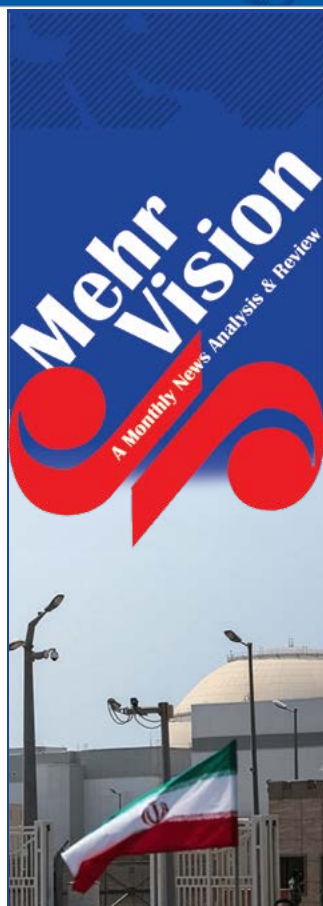


Iran reduces commitments
to JCPOA;

**gives Europe
a 60-day ultimatum**





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Iran gives JCPOA parties 60 days before reducing further commitments

By: Marjohn Sheikhi

On May 8, Iran revealed countermeasures to US' withdrawal from the nuclear deal, removing restrictions on storage of heavy water and enriched uranium, and giving the five remaining parties to JCPOA 60 days before reducing further commitments to the agreement.



"In line with protecting the security and national interests of the Iranian people", the Supreme National Security Council has ordered stop to implementation of some

parts of commitments of the Islamic Republic of Iran under the JCPOA according to articles 26 and 36 of the agreement.

The letter containing the details of Iran's countermeasures to the US withdrawal from the agreement and its increasing pressure and restrictions against the Islamic Republic since May 2018 was presented to the ambassadors of the five remaining parties to the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA) - France, Germany, UK, Russia and China - on Wednesday morning, a few hours before President Rouhani went live on a television broadcast to discuss the decision in length.

According to the decision of the Supreme National Security Council, Iran will no longer commit to the restrictions put on storage of enriched uranium and heavy water under the agreement.

The remaining parties to the nuclear deal have been given 60 days to implement their commitments under the JCPOA, particularly those related to the banking and oil sectors. Failure to do so will prompt the Islamic Republic to stop complying with restrictions on the level of uranium enrichment and the modernization of Arak heavy water reactor, the statement says.

"At any given time that our demands are met, we will resume complying with the stopped commitments; otherwise, we will continue to stop implementing the other commitments step by step," adds the statement by the Supreme National Security Council.

"Iran is ready to continue its consultations with the remaining parties to the JCPOA on all levels," the statement notes. "However, Iran will respond decisively and immediately to any irresponsible act, such as referring the issue to the UN Security Council or the imposition of more sanctions."

The statement further stresses that the failure of the JCPOA and any possible consequence will be fully upon the United States and the remaining parties to the nuclear deal.

EU rejects Iran's 60-day ultimatum on JCPOA

By: Marjohn Sheikhi

The EU has rejected Iran's ultimatum on JCPOA, which calls on the bloc to make good on their commitments to the nuclear deal in the next two months or Tehran would start suspending some of its own.

"We reject any ultimatums and will assess Iran's compliance on the basis of Iran's performance regarding its nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA and the NPT," the joint statement from the EU high representative and the foreign ministers of France, Germany and the UK read.

"We remain fully committed to the preservation and full implementation of the JCPOA," the statement says, calling on Iran "to continue to implement its commitments under the JCPOA in full as it has done until now and to refrain from any escalatory steps."

EU regrets the re-imposition of sanctions by the United States following their withdrawal from the JCPOA, says the statement.

"We are determined to continue pursuing efforts to enable the continuation of legitimate trade with Iran, including through the operationalisation of the special purpose vehicle 'INSTEX'," the statement adds, in reference to an alternative trade mechanism for Iran in the face of US sanctions, which has yet to become operational.

Iran revealed on May 8 countermeasures to US' withdrawal from the nuclear deal, giving the other remaining parties to the JCPOA a 60-day ultimatum to comply with their commitments, particularly those regarding Iran's economic interests in the banking and energy sectors, before reducing portions of its own commitments to the agreement stage by stage.

Iran says at any given time that its demands are met, it will resume complying with the suspended commitments, which have been made impossible to continue due to the US measures and sanctions, according to FM Zarif.

The decision to reduce commitments to the JCPOA comes as Washington is ramping up pressure against Iran, by re-imposing new sanctions, including restrictions on Iran's low-level uranium enrichment, and ending the sanctions waivers for Iran's major oil clients in an attempt to drive the country's oil exports to zero.

Iran has stressed that it has no intention to leave the JCPOA, and its decision on reducing commitments is still within the framework of the agreement.

Iran to stop selling yellow cake, heavy water: Pres. Rouhani



Rouhani on May 8 appeared on TV to declare Iranian reciprocal action to US over the breach of JCPOA by scale-down of Iran's commitments envisaged by Note 26 of the nuclear deal.

The president noted that "it does not mean that Iran leaves the nuclear agreement, known as Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)."

Noting that the pact is "beneficial to the region and the world and detrimental to the enemies of Iran," Rouhani said Iran has always been and will remain committed to its responsibilities to the nuclear deal.

The president said the country will continue the efforts to stay in the pact despite the enemies' wishes.

The enemies, including the American hardliners, Zionists, and the reactionaries in the region, were opposed to the international deal since the very moment it was reached, he added.

Rouhani noted that JCPOA has a national strategic foundation, it was not an individual or partisan or governmental issue, he said.

"Rather, it was a national decision which was made by the entire governing system."

The people in the region, the Europeans and even the US allies and the international companies are suffering from the US policies, creating restrictions for the European companies doing business with Iran.

60-day moratorium to remaining parties

Rouhani said Iran will give a 60-day moratorium to the parties to the deal to remedy the breaches and preserve Iran's interests enshrined by JCPOA.

He further said that the European signatories to the deal were doing well in lip service, but they were unable to implement what they vowed.

Rouhani was referring to the Europeans' pledge to take actions to neutralize the restrictions caused by the unilateral withdrawal.

He noted that based on a decision made by Iran's Supreme National Security Council, messages have been sent to the remaining five countries in the nuclear deal, announcing that Iran has done its part to give them the one year span they had requested.

We have done our part and it was our "strategic patience".

However, he stressed that Iran is not

leaving the deal, rather it is a new phase of the deal in the context and in line with the wording of the JCPOA.

"Articles of 26 and 36 entitled Iran to raise complaint about breach of the international deal in the joint commission."

According to the Article 36, under the Dispute Resolution Mechanism, if Iran believed that any or all of the E3/EU+3 were not meeting their commitments under this JCPOA, the country could refer the issue to the Joint Commission for resolution."

And based on the Article 26, the EU will refrain from re-introducing or re-imposing the sanctions that it has terminated implementing under this JCPOA, without prejudice to the dispute resolution process provided for under this JCPOA.

Rouhani stressed that after the said period, if the five countries come to the negotiation table to come to terms with Iran's interests particularly with regard to oil and banking, we would return to the previous position.

Should they not comply with their responsibilities to the pact, Iran would not observe the 3.6% level of enrichment and the heavy water reactor restrictions, Rouhani said.

Iran UN amb.:

No action from JCPOA parties in 2 months to mean 'no political will'

Iran's ambassador to the UN Majid Takht-Ravanchi told PBS that lack of action from the remaining signatories to the nuclear deal in the next two months would mean there is no political will and Iran would act based on its national interests.

