who converted to Islam during the 1980s and has dedicated his life to promoting Muslim rights around the world ever since, said the greatest appeal of Islam to him was the religion's strong call to humanitarian work.

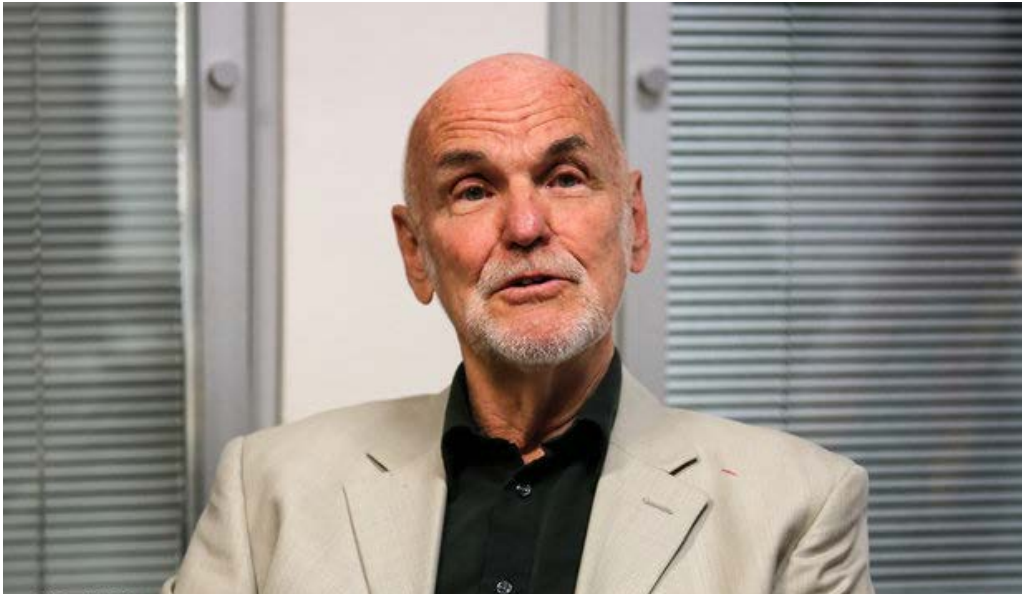
Lindstad began his career as a regular doctor in Oslo, and went on to offer his medical services as a volunteer to those in need in refugee camps in Jordan, Leb-

anon and Palestine. He also took the initiative to raise funds for medical assistance to the Palestinians in 1976, and was one of the leading members of the Palestinian Committee in Norway and the chairman of the Norwegian-Palestinian Friendship Association.

The following is his interview with Mehr News:

You have been awarded the International Islamic Human Rights Award for your contributions to defending Muslims' rights. What inspired you to dedicate your time and effort to this cause?

I come from Norway. I became a Muslim many years ago after I studied Islam and saw that the religion invites you to do humanitarian work. That call served as a great inspiration to me to dedicate my time to doing humanitarian work. ➔



You were one the first in Norway to convert to Islam – a country where Islam is a minority, with Muslims making up roughly 6% of the population. What about the religion appealed to you the most?

Well, I'm a medical doctor. I worked and stayed for a long time at the Palestinian refugee camps when I was a young man. Surrounding myself in that environment, where all my patients and all my colleagues were all Muslims, allowed me the opportunity to take part in discussions about existential questions and religions, and within this process, I decided to become a Muslim. I should say that I also visited Iran at that time – I got this great inspiration from Iran just after the Islamic Revolution. So Islam in general, Iran and more specifically the Palestinian cause, were all the inspiration I needed to become a Muslim. With being a Muslim, comes the notion of humanitarian work, which is implied in Islam. So, that's the direction I decided to take after my conversion.

You have a strong, and at times, leading presence in various Palestinian institutions in Norway. What piqued your interest in the Palestinian issue, in particular?

I obtained a diploma in tropical medicine and hygiene in Liverpool. I wanted to add an international aspect to my work, and at that time there were some great disturbances in the world, as there are today. At that time, it was the US bombing Vietnam, as well as many other instances of aggression carried out by

US in various parts of the world. And one place that seemed to be rife with American-Zionist aggression was of course Palestine. So with this background, I focused my activities on the Palestinian issue and I became a doctor to work at many Palestinian camps.

One of your major contributions to the Muslim community was the establishment of the Islamic foundation Urtehaven in Norway. What motivated you to become so active in promoting Islam in your country?

First, keep in mind that most of the population in Norway is either Christian or secular. The Muslim community in Norway is a minority, around 100,000 Muslims. After I converted to Islam, I came back to my country and made my mind. I stressed that we also need to give a face to Islam in this country, so as to make people respect and start to understand what Islam is. And I thought we should establish an Islamic institution, engage in humanitarian and social work with the non-Muslim Norwegian society, but also to work with the Muslims to promote their rights and make them conscious and proud of their religion.

You have also been particularly vocal in your criticism of Israeli regime as well as the support it receives from the US.

Well, yes, it was only natural. I had been working in Palestinian camps and I started to understand what the Palestinian problem was really about. I was the chairman of Norwegian-Palestinian Friendship Association for several years

and we established medical clinics in Palestinian areas, as well as in Lebanon and Jordan. So, we had been in very close contact with Palestinians for a very long time. My time around Palestinians opened my eyes to the fact that the Norwegian population was not much aware of the Palestinian question. Norway is on friendly terms with Israel, so it was natural to enter this discussion on what the problem with the Palestinian question was really about. When you start to voice solidarity with Palestinians, you also have to start to criticize the Israeli side. Imam Khomeini had a very clear stance on this issue. He inspired us. When you start to attack the Zionist ideology as a base for Israel, you do it by giving interviews and speeches, and the other side will then get very aggressive with you.

At one point, because of the social work we were doing, I was awarded the Norwegian King's medal of honor. The announcement made the Israeli side very angry, and they attacked me very strongly. They said the medal should not be given to me because of my work for Palestinians and criticism of Israel. So the medal was withdrawn from me because of interference from the Israeli side. However, during my work with the Palestinians, I also got in contact with some anti-Zionist Jews, some of whom have also traveled to Iran and talked with Iranian leaders. We became friends, so when the King's medal was withdrawn, this anti-Zionist Jewish community awarded me the Jewish medal of honor, which made up for the loss of the King's medal very nicely.

Iran has to be very careful in future negotiations on Caspian Sea: Prof. Entessar

Interview by Payman Yazdani

Professor of political science says although the text of the Caspian Sea Treaty signed on August 12, 2018 in Kazakhstan does not define the share of each of the littoral states, Iran has to be very careful in future negotiations.

Five Caspian Sea littoral states signed Caspian Sea Treaty on August 12, 2018 in Kazakhstan. The agreement has created many debates about the share of Iran in Iran.

To know more about the issue we reached out to Nader Entessar Professor Emeritus of Political Science in University of South Alabama.

Following is the full text of his interview:

There are many debates on the legal regime of the Caspian Sea. Some argue that according to the treaties of 1921 and 1940 between Iran and the USSR, the share of Iran equals to 50% of this sea. Is Iran's share stipulated in those treaties?

No. Neither the 1921 nor the 1940 treaties specify that Iran and the USSR each share 50 per cent ownership of the Caspian Sea. Both of these treaties talk in general terms about the resources of the Caspian Sea being the used by Iran and the USSR without stipulating the exact ownership of the seabed, boundary delimitation, and other related issues. We have to remember that these two treaties were signed well before the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) was drafted and came into force. Therefore, the 1921 and 1940 treaties could not have foreseen the complex issues of maritime boundaries that were discussed in UNCLOS.

Based on the international law, what is the legal status of the Caspian Sea after the collapse of the USSR and the sharing of the Caspian Sea by the five littoral states? Some bring about the idea of 20% sharing? Is there any base



for this idea in the international law?

The answer to this question depends on if the Caspian is defined as a "sea" or a "lake." If one classifies the Caspian as a lake, then according to international law its resources should be divided equally among the five riparian states. However, if the Caspian is designated as a sea, then the five littoral states should draw lines extending from their shores to the midway point with littoral neighbors. This explains why for many years Iran had insisted on defining the Caspian as a lake. However, it appears that the five littoral states agreed in Aktau that the Caspian is a sea. That is why some observers have argued that in the final delimitation agreement, Iran will end up getting not only about 13 per cent of the Caspian but also the saltiest and deepest part of it.

Is the share of each of the littoral states from the Caspian Sea defined in the convention signed on August 12 in Kazakhstan?

No, the text of the Caspian Sea Treaty signed on August 12, 2018 in Kazakhstan does not define the share of each of the littoral states. In so far as Iran is concerned, this issue will have

to be determined in a future agreement with Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. Iran has to be very careful in future negotiations with its two neighbors because the resulting boundary agreement will determine Iran's final Caspian share.

What is the main achievement of the Aktau Convention, signed on August 12 in Kazakhstan, in regards to the legal regime and status of the Caspian Sea?

Although some reports have referred to the Caspian Sea Convention as a "landmark agreement," I don't view this agreement as such. Its main achievement was that after more than 20 years of contentious diplomatic efforts, the five littoral states of the Caspian Sea finally agreed on a legal framework for sharing the resources of this significant body of water. There are some clear and specific agreements in the Convention. For example, all five littoral states agreed to 15 miles of sovereign waters, plus a further 10 nautical miles of fishing area. But the wording of the Convention remains vague in many parts of the document, thus delaying divisive decisions that have to be made in future negotiations.

US after Washington-friendly regime in Iran for its strategic goals in Central Asia

Interview by Payman Yazdani

Prof. Kovacevic is of the view that the US is after a US-friendly regime in Iran for its long term strategic goals in Central Asia to stop Chinese One road, One belt initiative.

During a press conference with Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, US President Trump said he would meet with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani without preconditions. His new strategy regarding meeting with Iranian officials caught commentators off guard, as he had been increasingly hostile to the Islamic Republic; on July 22, Trump threatened Iranian President Hassan Rouhani with an all-caps tweet.

Hours after Trump's remarks contrary to his remarks, Secretary of State Pompeo outlined a series of preconditions.

In his latest move repeating the idea of negotiating with the Iranian authorities, US President Donald Trump on Saturday said any meeting with the Iranian leaders is "up to them."

Earlier, Iranian president's chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi revealed that during Rouhani's last visit to New York for the UN General Assembly session, Trump asked the Iranian delegation eight times to have a meeting with the president.

An adviser to President Rouhani Hamid Aboutalebi also said "respecting the Iranian nation's rights, reducing hostilities and returning to the nuclear deal are steps that can be taken to pave the bumpy road of talks between Iran and America."

To shed more light on the issue we reached out to Filip Kovacevic,

Professor of geopolitics, University of San Francisco.

Following is the full text of the interview:

How do you assess contradictory statements of the US officials?

In my opinion, this is simply the playing out of the well-known psycho-



logical tactic of the 'good cop – bad cop.' One person appears to be gentle and kind and the other aggressive and abusive. The target person (or, in this case, the target country, Iran) is made to feel that one is different from the other and is therefore willing to compromise with the 'nicer' cop. However, both 'cops' work together as a team. There is no difference in terms of their final goal – which is to bring about the regime change in Iran. This is the ultimate goal of Trump and his entire team regarding Iran.

The long-term strategic goal of the Trump administration in Central Asia is much wider and it involves obstructing and ultimately stopping the Chinese One Belt, One Road initiative. Having a U.S.-friendly regime in Iran is one of the necessary conditions for doing that successfully.

Is it possible to talk under threat, sanction and breaking of international agreements?

That is the modus operandi of the U.S. foreign policy elite. The sanctions are supposed to weaken the other side so that it becomes willing to compromise. However, according to academic research studies, the sanctions are effective only in 35 percent of the cases. This means that the U.S. will increase the pressure on Iran by developing the so-called 'third option,' the

option between diplomacy and overt military action, that is to say, covert intelligence activities relying on external and internal actors. This is what we are witnessing in Iran right now.

Trump broke the Obama-era Iran deal because he thought he could get a better deal for the U.S. Great Powers are known for breaking treaties and agreements when they no longer suit their interests. That's a hard fact of international politics.

I think that there is no alternative to talking. A great deal of time is needed to form an international coalition to resist U.S. demands. Much closer coordination with Russia and China is necessary and they will ask for favors in return. France, however, will turn out to be a 'false' friend.

What can Trump do to show his good will for starting talks with Iran?

Trump needs a foreign policy victory on the Iranian front before the November election, but he does not need another war in the Middle East. His fiery rhetoric is used to leverage his position. We have seen the examples of that in his dealings with friends and foes alike. He threatened NATO and he threatened Kim Jong-un. And he apparently got what he wanted from them. But these 'victories' are symbolic and vague. They could be reversed any time. I think that's a valuable lesson for Iran.



Interview by Payman Yazdani

Ryan Costello says a great deal of trust was broken when Trump decided to fully withdraw from the JCPOA and snap back sanctions.

During a press conference with Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, US President Trump said he would meet with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani without preconditions. His new strategy regarding meeting with Iranian officials caught commentators off guard, as he had been increasingly hostile to the Islamic Republic; on July 22, Trump threatened Iranian President Hassan Rouhani with an all-caps tweet.

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Earlier, Iranian president's chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi revealed that during Rouhani's last visit to New York for the UN General Assembly session, Trump asked the Iranian delegation eight times to have a meeting with the president.

An adviser to President Rouhani Hamid Aboutalebi also said "respecting the Iranian nation's rights, reducing hostilities and returning to the nuclear deal are steps that can be taken to pave the bumpy road of talks between Iran and America."

To shed more light on the issue we reached out to Ryan Costello NIAC assistant policy director.

Following is the full text of the interview:

How do you assess contradictory statements of the US officials?

The US is pursuing a pressure campaign but hasn't decided whether that campaign will be an end in itself or a means toward a policy goal. Trump appears to have signaled a willingness to negotiate, in line with his approach toward North Korea, but it is unclear if he is serious or if his advisors would permit such a shift in approach at this time.

Immediately after Trump's statement saying he'd negotiate without preconditions, Secretary of State Pompeo outlined a series of preconditions. Moreover, John Bolton – Trump's national security advisor – indicated in 2017 that after the U.S. withdraws from the nuclear accord the administration should leave the prospect of negotiations open to demonstrate Iranian intransigence – not out of a sincere hope for dialogue.

Whereas the Obama administration had clear goals, it is hard to tell what Trump and his administration want on Iran policy.

Is it possible to talk under threat, sanction and breaking of international agreements?

My sense is it is still possible for Iran to talk to the United States, but the Trump administration has done almost

Trump has done everything to disincentivize negotiation with Iran: Costello

everything it can to disincentive serious negotiations. A great deal of trust was broken when Trump decided to fully withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal and snap back sanctions, which has limited the space in Iran to re-engage with the United States.

However, writing off negotiations completely until 2020 or 2024 could prove to be a mistake for Iran given the power of U.S. sanctions. If the Trump administration turns a new leaf and demonstrates a sustained interest in dialogue, Iran should consider direct negotiations. Trump has re-written the political rulebook in the United States before and could do it again, so it might be worth testing whether a mutually-beneficial deal can be struck.

What can Trump do to show his good will for starting talks with Iran?

An obvious good-faith gesture would be to return to the Iran nuclear accord, though I don't believe Trump would consider doing so given its association with his predecessor Barack Obama. An alternative would be to delay the re-imposition of key sanctions that had been lifted under the nuclear accord, provide waivers to European companies eager to continue business started under the JCPOA, or – less convincingly – write to Iran's leaders articulating bottom lines that he would like to address in future meetings. Given the variety of areas of pressure the administration is pressing on, there are many areas where Trump could ease off in order to try to jump-start negotiations.



Richard Nephew:

Trump thinks meeting with Rouhani can solve all US problems with Iran

Interview by: Javad Heirannia

Richard Nephew, who served as the lead sanctions expert for the US team negotiating with Iran, is of the opinion that Trump believes that "if he met with Rouhani, he could solve all US problems with Iran."

The fellow at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University, says, "I suspect, though, that from Iranian officials public comments, they would not be prepared to meet with Trump on the basis of his unpredictability, irrationality, and incoherence."

Following is the text of Mehr News interview with him:

Donald Trump said he would be willing to meet Iranian President Hassan Rouhani with "no preconditions". What are the reasons behind his statement?

I would not take this as a decision. This is a statement and, as the Secretary of State told Congress last week, the statements of the president are apparently not supposed to be understood to be policy. This is confusing not only to

you but also to the American people.

As for what motivated him, I think he's been clear that his main objection to most things is that he was not responsible for them. He believes any agreement he negotiates is the best one and that any decision he reaches is, likewise, the best. Consequently, I think he believes that if he met with Rouhani, he could solve all US problems with Iran. And, this he has said since the presidential campaign.

After Trump's statement on no preconditions' meeting with Iran, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo appeared on CNBC hours later to set some conditions. What are the reasons for this contradiction in Washington?

Ultimately, it is because there are sharp cleavages in the Trump Administration about virtually every foreign policy matter. Pompeo was attempting to reassert control over the Iran policy.

What if Trump is honest in his words but his own administration, especially national security advisor John Bolton or US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo

disagrees with his vision for talks? Is there any possibility that they would be fired from the administration?

Perhaps, but Trump himself also said that he would be prepared to launch a war against Iran. I think that his opinion about what we ought to do changes moment by moment. I do not think he would fire Bolton or Pompeo over this. He may fire them in the future if he decides they are disloyal or too public profile.

Former US deputy secretary of state Wendy Sherman tweeted "Iran just might have a precondition- (Trump) rejoin the community of nations in support of the JCPOA". What's your opinion on this matter?

Well, obviously, I agree with Wendy that this would be in the US national interest. I also agree with Wendy that, I would assume, this would be one of Iran's core demands of any negotiation. I suspect, though, that from Iranian officials' public comments, they would not be prepared to meet with Trump on the basis of his unpredictability, irrationality, and incoherence.

Dr. Zaccara:

Arab NATO, a US plan to curb Iran, deprive China, Russia from arms market

Interview by Payman Yazdani

Research assistant professor in Qatar University believes that the US plan to form Arab NATO aims not only to curb Iran but also to displace Russia and China from region's strategic weaponry market.

The United States is quietly pushing ahead with a bid to create a new security and political alliance with six Persian Gulf Arab states, Egypt and Jordan in part to counter Iran's expansion in the region.

The White House wants to see deeper cooperation between the countries on missile defense, military training, counterterrorism, and other issues such as strengthening regional economic and diplomatic ties.

To shed more light on the issue we reached out to Dr. Luciano Zaccara, research assistant professor in Qatar University.

Here is the full text of our interview with him:

Why is the US trying to form such an alliance?

The Trump's administration was very clear on this regard. The new alliance would be to provide a defense framework to the mentioned states against what is considered a military threat by Iran, mainly regarding missile capabilities. A second objective would be to reinstate the US as the main protector and military provider for the Arab states in the region, and to displace any further attempt by Russia, China or other providers that already entered the market of strate-

gic weaponry.

Considering the differences among these Persian Gulf Arab states, to what extent you think these states will be able to form such an alliance?

A similar alliance already exists, but due to the current crisis between Qatar and the quartet led by Saudi Arabia it became meaningless. A new framework with the same actors, similar goals, and without resolving the current discrepancies among them, and moreover, including new states such as Egypt and Jordan, it would be very difficult to materialize. First of all, the October summit has not been decided yet, and it will be very unlikely to see together in the same forum Qatari, Saudis, Emiratis and Bahrainis in the current situation.

Despite all differences, if such an alliance be formed, will it be able to materialize its goals while even a bigger alliance lead by Saudi Arabia in Yemen has not been able to reach its goals after years of fighting?

It will depend on the goals. So far, there is no such a thing, just a proposal from President Trump that was received with skepticism within the Arab states context. Even the suggested summit should have a clear agenda that so far was not released, moreover since the Qatar-Saudi crisis would interfere in any attempt to materialize an alliance between states that are accusing each other in a very harsh way. For instance, Saudi Arabia and Emirates are signaling Qatar for support to Houthi rebels in Yemen that are in conflict with them.



The same that is happening with the alleged Qatari support to Muslim Brotherhood, which is banned in both states.

What is the best security architecture for the Persian Gulf? Is it possible to provide the security of the region without the presence of all states?

It is difficult to think in a security framework that includes all the Persian Gulf states when there is a strong distrust among them, mainly between the major actors, Iran and Saudi Arabia, and when history is showing that territorial conflicts, such as the Iran-Iraq war, or the Kuwaiti invasion by Iraq, or even the current Saudi led blockade to Qatar, are still very present in the minds of both authorities and people. But also history proves that the European Union was formed by former enemies for centuries such as Germany, France, UK or Italy, and this was the most successful integration and cooperation framework at all levels in history. Why is not possible to think about something similar in the Persian Gulf context? Definitely, all the states, including Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the UAE should participate in a framework in which common threats, challenges and opportunities can be discussed openly. But the defense is not the first aspect that can attract such common interest. In my opinion, environmental concerns, such as the sustainability of the Persian Gulf waters, common to all the states, can be an aspect in which common interests and goals may surface and multilateral agreements may be reached.

Forming alliance among PGCC member states an illusory idea: Prof. Entessar



Interview by Payman Yazdani

Professor of political science says the “Arab world” today is a patchwork of competing countries and forming an enduring alliance among the Arab states of the Persian Gulf is an illusory idea concocted by the US.

The United States is quietly pushing ahead with a bid to create a new security and political alliance with six Persian Gulf Arab states, Egypt and Jordan in part to counter Iran's expansion in the region.

The White House wants to see deeper cooperation between the countries on missile defense, military training, counterterrorism, and other issues such as strengthening regional economic and diplomatic ties.

To know more about the issue we reached out to Professor Entessar, who is the Chair of Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice at the University of South Alabama.

Here is the full text of our interview with him:

Why is the US trying to form such an alliance?

The United States is manically obsessed with Iran and is throwing darts in different directions with the hope of undermining Iran and its national security. We have to see the idea of forming a broad anti-Iran alliance against Tehran in the context of Washington's overall policy in the Persian Gulf and beyond.

Considering the differences among these Persian Gulf Arab states, to what extent you think these states will be able to form such an alliance?

The Arab world, in general, and the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, in particular, are more fractious today than they have been in decades. What used to be called the “Arab consensus” does not exist today. What is euphemistically referred to as the “Arab world” today is a patchwork of competing countries. Forming an enduring alliance among the Arab states of the Persian Gulf is an illusory idea concocted by the West, especially the United States.

Despite all differences, if such an alliance be formed, will it be able to materialize its goals while even a bigger alliance lead by Saudi Arabia in Yemen

has not been able to reach its goals after years of fighting?