On the anniversary of the US' unlawful withdrawal from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, known as JCPOA, Iran said it plans to cease complying with portions of the agreement to jostle the remaining signatories into putting their words into action regarding the safeguarding of Iran's economic interests in the face of US sanctions.

At the same time, President Rouhani stressed that Iran would continue to remain in the agreement and the countermeasures still fall within the framework of the pact; "Our nation should know that we have not withdrawn from the nuclear deal. They shouldn't think that the nuclear deal doesn't exist anymore. Today, we announced a reduction, not withdrawal," Rouhani said during a televised appearance on Wednesday.

Speaking to the American public broadcaster PBS, Iran's ambassador to the UN Majid Takht-Ravanchi talked about why Iran waited a whole year since Trump administration pulled out of the JCPOA to announce countermeasures.

"Over the last year, we exercised extreme patience in order to show that Iran is ready, Iran is ready to take extra mile, in order to show that it is sincere in its implementation of the nuclear deal.

But, unfortunately, due to US bullying of even its closest allies, we have not received the economic benefit that we were promised to receive based on the nuclear deal. And then we were left with no other option than to say that, for 60 days, we are going to stop implementing



or to cease performance of some of our obligations, voluntary obligations, based on the nuclear deal.

And we will see what will happen during the next 60 days. The window of diplomacy is not closed. We believe that Iran will speak, will negotiate with the partners, the remaining participants of the JCPOA, and we will see what will be the outcome of the negotiations."

Ambassador, you say that you were left with no other option, but why do you need to enrich uranium at a higher level than 3.67 percent? What's your intentions by doing that — or possibly doing that?

Well, no, for the time being, we are adhering to the JCPOA on the limit of the enrichment, the level of enrichment.

What we have said is, for the next 60 days, we are going just to be free for our stockpile. We are not talking about enriching more than 3.67 percent for the next 60 days.

President Rouhani did say today that you would enrich higher than 3.67 if you don't get those economic incentives, which haven't come so far.

Of course. Of course we will. Of course we will.

The reason is that our partners have

had more than enough time, for the last year...to compensate what the Americans have done to the JCPOA.

So if they cannot do it in the next two months, that means that the political will is not there. And then we will act in accordance with our national interests.

Today, President Trump said that he still hoped to meet with Iran's leadership. Does Iran have any interest in meeting with President Trump?

There is — I mean, there is no utility in meeting somebody who carelessly tear apart, you know, an international agreement.

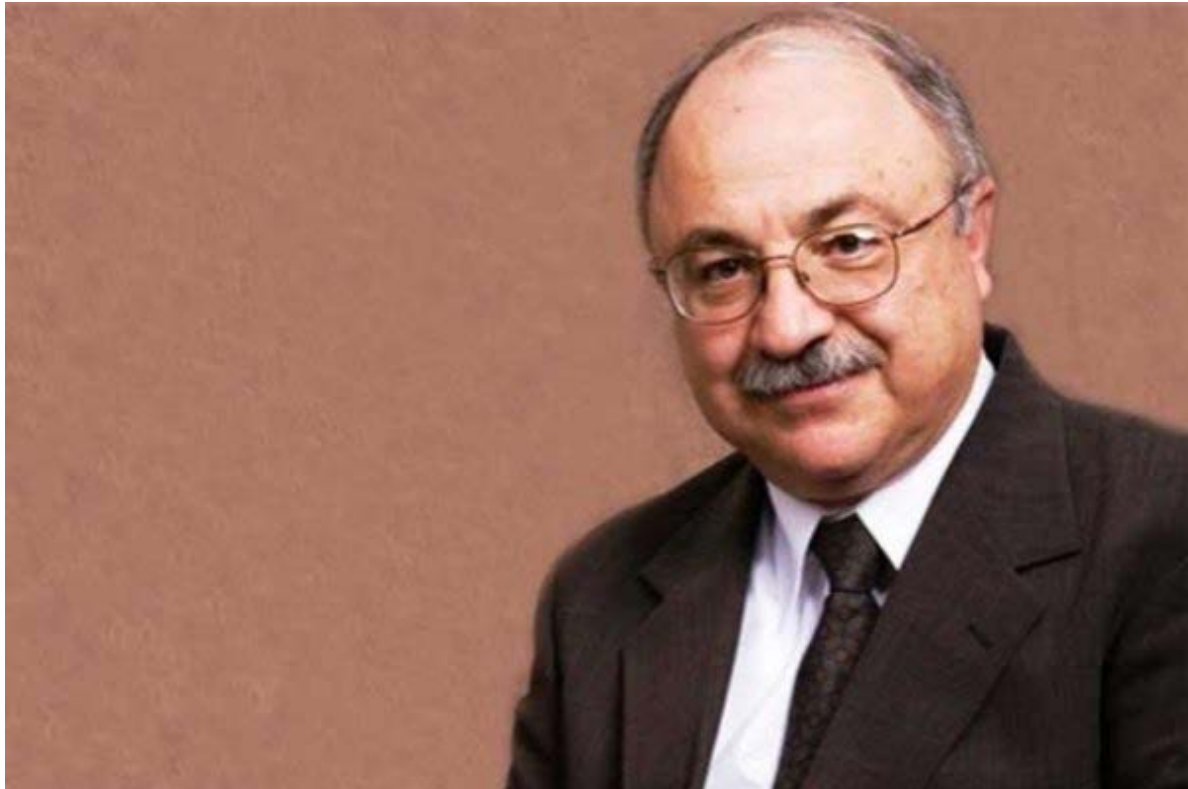
It wasn't an agreement between Iran and the United States. Other countries, the European Union were part of it. So, all of a sudden, we see that the president comes and says, I don't like it because of so many reasons, because the former president took the initiative to sign such an agreement with Iran.

So, how can we trust somebody who carelessly and recklessly do something like this?

Some people who I'm talking to here who are experts on Iran fear that the speech by President Rouhani today will allow hard-liners here in the US and perhaps Israel a stronger case to argue that Iran is not trustworthy.

I think the hard-liners, as our foreign minister has coined it, four B's, Bibi Netanyahu, Bolton, bin Zayed, and bin Salman, they are doing whatever they can, no matter what Iran does.

So it doesn't matter how we are dealing with JCPOA. Their agenda is to provoke. Their agenda is to agitate the situation. Their agenda is to prepare a war against Iran. We are not trying to wage war against anybody, but, definitely, we will defend ourselves no matter what.



Reducing JCPOA commitments Iran's appropriate long-overdue decision: Entessar

Interview by Payman Yazdani

Professor of political science describes Iran's decision to reduce its JCPOA commitments as an appropriate response that clear signals Iran's patience with Europe's nonperformance of its obligations under the JCPOA is wearing thin.

President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that Iran will stop selling its enriched uranium and heavy water in a reciprocal act to the US' withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal and reimposition of sanctions.

The president noted that the decision "does not mean that Iran will leave the nuclear agreement."

Rouhani said Iran will give a 60-day moratorium to the remaining parties to the deal to remedy the breaches and preserve Iran's interests enshrined by JCPOA.

He further said that the European signatories to the deal were doing well in lip service, but they were unable to

implement what they vowed.

In light of this development, we reached to Nader Entessar, professor emeritus of political science from university of South Alabama.

Following is the full text of our interview with him:

The Iran has decided to reduce part of Tehran's JCPOA commitment. How do you evaluate this decision from a legal point of view? Can one say that Iran has withdrawn from the deal?

I think this was an appropriate and long-overdue decision. Of course, it is a minimalist response but a clear signal that Iran's patience with Europe's nonperformance of its obligations under the JCPOA is wearing thin. The decision is a legal decision under the framework of articles 26 and 37 of the JCPOA. In other words, Iran is still abiding by its legal obligations and has by no means withdrawn from the nuclear deal.

Don't you think that Iran's measure is a

response to European countries' lack of commitments?

Yes. the European parties to the JCPOA have been toying with Iran for a long time now. While paying lip service to the JCPOA, they have caved in under the US pressure, and in essence, have demonstrated their own inability or unwillingness to implement their obligations. Most everybody knew that once the US withdrew from the JCPOA, Europe would not be able to challenge the US and would follow US diktat.

Can this decision reduce US pressures on the country or convince Europe to do more to safeguard Iran's interests under the deal?

Probably not. I think now the US will try to put even more pressure on Europe to act as Washington's junior partner in this sordid affair. Europe is not an independent player in Washington's "Game of Thrones" against Iran; it is clearly a secondary instrument in Washington's hands.

60 days ultimatum indication that Tehran's patience running thin: Kamrava

Interview by Javad Heirannia

Mehran Kamrava, a professor of the Middle East Studies in Georgetown University of Doha, tells the Tehran Times that "Clearly, the status quo of where JPCOA is today has become untenable. Today Iran is the only party that is living up to the terms of the agreement. The US pulled out a year ago, and the EU has done very little of what the agreement obligates it to do."



Director of the Center for International and Regional Studies at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in Qatar also adds "On the one hand European Union have been calling on Iran to abide by the terms of the JPCOA while on the other hand they have neither stood up to the United States nor even fulfilled their own obligations under the agreement."

Kamrava also adds that "While the agreement has existed on paper, in practice it has actually become an agreement of only one actor, namely Iran. The 60 day ultimatum is an indication that Tehran's patience is running thin."

Following is the text of the interview:

Iran is preparing to halt its implementation of some key parts of the JPCOA for 60 days. What is your assessment of this?

The European Union has been trying to have its cake and eat it too. On the one hand they have been calling on Iran to abide by the terms of the JPCOA while on the other hand they have neither stood up to the United States nor even fulfilled their own obligations under the agreement. They have been dragging their feet because of their own Iranophobia and also because they are unable, or unwilling, to stand up to the US. Iran, meanwhile, has lived up to all its obligations under the agreement. So while the agreement has existed on paper, in practice it has actually become an agreement of only one actor, namely Iran. The 60 day ultimatum is an indication

that Tehran's patience is running thin. Although the EU has rejected the ultimatum, this may be a positive move that prompts the Europeans to finally deliver on their end of the bargain.

What is the future of JPCOA according to new development?

Clearly, the status quo of where JPCOA is today has become untenable. Today Iran is the only party that is living up to the terms of the agreement. The US pulled out a year ago, and the EU has done very little of what the agreement obligates it to do. So there are two possible scenarios out of the deadlock: either the agreement completely collapses, with Iran formally pulling out; or the EU takes substantive and tangible measures to rectify what has become a farce. Over the last two years or so, the EU has been preoccupied with three primary concerns – namely Trump, Putin, and Brexit – and it has therefore put Iran and the JPCOA on the backburner. If it continues to ignore the JPCOA, it is bound to have another serious crisis on its hands.

What is the reaction of President Trump administration especially aggressive wing such as person like Bolton to Iran decision?

I don't think that's the way this White House operates. Donald Trump has demonstrated a predictable pattern of behavior. This behavior is predicated on his innate distrust of and dislike for multilateralism and multilateral agree-

ments. As a result, he has pulled the United States out of many multilateral commitments, the most notable of which are the Paris Agreement on climate change in 2016 and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the UN Human Rights Council, and the JPCOA, all in 2018. In each instance, after pulling out of the agreement, he has engaged in bombastic rhetoric, condemning the terms of the previous agreement, and calling for a new one. In the process, he has sought to apply what he believes his "art of the deal" in order to get better terms for the United States. This is precisely what we are seeing today in the current trade standoff between the US and China, and what we saw in 2017 in relation to North Korea, when Trump called Kim Jung Un "the little rocket man" and warned that his "fingers are on the trigger" are ready to be pulled at any moment. His actions against Iran are driven by the same logic. Trump himself does not seem to want war – wars are, after all, bad for business. But his rhetoric is empowering the wolves around him hungry for regime change in Iran. The real question is will he be able to rein in the likes of Bolton, Pompeo, and Giuliani, or will they become the tail wagging the dog.

What's the point of President Rouhani message (JPCOA is a win-win or lose-lose game) for the other side?

The point is clear. Abide by the terms of the agreement, or there will be serious consequences to the EU's continued foot-dragging.



Iran's game has just started

By: Hanif Ghaffari

By announcing that Iran will begin keeping its excess uranium and heavy water, the Islamic Republic now sends a firm and clear message to the west, exactly one year after US president, Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from its nuclear deal with Iran.

At this point, it seems that Iran has made a wise decision. Over the last year, the European troika has not only done anything to revive the nuclear deal or bring any kind of benefit to the Iranian nation, but they have actually backed up US by developing new plans to undermine Iran's "missile work", and diminish its "power in the region" as well as its "nuclear technology".

As stated in clauses 26 and 36 of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), if the other side fails to meet its obligations, Iran is entitled to partially or completely end its commitments as well. So, Iran's recent decision could be analyzed both on legal and strategic terms.

However, it seems that the strategic aspects of Iran's decision are even more important than its legal aspects. This decision is strategically important because it stops Washington and European troika to carry out their anti-Iran scheme,

a dangerous scheme that they actually started devising when Trump took the office in 2017.

At the time, Theresa May, the British Prime Minister, and Emmanuel Macron, the French president played a major part in carrying out the west scheme. A scheme based on enforcing Iran to keep its "nuclear promises" and stay committed to a "distorted nuclear deal" while "US had abandoned the deal", and at the same time, trying to "diminish Iran's power in the region" and "reduce its missile activities".

All other actions of Europeans toward Iran were also simply targeted at carrying out this major plan, including how they constantly changed their strategies toward Tehran, and how Germany, U.K. and France intentionally delayed in launching the alternative trade mechanism (Instex) with Iran.

Now, Iran's decision to keep its Uranium and heavy water is definitely in compliance with JCPOA, and more importantly, it will seriously undermine the "American-European" joint plan against Iran. This also explains why French government was so distressed by Iran's new nuclear strategy and had such a quick reaction, considering that Emmanuel Macron, the French president and Jean-Yves Le Drian, the French Foreign

Minister both have had important roles in carrying out the American-European anti-Iran scheme.

At any rate, what is clear now is that the game has just started! And the Iranian political system and specially the foreign ministry have a great mission to run this game wisely.

In following days, the European troika might want to force Iran into changing its decision by threats such as reviving the European Union sanctions against Iran or even taking Iran's case to the United Nations Security Council (so that Trump administration can meddle in Iran's affairs). But, it is time for Iran political system to be adamant in its decision.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry should clearly ask the Europeans to choose one of these options, either Iran will "further reduce its commitments to the nuclear deal" or the Europeans should do something practical to "protect the rights of Iranian nation".

It is also necessary that the Iranian political system reveals the American-European joint anti-Iran scheme to the people so that the true nature of Europeans is showed to Iranians. In that case, Europe and specially the European troika will completely lose their reputation.

Future of the JCPOA does not look good: Paul Pillar

Interview by: Javad Heirannia

Professor Paul Pillar, who was CIA intelligence analyst for 28 years, says that the future of the JCPOA does not look good.