As I alluded to in my previous answers, the experience of forming alliances among Arab states in recent decades has been marked by failure. This has been especially true in the case of the Arab states of the Persian Gulf. However, as Karl Marx has stated: “History repeats itself, the first as tragedy, then as farce.”

What is the best security architecture for the Persian Gulf? Is it possible to provide the security of the region without the presence of all states?

The best security architecture for the Persian Gulf is one that is structured on regional arrangements that guarantee the security and national integrity of all states. Functioning security arrangements cannot be seen as zero-sum games in which the goal is to eliminate or sideline one state. In the Persian Gulf, security arrangements that have been formed or talked about in the past 40 years have had one thing in common: containing and/or damaging Iran's national interests. That is why such arrangements have been failures.



Interview by Payman Yazdani

Turkish politician says Saudi Arabia's move toward Erbil aims to reduce Iran and Turkey influence in Iraq to break up the country in coordination with the US and Israel.

Recently a delegation from Riyadh agreed with KRG officials in Erbil to expand economic ties with the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.

The Saudi delegation was headed by Sami Bin Abdullah al-Obeidi, head of the Saudi Arabia's Commerce Chambers and he was accompanied by Saudi ambassador to Iraq, Faysal al-Oteibi, Saudi consul general to the Kurdistan Region, and other officials from the kingdom.

The Saudi delegation held a meeting with KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani in Erbil on Tuesday.

According to a statement from Barzani's office, the two sides had decided to "set the Kurdistan Region, as a first step, as the center to begin commercial, economic, and investment activities throughout Iraq."

The statement added the two sides discussed "employment and investment opportunities and the strengthening of economic and trade ties in all areas of the Kurdistan Region."

The need to establish direct flights between the region's airports and Saudi Arabia was stressed, as was a plan to open a Saudi bank in Iraq, Kurdistan 24 said.

According to Kurdistan 24, the Saudis and Iraqi Kurdistan officials supported the convening of a conference in either the Kurdistan Region or Saudi Arabia, with the participation of investors, businessmen from Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the Kurdistan Region, and the concerned governmental bodies on both sides.

Barzani also expressed the readiness of his government to provide facilities for investment and operation of Saudi capital in Iraqi Kurdistan Region.

Many politicians believe that Saudi Ara-

S Arabia playing with sectarian card in Iraq: Logoglu

bia's efforts to establish close relation with Erbil is a coordinated plan by Saudi Arabia, Israeli regime and the US to disintegrate Iraq and ultimately the Middle East.

On July 25, a day after the Saudi delegation's visit to Erbil, Iraqi politician Iskander Witwit warned that Saudi Arabia is getting closer to the Iraqi Kurds with the aim of breaking up Iraq.

Iskander Witwit, who has served as head of the Iraqi parliamentary security committee and now is one of the leader of second winning bloc in latest Iraqi elections namely 'Fatih', told Iraqi 'Baghdad Alyoum or Baghdad Today' that "Saudi Arabia has a malicious goal in getting closer to Iraqi Kurdistan and seeks to partition Iraq from there and weaken Iraq from inside."

Witwit further accused Masoud Barzani, the leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), of complicity in the Saudis' plan to break up Iraq into smaller parts by allowing the Saudis to use the territory of Kurdistan region to carry out the plot.

The Iraqi politician also stated that allowing Saudi military commanders to enter Iraq territories would affect Iraq's security and stability, for that, he called on Iraqi central government to take a stand on the worrisome cooperation between the Kurds and Saudi Arabia.

To know more about the issue we reached out to Dr. Osman Faruk Logoglu, a senior member of Turkey's Republican People's Party (CHP).

Following is the full text of our interview with him:

Commenting on the real goals of the Saudi's efforts to establish a relation with Erbil, Logoglu said, "Saudi outreach to Erbil could have the impact of boosting the threat to the territorial integrity of Iraq. KRG, having already held an independence referendum, is only biding its time to take further steps toward independence, waiting for more propitious conditions at the regional and international levels. KRG leaders have in the past declared that political independence is only a matter of time. Hence Saudi investments, by bolstering KRG's economy, would encourage the drive for Kurdish separation from Iraq. Whether this is actually the intent of Saudi Arabia or not will depend on the

nature and conditionality of these investments and more importantly, how this effort is cleared with the central government in Baghdad.

He added, "SA's basic foreign policy drive is to roll back and contain Iranian influence in the region. The same now increasingly applies to Turkey, given the fact that Turkish-Saudi relations have recently taken a steep downturn for a variety of reasons, including and especially because of differences over the Qatar issue. The Kurds in Iraq are therefore a natural target – in the positive, friendly sense – for SA. The Sunni-Shia factor is also definitely at play here, with SA playing the sectarian trump card. Thus, the basic Saudi goal is to reduce Iranian – and Turkish – influence in Iraq and replace it with its own."

Touching upon the relation between Saudi move in the region and the US and Israeli regime's goals in the region, the Turkish politician noted, "Recent SA actions whether at home or abroad must be interpreted in connection with the emerging new bond between SA, the USA and Israel. This glue holding this triangle is their mutual adversity to Iran. SA acts at the behest of the USA. The Kurds of Iraq and Syria are now the most coveted allies of Americans. And Israel would be the most enthusiastic supporter of a fragmented Iraq and Syria and would be happy to see the rise of an independent Kurdistan. Israel feels that this would deflect and divide Arab attention and resources and reduce the Arab – and Iranian and Turkish – pressure on Israel. Hence it is highly likely that the new SA move toward Erbil has the seal of approval from both Washington and Tel Aviv."

Logoglu concluded, "Any security concerns arising from SA presence near their borders can be readily and easily met by both Turkey and Iran. SA would not play any security-related games that could lead to Turkish and Iranian reactions. Nevertheless, both Ankara and Teheran should make clear that all SA actions in Iraq must be consistent with Iraq's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and with the consent of the central government in Baghdad."

Policymakers see a change in Transatlantic relations: ECFR's Moller

Interview by Payman Yazdani

Commenting on the necessity of a right balanced engagement between Russia and the EU, head of the ECFR Berlin office says Washington is after new alliances and European policymakers see a change in transatlantic relation.

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.

EU emergence as an economic super power has been the source of concerns for the US.

Differences between the US and EU over trade tariffs, NATO and other issues all resulted in the US President Donald Trump's remarks that called the EU as an enemy of the US. Following his unfriendly remarks some EU officials reacted to his unfriendly behavior.

To shed more light on the issue we reached out to Dr. Almut Moller, head of of the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) in Berlin.

Following is the full text of the interview with her:

Commenting on the recent tensions between Washington and EU, Dr. Moller



said, "In Berlin, policymakers do indeed see a change in transatlantic relations. President Trump, unlike previous US administrations, is challenging the European Union as an economic and political umbrella for the countries of Europe, and is undermining unity in words, and with action. While the unusual rhetoric and style of the US President is creating a lot of attention, there is the view in Berlin that what really matters are the structural divergences between the US and European countries that one needs to focus on. There is the widespread assumption that even with another president (either Republican or Democrat) the US would have asked Europeans for a greater share of the burden to upkeep the international order, in particular in terms of investing more into European security."

Referring to the Europeans reaction to current developments, she went on to say, "As a result, Chancellor Merkel has put forward her determination to strengthen the European Union in order to be able to protect European interests better. While the EU might look quite divided at this stage - in particular with the United Kingdom on its way out - what has happened over the last two years is that EU members realized the benefits of EU membership even more. If a country of the size and power of the UK is struggling with the prospect of being outside of the EU, how much more difficult would it be for smaller EU countries? This question has brought EU countries closer together. The trade dispute with the US for now has had a similar effect.

Overall, there is a more volatile European and international environment, but also a determination in Berlin, Paris and other EU capitals to adapt to this environment and to protect Europeans from the negative effects, while looking for new opportunities - see, for example, the recent trade agreement with Japan."

Moller added, "In the US, it seems that the consensus within the country that has carried much throughout the 20th century, that is to be involved in shaping the European and international order, is turning somewhat more inward looking. Having said that, the current US president is also looking for new alliances. However, his recent meetings with North Korean and Russian leaders are judged by their results, which for now have not materialized."

Emphasizing the necessity of a balanced relation with Russia, she said, "From a European perspective, the problem is perhaps not that Russia is overly powerful, but on the contrary that it might be vulnerable, in particular in economic terms. Having said that, Moscow has quite a bit of spoiling capacity. European geography means that Europeans have an interest in engaging with a Russia that is able to meet its citizens' needs. Having said that, EU capitals agreed in their determination to condemn Russia's violation of international law, that is the annexation of Crimea. So it is important to find the right balance between engagement and red lines."

She concluded, "On the Middle East, Europeans with the refugee crisis have experienced the direct impact of their neighboring region being in turmoil. Again, its geography makes Europe exposed, and makes Europeans more responsible than has been acknowledged in the past for what is happening in their neighborhood. A changing US engagement will mean once again that Europeans will have to step up - while being aware of the limits of their collective power, there is still room for European foreign policy to work better, and to look for new allies."

Trump in drive to stir unrest in Iran by sanctions: Prof. Zonis

Interview by Payman Yazdani

Professor of Chicago University is of the view that US President is a pathological narcissist that tries to press Iran by increasing sanctions and stirring domestic unrest.

Following is the full text of our interview with Marvin Zonis, Professor of international political economy and leadership in the University of Chicago on the recent developments in the international arena and possible changes in world orders and regimes created after World War II.

Nowadays great gaps and differences are seen among G7 member states while SCO member states are moving forward more convergence. Some believe that the orders and the regimes created after World War II are declining and because of this reason the US is not going to pay the costs of regimes like NATO, WTO and different free trade treaties like NAFTA,... What do you think of this? Why the US is not ready to pay the costs of the regimes and orders as before?

It is something of an exaggeration to say the US pays the cost of NATO or the WTO or NAFTA, as the richest of the member states and founder of the organizations, especially after the catastrophe of World War II, the US took the lead role. But member states still do contribute. The US, it needs to be mentioned, protected its self with a veto on virtually all the decisions these organizations make. But more important than any other factor is the very peculiar views of President Donald Trump who acts as if US allies are in fact its adversaries while its adversaries are in fact its friends. His attacks on Europe, NATO, the G7, etc., are not widely shared in the US and, in fact, are greeted with horror by the vast majority of the American people. His recent appalling performance with Vladimir Putin, where Trump said he believed the Russian President's denial of Russian interference in the 2016 elec-

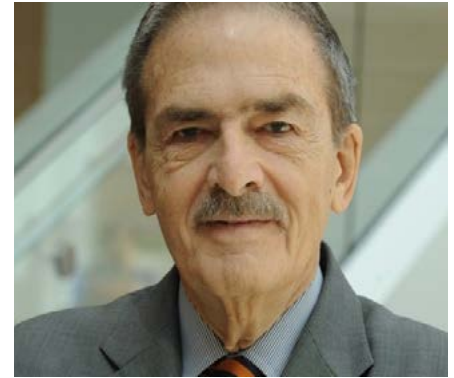
tion rather than all the US intelligence agencies is just but one very important indication of this.

While the US president Donald Trump attended the NATO and G7 summits with an aggressive approach toward Washington's allies, he is trying to improve relation with North Korea and Russia with a reconciling approach. Why?

It is very difficult to understand Donald Trump. I start with the possibility that he has serious cognitive impairments which prevent his thinking clearly and cogently. (He may, in short, be mentally ill.) He is also a pathological narcissist who believes that only he can solve US foreign problems. His rush to the summit meeting which Kim Jon Un is a consequence — an ill prepared summit with very little substance but lots of positive headlines for the narcissist Trump. With Putin — maybe the President of Russia does have incriminating videos of Trump's when he was in Russia for the beauty pageant he sponsored....It is also the case that he admires authoritarian, tough guys over democratic leaders...

International community is experiencing a new area in which while the US is retreating from the old orders and regimes, China is trying to impose its own orders and regimes by reviewing ancient Silk Road project. To what extent the developments in the Middle East especially in Syria are affected by international systems structure which is changing?

Under Trump, the US is certainly retreating from globalization — its past foreign policy priorities. In this sense he is cooperating with Russia and China who seek the same goal. For the time being the Chinese Silk Road projects have less to do with Syria than does the foreign policy of President Putin, whose military presence is a powerful factor in all Syrian developments? Then there is Iran, Israel, the US and Turkey — all part of the mix beneath President Assad. We are very far from a stable outcome in Syria and should be pre-



pared for more combat, deaths, and chaos — poor Syria.

Some theoretician including John Mearsheimer believe that one of the most important elements of president Trump's foreign policy is to move toward offshore balancing and reduction of troops and increasing of animosity with Iran. Do you agree with this? Will the US decrease the number of its troops in Middle East? If we accept that the mentioned elements are the base for Trump's foreign policy, how will Washington confront with Iran's regional influence?

The senior people surrounding President Trump — particularly John Bolton and James Mattis — are confirmed Iran haters. Trump himself hates Iran so the combination of these people suggest very negative things ahead for the US - Iran relationship. The only useful tools the US has for the moment is the imposition of more punishing sanctions. This may be followed by efforts to stir domestic Iranian unrest by focusing on Iran's minorities — not likely to be a very positive approach. Then it appears that President Putin and President Trump agree to allow Israel to attack Iran in Syria. So the result of these is that Iran will pay a very high price for its foreign policy.

Reacting to President Trump's remarks calling EU as the US foe, Donald Tusk, president of the European Council asked Trump and Putin not to disturb world order. Do you think that Trump and Putin are going to create a new world order? If yes, how will the new polarization be in the new order?

This is inconceivable to me since Putin is hated by virtually everyone in the US (with the apparent exception of President Trump).

Venezuela says Iran lucky to have no US embassy; 'petro' main tool for bypassing US sanctions

Interview by: Lachin Rezaian

Venezuela's Ambassador to Tehran Jesus Gregorio Gonzalez Gonzalez hailed Iran's chance to have no US embassy, saying what Americans do in all the embassies throughout the world is only to interfere in their affairs and their illegal demands are not met, they push for other measures, plots and coups.

Venezuela's Ambassador to Tehran Jesus Gregorio Gonzalez said when it comes to the cut in oil production, everybody talks about it being at zero level, however this is not true; Venezuela's oil output is not headed toward zero, he stressed, adding, "yes, production level has declined around a third of its previous level which is due to two reasons: first is the result of financial crisis of 2007-2008, during which many countries faced the liquidity problem and foreign exchange shortage which led to the steep fall in oil output; because of that, investment was not possible because there was no money, and this was not a problem only in Venezuela, but in the whole world which were forced to reduce their oil production level. Second, in political matters, Venezuela was hit by economic sanctions imposed by the United States, which also had its own consequences. They made some restrictions on our technologies and what we need to produce oil. And this is another reason that affects Venezuela's oil production.

The said reasons are considered as a political tool US used against Venezuela's economy to achieve its goals; however, Venezuela is doing its job in the oil market, as before. It continues to export oil to the United States as before, e.g. we are selling oil to eight refineries in the US, but we face payment difficulties caused by sanctions.

And this also has a series of effects on our investment, especially in the oil field, so that they can use it as a tool to attack us.

He ensured Venezuela is now more seriously pursuing some policies than last year, so that it can compensate for the shortfalls, during the next four years.



"Many of our allies like China, India and Russia help us in this area and as you know, investing in the oil field needs a large amount of capital," he explained.

Responding to a question on Venezuela's oil import from the Islamic Republic, and the possibility of any increase in the amount in President Maduro's new term, he said "Venezuela imports 400000 barrels of light crude from Iran and combines it with heavy oil of Venezuela to prepare it for export. Iran also faces some restrictions on its oil production.

Regarding the question on the agreement by major oil producers to pump more crude to help reduce prices and prevent a supply shortage, which is a significant reversal of OPEC's strategy of curbing output over the past 19 months, Jesus Gregorio Gonzalez said Iran's position on the issue is clearly announced, however, Saudi Arabia does not have an independent policy on the oil issue; Saudi Arabia, together with Russia, the world's two biggest oil producers, generate 11 million bpd per day, and this is due to their less problems with the United States.

"We have a single position on oil in OPEC, but Saudi's position is influenced by the political conditions. Indeed, Saudi Arabia does not have a consistent view on this issue, but anyway, they want to increase oil production, which is in line with the position of other members of OPEC so that they could cope with ris-

ing prices," he noted, adding "since Saudi Arabia lacks a definite, constant, and especially independent policy on the oil issue, so its potential performance in the future cannot be evaluated."

Gregorio Gonzalez underlined that Saudi Arabia has shown many contradictions in its approaches to oil issues, constantly changing its position. On the other hand, due to the fact that it produces a large amount of oil, it affects other members of the OPEC, including the UAE.

Commenting on Saudi Arabia's promise to US president to produce 2 million barrels of oil per day and whether this violates OPEC's rules, Gonzales said "it definitely violates the rules, but the problem is they are not able at all to produce that much oil; Saudi Arabia pledges to OPEC, but does not have the potential and capacity to keep this promise."

The Venezuelan ambassador to Iran, responding to a question on the critical status of Venezuela's national oil company PDVSA's debts and the payment strategies in President Maduro's new term, said "all important and big companies are in debt. They take loans to develop their activities, and this leads to debt creation. But there are two issues here: one is that all the companies have debts, and the other is that PDVSA is one of the largest oil companies in the world, which has many financial statements. Venezuela owns the world's largest oil reserves and needs some funds to make use of all →

its reserves for investment. Suppose you have an apple garden covering an area of at least 100,000 acres; you want to harvest your garden. In this case, you need to get a loan and spend a lot of money. But when your product volume is high, you may not have anything at that time to tap your garden, but your credit is the 100,000 hectares where you can get apple from. Venezuela's oil company is also like this garden. PDVSA has a lot of resources in the oil field, but due to financial problems and lack of sufficient funds, it cannot make use of them to achieve whatever it wants.

Venezuelan ambassador, responding a question on oil-backed "petro" cryptocurrency and its role in improving the economic crisis in Venezuela, said "each petro coin is backed by Venezuela's massive oil reserves."

Gonzales asserted that the petro price is correlated with one barrel of oil, adding that Venezuela is preparing a new cryptocurrency called "petro gold" that will be backed by precious metals.

He added that petro is said to have raised more than \$5 billion from investors throughout the world so far, and will undoubtedly keep rising, and that the state-backed virtual currency reaffirms Venezuela's economic sovereignty.

Venezuelan ambassador stressed "maybe \$5 million is a big money for a person, but for a country, it is a negligible amount. \$5 billion is not enough to improve a falling economy of a country; Venezuela definitely needs much higher amounts to cope with its crisis, because our debts are far more than that. Anyway, petro is a way in which the government of Venezuela can get around the harsh US sanctions imposed upon us.

On the other hand, he added, petro helps us pay the global trade. It helps us not to be dependent on any international entity such as the World Bank, and we have the freedom to act on our international payments.

Mr. Ambassador said "currently, only the United States does not allow trading with petro, because we can circumvent the restrictions imposed by the US sanctions, through petro," adding "all countries, depending on their financial power, can use cryptocurrency, like the way petro has also entered the global trading system."

In response to the question on whether the Venezuelan government, in its new term, will implement plans other

than petro to salvage its economy from crisis, he said "the new government will take office in January 2019, and it has new plans, including mining;" we have mineral products besides gas and oil, he added.

Jesus Gregorio Gonzalez asserted that, "as we have an active role in the steel industry in the world, we can also increase aluminum and iron production."

He also pointed to the tourism industry as the other section to be considered during the new term.

Pointing to some agreements signed in agricultural and industrial fields, he said, "for the implementation of these accords, we have to wait for some domestic Venezuelan issues to be resolved. In the near future, we will implement our

demands are not met, they push for other measures, plots and coups. They planned a coup against Chavez, all controlled by the US embassy. This is one of the reasons why Venezuela expels some American diplomats, including US former ambassador; Americans have conspired and tried to sabotage against the government, and took lots of measures to destabilize Venezuela."

"Americans are constantly trying to accuse Venezuelan elections as "fake" and "illegitimate", Gonzales said, adding "I think President Maduro was very tolerant and kind with them, since he expelled only two of them, instead of firing all of US diplomats from the embassy."

We are after communications with all the countries, in case they respect



plans for the export of rice, coffee, cocoa, gold, and precious stones."

Mehr News also discussed with Gonzales the US accusations against the Venezuelan elections and calling it a "sham" and President Nicolas Maduro's decision to expel the top US diplomat in Venezuela and his deputy for conspiring against the government and trying to sabotage the presidential elections.

Asked whether President Maduro made a good decision to expel US diplomats regarding the current situation and the possibility of imposing next round of sanctions, he said "the first thing is that we do not have Iran's chance to have no US embassy in Venezuela. Americans are not in Iran, and this is undoubtedly considered an advantage for Iran. What Americans do in all the embassies throughout the world is only to interfere in their affairs. When their illegal

our sovereignty and independency; we have proved this in action several times before: Venezuela released American missionary Joshua Holt on the weapons charges and released many other prisoners of opposition groups, he noted, adding "however, US is after hostile policies against Venezuela; they have and will impose sanctions on us, and nothing will change their behavior."

"Americans are constantly trying to accuse Venezuelan elections as "fake" and "illegitimate", Gonzales said, adding "I think President Maduro was very tolerant and kind with them, since he expelled only two of them, instead of firing all of US diplomats from the embassy."

US will keep on plotting against Venezuela, as they are doing against Iran during past 40 years, and against all people and all the governments throughout the world, he underlined.



No major intl. development occurred after 'Trump-Un' meeting: Dr. Cyr

Interview by Payman Yazdani

Commenting on talks between the leaders of the US and North Korea, Dr. Arthur I. Cyr believes that the Summit meetings are most successful and important when used to confirm consequential agreements, negotiated in detail in advance.

US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met face-to-face on June 12 in Singapore for their highly anticipated summit. After hours of talks, the US president said he was heading toward "a signing" with Kim, but there was no immediate indication of what sort of agreement would be signed.

The summit began with the two men briefly shaking hands and taking a photo side-by-side, then moving to another room, where they sat and made brief statements for the press.

Many expected the meeting of the two leaders as a breakthrough for the relation of the two states and the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

On July 7, the officials of the countries met again in Pyongyang. In comments to reporters before leaving Pyongyang, Pompeo said his conversations with senior North Korean official Kim Yong Chol

had been "productive," conducted "in good faith" and that "a great deal of progress" had been made in some areas.

High-level talks between the United States and North Korea appeared to hit a snag on Saturday as Pyongyang said a visit by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had been "regrettable" and accused Washington of making "gangster-like" demands to pressure the country into abandoning its nuclear weapons.

To shed more light on the issue, we reached out to Dr. Arthur I. Cyr, director of the A.W. Clausen Center for World Business at Carthage.

Commenting on the significance and possible success of the meeting Cyr said, "The Summit meetings are most successful and important when used to confirm consequential agreements, negotiated in detail in advance. The best examples are President Richard Nixon's two meetings in 1972, with the leaders of China to begin formal communication and diplomatic recognition, and the Soviet Union to sign the SALT strategic arms treaties."

"Summits can also serve the purpose of recognizing great changes in international relations, or hopes for progress. The 1989 meeting between President George H.W. Bush and Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev after the

fall of the Berlin Wall is in this category. The leaders at that time expressed good spirits and declared the Cold War had ended. The recent meeting between the US President and leader of North Korea is in this category roughly. However, there were no detailed formal agreements, and no major international development had occurred." He added, "If North Korea continues to dismantle nuclear weapon capabilities, and takes other peaceful steps, then the recent summit will be important."

Referring to possible effects of the potential improvement of relation between the US and North Korea on Pyongyang's relation with China and Russia, Dr. Cyr said, "So far, there is no significance for US relations with China, Russia or other major powers. The US-South Korea military alliance is exceptionally strong. South Korea, for example, maintained about 50,000 troops in South Vietnam during the long U.S. war there, only because of fraternal commitment. Cancelling a single military exercise is of no consequence in this context."

The meetings between the leaders of the two Koreas are extremely important. Before, Pyongyang tried hard to work only with the US and deny the existence of the government in Seoul.

Ankara-Washington relations to remain tense: Turkish expert



Interview by Payman Yazdani

Referring to reasons for reelection of Erdoğan, Turkish political analyst Semih Idiz says Turkey's domestic, regional policies and tensions with the US will have almost no changes.

On Sunday June 24th, Turkey's long-standing leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan won a new five-year term as president.

Mr. Erdogan got nearly 53% with almost all votes counted. His closest rival Muharrem Ince was on 31%.

To know more about the reasons for Erdogan's success and possible changes to his domestic and regional policies we reached out to Turkish Political analyst Semih Idiz.

Here is the full text of Mehr News interview with him:

What are the main reasons for reelection of Erdogan and success of AKP?

The conditions were arranged so that the playing field favored him in these elections. He had more airtime on television, more coverage in the press and could use the advantages of the emergency rule in force since the failed coup

attempt in 2016. Despite that though the results still showed that he continues to have the support of the conservative religious as well as the nationalist classes. His hard-line position on the PKK in Iraq and YPG in Syria also worked to his advantage. There were also those who like his strong leadership and fear that if he was to go Turkey would enter into a new period of instability. So you could say his victory was the result of a number of factors.

Will we see any changes in Ankara's policy in Syria and Iraq?

As far as Ankara's regional policies are concerned I think we will see continuity in this regard. In other words it will be much the same. There is no indication that he is prepared to change his position on the various issues relating to the region that he has maintained for a number of years now. I also think his regional policies will continue to be driven by sectarian considerations although Ankara vehemently denies this. In the meantime his ties with regional powers will not be as good as he would want, mainly because regional Arab powers are and Iran are not too happy about his interference in the Middle East, whatever his popularity may be with the poorer

elements of Middle Eastern society.

Will there be any breakthrough in the Kurdish issue in Turkey?

The Kurdish issue will continue to be one of his main headaches, especially now that he has to work together with the ultra-nationalist Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). He will continue his onslaught against the PKK and the pro-Kurdish Peoples Democratic Party (HDP), but he will try to present this as a policy which aims to fight terrorism, and which is not against the Kurdish people. The elections showed, however, that this argument is not convincing for the Kurds.

Recently we see improvement of relation between Ankara and Washington especially over Manbij. Will it affect the Ankara and Tehran relation in President Erdogan's new term?

Relations between Ankara and Washington will remain tense, despite the progress which is reportedly being made over Manbij. There are too many unresolved issues between the countries at the moment for ties to improve rapidly. The two countries will nevertheless continue to cooperate on strategic issues of mutual interest, as has been the case to date.

Recognition of Palestine to be raised at right time to bring progress, not further problems to ME

*Interview by: Lachin Rezaian,
Mohammad Ghaderi*

Slovenian Ambassador to Iran Kristina Radej underlined that Slovenia as a member of EU will always respect Common Foreign Relation Policy within EU, adding the recognition has to come on a proper time to bring progress not to bring additional tightening of the situation in the Middle East.

Expressing consent over the ties between Slovenia and Iran, especially after the reopening of Slovenian embassy in the Islamic Republic, Radej told Mehr News correspondent that progress is visible primarily in the economy. "In 2017, the value of trade between Slovenia and Iran amounted to €59 million; the Slovenian exports increased by 18 percent, while the growth rate of the total bilateral trade stood at 24 percent, an upward trend compared to 2016," she noted.

She also underlined the current developments make it possible to establish cooperation in banking and financial operations, which are very important in terms of supporting business in Iran.

Here is the full text of her interview with Mehr News:

What changes have been reported in the level of bilateral ties between Iran and Slovenia, since the reopening of Slovenia's embassy in Tehran and President Borut Pahor's visit to Tehran in 2016?

Slovenia was officially recognized by Iran on 14 February 1992. Two countries established diplomatic relations on 9 March 1992. The Slovenian Embassy in Tehran was first opened on April 1993. In July 2011 Islamic Republic of Iran officially opened the Embassy in Ljubljana.

New premises of the Embassy after we temporarily closed the Embassy in



March 2013 were inaugurated by President Borut Pahor during his visit to Iran in November 2016. In practice, the Embassy became fully functional after my arrival on May 2017.

I handed credentials to the President Rouhani on 20 June 2017. The reopening of the Embassy strengthened the political and economic ties between Slovenia and Iran. The work itself continued when we temporarily closed the Embassy in March 2013, so we did not have to start from the beginning. My appointment as ambassador was mainly dictated by the need for effective continuation of the work based on excellent relations between the two countries.

Progress is visible primarily in the economy, where in 2017 the value of trade between Slovenia and Iran amounted to €59 million. The Slovenian exports increased by 18 percent, while the rate of the total bilateral trade grows by 24 percent, compared to 2016. The value of Slovenian export totalled €54.2 million, exceeding the record value of 2011.

Business collaboration between two countries expanded in May 2016, when Slovenia hosted the 1st meeting of the Working Group on Energy based on the Memorandum of Cooperation in Energy.

In June 2017, Slovenia hosted the 3rd NANOAPP International Conference; attended by the representatives of the Iran Nanotechnology Initiative Council (INIC), who held talks at Slovenian faculties and institutes in order to identify possible areas of cooperation in the field of nanotechnology.

The next session of the Slovenian-Iranian joint economic commission is scheduled in the fall of 2018; it will be held on the basis of bilateral Agreement on Economic Cooperation.

The activities of the Embassy focuses on various economic segments, primarily on logistics, transport, energy, renewables, ICT, nanotechnology and biotechnology; as well as electro, automotive, and chemical industries. Important fields are also tourism, agriculture, wood processing and pharmaceuticals. Slovenia has an export oriented economy and can present in Iran its comparative advantages and know-how in green technologies, photovoltaic, water management and wider environmental issues.

The current developments make it possible to establish stronger cooperation in banking and financial operations, which are very important for supporting business in Iran.

As ambassador, I'm trying to sup→

port companies in negotiating business deals and to co-create favourable conditions for their operations in Iran. I'm very satisfied that the cooperation with the Iranian Embassy in Ljubljana is also excellent.

Since economy is a main route to access macro political goals in development of a country, in what fields do you think Iran and Slovenia can boost cooperation?

In 2017, the value of trade between the two countries amounted to €59 million. The Slovenian exports increased by 18 percent, while the growth rate of the total bilateral trade stood at 24 percent, an upward trend compared to 2016; the value of Slovenian export totalled €54.2 million.

Is any Slovenian official expected to visit Iran in the near future, two years after embassy reopening?

We focused on visits to Iran before reopening the Embassy. In January 2016, the Minister of Economic Development and Technology, Mr Zdravko Počivalšek, visited Iran, accompanied by a large business delegation, and held talks with the highest representatives of several Iranian ministries. Minister Počivalšek signed the Memorandum of

Economic Cooperation and Memorandum of Cooperation in energy.

In November 2016, the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Mr Borut Pahor, paid an official visit to Iran, accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Karl Erjavec, Minister of Economic Development and Technology, Mr Zdravko Počivalšek, and a business delegation of 41 Slovenian companies. During the visit, Slovenia and Iran signed the Agreement on Economic Cooperation, Memorandum of Cooperation in information and communications technology (ICT) and Memorandum on Cooperation in Science. At that time the Gorenjska Banka bank established correspondence relations with two partner banks in Iran.

Slovenia and Iran also maintain regular diplomatic dialogue. The political cooperation between foreign ministries foresees political dialogue in the form of regular consultations at the level of deputy ministers. The latest political consultations were held in Tehran in November 2016 and in December 2015 in Ljubljana. We are trying to facilitate the visit of His Excellency Foreign Minister Zarif to Slovenia and Deputy Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi as soon as possible to continue with political consultations at the

level of deputy ministers in year end. Slovenia is in the reforming process of the new Government so I presume that visits from the highest level from Slovenia will be postponed.

New Government will form their priorities on foreign relations policy in the future. Usually first visits are dedicated to our neighbouring countries, EU members and Institutions. Working level meetings are in our schedule without any delay.

Slovenia's expected recognition of Palestinian statehood was postponed until after the upcoming general elections. Unlike many other Western democracies, it is Slovenia's legislative branch, not its executive, which has the last word on foreign policy matters such as recognizing states. Do you think the new Parliament will finally vote for recognition of Palestinian statehood? And if not, did they retreat from their position due to threats of "negative consequences" on Israeli-Slovenian relations?, regarding the fact that President Borut Pahor has said he would only back the recognition of Palestine "in circumstances that would contribute to the solution of its bilateral issues with Israel but not to the worsening of relations.

Slovenia as a member of EU will →



always respect Common Foreign Relation Policy within EU, of course each of 28 countries has right to independently decide about their own state policy in specific issues.

We have to see the wider picture and we have to do our best to assist in the dialogue which will lead us to peace in the Middle East. We have to pay attention also to other countries in the region. The recognition has to come on a proper time to bring progress not to bring additional tightening of the situation in the Middle East. Diplomatic dialogue and political will are the only tools which will facilitate the conditions for recognition of the State of Palestine.

I wish that EU will be engaged more in Middle East peace process in the future.

With US pullout from JCPOA, will Slovenian companies stay in Tehran, considering that two of them, Duol and Comita, pulled out of Tehran in January this year, after two years in Tehran?

As other EU member states, Slovenia firmly believes that the JCPOA is the key element of the global architecture of Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and is important factor of stability in the region. The interest to further deepen the relations is mutual.

Regarding the recognition of Palestine, it is not the matter of IF but it is the matter of WHEN.

Mentioned companies did not leave Iran, they just do not have their own representative in the Economic Representative Office of Slovenian companies here in Iran. The Representative Office is working on a need to set bases. Companies' representatives are using the premises of the office if they need it in the business project timeframe.

I have to stress that majority of Slovenian companies are working directly with their partners here in Iran and they do not need necessarily the Economic Representative Office of Slovenian companies in Tehran. Slovenian companies which are not exposed on US market or US economic system will be more comfortable to do business in Iran in following months.

This week, on Tuesday, we had a meeting with the Iranian partners of Slovenian companies here at the Em-



bassy. We discussed situation on economic field, challenges on a banking area and sharing information how Embassy can assist with their businesses with Slovenia.

Slovenian companies have been in Iran during the worst period of time under sanctions and they found their opportunity on the field which became empty after departure of big business companies. They are small and middle-sized companies and very flexible with adaptation of their business models, they can easily adapt to the changes in the field.

Given the US illegal practices in the field of international relations, do you think the EU still wants to coordinate its policies with the White House, or is it possible for Europe to change its behavior and exit from the US domination?

As mentioned, the relations between Slovenia and Iran are good, and have recently intensified in target segments. Regular political dialogue is held, and economic cooperation is strengthening considerably. As I have already mentioned, EU and Slovenia firmly believes that the JCPOA is the key element of the global architecture of NPT and a core factor of stability in

the region and the world.

Current disagreements between US and EU regarding JCPOA and tariffs for certain goods for EU, Canada, China and others will be discussed through dialogue. Regarding tariffs, this is not something which is new; previous US Administration has tried in the past as well. But at the end of the day they all realized that so called "trade wars" and economic pressures are not a benefit for any side.

Open questions will be addressed through dialogue as it should be among longstanding partnerships and alliances. Political information and media dynamics on a daily basis should not be our priority and Slovenia and I as an ambassador are orientated on a longstanding cooperation, international global architecture, and the art of diplomacy.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that the future of the JCPOA and the economic cooperation with European countries does not rest solely with the EU.

At the moment, Iran is primarily focused on requirements towards the EU and other signatories of the JCPOA. But we should know that US withdrawal from the agreement will also affect economies of European countries and other signatories.

Turkey's future after recent elections

*Interview by Kamran Ghaderi Azar
and Yasser Nazifi Gilavan*

Erdogan managed to win the latest election in Turkey preserving his position at the top once again while his new presidential term is of prime importance as he is given more power through the new Constitution.

The latest presidential election in Turkey is of prime importance as the changes made in Turkey's Constitution has given a vaster jurisdiction to the new president to be stronger than ever in controlling this country.

Hence, after the results of the election were announced it was known to everybody that Recep Tayyip Erdogan had managed to win the first place ahead of all his competitors with the majority of votes as the president of modern Turkey.

Touching the same subject from a closer perspective, we held an interview with Nazmi Pinar, a journalist and the board member of Turkey's Confederation of Journalists.

Despite some expectations that the presidential election in Turkey would have a run-off round, Erdogan won the first ballot. What, to your mind, led to Erdogan's first round victory?

As you referred yourself, having ballotage was just a speculation which was used by some groups and parties as means of psychological warfare but realistic polls all showed what will happen.

Erdogan and his companions were well aware of this fact and even the reason for holding the election more than a year early; to foil the political ploy of some countries which were trying to make changes in the political system of Turkey. In fact, Recep Tayyip Erdogan was very assured from the very beginning that he would be the winner.

What are the expected changes in the political arena and power equations in Turkey after the election?

I believe that we will have a much stronger Turkey after the election and



the Justice and Development Party (AK) will continue its intra-party reforms and reshufflings which were initiated from 2 years ago but the more serious changes will occur in opposition side.

While different political classes are busy reconstructing themselves, the economic success of Erdogan will get the same 50% percent of people who did not vote for him inclined to Erdogan.

Now that Erdogan has won the presidential race, how he will deal with problems like the issue of Kurds, the war on terrorism, and Turkey's membership in the European Union.

This is not the first time that Erdogan succeeds in an election. He will continue his path with much more assurance with the power derived from the public vote.

To take the issue of Kurds and the issue of fighting terrorism in Turkey as things of similar subject is a mistake. Certainly, there is no problem with fellow countrymen of Kurdish origin who believe in the official establishment of Turkey. But fighting against people and groups which have been deceived by the Kurdistan Workers' Party or PKK to cooperate with them will be continued in a harsher way.

Joining the European Union is of prime importance to Turkey. This issue and resolving the problems surrounding it will be the focus of endeavours in this tenure,

however, I have to highlight that Turkey will strongly reiterate its stances on joining the union.

How will be the balance and relation between the parliament and Erdogan in the political arena of Turkey in the modern edition of this country?

Undoubtedly, the new parliament will be in full harmony with Erdogan. About this issue it should be reminded that the presence and support offered by the Nationalist Movement Party is of high importance.

From a perspective of influence on the future of Turkey, this party has gained a position of high responsibility using a good opportunity in the recent election of Turkey.

Considering the particular results returned in the recent election in Turkey, how will Turkey follow its regional policies now that it is garnering a new strategic position?

For sure, the political and geographic status of Turkey has always had a strategic importance. A country which enjoys having a powerful and integrated internal leadership will surely be successful in foreign policy. Since now, a new era of strategic cooperation begins under a Turkey which is able to recognize between friend and foe. To me, unity among Muslim countries is impossible without Turkey's contribution.

SCO long-term investment for Iran, no solution to urgent issues: Bininachvili



By: Mohammad Ali Haqshenas & Payman Yazdani

Dr. Albert Bininachvili, professor of political science at the Columbia University believes Iran's SCO membership is a long term investment for Tehran and doesn't necessarily provide Iran with solutions to its most urgent issues.

Attending a meeting in Merh News Agency and Tehran Times newspaper headquarters on 20th of June, a series of issues were discussed with Dr. Albert Bininachvili, a professor of political science at the Columbia University, by political analysts from the outlets. Bininachvili is an expert in security and energy focusing on the Persian Gulf and the Caspian. He has published numerous articles on Iran, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

A wide range of topics were discussed during the meeting ranging from speculations on OPEC's probable decision regarding its output to the

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the role of the EU for saving the pact, effects of new US sanctions on Iran's energy sector, reasons behind lack of adequate post-JCPOA foreign investment in Iran, options that the EU has to maintain JCPOA and Iran's presence in Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Asked about possible result of the OPEC meeting on 22th of June, Bininachvili highlighted that the result is both "complicated and simple."

He highlighted the great influence of Saudi Arabia and Russia regarding oil output, saying that Russia surely follows its own national interests, implying that it shouldn't be expected from Russia to address other states' interests in this regard.

Touching upon the low cost of JCPOA withdrawal for USA, Payman Yazdani framed "how could Iran increase the cost for USA exit?"

"By having attracted investments in the past," Bininachvili answered, adding that Iran cannot increase the price now

because of not being in a "favorable position."

Referring to the high interest of American companies in Iran, he said "every multinational [company] will be obviously interested in the untapped market [of Iran] ... with 80 million people."

Giving Boeing as an example, he highlighted that this American company is surely interested in dealing with Iran. He further referred to Iran's need to reconstruct and modernize its oil and gas fields; which provide extensive opportunities for multinational companies. Iran's oil and gas sector can "easily" absorb some \$100 b investment, he added.

Asked about the reasons behind lack of foreign investment in Iran, Bininachvili said his "personal feeling" is that some Iranian officials were under the delusion that JCPOA was a kind of infinite document and so there was no need to hurry up.

Describing post-JCPOA as the "period of lost opportunities for Iran," he noted →

that the country has just attracted one major investment and that is \$1 b from French energy giant Total.

Bininachvili compared the status of Iran and Iraq in attracting investment, saying that Iraq has managed to attract more companies despite all their problems including instability, war, and separatism. It is much easier to work in Iran because of its centralized authority, he added.

Asked about the effects of new sanctions on Iran's energy sector and solutions for lessening the effects, he answered "I expect the immediate effect in terms of the amount may be around 0.5 million [bpd], if things go really bad."

The most negative effect would be Iran's oil export to Europe, he said, adding that oil export to China and India have the potential to experience a slight increase while exports to Turkey will probably stay at the current rate.

Reiterating that EU, Japan and South Korea will be the main challenge of Iran for oil export, Bininachvili said that there is chance for obtaining exceptions for trading with Iran, in which companies will be carved out and sanctions won't limit their activities.

"It is much easier to negotiate with Trump about the carvings and exceptions than it used to be with Obama," he highlighted.

He went on to say that Japan was in desperate need of energy after Fukushima crisis but Obama insisted on sanctions and prevented Iran's oil export to Japan. Touching on the good relations between Trump and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe, he noted that there is a fair chance for obtaining exceptions.

Questioned on the extent of guarantees that EU can provide to keep JCPOA and whether European countries are ready to sacrifice their own interest for Iran or not, the political analyst said, "no one is doing anything for another and this is all about politics and protection of national interest and there is no room for emotions ... There are no free lunches in this world"

Analyzing the European positions, he listed three options regarding the EU approach toward the JCPOA. One option is deterioration of EU-US relations given

the trade wars and other issues, he said, adding, Europe, in this scenario, will try to expand ties with Iran to retaliate pressures from US.

He believed that the first option will not happen mostly because of Russia's behavior in Europe. If Russia was behaving much better, Europeans might have allowed themselves to mitigate with America, he said, adding, "... otherwise they [Europeans] will be forced to give concessions to Russia."

The second option of EU is "wait and see," the scholar said, highlighting that this is the most probable one. In this scenario, Europe will offer Iranians to stay in the pact but simultaneously expresses solidarity with US regarding issues like missiles and Iran's presence in the region, he said, adding that Europe may say that it will provide more support if Tehran makes some concessions on concerned areas.

Also, EU may use Iranian cards for bargaining with Washington on other sectors such as free trade, he added.

The next option is when EU says that it is maintaining independence from US but at the same time will do nothing to convince their own companies to work with Iran, Bininachvili highlighted.

Then, they will tell Iran "you see, we are not with America, but our companies are independent. We love Iran and Iranians but we can do nothing with regard to the companies and business activities," he noted.

Answering a question regarding the importance of Iran's presence in SCO and whether this international body can help Iran to tackle its economic, se-

curity concerns or not, the analyst said that Iran's membership in SCO doesn't necessarily provides Iran with solutions to its most urgent issues but it is a long-term investment.

The upgrade on SCO is an obvious continuation of Iran's long-term policies and another facet for implementation of Iran's Eastern strategy, the Colombia University professor noted.

Membership in SCO provides another outlet for strengthening ties with Russia and China, he said, adding, Iran relies on the diplomatic support of these permanent members of UN Security Council which are also members of SCO.

Considering the amount of economic cooperation with China and their potential of investment in Iran, joining SCO provides the ground for further cementing ties between the two countries, he added.

Describing China as a "very important actor," the political analyst said that cooperation with china can be boosted not only on the unilateral level but also on multilateral level.

Referring to Russia, he said that Iran has developed some sort of dependency on Russia's support in confrontation with US and there are many facets of cooperation between the two countries, the most impressive being the military aspect.

Iran's presence in SCO is "all in all positive" and "absolutely a right step," Bininachvili highlighted, adding that this provides opportunities to boost ties with India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asian countries.





Opinion

Iran's last deadline to Europe for preserving JCPOA

By: Mohammad Ghaderi

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy "Federica Mogherini has announced that the Europe's package of proposals for preserving the nuclear deal will soon be delivered to the Iranian authorities."

The package is scheduled to be submitted to the diplomatic system and foreign policy apparatus of our country for less than 24 hours to be carefully analyzed. In this regard, there are some points that need to be taken into consideration:

1. The examination of the Europe's package of proposals based on our "national interest" is the most important point that should be diligently considered at this critical period. Unfortunately, after the conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), European countries, especially the European troika, haven't made a good record in maintaining the nuclear deal. The accompaniment of Angela Merkel, Theresa May and Emmanuel Macron with Trump's illegitimate demands for "changing the JCPOA" won't be easily forgotten!