Pillar says, "The Europeans so far have simply not given much indication of implementing an economically significant arrangement that would be sufficient for Iranians to say that the deal is meeting their expectations."

He also adds that "the economic clout of the United States is such that the US administration can still scare and intimidate businesses and governments from having much to do with Iran."

Following is the text of the interview:

Given that Iran's needs were not met by the nuclear deal, by which I mean removing the sanctions, and as the result of the US withdrawal from that agreement and Europe's passivity, Iran has announced that it is stopping the sale of enriched uranium and heavy water. This action will be held for 60 days to bring the parties to the negotiation table. How do you assess this issue?

Iran is saying its patience is not unlimited. It has complied with its obligations under the JCPOA for an entire year, despite the US reneging on its own obligations. President Rouhani is saying that must change. Iranian leaders have given up on the Trump administration. They still are hoping for a change in US policy as of January 2021, but it has become politically and economically untenable for Iranian leaders simply to keep waiting for US policy to change. Rouhani is challenging the Europeans, in particular, to do more to make up for the economic shortfall from the US reneging.

The Iranian nuclear deal is an agreement based on the clarity and commitment of both sides. Paying attention to the important role that



the US plays on the other side and the passivity of European countries towards the US, Iran remains committed to this agreement. Bringing into consideration the current situation, how do you assess its future?

The future of the JCPOA does not look good. The Europeans so far have simply not given much indication of implementing an economically significant arrangement that would be sufficient for Iranians to say that the deal is meeting their expectations. The economic clout of the United States is such that the US administration can still scare and intimidate businesses and governments from having much to do with Iran. If the agreement collapses, it would be difficult to piece it back together even after a change of administration in the United States.

After the failed coup in Venezuela, it seems that John Bolton's role in Trump's decision-making process will be reduced. Is there any possibility that in the result of Bolton's aggressive activities which were not successful, the role of the aggressive party in the Trump administration will be reduced?

The aggressive nature of US policy,

especially toward Iran, does indeed depend heavily on Bolton's future. That, in turn, depends on impulsive and hard-to-predict decisions by Donald Trump. Bolton may have lost some favor with Trump because of differences on both Venezuela and North Korea. Bolton's job might be in jeopardy if Trump, who right now probably does not want a war with Iran, sees Bolton as leading him into one. But Trump might not see things that way, or Trump himself, faced with more domestic political problems, might himself come to welcome a military clash with Iran as a distraction.

President Rouhani called the Iranian nuclear deal a win-win or lose-lose game. What's the point of this message for the other side?

Rouhani is saying that if everyone observes the JCPOA, everyone benefits. And if the agreement breaks down, that will benefit no one. Iran clearly would lose economically, but the United States and others also would lose by having an avoidable nuclear crisis on their hands. Rouhani's perspective is far different from that of Donald Trump, who seems to see every agreement as a matter of one side winning and the other side losing.

Trump responsible for Iran halting of some commitments in JCPOA: Nephew

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 I can understand why Iran is preparing to halt its implementation of these key parts of the JCPOA and “do not deny at all the responsibility that the Trump Administration bears in this matter.”

The fellow at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University says that “I have long believed that the JCPOA could not survive without US sanctions relief.”

He also says that “Today’s action shows why: Iran will not continue to provide nuclear concessions without economic access.”

Following is the text of the interview:

Iran is preparing to halt its implementation of some key parts of the JCPOA for 60 days. What is your assessment of this?

It is deeply concerning that Iran is preparing to halt its implementation of these key parts of the JCPOA, especially

on low enriched uranium.

Although I can understand why Iran is doing so and do not deny at all the responsibility that the Trump Administration bear in this matter, the reality is that restarting the buildup of uranium stocks will create further instability and threat in the Middle East and do nothing to solve Iran’s economic problems.

This action means that Iran has now joined the United States in escalating the situation and, ultimately, I think has contributed to the risk of conflict in the region.

What is the future of JCPOA according to new development?

I have long believed that the JCPOA could not survive without US sanctions relief. Today’s action shows why: Iran will not continue to provide nuclear concessions without economic access.

I therefore believe that the JCPOA’s future is very bleak and that the agreement may expire as early as a few months from now.

What is the reaction of President Trump administration especially aggressive



wing such as person like Bolton to Iran decision?

I do not believe that this is a reasonable assessment of Bolton’s role in the Trump Administration. He remains in the driver’s seat with respect to a variety of policies, especially on Iran, and even if he were to be removed, his views of Iran are shared by many others in the Administration.

What’s the point of President Rouhani message (JCPOA is a win-win or lose-lose game) for the other side?

Well, clearly, President Rouhani is trying to encourage the United States to return to the agreement and to generate pressure on the United States to do so from other participating countries.

I understand why he is doing it. I do think that, at this point, it is probably a futile gesture given the inadequacy of European, Russian and Chinese pressure on the United States to reverse course to date.

Iran should not expect something special from EU: ex-envoy

By Mohammad Ali Haqshenas

A former Iranian diplomat said that European countries will not do something special during the next two months to ensure Iran’s interests.

“I believe that whatever has happened so far will also happen in the next two months that Iran has given Europe a chance, we really should not expect something special from Europe,” former Iranian ambassador to Italy Abolfazl Zohrehvand told Mehr News Agency on Wednesday.

“Some Europeans have pinned hope on the post-Trump era, but the point here is that Europe has been in line with US policies and will remain so in future,” he added

“During this time [after signing JCPOA], they simply tried to take advantage of the benefits of the deal and to secure their own interests without fulfilling their obligations.”

“JCPOA has been the most important diplomatic achievement

of the European Union since its formation so they did their best to maintain this achievement, but did not have the required power to cope with US pressure,” he maintained.

Zohrehvand went on to say, “The experience of negotiating with the West in recent years was very valuable, although it inflicted a great cost on the country, since and it made clear the real nature of the West for those who had hoped for the West-oriented approach.”

“We should not tie the country’s problems to issues such as INSTEX and the coming and going of the Democrats and Republicans in the United States, rather we should proceed through relying on our internal capacities,” he added.





Politics

Failure of Saudi project

Translated by Zahra Mirzafarjouyan

Flustered in the midst of high-speed events, Saudi Arabia hosted three regional meetings on Thursday and Friday, including Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Persian Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab League, but the question is that how successful the meetings have been?

Synchronization of meetings with events and developments

Holding of these meetings in Mecca which couldn't result in any consensus at all took place at the same time that we are faced with the momentous developments in the region.

One of the most important current developments is the political tension between Iran and the US which has worried major countries in the region. These countries fear that the Americans may start a war against Iran which its dimensions and size are unpredictable.

These meetings were held on the eve of International Quds Day. Some experts believe that the aim of these meetings were to overshadow the massive marches of millions around the world.

Also, holding these meetings is not unrelated to Trump's 'Deal of the Century' to complete destruction process of Palestine. Arab states of the region, especially the Saudis, Bahrainis and Emiratis have accepted to play a role in this plan which has been written by the Zionists and Senior Advisor to the US President Jared Kushner.

These meetings will be linked to the one which is going to be held Bahrain; a meeting that will focus on the financial dimension of the 'Deal of the Century'. It has been banned by the Palestinian and some of the countries in advance.

Results of these meetings

The Arab League summit was one of the three summits held in Mecca on Thursday. Although many attempts have been made to hide existing differences and gaps among participants, the Iraqi delegation, headed by Barham Salih, to the surprise of the Saudis strongly op-



posed the final statement.

Many political parties, prominent political figures and groups from West Asia to the Middle East reacted to the statements of the PGCC, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab League.