Meanwhile, over the past 15 years, the European troika has had a rather bad record in fulfilling the statements of Saad Abad and Paris. Hence, we can't be optimistic about the Europe's package of proposals for Tehran. The truth is that a rigorous and exact review of this package will to a great extent guarantee Iran's rights (based on the nuclear agreement).

2. At this critical period and in reviewing the European's proposals, it is necessary for our country's officials to make a strategic, rational and determined distinction between the two words of "commitment" and "guarantee". Undoubtedly, the Islamic Republic of Iran is not calling for the "repeat of Europe's commitments on the JCPOA" over the next months, but



seeking a guarantee of objectivity in these commitments. It should not be forgotten that not only during Trump's presidency, but also during Obama's time, the European troika refused to take effective steps to prevent the ban on the European banks to have connections with Iran.

They did not even accuse the US Treasury of violating paragraphs 26-29 of the nuclear agreement, and chose to sacrifice their legal obligations for the political conciliation with the current and previous governments of the United States. Therefore, the European Union is facing a tough test, and if it fails to pass this test for any reasons, there would no longer be a nuclear deal to continue.

3. Over the recent weeks, signals have been sent from the White House to the European troika regarding the JCPOA. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has announced that he will soon be discussing this issue with his European counterparts. No doubt, the more European troika is influenced by the United States in these talks, the farther it will be from reaching a reciprocal agreement with Iran. Last week, British Prime Minister Theresa May stated that Europe should enter into negotiations with the United States on

the nuclear deal!

Undoubtedly, the British prime minister knows well that Trump isn't going to change his negative attitude towards the JCPOA. Therefore, the British government is seeking to cooperate with the United States in opposition to Iran and the nuclear deal. This dangerous approach will result in the full annulment of the JCPOA, and the consequences will in no way be to the benefits of the EU member states.

4. Finally, it should be noted that coming up with new suggestions for preserving the JCPOA, is the last opportunity that the Iranian regime and nation have given the European authorities. Undoubtedly, negative records of the European troika won't be ignored in this equation. But the opportunity is once again given to European officials to maintain the nuclear deal.

If Europe loses this chance in compensating its mistakes, and consider the "JCPOA" as a political leverage to realize its transatlantic goals with the United States, then it would be a serious and strategic mistake. Therefore, dealing legally and rationally with the existing conditions is the main prerequisites for the maintenance of the JCPOA by the European Union.

Reuters' tales these days

By: Mohammad Ghaderi

This is Reuters. Just like Fox News, and even the BBC, it has not a long history of distorting news about Iran to tarnish the country's image. It is no easy task to bring down this news agency for spreading false news. But how long should the bias and distorted news go on?

In February 2003, Office of Strategic Influence was established, with a major responsibility to "distribute propaganda" to foreign media to promote America's image in the world. It is evident that a government agency has to cover up for the lies and through this bureau the spread of false news could continue.

Herbert Marcuse was the first to claim that in the history of the emergence of fascism, comedy precedes tragedy. The initial terror will appear as a comic opera.

On August 1, 2017, the Reuters news agency released an exclusive, very controversial and hot report, saying that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has found a new way to join the Yemeni rebels. The news laid out a map of the geographic location of Iran and Yemen, claiming that the Iran was dispatching arms to the Yemeni rebels. However, there was no way for Iran to reach Yemen, an Arabian country that was fully besieged.

But the story got even more interesting. The author of this report was Londoner Jonathan Saul, whose articles in Reuters were mainly in the field of global transportation and banking. The source of information was three senior Iranian officials who apparently had contacted Saul, telling him that Iran had found a new way to bring weapons to the Yemeni people. But why did they do that? Had they gone mad? Is this Reuters?

This was Reuters then. Today, the release of the satirical comedies about Iran continues, a familiar scenario to

the Iranian people. It is a reminder of the news channel, Amad News Agency which repeatedly downgrades Iran's governing system. Reuters has, too, focused on Iran for some reason.

A few days ago, Reuters also wrote that some officials in the Islamic Republic have allegedly bought African passports as sanctions bit and are ready to transfer \$30 billion out of the country.

In his latest press conference, the US State Department spokesman also said that Reuters reported that some of the companies in the Iranian market have already left Iran over the last few weeks, and some never entered the Iranian market for the past two years.

Finally, Iran Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also said that Reuters has spread 50 lies on Iran's economic status.

Why does Reuters muddy its reputation?

Reuters does not gamble. Iranians living in Iran know quite well that the reports and news are lies, but the foreign audience can buy such reports. But why?

The Western audience is accustomed to accepting other beliefs that ultimately come to them through the amazing power of the mass media. The Reuters blows Iran's economic problems out of proportion, a scenario that is not even played by the notorious media like Fox News or their BBC, although the international news agency claims that is moving towards another "media paradigm". A paradigm that is not gained through credibility, but is more based on building short-term and rapid impacts on foreign audience about Iran; encouraging them to believe that Iran is a turbulent society, and so on. Slowly and gradually, the Iranian audience is forced to accept such news. This is Reuters's policy.

The political tendencies of governments these days are merciless and



brutal, but history proves to be more brutal. If Reuters continues to publish false news, then the news agency is nothing but a mouthpiece for the notorious Western mainstream media.

On an American site, where people get their questions answered, a user named eli5 three years ago asked how is the Reuters news agency different from news networks such as Fox News and MSNBC, and why Reuters carries reputable sources.

Users almost provided identical answers: Reuters was a professional news agency and is not affiliated to any power. Reuters is a source of the news of various news networks and media and is therefore bound to maintain neutrality; Reuters covers only facts, does not interpret news, and is not objective. Reuters also does not use emotional words; it only provides numbers and facts, as it is not inclined to any political group or country.

Former CNN correspondent Amber Lyon was the last to answer this question. She said, "CNN does nothing but to provide a series of media propaganda for Western dictators."

The story of Reuters' credibility and its project on Iran these days can quickly take the mind of a well-informed person to the similar stories by Reuters.

One story was February 11, 2011. The news of President Hosni Mubarak's withdrawal from the Egyptian government was quickly spread through words of mouth and Cairo's al-Tahrir Square was ready for Egyptian people to celebrate the victory of their revolution. National flags flooded the streets. Among the images television cameras reported to the world in the ➡

quadrangles of the Tahrir Square was excitement over "Freedom". A special video in the corner of the same Square showed clips of some people having raised the flag of Qatar. The meaning of this symbolic gesture was so quite clear. Egyptians thanking the Al Jazeera network for its media support and coverage for the Egyptian revolution. Al Jazeera got big, bigger than the actual coverage of Mubarak's withdrawal.

A year into the crisis in Syria, angry Syrians took to streets in support of their legitimate President Bashar al-Assad. In addition to burning the flag of the US and Israel, the perpetrators of the crisis, Syrians burnt flags of Qatar too. Protesters wanted Al-Jazeera to halt the propaganda on Syria, and they had many good reasons for that, including the video that the Syrian government had discovered behind the scenes of the activities of the Algerian correspondent in Syria, showing how the Algerian correspondent was getting ready to fabricate the news, showing the invasion of Bashar's army in his background, while he was busy reading the report.

And that put an early end to the dream that Al Jazeera had in mind, leading public opinion in the Arab world. If Reuters continues the spread of propaganda, it will, too, be at the end of its dream of shaping the world's public opinion.

In the report by Reuters on the purchase of African passport by Iranian authorities, a name was familiar, Bozorgmehr Sharafedin, an Iranian journalist, who had already been busy working with BBC Persian Television. What's sad is that in an era, when the independent American media are defending Iran with the slogan "Not to war with Iran", Iranian journalists are doing otherwise. Sharafedin had produced two documentaries on Iran in an attempt to portray lies on Iran, published by Reuters.

Will Europe finally act independently of US?



By: Mohammad Ghaderi

The 4+1 summit was launched in Vienna Friday to try to repair the damage done when the US reneged on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, JCPOA.

The meeting, led by Federica Mogherini, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, was attended by Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, along with the foreign ministers of the UK, Russia, China, and Germany.

The meeting was aimed at saving the Iran deal and permitting continuous cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and remaining members of the Iran deal without the US.

At the end of the meeting, an EU package was to be offered to Iran.

In a 10-article statement released by Mogherini, Europe was accountable for maintaining the commitment to the JCPOA. However, there are valid concerns.

Firstly, the agreement, particularly article eight, does not guarantee that Europe will stick to the pact based on the intentional law.

Secondly, in the past two months following the US withdrawal from the

JCPOA, members of 4+1 have repeatedly failed to keep companies, commercial businesses and financial institutions in business with Iran.

Thirdly, leaders of European member states of the JCPOA have over and over again expressed concerns over Iran's regional role and defensive missile capabilities. For that reason, they even wanted Iran to sign the FATF international convention, while they had no obligation to remain faithful to the Iran accord.

The frustration expressed by Iran's foreign minister over Europe's proposal in the past 72 hours is a proof that Europe, perhaps out of fear, is not ready to stand up fully against the US demands and confront Washington.

The Islamic Republic has refused to accept these rather weak proposals without legal and other guarantees, and is not willing to sacrifice its national interests over the European leaders' uncertainty and lack of firm resolve. Unless Europe makes hard decisions to try to cancel the effects of the US failure to abide by the JCPOA, and sanctions ahead, albeit without the influence of the Saudis and Zionists, the negotiations may come to naught.

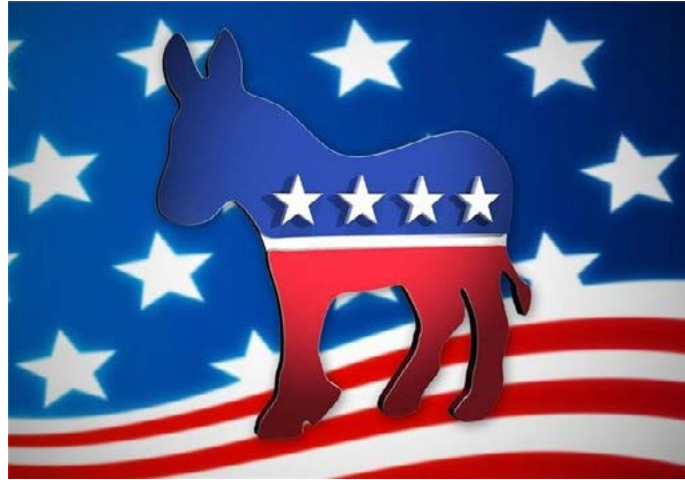
The true face of American Democrats

By: Hanif Ghaffari

Donald Trump's withdrawal from the nuclear deal with Iran and the re-enforcement of US secondary sanctions against our country have raised the opposition of the Democratic politicians and members of the US Senate.

During recent weeks, Barack Obama, Joe Biden, John Kerry, Susan Rice and Richard Nephew have become supporters of the nuclear deal with Iran, and condemned Trump's approach in their speeches! The Democrats, who are aware of the 66% support of the American citizens of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) (according to the latest polls conducted in the United States), decided to raise their voices against the White House, so that they can use the mummified body of the JCPOA and turn it to bridge for their own victory in the Congress midterm elections.

The Democrats are well aware that "Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA" can serve as a catalyst for strengthening the artificial bipolar of "Democrats vs Republicans" in the minds of American citizens. In general, American politicians are really skillful creating "target-full bipolar" systems, and these bipolar systems has been of great help to American officials from both parties. This is exactly what facilitates their job in reaching their goals. However, we should regretfully say that some of the Iranian officials, despite the 40-year experience that the Islamic Revolution had in dealing with both the major parties in the United States, are still to be tricked by such bipolar systems. An overview of the anti-Iranian policies of the three American Democratic governments, namely the governments of Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, clearly reflect the "deep opposition" of US Democrats to the Iranian nation and political system. It should be noted here that the intensity of the Democrats' opposition to Iran stands at a much higher level than that of the Republicans, and the "seemingly peaceful doves", through



their actions, laws, decrees and decisions over the past four decades, have provided room for subsequent Republicans' maneuvers against Iran. Although Democrats prefer not to point out their fundamental and destructive role in setting lots of restricting economic and legal mechanisms against our country, the history of US-Iranian relations during the post-Islamic revolution, uncovers the true face of Trump's rivals in this conflict! An overview of the sanctions imposed by Obama's administration during his presidency will help to figure this face out:

Although Barack Obama's victory in 2008 presidential elections boosted the hope and motivation for the proponents of reviving Iran-US relations in our country, but in 2009, Obama and Hillary Clinton (former US Secretary of State) ordered various packages of sanctions to be prepared for pressuring our country.

Financial exchanges," "insurance," "transportation," the sale of oil and "energy" were among those sanctions! A cutoff of investments to our country's oil-and-gas industry and restrictions on many more Iranian banks than those already blacklisted, had a quite destructive effect on Iran's economy. It is obvious that the scope of the sanctions imposed during Obama's presidency against our country was much wider compared to other US presidents from both the Democratic and Republican Parties. Obama ordered American officials such as Richard Nephew and Susan Rice to prepare new sanction packages for Iran and send it to European and international allies of the United States. In November 2009,

Susan Rice, then the US Ambassador to the UN Security Council, along with Hillary Clinton, began their joint efforts to conclude United Nations Security Council Resolution 1929. The resolution put the toughest pressure on Iran regarding energy, lack of access to financial resources to develop nuclear and missile programs, etc. Obama went even further, and in June 2013, he ratcheted up his efforts to isolate Iran, targeting Tehran with currency and auto-sector sanctions.

Obama imposed sanctions on foreign financial institutions that conduct or facilitate significant transactions in the Iranian rial, meant to further weaken our country's currency. As reported by Reuters, a senior official in Obama's administration said the low level of the rial was to be a key vulnerability for the Iranian government.

"The objective is to take aim at the rial and to make it as unusable a currency as possible, which is all part and parcel of our efforts to apply significant financial pressure on the government of Iran."

A brief overview on what has happened during the presidency of Carter, Clinton and, most importantly, Obama and in opposition to the Islamic Republic of Iran, well uncovers the true face of the US Democrats! These Democrats who are now raising their voices in support of the JCPOA, and blame Trump for pulling out of the nuclear deal with Iran, had imposed the toughest sanctions on our country and on our people when they were in power, and those were the most terrible sanctions against our country. The list of sanctions imposed during the Obama presidency (which we merely referred to its main parts in this article) is so long that it can't be fully reviewed here. Indeed, how can one be optimistic about the support of the Democrats under such circumstances? The time has now come for some of our officials and authorities to reject their unjustified optimism about the presence of Democrats in power, and put an end to their indirect play on the Trump's rivals' ground.

Decoding White House's recent offer to Macron

By: Hanif Ghaffari

The US President Donald Trump has suggested that if the French government leaves the European Union, the United States could have better bilateral trade relations with it.

The Washington Post, in one of its most recent articles, unveiled the US President's suggestion to the French government: Donald Trump is trying to persuade Paris to leave the European Union. The suggestion was apparently made during the recent visit of President Emmanuel Macron to Washington. During this visit, Trump has suggested that, if France leaves the European Union, the United States could have better bilateral trade relations with France.

The Washington Post then continued "other reports note that Trump recently told Group of Seven leaders that 'NATO is as bad as NAFTA,' suggested to the Swedish prime minister that America should leave the NATO alliance, and launched gratuitous public attacks on German Chancellor Angela Merkel at her weakest moment. It is a deepening trend that leads to an unavoidable conclusion: Trump doesn't believe in the continued sanctity of the European Union and NATO, as well as the United States' commitment to both.

It should be noted that during the US presidential competitions in 2016, Trump had expressed his opposition to the "existence of the United Europe". Trump's particular support for events such as Brexit, and beyond that, his support for nationalist and far-right extremists in European countries, indicated the full opposition of the President of the United States to the European Union and the Eurozone. Evidences suggest that Trump's relations with nationalist groups and anti-EU movements throughout Europe remain strong. Therefore, the White House's controversy with Europe is kind of fundamental opposition which is going to continue until the collapse of the United Europe or the end of Trump's time at the White House.

The second point is that European officials' compromise with Donald Trump and US policies have not only had little effect



on reducing the anti-EU inclinations of the US President and his confrontation with the existence of the United Europe's entity, but it made Trump even more hideous in this regard. The American President's recent offer to Emmanuel Macron is also to be analyzed in the same vein. Under the influence of politicians such as Theresa May, the British prime minister, the French President Emmanuel Macron, and even German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Europe hasn't yet used its capacities to confront the Trump government's policies and actions. It has reached a point where the British prime minister has asked other European countries to remain silent against the imposition of tariffs on the imported steel and aluminum from Europe and not take retaliatory measures against Washington's policies! Theresa May asked the European leaders to step back from harsh reprisals against Donald Trump over his new tariffs. The British Prime Minister said that she would urge fellow leaders in the European Union to ensure a level-headed approach to prevent damage to free trade around the world.

Third, the negative role of European countries towards the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is undeniable. The European troika first initiated its direct play on the United States' ground, and agreed with its four demands to be included in the nuclear agreement. The US demands went around the inclusion of Iran's defensive and missile capabilities, the inspection of military sites, the removal of so-called Sunset clauses, and the limitation of Iran's regional power.

And the European authorities made a bad mistake in this regard. After the United States unilaterally pulled out of the nuclear deal, Europeans were still refusing to use their full capacity in opposition to Trump's anti-JCPOA policies.

It's not without a reason that US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has reported the continuous contact of the White House with the foreign ministers of the three European countries on the nuclear deal with Iran. Undoubtedly, unless the European Union starts its thorough confrontation with the Trump government, and merely seeks to manage and restrain the behavior and actions of the US President, the open and secret moves of the White House against the existence of the United Europe will intensify. The problem is that European officials may become aware of the deepness of this catastrophe so late, and at a time when there is no longer any signs of the United Europe! European leaders have now realized that "reconciliation with Trump" can no longer be considered as a healing solution for the transatlantic relations. Nevertheless, they're still keeping to regard the current relations in the international system idealistically, and especially in their relations with the United States they stick to this idealistic perspective. It's quite obvious that the continuation of this strategic mistake in EU foreign policy will have irreparable costs for this block and the Eurozone.

It's obvious that since the formation of the European Union and the Eurozone, the withdrawal of European countries from this block, and returning to the time →

before the formation of the United Europe was synonymous to crossing the red lines for the EU member states, and this red line is still highlighted in the EU equations. However, Trump practically encourages European countries to pull out of the United Europe. The US controversial President support of far-right movements and nationalist groups in the European countries is well indicating his specific approach. It's not without a reason that politicians such as Marine Le Pen, President of the French National Rally party, has opened a special account on Trump's support.

The next point is that the united Europe is currently in amid a big crisis. During the recent years, the economic, security, social, and political crises have been intensified inside the borders of the Green Continent, and this contributes to the EU's external vulnerability.

Under such circumstances, the European Union may not be strong enough to confront Trump's provocations! The President of the United States is trying to return Europe to the time before the formation of the European Union. He's doing this through promoting nationalism among European citizen, so that he can limit the power of Europe's maneuverability in the international system and NATO. This approach and other policies by the US government are extremely dangerous for the United Europe. The fact that these nationalist movements and far-right groups has become more and more popular among the European citizens, is considered another weakness to the existence of the European Union.

The next point is about Trump's support for the Brexit. Last year, and during the presidential elections, Trump had been repeatedly encouraging the withdrawal of Britain from the European Union. Trump knew well that the departure of Britain would not be the first and last exit from the European Union. He can't now hide his happiness over the recent changes in Europe. The US President is planning to prepare the ground for other EU member states to leave this block.

Interestingly, Trump doesn't pursue his plans as a "hidden strategy." But he explicitly declares his views in this regard before the media. This reflects the serious opposition between Washington and the EU during the presidency of Donald Trump. Consequently, what "Wolfgang Ischinger", Munich Security Chairman said about the US war against Brussels (EU) was an objective and correct interpretation of the current situation. This confrontation isn't going to stop in the coming months, but will probably intensify as France presidential elections approaches.

American unilateralism and the world crisis

By: Mohammad Nahavandian



In the following op-ed piece, the author reviews two cases of US unilateral interferences in the world affairs which led to unfair and unfavorable results and believes that US won't have the permit to repeat these kinds of behaviors in the 21st century.

1. Friday, July 6, marked the anniversary of signing the Bayonet Constitution in Hawaii of the late 19th century. 131 years ago, in 1887, Kalakaua, the king of Hawaii under the threat of bayonet and lobby of the Americans and a group of white businessmen called Hawaiian League who were mostly involved in sugar production, was forced to sign a new constitution. Backed by the military arm of Hawaiian League, Bayonet Constitution changed the voting rights, as it gave the foreign Americans and Europeans the voting right, but restricted the native Hawaiian to only those who could meet certain financial requirements!

Later, authorized by the direct intervention of their secretary of state, the American military forces suppressed the native Hawaiians' protests against the foreign interference in their domestic affairs. A few years later, the Americans overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy and annexed the independent country to the United States due to its strategic importance. In other words, they didn't recognize a right for a nation in the Pacific Ocean which they had already recognized for themselves based on the Constitution of the United States in 1783. Despite their human rights rhetoric, the American statesmen authorized themselves to use force in order to change the fate of others. With such attitude, they not only gave priority to the interests of the United States over other countries, but they are presumed that the right of the Americans stands above the others.

2. In 1929, the US Senate passed a law titled the Hawley-Smoot Tariff, which imposed the highest rates of tariffs on the imported commodities in the history of that country. The then US president, Herbert Hoover who chanted slogans on protecting domestic productions and ➡

maintaining jobs for the American farmers and won the presidential election of 1928, signed the tariff act into law. Earlier, the first World Economic Conference in Geneva, 1927, which observed the symptoms of recession and the Great Depression in world economy, called for all countries to remove tariffs and boost international trade in a bid to improve the economic growth.

In the United States, 1028 economists expressed their protest against imposing limitation on trade in a petition addressed to Hoover. But, pressed by the Congress, Hoover implemented the plan and raised the tariffs on imported goods by 59%. In retaliation, the other countries also raised their tariffs on American commodities. Although at the beginning, the tariff act introduced by two Republicans, Representative Willis C. Hawley and Senator Reed Smoot increased the employment rate and the number of production agreements, due to the retaliatory measures taken by other countries, the American exports sharply dropped by 61% and the GDP fell to less than a half within the next four years.

On the other hand, the unemployment rate which was 8%, hiked up by 25% in just three years. Many historians and economists believe that the Hawley-Smoot Tariff Act and unilateralist policy adopted by the US government were the key factors in the continuation and exacerbation of recession in the global economy as it reduced the scale of world trade to 33% and prepared the ground for World War II at the end of the 1930s. Despite their populist slogans, Smoot and Hawley could not even save their House seats and had to leave office two years later. Once again, the egoistic and unilateralist attitude of the American statesmen pushed their country and the entire world to a major crisis and an unprecedented destructive war.

The American arrogance led the humankind to a catastrophe which cost the lives of more than 60 million people across the world.

3. Nowadays, the world is hit over again by a new wave of populist unilateralism. The current mindset which claims that simply gives priority to the interests of the American nation without trammeling the other nations' rights has taken action against the internation-

al agreements. Recently, the incumbent US president announced that his country withdraws from Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Likewise, the American statesmen have since violated regional trade agreements such as North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and have set high tariffs on imports of steel and aluminum and automobiles from other countries. The US has also withdrawn from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear program.

All such decisions clearly trammel the rights of people in other countries and damage life and business environment throughout the world. They launch a global trade war, which paves

tage, the online world and internet data has also a great advantage as it facilitates transparency and conveys the demands of people so rapidly. In the age of information explosion, archaic and outdated nineteenth century minds are less likely to dominate public opinion. Therefore, they look less impressive and their long-term consequences will become evident in a short period of time. At the moment, all people throughout the world understand the true meaning of "America First" [chanted by the incumbent US president] which indeed means "All for the Powerful of America", and immediately respond to that. All over the world, including the United States, a consciousness is growing toward the catastrophic policies of the US government which has caused widespread negative responses.



the way for economic recession and in turn threatens the world security. This dangerous approach is rooted not only in profiteering in business, but also in an egomaniac view of the one who sees himself superior to the others and falsely believes that has the right to determine the fate of others. Such an arrogant view is evident in the decision to ban travel of people from some Muslim countries to the United States and inhumane separation of illegal immigrants' children from their parents.

4. But, our time differs crucially from the 19th and 20th centuries in terms of growing public awareness of the events and politics. Even if it has a disadvan-

Governments of other countries are also challenging the unilateral measures taken by American statesmen, for instance in the fight over tariff rates. The upcoming midterm elections of the United States in November will show to what extent the American voters are aware of the looming threat.

In order to avoid a global tragedy, the governments across the world should respond seriously and clearly to unilateralist, hostile measures taken by the American government. Those who know the past and can foresee the future are tasked with playing a significant role on the scene of the world's public opinion and increase people's awareness.

Disaster of US anti-narcotics campaign in Afghanistan

By: Syed Zafar Mehdi

Despite US claims about fighting narcotics cultivation in Afghanistan, the author of this op-ed believes that the Americans have sowed nothing but disaster in Afghanistan.

The protracted war in Afghanistan has many convoluted dimensions and needless to say the foreign invaders have failed in almost every way. Their engagement in the war-ravaged country has only wreaked havoc, brought misery to the people and emboldened insurgent groups to carry out deadly strikes across the country.

More than 17 years after invading the country, the US-led international coalition has reluctantly conceded defeat to insurgent groups, after miserably failing in counter-terrorism efforts. Today, security situation remains volatile, government is in tatters, terrorists strike at will, and people continue to live in fear. It pretty much sums up the horrible legacy of America in Afghanistan.

The much-hyped rebuilding and reconstruction projects of the US-led coalition have also turned into a farce. It has only contributed to destruction and devastation post-2001.

One area where the international partners of the Afghan government have particularly been disastrous is counter-narcotics campaign. Notwithstanding the 'strenuous efforts' to dissuade Afghan farmers from opium plantation, the country continues to be the world's top opium producer. Interestingly the area covered by opium fields in Afghanistan equals the total area of Mauritius.

The opium cultivation in Afghanistan hit a record high last year, according to a US government watchdog body SIGAR, which described the counter-narcotics campaign of the US-led coalition as a "failure". Pertinently, the US government has splurged about \$8.7 billion on its counter-narcotics campaign in the war-torn country since 2001.

A new report by SIGAR made many interesting revelations, pointing to the farcical counter-narcotics campaign of



the international community in Afghanistan. Despite billions of dollars, opium cultivation reached about 328,000 hectares (1,265 square miles) in 2017, marking an increase of 63 percent from the year before, and the highest amount recorded since 2002.

"To put it bluntly, these numbers spell failure, and the outlook is not encouraging," John Sopko, the special inspector general, remarked in the report. "There's more opium being grown now than when we started, there's more heroin being produced than when we started, there's more heroin being exported, there are more profits from the heroin going to the Taliban and to the other terrorist groups than when we started," he later said in a TV show.

What Sopko said quite unapologetically and unequivocally is what many war-mongering hawks in Washington admit in private but refuse to admit in public, because it leaves them embarrassed. They don't want the American taxpayers to know how their money is being wasted in a ludicrous campaign that is producing no results or how their money is being used to fuel insurgency or bomb Afghans.

The question hovering on everyone's mind is: Who benefits most from the opium cultivation and why have the counter-narcotics efforts of international community failed? It is important to note that opium is a major source of revenue for the Taliban movement. The money from the sales of opium helps fuel insurgency across the country.

But the Taliban is not the only group benefiting from opium business in Afghanistan. Many criminal gangs, warlords, policemen, tribal elites, government officials also profit from it. And

most of them enjoy patronage of the US forces in Afghanistan. So, it is also a case of the conflict of interest.

The opium reduction program was one of two initiatives of the US government apparently designed to resurrect the country's agrarian economy. But the way it has been executed has raised more questions than answers. It has not only led to increase in opium cultivation but has fueled insurgency.

The US forces have been carrying out airstrikes across the country to eliminate what they call 'Taliban drug labs'. In February this year, the top US commander in Afghanistan John Nicholson announced that his forces were bombing these labs to weaken the economy of the insurgent group. "We are hitting the Taliban where it hurts, which is their finances," he said.

But he didn't explain how the American forces intended to carry out these strikes, which according to many experts put lives of farmers in danger. As Thomas Ruttig, co-director of the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) told in an interview recently, these labs are not what people in the West consider labs, and they are not manned by the Taliban fighters, meaning the casualties would more often be civilians.

That is how imaginative America's counter-narcotics campaign in Afghanistan has been. No wonder why it has proved a big disaster.

The best possible, and the only, solution to the illicit opium economy in Afghanistan is the withdrawal of US-led coalition forces, which is one of the main demands of insurgents to end the long-standing war. Unless the war doesn't end, the opium production and smuggling is unlikely to go down.

If the US forces could not eradicate poppy fields or what they call 'Taliban drug labs' in 17 years, chances are they won't be able to do it now. Since they have admitted defeat in their longest war and failed in counter-narcotics campaign and other such farcical campaigns, it is time for the US-led coalition forces to call it quits, end the drama and go home.

France' dangerous game over N-deal

By Mohammad Ghaderi

On the eve of the negotiations between Iran and the members of the P4+1 in Vienna on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the French Foreign Minister determined the fate of "European JCPOA" once and for all!

In an interview with RTL radio on the "Europe's package of proposals to Iran" for saving the nuclear deal, Jean Yves Le Drian stated "Iran must stop permanently threatening to break their commitments to the nuclear deal so that Europe can find the solutions so that Iran can have the necessary economic compensations."

"Iran must stop permanently threatening to break their commitments to the nuclear deal so that Europe can find the solutions so that Iran can have the necessary economic compensations."

France has also said that Europe would likely not be able to create an economic compensation package for Iran prior to November. Le Drian said France was working to create a plan to mitigate the effects of the United States' sanctions, which will be reapplied in August, and toughened in November.

"For the start August it seems a bit short, but we are trying to do it by November," he emphasized.

At the first glance, Le Drian's words seem to be simple and obvious. Some optimistic analysts may even agree with the French FM for more time being needed to come up with an economic compensation package. But the fact is that Le Drian is sending signals of entering a complicated and dangerous game! There are some points to be taken into consideration in this regard:

1) Undoubtedly, if the European troika and other EU member states wanted to consider their economic capacities for saving the JCPOA, they had to do so immediately after the withdrawal of Trump from the nuclear deal. However, today, as almost two months has passed since the official withdrawal of the White House from the JCPOA, European authorities are still talking about their "obligations" towards the nuclear deal, and refuse to



offer any guarantees in this regard. The European officials, quite deliberately, are refusing to draw up the basic and minimal mechanisms to enforce their commitment to the JCPOA. The reality is that, at the current moment, Europe has no intention and incentive to announce its full and detailed package.

Although part of US secondary sanctions against Iran is scheduled to be implemented in August, but this is of no importance to the European troika! The French authorities' focus and emphasis on "November" has also been well targeted. The US Congress elections will be held in November, and the results could lead to the loss of the majority Republicans in Congress (House of Representatives and Senate), and thereby, Donald Trump's domestic and international maneuverability may decrease. However, the opposite can also come true. That is, the Republicans possible victory in Congress could lead to more pressures on Europe by the United States' controversial President between 2018 and 2020. French and European officials are now trying to continue their game until November to see what will eventually happen, and then act accordingly.

2) Over the recent months, Democrats in the United States held negotiations with the US European allies. They have promised Europeans that in case of their victory in the US midterm elections, the White House's confrontation with the United Europe would considerably decrease. However, the French authorities, on the one hand, aren't sure of the Democrats' victory in the US midterm elections, and on the other hand, they are not convinced of the implementation of their commitments to "restrain Trump." The European troika believes that if the case of the "European JCPOA" was closed

before November, and then the Congress would remain in the hands of the Republicans, they would lose one of their main leverages in dealing with the White House. This bitter truth reflects the illegal encountering of the United Europe with the JCPOA on the one hand, and on the other hand, it indicates Europe's inclination for continued security and economic dependence on the United States. Obviously, in such a situation, counting on the "European JCPOA" would be considered a terrible mistake.

3) In August 2017, the French pledged Donald Trump and Netanyahu to pursue their four demands, namely the inspection of Iran's military sites by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), removal of the so-called Sunset clauses (in order to permanently restrict Iran's nuclear activities), and to limit Iran's missile capabilities and regional activities. In this equation, French President Emmanuel Macron played a pioneering role in identifying himself as Washington and Tel Aviv's most useful ally in the European Union. After the United States unilaterally pulled out of the nuclear deal, Macron was disturbed with President Trump. However, he still has his eyes fixed on the other side of the Atlantic.

In 2017, the French began the process of "limiting Iran's regional power" but failed to do so. This year again, they're trying to manage the process of "prolonging talks with Iran over European JCPOA." Le Drian's recent words shows that Europe has no intention of confronting the Trump government (at least until November). The Elysee Palace plans to finalize its plans and actions in the run-up to the November elections, based on the valid polls conducted in the United States.

Finally, the French Foreign Minister's statements unveil the Europe's hideous and entirely political game towards the JCPOA. Obviously, our country's diplomacy apparatus and foreign policy system shouldn't act passively about the continuation of this process by the European authorities. Undoubtedly, Emmanuel Macron and other officials in the Elysees Palace can't hide their policies and measures from the Iranian nation, just like they couldn't hide their direct play on Trump's ground from tens of millions of Iranians.

NATO is worried about Trump!

By Hanif Ghafari

In recent days, Western analysts have analyzed and evaluated various aspects of the tensions and challenges among NATO members. The majority of NATO members are European countries.

Countries that are furious about the behavior of the White House due to issues such as the imposition of tariffs on imported steel and aluminum, and the withdrawal of Trump from a nuclear deal with Iran.

However, some Western media believe the US-EU security relationship remains strong. Relations that have a meaningful, more meaningful meaning in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The concerns of the European leaders about the recent meeting between Putin and Trump and the possibility of security bouts between the two US and Russian presidents is another issue that has been addressed in this regard. POLITICO, in a paper by Thomas Voltask, examines the relationship between the US, Russia and the European members of NATO.

As Politico reported, So far, the defense-centered core of the Western alliance has proven strikingly sturdy, even as US-European collaboration has collapsed on other issues, such as climate change, trade and Iran. The Trump administration pleasantly surprised many across the Atlantic by nearly doubling the Obama-era program to fund US military presence in Europe. Almost 1,000 Americans in uniform are now deployed in Poland. By most accounts, the alliance's ability to discourage Moscow from testing NATO's resolve has never been better.

But not all is well. For the past decade, US officials have been warning the Europeans to start spending more on their own defense. The US now spends \$3 for each \$1 that the remaining 28 European members plus Canada spend together. This prompted the former American secretary of



defense, Robert Gates, to warn back in 2011 that when Congress wakes up to that reality, NATO will face a "dim if not dismal future."

This crisis, however, was on its way to a resolution of sorts in recent years. Europe is now the region with the fastest growing real-term defense spending, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. The countries of Central and Northern Europe in particular were spooked by Russia's aggression into raising budgets as much as 40 percent year-on-year. Not all allies will be spending 2 percent of their GDP on defense, as agreed in 2014, but then again all governments have a habit of making promises they do not intend to keep. This one has actually proven more consequential than other such "commitments" made in the past — most notably on development aid and climate change.

Of course, none of this is guaranteed to make a difference to the White House. Trump brings two new uncertainties into NATO politics. He doesn't appear to share Europe's sense of urgency on keeping Russia in check through a significant allied military presence. And even if he did, it's unlikely that he would consider it to be Amer-

ica's problem.

The president has said on a number of occasions that he considers all alliances a burden on the United States — it's a position he's held unaltered for decades. That raises the possibility that the debate on defense spending is a red herring. In the end, it may not matter whether the allies carry their weight in NATO or not. That would put Europe in somewhat of a lose-lose situation.

The Polish government, probably suspecting as much, has floated an interesting proposal: In addition to spending 2 percent on defense, which it already does, it has offered to pay as much as \$2 billion to cover the cost of stationing US forces there. In effect, they have turned the tables on the US president, taking the thorny issue of money out of the equation and testing Trump's commitment to European stability itself.

The reality is that the crises facing the United States and NATO members will not end soon. At least until the arrival of Trump at the White House, these concerns will remain. On the other hand, the foreseeable future of the president of the United States will face Western actors with serious dilemmas.

Features of nuclear deal as defined by Merkel

By Mohammad Ghaderi

Angela Merkel, German Chancellor, has recently stated important words on talks with Iran over the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and the Europe's package of proposals which was accordingly offered to the Iranian officials! After her meeting with the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, Merkel mentioned: We remain committed to the nuclear agreement. We think it was well negotiated.

There is more that needs to be negotiated with Iran, but we think it is better to stay in the agreement. However, Berlin could do little to protect international companies against punitive US measures, it is up to individual firms to decide if they want to invest in Iran."

Decoding the recent remarks of the German Chancellor is not so difficult or complicated. With a brief overview on Angela Merkel's sentences, we can come to the picture of "JCPOA as defined by the European authorities". Accordingly, there are some points that need to be taken into consideration:

1. Angela Merkel and other European officials stressed that "THERE ARE MORE TO BE NEGOTIATED". These words indicate that the European troika is going to keep playing on the Washington's ground. By extending the negotiations, Merkel, Macron and Theresa May intend to limit our country's missile capabilities, and to decrease Iran's regional power. After the United States withdrawal from the nuclear deal, European officials are still talking about a "comprehensive agreement" with Iran: an agreement that has no purpose other than "isolating Iran as a powerful country".

Accordingly, Hassan Rouhani, the Iranian President, said on his official website: "Unfortunately the proposed package lacked operational solution and specific method for cooperation, and featured just a set of general commitments like the previous statements by the European Union,"

2. The German Chancellor has explicitly stated that Europe can't "guarantee" to protect international



companies in Iran. It has often been said that legally, there is a difference between "commitment" and "guarantee". After Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA, European authorities have continued to remain at the stage of "formal commitment" to the nuclear deal, and avoid to provide Iran with "objective assurances" in this regard. Even they try to make their commitments as vague and unclear as possible. It's obvious that the European authorities intend not to perfectly fulfill the responsibility they have in the future.

Between 2015 and 2018, European authorities have well proved that in their "lack of commitment towards JCPOA", they act just like the United States. The absolute cooperation of the European troika with the Obama and Trump governments in violating the JCPOA confirms this fact.

3. By Merkel's words, we realize that for the EU officials, the JCPOA is a line drawn between two given points: "getting more advantages from Iran" and "not providing any guarantees by Europe". Without a doubt, none of the European authorities could draw a clearer picture of the JCPOA better than Merkel! Interestingly enough, the diplomacy and foreign policy system of our country is still hopeful about the "European version of the JCPOA"!

The fact is that there is no sign of Europe's providing any "guarantee for the fulfilment of the JCPOA". On the other

hand, with its recent package of proposals, the European Union has proved that it basically has no intention of maintaining the nuclear deal as it was concluded in 2015.

Part of this has been related to the economic structure of Europe, and the fact that the public sector has been dominated by the private sector, and part of it returns to the decision of European countries. It is clear that European countries are planning to continue to keep the JCPOA as a "leverage" for making deals with the Donald Trump's government.

Hence, the European troika and the EU don't have any intentions of coming to an agreement over Iran's nuclear deal in the near future. That's why the European officials insist that the EU final package of proposals will not be presented to the Iranian authorities before August (the first phase of US sanctions against Iran).

Finally, it should be noted that the existing evidences all suggest the inefficiency of the United Europe and its plans for the nuclear deal. Our country's officials would better take Merkel's recent statement as a "solid document" indicating Europe's inability to maintain the nuclear deal, and to stop their negotiations with the European Union on the JCPOA. The time has come for the Iranian foreign policy apparatus to find ways and means to face the United States and the European Union's violations of the nuclear deal.

Afghan-owned peace process only solution to war in Afghanistan

By: Syed Zafar Mahdi

America's top military commander in Afghanistan, John Nicholson, sent regional observers into a tizzy with his comments on Monday that the United States was ready to join direct negotiations with the Taliban. He later retracted his statement, apparently under pressure, saying his words were "mischaracterized."

So what does the US actually want in Afghanistan? Is it in favor of direct talks with the Taliban or does it want the process to be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned? Is Trump frantically looking for an escape route from the 17-year-old war that has been a complete disaster or he wants to inflict more misery on the poor, hapless, and war-weary Afghans?

Just a few days ago, on an unannounced trip to Kabul, the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the Trump administration was prepared to "support, facilitate and participate" in peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. However, he hastened to add that the process will be Afghan-led.

Did the position of US on Afghan peace process change so dramatically in less than a week or was Nicholson simply not aware of it when his tongue apparently slipped? "Our Secretary of State, Mr. Pompeo, has said that we, the United States, are ready to talk to the Taliban and discuss the role of international forces," he said during a visit to southern province of Kandahar.

Taliban, who refuse to recognize the legitimacy of government in Kabul, have always insisted on holding direct deliberations with Washington. And Washington has insisted that the Afghan government should directly engage with the Taliban. Nicholson's statement, which he said was 'mischaracterized', marks a significant shift in the US policy in Afghanistan. It shows respect to the Taliban leadership and disrespect to the elected government in Kabul.

As expected, a spokesperson for Taliban's political office in Qatar was in a celebratory mood. "This is what we wanted and were waiting for – to sit with the US directly and discuss the withdrawal of



foreign troops from Afghanistan" he was quoting saying. The group has repeatedly demanded lifting of travel embargo on Taliban leaders by UN and unconditional withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan. So will the US-led coalition concede to the demand that foreign forces must withdraw from the battle-scarred country?

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who has faced blistering criticism at home and abroad for failing to contain violence, has been desperately wooing the Taliban to join Afghan-led and Afghan-owned talks. A breakthrough was expected when the two parties observed an unprecedented three-day ceasefire on the festival of Eid this year. But, all hopes were dashed when the insurgent group refused to extend the ceasefire and went back to the frontlines of war.

Ghani, however, has not given up. On Monday, in an interview with RFE/RL, he dismissed the Taliban's rejection of his offer of peace talks, suggesting that the insurgent group can still be persuaded to come to the negotiating table. "It's like when you ask someone's hand in marriage and the family of the bride says no several times [before relenting]," said the economist-turned-president, sounding clearly over-optimistic. He strongly favors talks that are Afghan-led and Afghan-owned.

The government in Kabul, which depends heavily on the funding from its international partners, has been rendered weak and inefficient. Critics believe that the Ashraf Ghani government, which was formed as a result of power-sharing deal brokered by then U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry in 2014, does not take its own decisions. A shadow of Washington hangs overhead.

So, although Nicholson has retracted his statement, if the US actually plans to hold direct talks with the Taliban, the le-

gitimacy of the Ashraf Ghani-led government in Kabul, which is already under fire, will be further eroded. The general sense in Afghanistan is that the peace process should be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. Americans cannot talk to the Taliban on behalf of the people of Afghanistan.

Why Afghans cannot trust Americans is pretty clear. America has never been the well-wisher of Afghanistan. It invaded Afghanistan in 2001 not to overthrow the Taliban regime and bring peace to the war-torn country, but it basically sought to neutralize the masterminds of 9-11 attack, who the hawks in Washington believed were hiding in the mountains of Afghanistan. Then, on the pretext of 'war against terrorism', Americans turned Afghanistan into another Iraq, another killing field, another failed experiment. And the innocent blood continues to flow in the streets of Afghanistan.

Today, after 17 years of war and trillions of dollars, the government in Kabul controls 229 of Afghanistan's 407 districts, and the Taliban controls and yields influence in 59. The remaining 119 districts are contested, according to the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR). This is the legacy of America and its allies in Afghanistan.

But, importantly, the involvement of America in Afghanistan did not begin in 2001. They fought against Russians in Afghanistan in 1980s and played a key role in the birth of the Taliban. Most of the top-notch Taliban and Al Qaeda leaders were on the payroll of CIA before the tables turned.

Since 2001, Americans have been fighting against the same 'warriors' they once patronized. They did same in Iraq, supporting Saddam Hussain in all his horrendous war crimes and eventually getting him killed. They did exactly the same to Osama Bin Laden, who was once a close ally of CIA in Afghanistan.

So, the idea of America-led direct talks with the Taliban inspires no hope. The devil cannot be trusted. For the final political settlement, the peace process has to be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned and important regional players like India, Pakistan, Iran, Russia and China must be roped in. Otherwise, it is an exercise in futility.

Facts and figures about Xinjiang of China

By: Pang Sen

Due to its important role in China's Belt-and-Road Initiative, the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang) has attracted much attention. Not infrequently, praises, along with misunderstanding and western media's distortion are intertwined in the press. It is necessary to present a real and true picture about the region to facilitate a better understanding of Xinjiang.

Great achievements since 1949

Located in northwestern China with a land area of 1,660,000 square kilometers, Xinjiang is China's largest administrative region at provincial level. Historically, Xinjiang was the passage for land transport and exchanges between different cultures across Asia and Europe. The famous Silk Road linking the ancient civilizations of the East and the West went through this vast land. Its geographical location has resulted in Xinjiang's distinctive feature: coexistence and integration of diverse peoples and their cultures.