The Secretary General of the Lebanese Hezbollah said that Saudi Arabia depends on the West, and the US and the intelligence services of these countries for its survival. He also added that some Arab regimes have been plotting against Iran since the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran.

Yemen Ansarullah Spokesman Muhammad Abdulalam also said that the unilateral statement issued under the influence of Saudi Arabia did not include the Palestine which is the most important issue of the Islamic world.

These meetings and statements also did not have good reflection in Palestine.

Another major issues during the meetings were the gaps and differences among member states, especially differences between Saudi Arabia and Qatar. In a video has been shared by Arab users on large scale, the Qatari prime minister disregarded the king of Saudi Arabia at a recent summit.

Emir of Qatar Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani refused to attend the meetings and sent Prime Minister of Qatar Abdul-

lah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani. Relations between Riyadh and Doha have shrunk since 5th June 2017 following the siege of Qatar by Saudis and other members of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council.

The king of Morocco also did not attend the meetings and sent his prime minister to Mecca. He hasn't had a good relationship with Riyadh since the painful murder of Jamal Khashoggi.

The Saudis ended the three meetings held in Mecca by issuing statements against Iran. As usual it seems that the statements have never been considered serious.

While the Muslim nations of the region were getting ready for the Quds International Day, Saudi king began the first meeting with attacks on Iran claiming Iran behind suspicious attacks on oil tankers.

If the issue of the Zionist regime was raised in the meetings it would be natural because the Zionist regime benefiting of existing US created regional tensions against Iran is moving ahead with its anti-Islamic goals.

The reason behind the Saudi leaders' move was Trump's 'Deal of the Century', to marginalize the Quds Day and create an anti-Iranian alliance which seems none of these goals has not been materialized so far.

The traditional German parties are in danger

By: Hanif Ghaffari

As much time passes, Merkel's power is at the head of the political and administrative equations of Berlin. It should not be forgotten that the German Chancellor was in the past a symbol of unity in the European Union and the Eurozone.

However, today Angela Merkel has become the symbol of EU power cuts! Now, the two Christian and Social Democrats, which are the most traditional German parties, are not very popular with German voters. This could lead to profound changes on the political, economic and social scene of Germany. On the other hand, it is widely accepted that any change in Germany will also affect other European countries.

Now, the German Chancellor is concerned about his political future, on the one hand, and worried about the fate of the European Union and the Eurozone. However, it must be admitted that Angela Merkel is also involved in shaping the situation! The economic policies of austerity imposed by the German Chancellor and his unnecessary accompaniment to many of the Democratic and Republican Party policies and policies in the United States have played an important role in creating the current situation. It's a difficult time for the Chancellor of Germany! She had to pass the power inside the Christian Democrat Party to her rival, Kramp-Karenbauer. In a conference, Karenbauer rejected claims that she was the "mini Merkel".

"People consider me a 'mini,' a copy, a simple 'more of the same,' but I can tell you that I stand here as my own person, just as life has shaped me and of that I am proud," she said.

Angela Merkel has announced that she will step down of power in 2021, but the polls conducted in Germany has intensively worried her. The results of these polls indicate that the total popularity of the two traditional German parties, the coalition of the Christian and Social Democrats, have fallen below 50%. This suggests the unpopularity of the coalition government among the German cit-



izens. Merkel now has to run the weak coalition government until 2021!

Many analysts of Europe's affairs believe that Merkel's power is actually over. The Chancellor of Germany is no longer the symbol of power in United Europe. She has lost the power of managing the power equations in her country. In other words, Merkel has become a "passive player" in Berlin, the European Union, and the Eurozone.

This is while Merkel had previously said that she hoped her planned departure would end bitter fighting in her weak and fractious right-left coalition, confessing that "the picture the government is sending out is unacceptable".

Merkel is currently worried about polls in Germany. According to an Infratest dimap survey, the Alternative for Germany (AFD), the Green Party and Liberal Democrats are now increasing their relative popularity to challenge the two ruling parties (Christian Democrats and Social Democrats) and to end the domination of the two traditional German parties on the power equations in Berlin. Undoubtedly, Merkel can't be now regarded as a successful politician at the head of the political and administrative equations of Germany. At the beginning of the German coalition government, many analysts believed that the presence of Social-Democrats alongside the Christian Democrats was a big

mistake. The anti-EU and anti-immigration party of "Alternative for Germany" has become the main opposition party in the German parliament. On the other hand, as the current trend continues and the popularity of the two traditional German ruling parties drops in the polls, they will lose more votes in the upcoming German elections in 2021.

What is happening today in Germany is a big catastrophe for Merkel, the Christian Democrat and, subsequently, the Social-Democratic Party. It's not possible to restore the political power of these two parties in the near future, that is, as long as they are working together in the coalition government of Germany. On the other hand, the political equations in Germany are so complex that none of the traditional German parties will be able to win the majority of seats in the parliament. As a result, a large part of the German authorities' time and energy will be consumed by forming a coalition government (which will be a weak one). This will undermine the position of Germany's leadership in United Europe. In this sophisticated game, the Alternative for Germany (which the other German parties are unwilling to join) have been struggling to broaden its political and social popularity. This extremist party hopes that other right-wingers, including French national leader Marin Le Pen, will be able to win

good results in the elections and other political platforms in their country, and that their victory will influence Germany.

Merkel is no longer the symbol of Christian Democrats' power in Germany's and Europe's equations. A political history of the German Chancellor as the EU leader has come to an end at a time when her substitute (in the event of a relative and fragile victory in the country's next general elections), should devote her power to attempts for the formation of a coalition or minimal government in Berlin. Without a doubt, Angela Merkel never imagined that she would have to permanently withdraw from power in Europe by 2021, as an incapable chancellor.

Meanwhile, the Chancellor of Germany is uncertain about the future of her coalition government before 2021. As The Reuters reported, Voters in the northern state of Bremen look set to inflict a humiliating blow on Germany's Social Democrats (SPD) in an election on Sunday that could hasten the end

of their loveless federal coalition with Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives. Polls in Germany's smallest state focused on the port city of the same name, are tight but indicate the SPD risks losing a stronghold it has ruled for 73 years.

No other German state has been ruled by the same party for so long. If the SPD loses Bremen to the conservative Christian Democrats (CDU), pressure will mount on party leader Andrea Nahles to stand down or break with the federal coalition. In a sign of growing unrest inside the SPD, German weekly Bild is Sonntag reported that former party leader Martin Schulz wants to replace Nahles as chief.

Bremen has the highest jobless level of any German state. Most recent polls suggest there is scope for three outcomes in Bremen: a grand coalition of the SPD and CDU; a coalition of the CDU, Greens, and the business-friendly FDP; or a coalition of SPD with the far-left Die Linke party and the Greens.

Many among the SPD's rank and file are fed up with serving as Merkel's allies, a thankless role the party has fulfilled in 10 of the last 14 years and which has left the chancellor to steal the limelight, especially on the international stage. The party reluctantly re-entered a Merkel-led coalition last year after slumping to its weakest level since 1933 in the 2017 federal election. It has since sunk even lower, polling at about 17 percent, more than 10 points behind the conservatives.

The party is due to review the coalition by the end of the year and pressure from members could grow to ditch it and instead reinvigorate its leftist roots in opposition such a move could force a snap federal election, an unappealing option for both the SPD and conservative bloc, or possibly the formation of a different coalition which would be a tricky task. Either of those scenarios could hasten Merkel's exit, a subject of increasing speculation since she handed the CDU leadership to her protégé Angelika Kramp-Karrenbauer last year.