Xinjiang now has a population of 24 million. Major ethnic groups include the Uygur, Han, Kazak, Hui, Mongolian, Kirgiz, Xibe, Tajik, Ozbek, Manchu, Daur, Tatar and Russian, with the Uygurs as the largest population.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Xinjiang has achieved the fastest development in history. Its gross domestic product (GDP) grew from 1.2 billion yuan (RMB) in 1955 to 961.7 billion yuan in 2016, a growth rate above the national average. Xinjiang's agriculture and husbandry-based economy evolved into one focused on industry and services. The per capita GDP rose from 241 yuan in 1955 to 40,648 yuan in 2014, about 24-fold increase in real terms. The rate of urbanization increased from 15% to 48% in the same period. By 2016, highway mileage reached 182,000 km, of which 4,395 km were expressways. Operating railway lines totaled 6166 km. It has in operation 18 civil airports, and 155 air routes totaling 230,000 km. Xinjiang now boasts the largest number



of airports and the longest flight routes among all provinces and autonomous regions in China.

The mobile phone penetration reached 90%. Internet has covered most of the region, transforming Xinjiang into an information society. Xinjiang has registered rapid development in industrial, new and high technologies, and leads the country in such areas as railway traction transformer technologies, research and manufacturing of solar and wind power equipment, information processing of ethnic minority languages.

Xinjiang's ecological system is extremely fragile, due to the fact that oases accounts for only 5 percent of the region's total area. It has been making unremitting efforts to protecting and building the ecological system and pollution control, carefully balancing need for economic growth and environmental protection.

In 2014, education expenditure increased to 6.47 percent of the GDP. A complete educational system from pre-school education to higher education has been established, and Xinjiang enters into the era of higher education popularization. The average life expectancy exceeds 72 years.

Xinjiang has become China's frontline in opening to the west, the window for exchanges and cooperation with Cen-

tral, South and West Asia. It also serves as the core area of Belt and Road Initiative. As a region with rich natural resources and great growth potential, Xinjiang is catching up quickly with the pace of national development.

A system of ethnic regional autonomy

As a multi-ethnic region, Xinjiang implements the system of regional autonomy for ethnic minorities. The essence of this system is that under the unitary and unified state leadership, a certain degree of autonomy is accorded to Xinjiang.

Compared with other provinces and municipalities directly under the central government, Xinjiang enjoys the power of legislation and the power to flexibly carry out decisions from higher-level state organs in accordance with local conditions.

People of all ethnic origins in Xinjiang are ensured an equal legal status. They enjoy the rights to vote and stand for election as prescribed by the Constitution and the law, the right of equal participation in the administration of state affairs, the right of religious belief, the right to receive education, the right to use their own spoken and written languages, the right to inherit and carry on the traditional culture of their own ethnic groups, etc.

Internal affairs of Xinjiang are admin-

istered by itself. Xinjiang guarantees all ethnic groups' right to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, in such fields as justice, administration, education, news media, publishing, radio, movies, television programs, the internet and daily life. The diet, marriage and funeral customs of ethnic minorities are respected.

Candidates of ethnic minority origins are selected and cultivated as officials and professionals. Ethnic minority officials account for 51.4 percent of the total officials in the region.

At the same time, Xinjiang has always been an inalienable part of the unified and multiethnic country, bearing the responsibility of safeguarding national unity, ethnic harmony and social stability. The region has focused on eliminating ethnic misunderstandings carried over from the past. It has firmly opposed any form of ethnic oppression or discrimination, and outlawed any action that might sabotage ethnic unity or incite ethnic separatism. Along with the region's economic and social progress, contacts and exchanges among various ethnic groups of Xinjiang grow ever closer. A relationship of unity, harmony and mutual assistance has been developed.

Freedom of religious belief protected

Xinjiang is also a region with multiple religions. At present, the major religions are Islam, Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism and Taoism. Historically, the religious relations in Xinjiang were very complicated. Since the 4th century BC, Zoroastrianism and Buddhism made their way into Xinjiang. Manichaeism and Nestorians were introduced into Xinjiang in the 6th century. In the late 9th century, Islam was introduced into southern Xinjiang. Today, Islam has become the principal religion in the region.

Between different religions and different sects of the same religion in Xinjiang, there had occurred many conflicts, religious wars lasting for decades, and sectarian disputes of hundreds of years, causing serious damage to the economy and society of Xinjiang.

Since its founding in 1949, the People's Republic of China has been pursuing a policy of freedom of religious belief. The state protects citizens' freedom of religious belief and normal religious activities. All normal religious activities

that believers conduct at venues for religious activities or in their own homes, including attending religious services, fasting, preaching, reciting scriptures, are protected by law, and no organization or individual may interfere with them. Muslim customs are fully respected.

Xinjiang now has 24,800 venues for religious activities, including mosques, churches, lamaseries and temples, with 29,300 clerical personnel. Among these, 24,400 mosques have 29,000 clerical personnel.

Clerical personnel have been trained through study under senior clerical personnel, at scripture schools (classes or workshops), at colleges, and by other means. Religious classics and books including the Koran have been translated and published in the Uygur, Chinese, Kazak and Kirgiz languages.

To ensure successful pilgrimages for believers in Islam, Xinjiang adopts a policy of organized and planned pilgrimages. The Xinjiang government has arranged charter flights every year to take Muslims to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, and offered medical care and interpretation services for pilgrims to ensure safe and orderly pilgrimages.

Xinjiang engages in active communication and exchanges with other religious organizations worldwide. Representatives from Xinjiang religious circles have participated in many international academic meetings and seminars, and clerical personnel and students from religious schools in Xinjiang have won prizes at many international Koran recitation contests, and some have been sent abroad for further study.

Religious believers serve as deputies and members in People's congresses and committees of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) at all levels, participate in the deliberation and administration of state affairs, and supervise and inspect the implementation of the policy of religious freedom.

At the same time, religious believers must also fulfill their constitutional and legal obligations, and must not make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt social order, impair the health of citizens, or interfere with the educational system of the state. Religious affairs and religious organizations in Xinjiang are not subject to control by foreign forces. Due to the effective im-

plementation of the policy of freedom of religious belief, all religions in Xinjiang enjoy harmonious coexistence.

In China's history, there had been attempts by colonialists and imperialists to split Xinjiang from China. Since the end of the Cold War, religious extremism, ethnic separatism and violent terrorism have been rampant in many parts of the world. Xinjiang's stability and development was also disturbed and impacted. The splittist forces, headed by East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), plotted and organized a number of bloody incidents of terror and violence, including explosions, assassinations, arsons, poisonings, assaults, and riots, seriously jeopardizing the lives, property and security of the Xinjiang people. The July 5 riot in Urumqi in 2009 caused huge losses in lives, in which 197 people died and over 1,700 were injured. The violent terrorists brutally killed innocent civilians, including the Islamic clerics and believers.

Religious extremism betrays and distorts religious doctrines, deludes and deceives the Muslims with their fallacies, and endangers religious and social harmony in Xinjiang.

To fight against the violent crimes by the ETIM separatist forces and safeguard Xinjiang's security and economic and social progress, resolute steps have been taken by the Xinjiang Government. The occurrence of violent and terrorist incidents and the spread of religious extremism have been suppressed effectively. These measures received broad support by people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang and are understood by friendly neighboring countries.

Xinjiang has a long history of being the key junction of the Silk Road and played an important role in the exchanges between China and Iran. Today, the Belt and Road Initiative provides new historic opportunities for economic cooperation and people-to-people exchanges between the two countries. Once again, Xinjiang occupies a position to significantly influence China-Iran cooperation and exchanges. It's my sincere hope that Iranian friends take this opportunity to explore more of and better appreciate Xinjiang, conduct trade and investment on this land of hope, and promote the welfare and friendship of our two peoples.

When dollar matters more than lives of Yemeni children



By: Ramin Hossein Abadian

The Saudi regime has committed yet another war crime in Yemen and this one is particularly horrendous.

An airstrike by the Saudi-led coalition hit a school bus in the Dahyan market in Saada province on Thursday, killing at least 44 Yemeni students and wounding 77.

This Saudi war crime has been denounced. Hezbollah Thursday issued a statement saying that the “continuous US-Saudi brutal massacres committed against the civilians in Yemen” marks the failure of the Saudi coalition. It is “the worst form of violence and terror and hides the failure of the war on Yemen.”

Meanwhile, Syria also issued a scathing condemnation of the massacre where almost all of the victims were children.

Yemen’s Defense Ministry responded to the latest Saudi offense in attacking the Yemeni school bus, condemning the attack. The Defense Ministry has also announced that its forces will respond to this crime at the time and place of its choosing.

Adding insult to injury, Colonel Turki al-Malki, a Spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition, stressed that Thursday’s attack

carried out in Saada is a “legitimate military action” and is “in accordance with international humanitarian law and customs.” Nothing could be further from the truth.

He said the attack was in response to the Houthis missile strike in Jaizan, Saudi Arabia. However, attacking civilians is illegal and goes against international laws.

At a time when the main body of the International Human Rights Defender, the United Nations, fears the loss of Saudi funding, it remove the name of the Saudi regime from the blacklist of countries that violate Yemeni children’s rights, it is quite natural that the Riyadh authorities in the shadow of such a great achievement in the international arena, they will compete in child killing with their Jewish brethren.

The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, called for a “credible” investigation Friday but failed to condemn the horrific crime against Yemeni children in Saada. This is unfortunate because to the extent the UN fails to act decisively, this will only encourage war criminals who think they can act with impunity and may only encourage more such horrible actions against civilians. The UN seems to have become ineffective whenever it is challenged by a potential withdrawal of member funding.

In any case, Saudi Arabia has pushed

the scope of the war by bombing school children as brazenly as the Zionists have shot children in the Gaza Strip and wiped out entire families with bombing and artillery.

One of the main reasons for Saudi Arabia turning to the brutal and unjustified killing of innocent Yemeni children has apparently been the Saudi failure to achieve its goals in Yemen over the past three years. Saudi Arabia has been plunged into the swamp of the Yemeni war for three years. It thought it could end the war quickly in less than a month with a victory, but nothing of the sort has occurred. This failure has remained a big blow to the Saudi coalition.

The Saudi coalition has also of late failed to occupy the strategic port of al-Hudaydah because of the strength of the Yemeni resistance. In addition, the Saudis have apparently been trying to enlist support for its war effort from al-Qaeda members in Yemen, offering the terror group money.

This further depravity of seeking help from known terrorist organizations may have encouraged war crimes such as the bombing of the school bus. Mohammed bin Salman and Mohammed bin Zayed are playing a dangerous game. World public opinion is certainly not going to shift in favor of the Saudi coalition and its aggressive actions in Yemen.

EU dying silently as it plays in Trump's court

By: Mohammad Ghaderi

While the US is explicitly undermining the EU regionalism for an upper hand in the global economic dynamics, the Europe is falling in a trap with secret negotiations.

The paradoxical approaches taken by the European authorities is definitely one of its kind. Over the past months, Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, has repeatedly emphasized that the EU can no longer rely on the United States to secure its interests.

However, the German Chancellor held secret and hidden negotiations with the US government and Trump to resolve Europe's economic and security problems and crises.

In other words, there is a significant difference between the speeches and actions of the European authorities regarding the EU's independence from Washington. Here are some points that need to be taken into consideration:

Firstly, US President Donald Trump is one of the main opponents of the existing structure in Europe. He has come to this conclusion that the collapse of the United Europe will provide the United States with great economic growth among its allies. The White House therefore monitors the simultaneous destruction of the Eurozone and the European Union as essential goals. This is the main reason for Trump's support for nationalist and anti-EU movements in Europe. Recently, Donald Trump has officially urged French President Emmanuel Macron to pull his country out of the EU to benefit from more US-France ties. Also, the US president has asked Theresa May, the British Prime Minister, to sue the European Union for making barriers in Brexit talks. Trump has gone even further, and warned Theresa May that she should choose between integrating in the European economic structure and having economic relations with the United States. Together, these statements and stances show that Trump is working hard to achieve his main goal in Europe; which is the collapse of the European Union.

Secondly, although some may think



that confronting the United Europe is the secret target of the US President, Trump's behavior suggest that he has no reluctance to declare his opposition to the EU and the Eurozone. Trump believes that the collapse of the European Union will lead to an increase in his power and would intensify his dominance on the European players. Hence, the President of the United States is trying to manage the EU's collapse from an economic and commercial perspective. It should not be forgotten that during the 2016 presidential campaigns, nationalist and anti-EU movements were Trump's only supporters in Europe, and other politicians affiliated with the Social Democratic or Conservative movements in Europe (which currently hold the power) wished that the Democrats and Hillary Clinton could win the election.

Europe is now facing a phenomenon called "Trump". In spite of this, the way European authorities try to deal with the White House is still based on a kind of deterrent idealism. Unlike countries such as China and Canada, which have given a strong response to imposing tariffs on imported steel and aluminum, European authorities have not yet taken a determined decision against the United States and the Trump government. On the other hand, European leaders continue to resolve the differences between themselves and the Trump government on the through negotiation. It is as if the European leaders have not yet realized the deep opposition of Trump with the EU and the Eurozone. They are still trying to reduce the US president's "conflicts" with the EU to some sort of "superficial disagreement", which is exactly what the

president of the United States and his entourage want.

Undoubtedly, the current retreat of the EU authorities before Trump and their failure to enter the phase of "confrontation with the White House" should be interpreted as "EU's quiet suicide". The continuation of this process will lead to further pressures on the European Union, and subsequently, the position of nationalist and anti-EU groups within Europe will be strengthened. Besides, we should take this fact into account that with the advent of more than one hundred far-right representatives to the European Parliament during the 2014 parliamentary elections, the process of "collapse of the United Europe" has actually begun. Right now in countries such as Austria, Italy, Sweden, and even France and Germany, nationalist groups have been able to politically strengthen their position, and even find way to the top of political equations of some of these countries. The most important factor that can save Europe from current crises is to strengthen the Europe's independence in the international system. The symbol and objective example of the strengthening of such an independence is "standing against the United States". But that's exactly what the European authorities have forgotten.

It seems as if European officials hesitate to consider the significant presumption of "Trump's opposition to the United Europe" in their behavioral and verbal calculations. They are still thinking and deciding in the phase of "interacting with the White House", and they are even willing to give their NATO Ally some advantages. But if the EU doesn't enter the phase of "confronting the US" and merely try to control Trump's decisions and policies, its destiny will be nothing but collapse and destruction. This confrontation calls for putting an end to the Europeans' play on the US ground; a precondition that has not yet been fulfilled by EU member states. Eventually, the Green Continent is at one of the most critical periods of its political, economic and security life. Indeed, how can we imagine that Europe, by continuing its current submission to the United States, can get out of the existing crises?

Reasons behind Tel Aviv's fear of war with Hezbollah

By Farzad Farhadi

August 14 is the anniversary of the Lebanon Resistance Victory over the Israel's 33-day war in 2006. That has been enough for Israeli officials to threaten Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The Zionists, deeply concerned about the situation on their domestic front, have been tempted to try a possible war with Hezbollah. Israel has devoted a huge budget of 30 billion shekel to its military for protecting its internal front from rocket attacks by Gaza or Hezbollah missiles.

Zionist analysts are heavily worried about the new and modern weapons of Hezbollah. The Zionist Channel 2 analyst Yaron Schneider points to the Lebanon Resistance missiles "Se7" and "Se14". According to various reports in recent years, Hezbollah has some 120,000 to 130,000 missiles and rockets, most short to medium in range. About 90 percent of the rockets can reach up to 45 kilometers, which means they could reach Haifa.

Amos Gilad, head the Institute for Policy and Strategy and the former head of the Defense Ministry's political affairs bureau has spoken of Israeli army reports to the Security Council on future war scenarios in the Northern Front, which include the discharge of hundreds of thousands of Israelis and the daily exposure of hundreds of missiles and energy shortages.

Gilad warned against the military struck on the northern front and considered the threat of the internal front to be very serious. "The resistance has targeted its missiles in the north towards Israel's Tel Aviv. This condition requires that the army and security institutions be fully equipped" he announced.

The Zionist's Haartz shared damaging estimates in the event of a brief clash with Hezbollah in Lebanon, "what would happen if it [the war] lasted about 10 days, a longer but medium-length campaign, about three weeks; or a longer



conflict that lasts more than a month.

The scenarios shared with the cabinet included estimates of how many rockets that would likely be fired each day, how many them would be intercepted, how many would strike on plains versus constructions and civilians.

If a war erupts up north, the Israeli army plans to evacuate hundreds of thousands of people who live within missile range, and move them to other parts of Israel.

Haartz reported that in the wake of the war, hundreds of missiles will be fired every day to Israel, a fatal blow to both in the north and south of the country.

The proliferation of missile attacks and the limitation of anti-missile systems such as the Iron Dome and Patriot in their interception will make it harder to confront these missiles.

According to various reports in recent years, Hezbollah has some 120,000 missiles and rockets and they can launch 700 rockets a day, most short to medium in range. About 90 percent of the rockets can reach up to 45 kilometers, most of them are Grad-type Katyusha.

Hezbollah has the ability to fight for several weeks in a row, even if half its missiles are shot down by the Israeli Air Force, reported Haartz. Iron Dome air

defense system will face severe problems in dealing with this rocket volume, especially because of limited number of missile reserves.

With all the efforts of the Zionist authorities to assure Hezbollah of the next war, the truth is, the Israelis have no faith and trust on their defensive systems.

According to Zionist circles, more than half of the Israelis will naturally turn to more secure areas in the event of a war between Hezbollah and Israel.

Meanwhile, the economy of the Zionist regime faces a lot of problems like power outage, water shortage and other war-related problems such as flight cancellations.

The Zionists are also concerned about platforms and offshore facilities. According to Zionist media, Tamar square facilities are located 23 kilometers from the shore, the Karish and Tanin field development are 40 kilometers away and Levitan is 10 kilometers away from the coast. The Zionists have been spending hefty money in gas platforms, but they are still very worried.

Meanwhile, Lebanese Hezbollah Secretary-general Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah announced several days ago that he was ready to attack Israeli gas platforms in the Mediterranean, saying he was wait-

ing to get a green light from the Lebanon's Supreme Defense Council.

Abdel Bari Atwan, the famous analyst of the Arab world, wrote "Palestinians and Lebanese resistance are not afraid of Israeli military superiority as Arab regimes are fearful of them. He went on to address the Zionist concern about targeting Hezbollah with its unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) gas fields in the Mediterranean Sea."

Atwan adds: "All Israeli experts believe Iron dome may be able to deal with missiles coming from Gaza, but it certainly cannot demolish drills that come from southern Lebanon or southern Palestine. What we want to say is that dignitaries work around the clock to strengthen the military power of resistance and stand up to the Israeli tyranny."

He continued "we do not know the number of patriotic invaders, but what we know is that there are hundreds of unmanned drones in Lebanon's and Gaza's stockpiles, a matter that wastes the Israeli military budget and creates panic among settlers. Perhaps most Arabs do not pursue these remarkable news and meanings, but the Israeli military analysts are closely following the trend and are aware of the size of the threat, whether they are threatened with drones or hundreds of thousands of resistance advanced missiles."

Israel's Minister of Education Naftali Bennett and an Israeli cabinet member, who is also the military officer of the regime, described his level of risk as part of a maneuver for the domestic front at an Israeli school. He said "each new war causes damage at unusual level. Israel has not had new plans since the beginning of 1967, and now Israel will face retaliation from Arab states if it breaks out any war with Arab nations."

Although the Zionists think very little of the probability of a war initiated by Hezbollah, but any small incident may turn into a full-fledged war.

Undoubtedly, the Zionists having the 2006 bitter war experience before them, fear another war with Hezbollah for three reasons: Hezbollah's powerful missile power, the fragility of the Israeli front, and the heavy economic consequences of the war. They have fear of being hit by the power grid, large power plants, airports and critical facilities.

Europe and Trump's riddle



By: Hanif Ghaffari

The European Union is still confused by the United States and Donald Trump's behaviors as President of this drawer. On the other hand, the White House sends Europe to Europe with dual parallelism and paradoxal flow.

Trump, on the one hand, continues its rigid economic policies towards Europe, and, on the other hand, talks about negotiating with Europe in the security and economic spheres!

This dual approach has not yet been thoroughly scrutinized by European authorities. The French PM Emmanuel Macron and British prime minister are still trying to look optimistic about the White House. They hope to deal with Trump on various issues. However, people like Angela Merkel have a more realistic approach to Trump and his actions against Europe. In any case, as long as Europe fails to adopt a stubborn and powerful approach to the United States, Trump will take a firmer approach towards Europe.

It should not be forgotten that Trump is opposed to the existence of the European Union. Something that some European politicians still do not understand! Trump has repeatedly called for the destruction of the European Union and the eurozone in its speeches and behaviors. The support of the President of the United States and his entourage for the withdrawal of Britain from the European Union is also worthy of consideration.

Many analysts of the international

affairs have recently had a special focus on US-EU relations! Some signals and speeches by the President of the United States which are addressed to the European authorities indicate the full opposition of the White House to the European Union. Over the past few days, there has been news about the specific talks between the President of the United States and some of the European Union's member states. Trump called on French President "Emmanuel Macron" to leave the European Union and thus build wider bilateral relations with the United States!

On the other hand, Trump has officially asked the British Prime Minister "Theresa May" to sue the European Union rather than interacting with it. These are indications of the wide and extensive opposition of the United States to the United Europe. This confrontation can become a full-fledged dispute in the future. However, the European Union has not yet made a firm response to the United States, and it has adopted a policy of "having interactions with Trump," but this policy can't be adopted for a long time!

EU member states, under the policies of politicians such as Theresa May, Emmanuel Macron, and even German Chancellor "Angela Merkel, have not yet used their capacities to confront the Trump's government's actions and policies. It has reached a point where the British prime minister has asked other European countries to be silent against Washington regarding the imposition of tariffs on steel and aluminum imported from Europe!

The fact is that some EU officials have been compromised with regard to the Trump government. In general, they have forgotten that the confrontation between Trump and Europe is fundamental! Undoubtedly, if European officials do not or cannot understand this fact, they will face crises in the near future: the crises that the Trump government will create for them.

Bolton's negotiations against Iran

By: Hanif Ghaffari

John Bolton, the US National Security Advisor, continues his anti-Iranian negotiations in various fields. In recent weeks, he has been busy discussing the presence of Iran in Syria and, on the other hand, engaging in negotiations with other countries over Iran's sanctions.