Iran's security plans for Persian Gulf: non-aggression pact

By: Javad Heirannia

Iran's security pattern in the region relies on enforcing discipline with cooperation of regional countries and without interference of foreigners to form a 'natural order'.

After a meeting with his Iraqi counterpart on May 26, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said that he had suggested signing a non-aggression pact with Persian Gulf littoral states several times. As he said, the proposal is still on the table.

Underlining that Iran is a fan of having best relations with Persian Gulf countries, he added that "everyone welcomes suggestions and negotiations about removing tensions."

As the Iranian foreign minister announced, this is not the first time that Iran puts forward such a suggestion.

Zarif had made a proposal for signing a non-aggression pact with Saudi Arabia a while back. He had also suggested the holding of a 'Regional Dialogue Forum'.

The suggested plan proves Iran to be right since security in the region would be achieved via cooperation of all regional countries and a desirable and stable regional discipline is obtainable without interference of foreigner countries.

The plan can become operational step by step in case of building confidence among regional countries.

At the present time, the security pattern of the Persian Gulf region is faced with a 'security puzzle', due to the presence of foreign powers. Therefore, security activities in the region are not going on under regular circumstances. The competition among great powers has automatically reinforced the competition among regional powers, which is

difficult to be changed.

Discipline and order in the Persian Gulf region relies on win-loss strategy which revolves around relative increase of power with each player interested in having its power strengthened and that of the rivals decrease.

Arab countries in the Persian Gulf region see themselves in dire need of westerners' presence, therefore, they compete with each other on establishing a western military base in their land.

Persian Gulf is in need of a comprehensive order with no foreign forces present in the region in the long-run. It requires a security structure which relies on regional countries cooperation.

To reach this type of security the following should be considered:

1. Paying attention to balance of power in the region among Iran, Iraq and Persian Gulf Cooperation Council



which would result in their satisfaction

2. Reliance of security system on positive peace

3. Creation of confidence among regional countries and departure of foreigners

4. Making the security system powerful against international society and forces

5. Having the security system able to resolve regional difficulties without unilateral attitude

6. Having the security system expand in the region via making deep political changes including resolving the territorial disputes, bringing economic stability and etc.

7. There are two different conciliatory views in the security puzzle: first, Iran rightfully seeks withdrawal of US forces from the region. Second, Arab countries are big fans of having the US control Iran, calling for the American country's presence in the region. This is a dead end and difficult to pass. JCPOA provides a chance for establishing a new order on the Persian Gulf region. The new order can improve the relations between Iran and Arab countries and reduce the US commitment to them.

8. Creating an informal network of technical experts to provide effective resolutions for introducing a dialogue in the region seems essential.

9. Via a regional consensus, the security order of the Persian Gulf should

announce war as illegal.

10. The greatest challenge for Persian Gulf Cooperation Council's countries in the long run are internal pressures and related threats to human security, not Iran as a threat to state security. Accordingly, Arab states need significant internal reformations to preserve security for their citizens.

11. Trans-regional countries including the US should back no side in the ongoing ethnic and geopolitical competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia. They should try to create balance between the two sides.

12. Negotiations between Iran and Persian Gulf Cooperation Council should be commenced by a bottom-up attitude via holding regional councils.

13. The talks among regional members can be started from political and diplomatic procedures leading into security issues. A level of strategic stability between Iran and the members of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council seems necessary to begin the political process. This strategic stability is the result of the policies and actions of the two sides in Iraq, Yemen, Syria and Lebanon, in a way that both sides achieve comparative equilibrium in the realm of opposition, in order to be inclined in political dialogue.

14. The previous achievements of the regional states, including the MoU between Iran and Saudi Arabia during the

presidency of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, should be taken into consideration.

15. Non-governmental institutions that can provide a forum for discussion should be established to provide a platform for broadening activities to the state level. These institutions can be active cultural and educational sectors including cinema, art, and urban community projects.

16. NGOs, in favor of convergence in the Persian Gulf states, should hold conferences to bring together organizations and institutions based on common interests.

17. Academic conferences on the Persian Gulf security model are necessary to be held.

18. The regional countries must understand each other's security concerns and depth of influence in the region.

Currently, in the light of the presence of Donald Trump, regional competitions for purchasing weapons have already increased. The security puzzle of the Persian Gulf states has now made the countries of this region launch external balancing in addition to an internal one. Thus, we are witnessing bilateral and multilateral security and military cooperation between the Persian Gulf states. The formation of the Arab NATO, which has been proposed by Washington, can be analyzed from this perspective.

Translated by: Haniyeh Sadat Jafariyeh



Saudi-Russian oil alliance marks a potentially historic shift for OPEC: Prof. Bininachvili

Interview by Payman Yazdani

A professor of political science at the Columbia University says not much is left from 60 years old OPEC and Saudi-Russian oil alliance marks a potentially historic shift for organization.

The Trump administration sharply accelerated its goal of driving Iran's oil exports to zero, ending sanctions exemptions that it previously granted to some of the Islamic Republic's biggest customers.

The market widely expected Washington to extend the waivers for five of the countries. However, the administration says that any country still importing oil from Iran will be subject to US sanctions beginning on May 2.

"Saudi Arabia and others in OPEC will more than make up the Oil Flow difference in our now Full Sanctions on Iranian Oil," Trump said in a tweet on 22nd of April after he ordered a tightening of sanctions on Iran's oil

exports.

To shed more light on the issue we reached out to Dr. Albert Bininachvili, a professor of political science at the Columbia University for an interview.

Here is the second part of the interview:

Commenting on the Saudi role in OPEC to help Washington to materialize its maximum pressure policy on Iran, bininachvili said, "OPEC is now a completely different organization in comparison to one founded 60 years ago. Not much has left from the sense of discipline and solidarity."

"The important thing to recognize is that it also has a new identity that may reshape oil geopolitics for years to come."

Pause

"As OPEC reasserts its traditional role, the organization has been reincarnated in new form, says Jason Bordoff the leading energy expert from the Columbia University. What matters today is the spare capacity.

This factor determines the indisputably leading role of Saudi Arabia in the organization thanks to its meaningful amount of spare capacity, because it is the only country that chooses, at a cost to itself, to produce significantly less than it otherwise could."

"The second major change in OPEC is that its second-most important player, after Saudi Arabia, is now Russia, despite not being an official member of OPEC at all. The OPEC+ deal reaffirmed the newfound role of Russia, the world's largest crude oil producer, in managing world oil prices with Saudi Arabia.

This new alliance between Saudi Arabia and Russia in managing world oil markets marks an important shift. Deepening and possibly formalizing the Saudi-Russian oil alliance marks a potentially historic shift for OPEC, as the decision-making power is almost completely concentrated in the hands of Riyadh and Moscow to the detri-

ment of other members left with little or no say.

Against the backdrop of the current market realities, with well defined shares of specific producers, it is quite probable to expect that the Iran's share will most probably be grabbed by Russia and Saudi Arabia and other Gulf spare capacity holders."

He added, "The New wave of the US sanctions is a serious challenge to the viability of the IRI's Eastern Strategy, a policy of preferential development of relations with Russia, China and India as an alternative to the West."

"Naturally, Iranian strategy will have to take into account Russia, China and India's strategic outlooks. The three countries will have to balance their geo-economic interests with the US on one hand and Iran on the other. The three countries are likely to use their cooperation with Iran as leverage in their respective bilateral relationships with the Trump administration.

Moscow is tied to Tehran with a network of relations ranging from massive military hardware procurements, and diplomatic support in the UN, to a broad cooperation in the energy sphere including nuclear, gas and oil and military cooperation in Syria. A factor of particular importance is the fact that Russia is one the world's leading oil producers, the second importer and the holder of significant spare capacity.

Formally not an OPEC member Moscow, nevertheless has a say in its decisions through the OPEC plus mechanism and actively influences the policy of this organization through coordination agreement it has with the OPEC's leader Saudi Arabia. Russia also has willingness not to miss at any opportunity to challenge the US interests.

Russia is in a prime position to deliver the oil removed from markets because of U.S. sanctions against Iran, which will result in development of cooperation between Moscow and countries important to American foreign policy. Thus, Russia will gain new leverage against the United States.

Additionally, and no less important-

ly, Russia is ready to increase its export. Despite cooperating with Iran on many issues, Russia has a good chance to grab a significant chunk of Iranian market share. Any increase in sales of Russian oil will soften the blow of U.S. sanctions on global oil markets. This indirectly supports U.S. foreign policy, providing the Kremlin with a card in relations with Washington."

Bininachvili went on to say, "Whatever the state of relations between Moscow and Washington, Russia will contribute to easing the impact of Iranian oil removal from global markets. Economically, Russian producers and the state budget desperately need new revenues. Therefore Moscow tries to keep oil export generated cash flow stable by increasing export satisfying the growing global demand, especially in Asia. Among the buyers of Iranian oil there are countries, mostly in Asia, important to U.S. foreign policy. By developing energy cooperation with them, Moscow gets an opportunity to deepen bilateral partnerships with these states on issues that are important to Washington, such as issues tied to North Korea or Afghanistan."

"The EU, despite its vocal criticism of Trump's Iran policy, is yet to make any actual moves against the United States. The EU cost-benefit analysis is not in Iran's favor.

Arguably, the same is correct for China: among many issues with the United States the issue of Iranian oil is hardly on the top of the Beijing's agenda.

Russia might very well be the only player willing and able to help Iran while undercutting the market positions lost due to U.S. sanctions.

For example, Russia may be interested in buying Iranian oil.

The conflict in Syria has proved that Moscow and Tehran may disagree on some issues while productively cooperating on many others."

"Although Trump administration has warned Moscow against any actions that could help the Islamic Republic evade the measures, Russia may try to help Iran counter US attempts to throttle its oil sales when sanctions come into effect by trad-

ing Tehran's crude in defiance of Washington. But Russia is looking to "continue developing" its trading of Iranian oil, which it sells to third countries under a 2014 oil-for-goods deal, regardless of the sanctions. The 2014 deal between Russia and Iran uses a formerly dormant Soviet state enterprise, Promsyrvoimport. The amount traded has been around 100,000 barrels a day of Iranian crude, according to both countries' ministers, though it is unclear who has bought the oil. In exchange, Tehran uses the revenue to pay for Russian goods and services such as power generation, railway infrastructure or agricultural products.

The 2014 Russia-Iran deal allows for an increase in currently-traded volumes and Iran will be looking for additional buyers if some of its regular customers turn away when the sanctions take effect.

Both Russia and Iran are part of a 24-country coalition between OPEC and non-OPEC oil producers to regulate their output to try and balance oil markets over the past two years. Mr Novak said in November 2018 that the threat of US retaliation for handling Iranian crude did not concern Moscow. "We already live in the conditions of sanctions," he said. "We do not recognize the sanctions introduced unilaterally without the United Nations, we consider those methods illegal per se."

A number of countries which enjoyed U.S. waivers for some time can also develop their political partnerships with Russia based on increased energy cooperation. Indian leadership is hardly satisfied with U.S. sanctions against Iran messing with Indian energy security. Turkey, Italy, and Greece already hardly belong to the countries providing the United States with full support in its effort to contain Russia. Energy cooperation is among the main reasons for that pushback.

President Trump decisively conducts the campaign of pressure and sanctions against the Islamic Republic and such campaign leads to complications for the United States elsewhere, sometimes unknowingly playing into Russia's hands."

A totally Americanized England at full display!

By: Mohammad Ghaderi

British Secretary of State for Defense Penny Mordaunt recently described Iran activities in the region as "causing tension", adding that London will be supporting Washington. British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Jeremy Hunt has also announced that the United States will respond to any activity that threatens its "interests" in the region.

Hunt has claimed that the best way to resolve the Middle East conflict is by making Iran stop its destabilizing activities in the region.

Apart from such statements, it is said that the United Kingdom has sent out some special military forces in order to help American forces to settle what they claim to be "Iran's threat" in the region. This shows that UK, once again, has adopted a mixed strategy so that it can derive the most benefit out of every situation.



U.K. goals can be interpreted from its activities. The country has not fulfilled its commitments in Iran nuclear deal; instead it has tried to guard its own interests by keeping U.S. as a traditional ally. At the same time, UK has kept selling weapons to countries in the region and posed as an active member in international arena so that it can cover up its own problems with Brexit.

By analyzing the factors affecting the region, British are well aware that war might be an unlikely consequence, but they still try to create an atmosphere of fear and imply that "an impending war" might be ahead of us, so that they can reach the four goals that we mentioned above.

Apart from such actions, U.K. is aiming to maintain its relations with main players in the region, such as Iran, so that it can establish a favorable atmosphere for itself in media and reap its benefits in political and economic, as well as security fields.

The British should have learned by now, that such actions might help them squeeze money out of tycoons of Middle East or have U.S. make some political concessions to them, but such actions will not have any effect on the Islamic Republic of Iran, as it had not over the last 40 years.

Riyadh's lies about targeting Mecca

By: Fatemeh Salehi

The recent move by Saudi authorities to level accusations at Yemeni resistance forces over targeting Mecca, as one of the most sacred places for Muslims, can be analyzed in the context of Riyadh's psychological warfare against the Yemeni forces and their recent major field achievements regarding the retaliatory drone strikes on two major oil pumping stations in the Kingdom.



Saudi newspaper 'Okaz' has recently claimed that An-sarallah fired a missile at Mecca which was intercepted by Riyadh.

Five years of Yemeni resistance reveals the political and military defeat of the aggressive Saudi-led coalition. Saudi Arabia is trying to use these allegations to increase the support and approval it needs to continue its brutal attack on Yemen.

These claims indicate a huge bankruptcy which the Saudi regime is trying to get out of by hanging from the covers of the Kaaba, and telling the public opinion that Mecca is being targeted.

The Yemeni resistance forces have not retreated in the face of this psychological and media warfare and recently announced that they have 300 military and vital enemy positions in their sight.

A Yemeni official maintained that the said targets include the military and vital units and bases of the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, as well as their bases in Yemen.

Recent Yemeni developments, especially field developments and the operations by Yemeni resistance forces against enemy positions, show that Yemeni forces' harsh response to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates has entered a new, unprecedented phase.

Saudi Arabia, now having fully realized that after five years of aggression against Yemeni people, it has weakened only for the resistance to grow stronger, is creating a false media hype to manipulate Muslims' sentiments and further escalate its attacks on Yemen's residential areas and the massacre of innocent women and children there.

In any case, it must be noted that the claim of targeting Mecca by Yemeni forces is a completely planned move aimed at manipulating the public opinion and the international community against the Yemeni resistance forces. This strategy, however, will ultimately fail to achieve Saudi's desired results, since Saudi Arabia has offered no considerable evidence and has only resorted to creating media hype over the issue.

Driving Iran's oil export to zero biggest supply risk to global markets: Prof. Bininachvili

Interview by Payman Yazdani

Commenting on Saudi Arabia and UAE capabilities to make up for any shortfalls in energy supply, Albert Bininachvili says the US decision to drive Iran's oil export to zero is the biggest risk to global energy markets and a double-edged sword.