Bolton knows well that he will have to come to an agreement with other international players in this regard until November; the time when the US sanctions against Iran's oil and the Central Bank will begin. But the existing evidences suggest that the US National Security Advisor is not going to succeed in this regard.

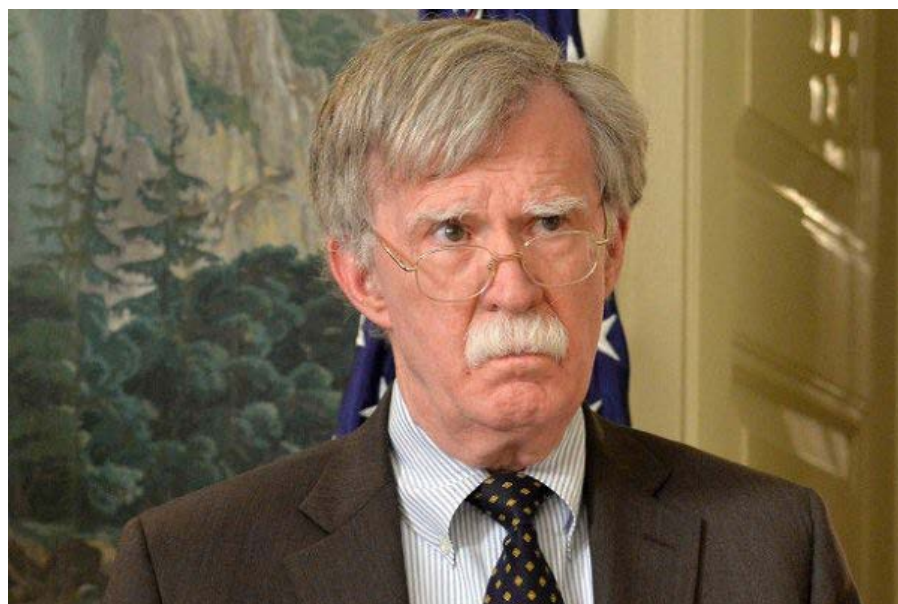
On the sidelines of his recent visit to Nikolai Patrushev, the secretary of President Vladimir Putin's Security Council, Bolton explicitly raised the issue of Iran's oil embargo, and mentioned that the US is prepared to use sanctions to drive Iranian oil exports down to zero.

He also addressed the European authorities in a specific way and said that the Europeans have to make a choice between the US and Iran in observing American sanctions which he claims have been more effective than expected.

"We expect that Europeans will see, as businesses all over Europe are seeing, that the choice between doing business with Iran or doing business with the United States is very clear to them".

Bolton's remarks come at a time when China, India and Turkey are refusing to comply with US secondary sanctions against Iran. On the other hand, European countries are also preparing a plan (a new package of proposals) for maintaining the nuclear deal.

Under such circumstances, even Trump's close friends (some of whom are opposed to the presence of Bolton at the White House) and many traditional Republicans doubt Bolton's success in confronting Iran. It's to be noted here that John Bolton was the main advocate of George W. Bush invasion to



Iraq in 2003.

However, after a while it became clear that he and the other conservatives had stuck Washington in a terrible mire. By the end of the Bush presidency, Bolton has become the symbol of the defeat of the US President both inside and outside the country. Such a fate is already expected for Trump and Bolton. Many international affairs analysts believe that John Bolton, the current national security adviser in the United States, will soon become a symbol of the failure of the Trump government.

Another issue that Bolton had negotiated with the Russian authorities was about Iran's military presence in Syria. This was also discussed at the recent joint meeting of Bolton and Patrushev. The visit was largely influenced by verbal attacks from American and Russian officials. Russian sources have emphasized that the Russian and American officials couldn't come to an agreement over issues such as the presence in Syria. However, the parties have announced that they will continue negotiations in the future.

At the end, Bolton and Nikolai Patrushev failed to sign a joint statement following five hours of discussion in Geneva covering security issues, amid a historic low in relations between the two countries. Both Bolton and Patrushev spoke

to reporters after the meeting, the first official bilateral talks since Putin's summit with US President Donald Trump last month, and they said there would be no joint declaration because Russia opposed US accusations.

After his meeting with Patrushev, Bolton stated that Russian President Vladimir Putin told the United States that an Iranian presence in Syria does not tally with Russian interests, but he can't force Iran out of Syria. He also mentioned that Washington and Moscow don't agree on the presence of Iranian forces in Syria.

Bolton's statements reflect the failure of his talks with the secretary of Putin's Security Council on Iran's military presence in Syria. As we can see, John Bolton has started a full-fledged opposition to the Islamic Republic of Iran in the economic, political and regional dimensions.

President Donald Trump seems to have given Bolton full authorization in this regard, but he has not been able to take a practical step forward in confronting Iran. He has faced crises and obstacles on the imposition of oil sanctions against Iran and on regional policies of our country; an issue which has raised concerns among Zionist lobbies that support Bolton in the United States.

European troika with France's basic role keeps to buy time

By Mohammad Ghaderi

The European Commission recently adopted a first package of €18 million for projects in support of sustainable economic and social development in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including €8 million assistance to the private sector.

As reported by the European sources, these projects are the first of a wider package of €50 million for Iran, aiming to support our country to address key economic challenges. These projects are defined as part of the renewed cooperation and engagement between the European Union and Iran following the conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, said: "Since the renewal of the EU-Iran relations as a result of the Iran nuclear deal, cooperation has developed in many sectors. We are committed to sustain it and this new package will widen economic and sectoral relations in areas that are of direct benefit to our citizens".

Activities supporting the private sector will include support to high-potential Iranian Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), the development of selected value chains, and technical assistance to Iran's Trade Promotion Organization.

The European sources noted that the European Commission will also provide technical support in the area of environmental challenges for €8 million and support drug harm reduction for €2 million.

The projects will be implemented by the International Trade Centre, EU Member State agencies, and other organizations in close cooperation with Iranian counterparts. In this regard, there are some points that need to be taken into consideration.

First, the European authorities are keeping to "buy time" in order to deliberately postpone their "package of



proposals" which was supposed to be offered to the Iranian officials much earlier. We can clearly see that they are not the least in a hurry to come forth with this package.

The reason for the adoption of this tactic by the European authorities is clear: they want to measure the impact of US secondary sanctions on the Iranian economy on the one hand, and on the other hand, they intend to observe the new political situation in Washington following the mid-term elections. These two factors has caused them to be basically reluctant to provide Iran with immediate and timely proposals.

Although our country's Foreign Ministry spokesman said that there's a difference between the recent support package and the package of proposals, but we should not forget that the European authorities are trying to make us accept the former for the latter.

The European troika and in general, all the European players consider the recent support package as an excuse for "buying more time". Therefore, accepting this package is not in the interest of our country. As French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian emphasized, for the time being, European officials are not interested in coming up with the final package to Iran!

The next point is about the nature of the Europeans' support package for Iran. European officials have made specific maneuvers on their "support package." Indeed, what purpose does this package serve? While the European Union,

and in particular the European troika (Germany, Britain and France) have made a significant delay in offering their "package of proposals" to Iran, what does their maneuver on this support package mean? Interestingly, Federica Mogherini spoke of the EU's commitment to working with Iran! Did the EU' High Representative forget the European Union approach towards Iran and the nuclear deal?

Everyone remembers that the European authorities, even before Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA, were in agreement with all the cruel and illegal actions of the President of the United States on "changing the JCPOA". The same thing made Trump bolder to pursue his policies on Iran. Even some news suggest that there is still a secret deal between the US Department of State and the Foreign Offices of Germany, Britain and France.

Meanwhile, the French have the closest cooperation with American officials. Many international experts and analysts believe that the French's insistence on not submitting the package to Iran by November is the result of a back-to-back coordination between the White House and the Elysee Palace.

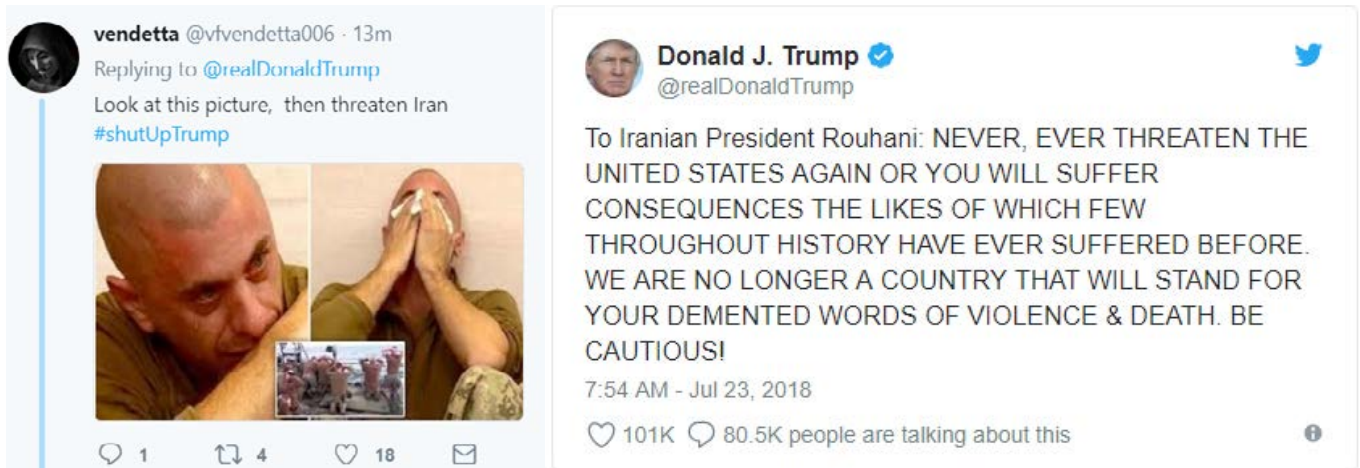
In any case, we should accept that even after the withdrawal of the United States from the nuclear deal, European authorities have looked at the JCPOA as a leverage for their possible dealings with Washington. The delay of the European authorities in offering the package of proposals to Iran can also be analyzed in this regard.

What is certain is that the European Union should focus on its main obligations rather than maneuvering on its support package. These obligations include providing objective guarantees regarding the sale of Iranian oil, having bank ties with Iran, etc. This is while the European Union has not yet offered any kind of objective guarantees, and this issue that can't be simply ignored in analyzing the EU performance.



Report

Trump's threatening post against Iran stirs outrage on Twitter



By: Lachin Rezaian

Donald Trump, notorious for his Twitter tirades, has launched a blistering all-caps attack on Iran via Twitter, sparking thousands of tweets under his post, rebuking him for his reckless "midnight" remarks.

Based to an "American habit" of threatening and intimidating people and governments around the world, suggesting war and violence against them, including the Islamic Republic, Trump has launched a furious all-caps tweet posted last Sunday night, threatening Iran of "suffering consequences the likes of which few have ever suffered before."

Eighteen months into his tenure at the White House, the US president is as 'reckless' in his social media utterances as ever.

Trump threatened Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Twitter late Sunday night; To Iranian President Rouhani: NEVER, EVER THREATEN THE UNITED STATES AGAIN OR YOU WILL SUFFER CONSEQUENCES THE LIKES OF WHICH FEW THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAVE EVER SUFFERED BEFORE. WE ARE NO LONGER A COUNTRY THAT WILL STAND FOR YOUR DEMENTED WORDS OF VIOLENCE & DEATH. BE CAUTIOUS!

Speaking at a gathering of Iranian ambassadors and heads of Iran's missions abroad earlier on Sunday, President

Rouhani responded to the US claim over completely stopping Iran's oil exports; "Iran has many "straits" apart from the Strait of Hormuz, through which to ship its oil, in case Iran's exports are blocked."

"Mr. Trump! We are the honest men who have throughout history guaranteed the safety of this region's waterways. Do not play with the lion's tail, it will bring regret," Rouhani said.

Hassan Rouhani cautioned Mr Trump about pursuing hostile policies against Iran's capital of Tehran, saying "American must understand well that peace with Iran is the mother of all peace and war with Iran is the mother of all wars."

"You are not in a position to incite the Iranian nation against Iran's security and interests," Rouhani said, in an apparent reference to reports of efforts by Washington to destabilize Iran's Islamic Establishment.

Following hashtags like #shutUpTrump, #Learn_from_the_past, #animaltrump, #StopMeddlingInIran, #ShutUpTrump, #ImpeachTrump and #ReleaseTheTrumpTapes, many users have lashed out at Trump's threatening message against Iran.

One user, Monty Boa, said that President Rouhani didn't threaten the United States. He threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz in Iranian territorial waters, effectively revoking a "privilege" that Iran grants to other countries. The US



contests Iran's and Oman's claims to these waters.

Some users also posted an image showing Iran's detention of US Navy sailors in the Persian Gulf back in 2016, using #Learn_from_the_past hashtag; they have recommended Trump to learn from the past and after looking carefully the images, repeat his words against Iran again:

An American journalist David Hogg, in response to Trump's tweet, ironically wrote "one of the biggest threats to national security in the past 2 years has been increasing the character limit from 140 to 280."

This is not the first time that Donald Trump is threatening a country in his Twitter account. He constantly threatened the Islamic Republic to quit the international nuclear deal, waging war against Iran, imposing the severest sanctions ever against Iran, and cutting its oil exports. He also has a long history in insulting the Iranian officials and nation.

Beiranvand heading to Torino or Dynamo Kyiv?

By: Mohammad Ali Haqshenas

Team Melli's goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand showed great performance in 2018 World Cup which was enough for creating a wave of offers from top European teams.

Beiranvand had great saves in World Cup against Spain, Portugal and Morocco, recording one clean sheet in the event. His most shining moment was when he saved Cristiano Ronaldo's penalty. That brilliant save made him Iran's hero.

He was also selected as the best goalkeeper of 2018 World Cup group stage competitions by Guardian readers.

All these shining and reports was a sign that he will not be short of offers after the games.

Beiranvand is in contract with Iran's Persepolis FC until 2021 and the club will decide whether he heads other teams or not. This is while Persepolis seems to be in dire need of a good goalkeeper as the team will compete

in the quarter-finals of AFC Champions League.

"Eight top clubs have put in offers for Beiranvand; most from Europe and few from Asia. The offers are fair and we are studying the cases," said Persepolis General Manager Hamidreza Garshasbi, Varzesh1 reported on Friday.

The moment when Beiranvand saved Cristiano Ronaldo's penalty during match against Portugal at 2018 World Cup

Beiro himself seems eager to start a new phase in his life by playing in the top European leagues. This is evident when Guardian quoted him as saying, "I'd like to play at Liverpool or PSG."

Italian Torino FC, Ukrainian FC Dynamo Kyiv and Turkish Beşiktaş are among teams which look to sign Beiranvand.

Torino FC has been reportedly offered a three-year contract with the goalkeeper. They have offered €900,000 for the first season. Their attempts to hire Team Melli's goalie has started just after Iran's elimination from 2018 World Cup.

From Eastern Europe, Dynamo Kyiv

FC has proposed €1 million for the transfer which can also be enhanced to €1.2 million. The Ukrainian club has had direct negotiations with Beiranvand and their official offer will soon be handed to Persepolis FC officials.

Beşiktaş has also reportedly offered some €1 million for his hiring.

It's a fact that Persepolis doesn't like to lose its main keeper, considering that the team cannot hire any other player due to transfer ban. Croatian Božidar Radošević is the second goalkeeper of Persepolis and the team seems to lack any other qualified goalies; which can become a challenge for coach Branko Ivankovic.

Ivankovic has told club's managers during their last session that he needs Beiranvand and is against his transfer.

The transfer, if made, can provide substantial income for the Iranian club; the revenue which may be persuasive enough to risk on the transfer.

Many experts believe that Beiro will not be playing in Iran in next season. Although, time will tell.



Was Iran really in World Cup's 'Group of Death'?



By: Mohammad Ali Haqshenas

As the only remaining team of Group B in 2018 World Cup, Spain, was eliminated by Russia, public opinion and even some experts are beginning to cast doubt on whether Iran was in 'Group of Death' or not.

Iran national football team was drawn in Group B of 2018 World Cup along with 2012 World Champion Spain, 2016 UEFA Champion Portugal and 2018 African Nations Champion Morocco.

When the Brazilian football legend Cafu displayed the slip of Iran during the Final Draw for the 2018 FIFA World Cup at the Kremlin Palace on December 1, Iranians were filled with excitement.

People had diverse views on this incident; many felt disappointed and believed that Iran has no chance against these big names. While others insisted that Iran always plays well against great teams.

Many believed that Iran was certainly in the 'Group of Death', saying that a decent elimination from group stage can be the best result for Team Melli; and it happened, but now the group's level of toughness is called into question.

Iran won the first game against Morocco, but lost the match to Spain and gained 1 point from Cristiano Ronaldo's side.

With 4 points, Team Melli stood at the third place of Group B, just behind 5-pointed Spain and Portugal, and 'decently' eliminated from the World Cup.

In the round of 16, Uruguay defeated Portugal 2-1 on June 30 to destroy Ronaldo's dreams for completing his awards collection with Golden Boot and world champion. And Spain, the other remaining team of Group B, lost the Sunday match to Russia in penalty shootouts to prove that it is far from the ideal La Roja.

Iran's great defensive wall was repeatedly praised by many experts both in the country and beyond and especially by general public. However, the defeat of Iran's ex-opponents in the round of 16, combined with the performance of other Asian representatives, has created a wave of doubt towards the actual performance of Team Melli.

Iran's traditional rivals in Asia, namely Japan, South Korea and Saudi Arabia, had compelling performance in some of their games.

Despite the loss against Poland in

the final match, Japan advanced to the knockout stage to be the only representative of Asia in next round.

South Korea stunned the football world with a 2-0 victory over title-holder Germany. This result was enough to send the Mannschaft home and list the Asian team as a 'phenomenon'.

And Saudi Arabia had a true comeback against Egypt on their last match, winning the African team 2-1 which partly alleviated the pain of that humiliating 5-0 defeat to Russia at the 2018 World Cup opening game.

Iranian people were happy (and maybe still are) with the unprecedented result of their national team in the history of World Cup finals. Even after the team lost the match to Spain, some people came to streets to praise their team.

All in all, it seems that Group B wasn't really the 'Group of Death', and general public's level of satisfaction from Team Melli seems to have decreased after recent incidents.

Queiroz's men now eye to reclaim the title of 2019 AFC Asian Cup after some 42 years. The competition is going to be held in United Arab Emirates from January 5 to February 1.

On Azmoun-Ghoochannejhad retirement from national duty

By: Mohammad Ali Haqshenas

Two Iran national football team strikers Reza Ghoochannejhad and Sardar Azmoun quit national duty just after coming home from 2018 Russia World Cup.

Qualifying for 2018 World Cup as the second team, Iran had raised hopes for gaining unprecedented results in the history of their presence in World Cups; and they did.

Despite being in a very rough group besides giant Spain and Portugal and African champion Morocco, Team Melli gained four points but lost the chance to advance to the Round of 16.

Just like the games in the qualifying round, Iran proved its strong defensive line and just conceded two goals in its three matches.

Many experts and most of the public praised Iran's defensive performance at the World Cup, however, when the focus is on defending, strikers have the least chance to become stars and they face a rather heavy emotional pressure.

When Iran was eliminated from World Cup, defenders and goalkeeper became heroes and some fierce criticisms centered on Iran's attacking line.

The case of Ghoochannejhad

Seemed desperate, Reza Ghoochannejhad, posted a message on his Instagram account after arrival to Iran and announced that he is retiring from national duty.

"To wear Iran jersey was a dream which came true for me but I think it's time to bid farewell to Team Melli. I would also like to thank all my coaches and teammates for helping me grow as a player in the previous six years and wish them all the best," he wrote, Tehran Times reported.

The Heerenveen striker remained an unused substitute in all three World Cup matches and didn't find the chance to prove his readiness, despite Iran's need to score to advance to the knockout stage for the first time.



Nicknamed 'Gucci', he has served six years in Team Melli scoring 16 goals in his 44 caps. His most dramatic and influential goal was that against South Korea in 2012 which led to Iran's qualifying to 2014 Brazil World Cup.

Who knows, maybe his experience and mentality could solve Iran's lack of scoring.

The 30-year-old striker has decided to quite national duty and focus on his family and newborn son, Doran, and his club competitions.

The emotional decision of Sardar

23-year-old Sardar Azmoun also dropped a retirement bombshell after coming home.

The news went viral in minutes, and made it the hottest topic among Iranian football fans.

Azmoun, also called 'Iranian Messi', played in three matches but couldn't score a goal despite all hopes that were built on him.

Sardar feels insulted by comments from national team supporters and believes they have resulted in his mother becoming ill again.

"Unfortunately, with all the interest I have, and contrary to my heart's desire, I decided to say goodbye to the national team of my country ... It's definitely the most painful decision for a young 23-year-old who has come here with a lot of hardship and misery," he wrote, adding, "My mother had overcome a serious illness and I was happy. Unfortunately

because of the unkindness of some people, and the insults that me and my teammates in no way deserved, her illness has become severe. This has put me in a difficult position where I must pick one or the other - and as a result I pick my mother," Goal reported.

Also, many people believe that he is far from retirement period and Team Melli needs strikers like Sardar.

"I hope that I could again score goals for the Islamic Republic of Iran," said Sardar on June 28 while addressing the people of his hometown Gonbad; a comment which shows he has changed his mind.

What is obvious here is that his decision is based on emotions to the point that Carlos Quieroz hasn't commented on him, implying that he will probably be back.

Blame on players or Iran's style?

The fact is that Quieroz has built a spectacular team which is focusing on defense and counter attacks. This style was most apparent when the team was playing against big names like Argentina, Spain and Portugal.

In this style, strikers are also extensively participating in defense and have the lowest chance to shine in attacks. This puts an extra physical and emotional pressure on strikers.

Team Melli needs improved strikers, no doubt, but the attacking line shouldn't be harshly criticized when the team is concentrating on defense.



Iran goalie not boastful about saving Ronaldo's penalty kick!

By: Lachin Rezaian

"Brilliant save! You don't see that often vs Cristiano;" this is among millions of tweets went viral after Iranian goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand saved a penalty from Cristiano Ronaldo in a 1-1 draw with Portugal on Monday at Russia 2018 World Cup.

If you take a little time searching for Alireza Beiranvand's name in google, you may find lots of comments admiring his play against Portugal: "Iranian goalie has become an overnight star"; "Iran's goalkeeper went from being homeless to blocking Ronaldo's penalty kick"; "Cristiano Ronaldo misses the penalty and Messi fans are currently happier than Iran fans"; No one will give the credit to Ali Beiranvand because the penalty is missed by Ronaldo, a brilliant save against a good player."

I don't know how many times I have

seen that 2 seconds when Beiranvand saved Iran's net; It looked like the Iranian keeper wanted to live inside that moment where he saved a penalty from Ronaldo for as long as humanly possible and I don't blame him; "when I saved that penalty, I did not understand anything. It was as if I was dreaming that someone woke me up," says Beiranvand who is playing in his first World Cup!

"I waited until the last second to stop that penalty and I feel our hard work could have earned us a spot among the last 16 in Russia," he said. "But I can definitely see that in the future no one will think of us as a surprise. We played hard, we deserved better and people saw that."

Earlier, Portugal coach Fernando Santos also had called Iran "the best Asian team at the moment," and said those who think every match in the World Cup would be easy for Portugal are "certainly not on the pitch."

Everyone in the online world is talking about his past life, the struggles that he had gone through, saying his epic life story could be an inspiration for millions around the globe. Many in the world, especially the Iranians are calling him a champion for what he did against Ronaldo; however when he was asked what he feels now, he smiled and said "actually I am not boastful about saving a penalty kick from Cristiano Ronaldo; I don't care about that; I fought for my team, for the whole my country, for my nation, not myself; I don't care about the fame after the penalty save, I only tried to avoid a defeat for my country and nation."

Yes! Iran lost chance to advance to the Round of 16 and its 2018 World Cup aspirations came to an end with the 1-1 draw to Portugal, however, Iranian team are feeling as though they are going home as a champion; Iran is proud of her sons!

Visit to Qingjing Mosque, Kaiyuan Temple

By: Yasser Nazifi Gilavan

The delegates participating the 2018 edition of 'One-Belt One-Road Journalist Forum' were taken to Quanzhou, in a 70 kilometer distance from Xiamen, on Saturday June 23. They paid a visit to the Qingjing Mosque in the center of Tumen Street in Quanzhou.

Also known as the Ashab Mosque, Qingjing Mosque has an area of 2,500 square meters, and was initially built in 1009 by Arab merchants living in Islamic communities of the region back in the time of the Song Dynasty (960-1279). Today it is the oldest Arab-style mosque in China.

Kaiyuan Temple was the next stop during the tour on Saturday; it is a Buddhist temple in West Street,

Quanzhou, China, the largest in Fujian province with an area of 78,000 square metres (840,000 sq ft). Although it is known as a "Hindu-Buddhist temple", on account of added Tamil-Hindu influences, the main statue in the most important hall is that of Vairocana Buddha, the main Buddha according to Huayan Buddhism. What is now called the Mahavira Hall (Mahavira = the Great and Strong) is in fact the Vairocana Hall.

The visit to Fujian is in a bid to contribute to the construction of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road as the Chinese believe that the port was the starting point for the ancient maritime Silk Road and it now shoulders the responsibility of promoting South Fujian culture, and strengthening institutional and people-to-people connectivity

The local and national authorities

are aiming to increase the popularity of Xiamen's tourism industry and attract more foreign visitors to Xiamen. By integrating various advantageous resources, Xiamen will gradually develop all-for-one tourism based on cultures in Xiamen, Zhangzhou, and Quanzhou.

The 2018 edition of the 'One-Belt One-Road Journalist Forum' kicked off on Tuesday June 19 in Beijing and will come to an end on Tuesday June 26. Hosting more than 100 delegates from 52 countries and regions of the world, the second edition of event sees a triple extension from the first edition in 2017 where only 30 delegates attended the forum.

Mehr News Agency is the only Iranian media institution attending the 8 day event, covering the opening ceremony and offering reports on the international gathering.



3 years after Mina stampede and 'Marjan's Dream' is still haunting

By: Marjohn Sheikhi

Wednesday marks the 3rd anniversary of the 2015 Mina stampede during the Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia, which killed more than 2,000 people, with the highest death toll belonging to Iran. 'Marjan's Dream', Mohsen Eslamzadeh's latest documentary, is an artistic attempt to keep the memory of those lost to the tragedy alive.

It is hard to grasp that it has been three years already, when the wounds are still tender, when loved ones are still missing, when grieving has become this continued ritual that you do every morning, and your mind has not known peace ever since.

Mohsen Eslamzadeh's documentary 'Marjan's Dream' that was screened for the first time on Sunday, three days before the Eid al-Adha festival that concludes the Hajj pilgrimage, reminded us of the many untold, still unfinished stories that got buried under a heap of bodies, the unforgiving heat of the sun, and a forced amnesia caused by collective efforts of those who refused to shoulder the responsibility for that enormous human catastrophe.

'Marjan's Dream' is at once a portrait, a feminist narrative, a local portraiture, and at its heart the unfolding of a colossal tragedy. You will have a hard time deciding which angle of the documentary should have been the focus of the story: the life of Marjan Nazghelichi, a competent, self-made woman who became the first female governor in Bandar Torkaman in the face of adversity, or the local texture, of women in colorful scarves meandering through Doshanbeh Bazaar or weaving intricate patterns into aesthetically pleasing carpets and rugs; or the absent protagonist's tragic fate in an incident that made history, of what came to be known as the 2015 Mina stampede.

She was there, along with some 2.5 million other pilgrims carrying out Hajj rituals in the holy city of Mina on the outskirts of Mecca. The 10-minute stampede took the lives of over 2,000



people. Hers was among them. Or that is the assumption, anyway. Her body was never returned.

'Marjan's Dream' opens with an off-screen telephone conversation. A male's voice lets us know that the person on the other end of the line is panting in distress.

"What's wrong?"

"..."

"You had a bad dream?"

The dream is later revealed to us, by Marjan's husband, to have been a bad omen. Two days before the tragedy, his call wakes her up from a bad dream: a flood has washed away all pilgrims performing the Hajj rituals. She told him none of her fellow travelers had taken the dream seriously, as it was a sunny day in Mina and Mecca, with no chance of rain. She told him to put some money aside for charity to ward off misfortune, anyway. He tells us, in a regretful tone, that he told her to do it herself, because he didn't feel up to it. I wonder if the charity would have stopped the tragedy from unfolding on such a colossal scale. I wonder if the rain would have saved lives as many had died under the unbearable, suffocating heat. I guess, you never stop wondering. The unending series of 'what-ifs' after a loss. You wish you could turn time, but the only thing that keeps

turning back is your thoughts to that horrid day. It still haunts me to this day.

'Marjan's Dream' is important subject-wise. It picks one life from the thousands that were lost that day to show how significant it is, just one life, to a whole family, to the people who knew that person, to a whole city that were impacted by and indebted to that person's efforts and services. Eslamzadeh chose to tell Marjan's story. It is not hard to imagine that every single person that died in the stampede that year has a similar important story to tell. Imagine the family and friends that survived them. Imagine the pain and the void that continue to exist in their hearts. To media, 2,400 is a number, good for its shock value, a clickworthy headline, nothing more. But to an artistic mind, it's 2,400 different ideas for creation, for introspection, for investigation. To media, one doesn't matter at all, it can be easily and readily dismissed. But to a filmmaker, one can be the reason for the creation of a 55-minute documentary, a whole year in production, heavy expenses, multiple back and forth trips, meeting with many new people, interviewing everyone, many sleepless nights. And the end results, a story that needed to be told in its entirety, needs →

to be seen and remembered, it also needs an ending. No hope for a happy one at this point, but the family needs to know: where is her body?

Form-wise, 'Marjan's Dream' falls mostly in the category of expository documentary, with its liberal use of interviews, b-roll, and archival footage, but a few times it ventures into the impressionistic realm, as it takes hold of the rain symbolism coupled with thunderstorms, belying the traditional meaning of 'rebirth' with the gut-wrenching sense of impending doom – or more accurately in this case, a sense of lingering doom, a tragedy that took place three years ago but its shockwaves still continue to reverberate inside the broken hearts of so many.

Iran had the highest death toll in the stampede. 464 Iranians dead, and it's cruel how everyone knew someone who had lost a relative in the tragic event. A friend of mine lost his father. A coworker had lost an uncle. Suddenly, everyone around you became connected through loss. Worse was, the families of the victims were never compensated by Saudi Arabia. They didn't even receive a note of apology. Iran made every effort to send a fact-finding committee to Saudi Arabia to discover the actual cause of the catastrophe. The efforts were thwarted, and in the midst of broken diplomatic ties, it became almost impossible to follow up the issue through diplomatic channels.

Eslamzadeh's documentary, surprisingly, lacks enough footage of the stampede; just two or three haphazard, low-quality video footage that was obvious had been taken by cell phones. I thought perhaps the censorship was a deliberate act on the director's part out of some ethical consideration, but he said that he could barely find any relevant picture or video footage on the internet.

"It's as if they have swept through the internet," he said. "There are like, only three or four mobile shots [in the film] and even those are of such poor quality. I do think that the greatest censorship in history has happened in the case of the Mina tragedy. It's like as if every picture related to the incident has been taken off the internet."

The assumption leaves a sobering sensation in its wake. It wouldn't be too amiss to suspect that the tragedy, even in its entire harrowing enormity, has already been swept aside as a faded, half-forgotten memory. Only those who are still smarting from the loss remember. To everyone else untouched by the tragedy, the Mina stampede is already history.

Perhaps, Eslamzadeh's documentary could save at least one dream, one brilliant life wasted, from fading away? Perhaps.

Mohsen Eslamzadeh is an Iranian documentary filmmaker, best known for his 'Alone Among the Taliban' which won the best documentary award at the 44th Athens International Film and Video Festival in the US, as well as the best documentary award at the 12th Marbella International Film Festival in Spain.



Plotters of 1953 coup d'état still fearful of Iran

Today marks the 1953 coup d'état in Iran. 65 years have passed since that date. Among Iranians it is known as the 28 Mordad coup d'état.

On the day, the streets of Tehran became the scene of violence and chaos by hooligans in support of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The violence was engineered by Britain and with the help of US dollars. Finally, the democratically-elected government of Mohammad Mosaddeq was toppled.

The coup was plotted to take revenge for the nationalization of oil in Iran on August 19, 1951. The nationalization of oil became possible through unity among nationalists and religionists.

The British, who saw unity among different groups of society as the main hurdle to their plundering of Iran, tried to create division among religionists and nationalists on the date the nationalization of oil was declared. They did so in order to create the ground for the return of Pahlavi to power on August 19, 1953.

The coup was the highlight of suppression and despotism and the plundering of national resources until the victory of the Islamic Revolution in February 1979. There are many stories about the role of Britain and the US in the coup.

However, Kermit Roosevelt, the chief of the CIA's Near East and Africa division who was director of the coup, said in an interview that it was the first secret operation against a foreign government which had been engineered at the end of the Truman administration.

These revelations show that due to political, geopolitical and economic reasons, foreigners have always had a covetous eye on Iran and that such moves have not been limited to the post-1979 revolution. Needless to say that regardless of who has been in power in Washington or London, the US and Britain have not yet abandoned their evil intentions toward Iranians, a nation that many experts say has civilizational superiority.

These moves show that the leaders of liberal democracy, from Dwight D. Eisenhower to Donald Trump, have been fearful of Iran no matter the nationalists have been ruling this country or proponents of Islamic republicanism.

Yazd, land of brown memories

By: Lachin Rezaian



The well-preserved mud brick old architecture, distinctive wind-catchers, qanats, numerous historical sites in the central city of Iran, Yazd, make it a necessary destination for any tourist visiting Iran.

Yazd is located midway between Isfahan and Kerman, 689 km (427 miles) south east of Tehran. The city's tourist attractions never fail to lure tourists from across the globe, and today city has become one of Iran's tourism hot-spots.

The earthen architecture of Yazd has escaped the modernization that destroyed many traditional earthen towns, retaining its traditional districts, the qanat system, traditional houses, bazaars, hammams, mosques, synagogues, Zoroastrian temples and the historic garden of Dolat-abad.

Yazd is not a colorful city, having no huge modern skyscraper, tower or even tall multi-floor buildings. The historical houses in Yazd have colors of desert brown, leaving brownish memories in every tourist's mind.

Yazd is now the only UNESCO-listed Iranian city where people still live. It was named as Iran's 22nd world heritage site at UNESCO's World Heritage List 2017 held in Krakow, Poland; it is also

believed to be the world's largest inhabited adobe city.

It was on the last days of winter that I decided to arrange a trip to the ancient city of Yazd with my husband, who is into trips very much, for the first time in my life. When I just arrived in the city, it was love at almost first sight!

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We decided to stay in a traditional place which brings to mind the lifestyles of people who lived in the province in the past. Our place was a very cozy and clean room with traditional decoration. The hotel had a big yard with a number of furnished beds where we could relax for a while. There was a big Samovar on the corner of the yard with an antique teapot on it, flavored with cardamom and cinnamon. The hotel was relatively quiet and there were only two other families staying in the hotel, all of which were foreign tourists.

The most important thing everyone does while in trip, is to look for the restaurants which have high-quality, delicious and economical food for tourists.

For breakfast we found a traditional café near the hotel in which lentil stew and omelette were very delicious. Every morning the café was our regular spot.

Yazd has amazing food at most economical prices; it is home for many traditional and modern restaurants, in which live traditional music is played by musicians wearing classical costumes.

The eye-catching Moshir al-Mamalek Garden Hotel, remained from the Qajar Era, was the first place we chose for lunch in which tradition is mixed with modernity in its best way. The garden is one of the tourist attractions of Yazd and has been registered in the List of Heritage Sites of Iran with the number of 7778.

One of the top spots to tour when you are backpacking in Yazd is Zoroastrian Fire Temple at the center of the city. The place is holding an eternal flame believed to have been burning for hundreds of years, seen as sacred fire by Zoroastrians. 'Atash Behram' sacred fire holds a flame that has been burning for nearly 1,550 years. It is located in the middle of a vast garden of pine, cedar and fruit trees with a vast circular water pool in front of it.

The fire temples in Yazd date back to pre-Sassanid period, which are the plac-

es of worship for Zoroastrians. In 1999, the Yazd fire temple was registered in Iran's National Heritage List and some sections of the temple have been open to visit for tourists where they can see the fire behind the glass wall.

The Amir Chakhmaq Complex was our next stop during a tour in the classic desert city of Yazd. Amir Chakhmaq Complex stands out as the symbol of the city and is a prominent structure noted for its symmetrical sunken alcoves. It is a mosque located on a square of the same name. It also contains a caravanserai, a tekkeh, a bathhouse, a cold water well, and a confectionery. At night, the building is lit up after twilight hours after sun set with orange lighting in the arched alcoves which makes it a spectacle.

The place is named after Amir Jalaeddin Chakhmaq, a governor of Yazd during the Timurid rule (15th-16th century CE).

The place is free to visit and good for taking selfies. The ambiance of this place is really pleasant; around the square you can find lots of shops which sell handcraft. It has a big pond with fountains and garden beds with flowers.

Nearby Hajkhalife Confectionery on the left at the intersection is highly recommended to buy local sweets of Yazd such as Ghottab, Sohan, Pasmak and

cakes as souvenirs.

If you need watching 700 years in one shot, I recommend you meeting Jame Mosque of Yazd, excellent exhibition of colorful tile work with symmetrical shape, nice and soaring façade, crowned by a pair of minarets which are the highest in Iran.

The 12th-century mosque is still in use today. It was first built under Ala'oddoleh Garshasb of the Al-e Bouyeh dynasty. The mosque was largely rebuilt between 1324 and 1365, and is one of the outstanding 14th century buildings of Iran.

As our next historical touring in Yazd, we also paid a visit to the Art House, Water Museum, Sadri Garden, Markar Historical Complex and Alexander's Prison and took excellent photos.

Last but not least of our trip was one-day tour in the desert. It took us one-hour ride to go to Fahraj Desert, about 30 km away from the city. Since it was my first time ever to see a desert so closely, once we entered, it made a great impression. Traveling to desert is like a dream, walking barefoot through soft dry sand, visiting untouched regions. In short, desert is sand, sun and deep silence that you cannot find anywhere else.

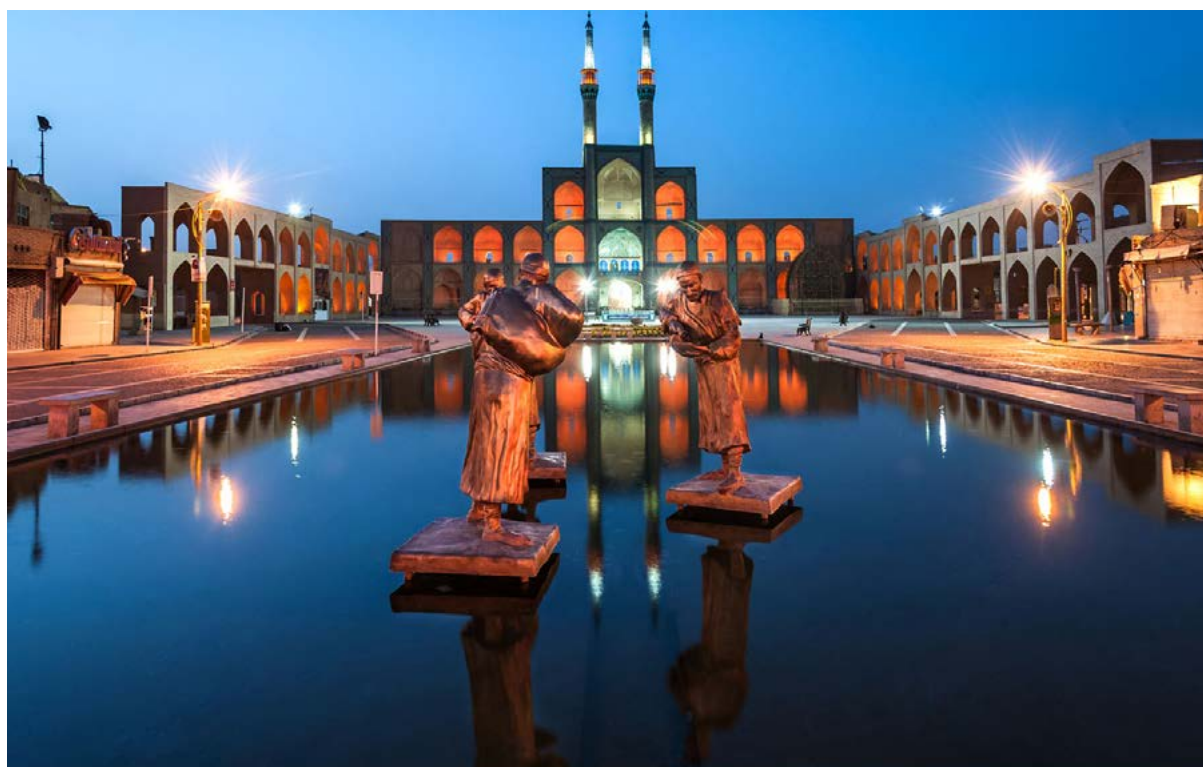
There was a family living nearby who ran the business offering camel riding

chances to the tourists; we have never had a chance before to ride a camel and it was an amazing experience and a memorable adventure.

Next adventure was riding safari and then we started best part of our trip, walking barefoot on the sifting sands and exploring the rocky outcrops. We walked, and walked. Up and down, over and around, wherever the sand was strong enough to carry our feet, and the earliest rays of light shone to guide our eyes.

A nice treat to end the day at the desert was drinking tea and at the same time experiencing the magic moments of observing the sky full of shining stars. Sunrise in the Fahraj Desert was superb! The guide then took us to a local place where a family had prepared for the tourists the traditional Iranian food for dinner.

Our journey to Yazd wrapped up after 3 days, leaving brownish memories in our minds. At the end of each trip, you may come back home tired, with empty pocket, but you have packed some enjoyable experiences that would make you smile to the end of your life when remembering your moments. Traveling humbles us and broadens our perspective in so many ways. An old saying goes: "adventure may hurt you but monotony will kill you."





News in Vision



In the 13th edition of the National 'Ash' Festival, cooks compete to win the judges' approval with delicious bowls of 'Ash', a famous category of dishes in Iranian cuisine. The event is underway in Gavazang entertainment zone of Zanjan province.



A unique kind of carpet named 'dorou' is made by Turkmen living in Duydukh village, Iran's Northeastern North Khorasan province. 'dorou' means 'two-sided'; each side of this carpet has its own special design. Two weavers need to seat in front each other and each weave a different design. The process usually takes about a year to complete.

Iran test-flied its newly-developed twin-engine military fighter/trainer 'Kowsar' on Tuesday, on the occasion of National Day of Defense Industry, to be held tomorrow, on Aug. 22.



During his visit to Vienna, Iranian President Rouhani met with Austrian counterpart Van der Bellen and Austrian Chancellor Kurz.

The new generation of domestically-manufactured 'Fateh-e Mobin' missiles, with pinpoint accuracy and able to hit targets in sea and on the ground, have been unveiled ahead of National Defense Industry Day (Aug. 22) in the presence of Defense Minister Amir Hatami.





The 4th international paragliding tournament, accuracy landing, wrapped up on Friday in Silvana in Urmia County, West Azerbaijan Province. World's top 15 paraglider pilots competed with other top pilots from various provinces in Iran on a three-day event.



Children in Hamidiyeh, a city in Khuzestan province, spend a plenty of time swimming in Karkheh River and playing with water buffaloes every day, during summer.



Kandovan is a renowned stone and tourist village in Iran. The astonishing village is located 50 km south of Tabriz in the northwestern province of East Azarbaijan. It is not only famous for its scenic beauty but for its troglodyte homes, excavated inside volcanic rocks and tuffs, making the complete village look like a gigantic termite colony.



Zagros Mountains, which cross Hamedan province in Western Iran, provide a rich ground and pastures for the livestock and life of nomads of the region.



Joint commission of the nuclear agreement was held at ministerial level in Vienna on Friday to discuss ways of maintaining the international accord after the US withdrawal.

Iran inaugurated the production line of Fakoor air-to-air missiles with the presence of Defense Minister Brigadier-General Amir Hatami on Monday.



Iranian women Classic Wrestling League kicked off on Thursday at Mohammad Banna Wrestling House.

Qeshm, an Iranian island in the Strait of Hormuz, is home to over 3,000 camels, known for being uncharacteristically fast and highly sought-after in the Persian Gulf littoral states for racing events.



The Mangrove forests of Qeshm or Hara forests of Qeshm are located in the southern coast of Iran, near the island of Qeshm in the Persian Gulf. Dominated by the species *Avicennia marina*, known locally as the “hara” tree, the forests represent an important ecological resource.

International Army Games 2018
The International Depth Competition, as part of the 2018 Intl. Army Games, is underway in Iranian city Nowshahr from 1-9 August. 181 teams from 32 countries are taking part in the Games initiated by Russia. Iran is participating in 16 out of the 28 contests.