The Trump administration sharply accelerated its goal of driving Iran's oil exports to zero, ending sanctions exemptions that it previously granted to some of the Islamic Republic's biggest customers.

The market widely expected Washington to extend the waivers for five of the countries. However, the administration says that any country still importing oil from Iran will be subject to US sanctions beginning on May 2.

"Saudi Arabia and others in OPEC will more than make up the Oil Flow difference in our now Full Sanctions on Iranian Oil," Trump said in a tweet on 22nd of April after he ordered a tightening of sanctions on Iran's oil exports.

To shed more light on the issue we reached out to Dr. Albert Bininachvili, a professor of political science at the Columbia University for an interview.

Here is the first part of the interview:

Answering our question on the possibility of the driving of Iran's oil export to zero and the Saudi Arabia and the UAE's capabilities to make up for any shortfalls in oil supply, he said, "The US decision to strictly re-impose secondary sanctions on Iran by denying waiver extensions to eight countries that had been buying Iranian crude makes the future of Iran's oil exports (which amounted to up to 2.4m bpd before sanctions were imposed) the biggest supply risk to the global energy markets, especially against the backdrop of political turbulence and output losses in Libya and Venezuela. The ability of other oil producers to bridge this impending supply shortfall is about to be tested.



Most energy experts believe the Trump administration's decision can only work with the backing and cooperation of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other Persian Gulf producers to avoid an undersupplied oil market and spiking crude prices.

However, the circumstances are different than the lead-up to Washington renewing sanctions on Iran in November 2018 when the two leading Gulf producers and other crude suppliers, including Russia, turned up their oil taps only to find themselves outwitted by learning that the Trump administration had granted waivers — significant reduction exceptions (SREs) — to Tehran's top crude buyers.

Riyadh and Abu Dhabi are making it clear that cooperation in replacing Iranian oil exports will now be on their terms.

Saudi Oil Minister Khalid al-Falih struck a cautious tone in comments regarding the end of the waivers, saying: "In the next few weeks, the kingdom will be consulting closely with other producing countries and key oil-consuming nations to ensure a well-balanced and stable oil market." Riyadh evidently is not interested in another oil price crash.

Falih later stressed that, because the oil market is "well-supplied," Riyadh didn't perceive urgency in boosting production in May, when SREs to eight nations expire. "We will be responsive and we think there will be an uptick in real demand but certainly we are not going to be pre-emptive and increase production," he said.

UAE Oil Minister Suhail al-Mazrouei made a similar point earlier in April at a conference in Abu Dhabi, saying "I think we have learned the lesson... We will not jump the gun, pre-produce the volumes that are not required yet."

The two Gulf oil powerhouses seem politically committed to doing their part to undermine Iran's economy and ideally marginalize its influence in the greater Middle East. But Riyadh and Abu Dhabi know the oil market is tighter and more vulnerable than six months ago, the result of slowing global demand, rising crude inventories, less Venezuelan and Libyan oil available due to internal strife in these countries.

Given that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are being tasked with replacing Iranian oil and preventing a major oil market disruption, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi tend nevertheless to avoid

reckless and hasty steps on moving precipitously while they assess market conditions, determine their best course of action and protect their financial self-interests.

Energy executives familiar with Saudi decision-making process are certain that Riyadh would only respond after it thoroughly assessed the impact on the oil market from the expiration of sanctions. In other words, they may let the oil market continue to tighten before they add supply.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have been instrumental in the OPEC+ alliance that has withdrawn as much as 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude from the market over the last year, a major contributor to a tightening of global oil supply. Saudi Arabia has assumed the lion's share of the cuts agreed to by the alliance, pumping well below its assigned quota of 10.31 million bpd at 9.79 million bpd in March.

Technically, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates could collectively boost oil output by as much as 1.5 million bpd reasonably quickly. As the biggest OPEC producer Saudi Arabia produced 9.82 million barrels a day in March and can pump an additional 1 million barrels a day within a short period.

The UAE can increase output to 3.5 million barrels a day from a current level of 3.045 million.

That volume would handily accommodate the loss of Iran's remaining 1 million bpd of exports, although the United States is unlikely to see Iranian crude sales drop to its "zero" target goal.

Interestingly, to cover the first 1 million bpd of the lost Iran's share, Saudi Arabia and UAE do not need to transcend their respective OPEC allocated quotas as both countries are still underperforming. Saudi Arabia can lift output and still abide by the deal because it is currently pumping about 500,000 bpd below its quota.

UAE also stays 400,000 bpd below.

They are unlikely to increase output over the existing quota before the OPEC+ summit in June, where new ceilings may most probably be reserved for the spare capacity holders.

However, the two Gulf producers would be unable to maintain that higher output indefinitely and what is particularly important, it would greatly diminish global spare production capacity, a critical factor should unexpected crises arise.

OPEC and allied suppliers including Russia agreed to limit their production until the end of June to buttress crude prices and avert a glut. They are due to meet in June to decide whether to extend the cuts.

Russia's crude and condensate output increasing slightly in 2019 to 558 million tons, or 11.21 million barrels a day.

That on the surface, would suggest that the impact on oil prices from the expiration of Iran sanctions waivers could be limited. Saudi Arabia could replace lost Iranian supply barrel-for-barrel, at least in short term perspective. However, while Riyadh could ramp up production, it would also need to do so at a cost to its spare capacity. Buyers won't have trouble finding enough supply, but the loss of a big chunk of spare capacity has historically been a driver of higher prices and higher volatility.

If the United States succeeds in reducing Iran's crude exports close to zero, in line with its stated policy, Saudi Arabia would have to raise its production to unprecedented levels to cover the loss.

And it would leave the global market tighter than at any time since the oil shocks of 1973/74 and 1979/80, with resulting upward pressure on prices.

The question is where exactly will the replacement barrels come from?

The estimates of the International Energy Agency show that OPEC members held 3.4 million bpd of spare capacity, while their non-OPEC allies had no more than 330,000 bpd.

Saudi Arabia accounted for almost two-thirds of the reported OPEC spare capacity (2.02 million bpd), with smaller volumes held by Iraq (330,000 bpd), United Arab Emirates (330,000 bpd) and Kuwait (220,000 bpd).

Russia accounted for most of the non-OPEC spare capacity (roughly 250,000 bpd) with little or no available spare capacity in the other non-OPEC allies.

But using the IEA's figures, it is clear Saudi Arabia would need to increase production and exports by at least 1 million bpd to cover the total loss of Iranian barrels.

The Saudis claim that their spare production capacity is between 1.5 million bpd and 2 million bpd. The EIA defines spare capacity as the volume of oil production that can be brought online within 30 days and sustained for at least 90 days.

The problem with this estimate is that it has never been tested. According to the US Energy Information Administration, the kingdom has never produced more than 10.42 million bpd on an annual basis (2016) or 10.63 million bpd in a single month (July 2016) in the last 20 years.

Although, in theory, it may seem there is sufficient spare capacity in Saudi Arabia and other countries, to compensate for the loss of Iranian export, but it would leave the global market with less than 1 million bpd of capacity left to meet all other contingencies.

In practice, the market could become much tighter, with sanctions essentially using up all the spare capacity worldwide and eliminating this vitally important "shock-absorber".

Maximum production would require opening the chokes on existing wells and bringing previously shut-in wells back into service. Boosting production this way might risk a decline in oilfield pressure that could result in long-term damage to the reservoirs.

And it is not clear whether the mid-stream infrastructure, i.e. pipelines, processing plants and export terminals have enough capacity to handle 12 million bpd because such high flow rates have never been tested.

The Saudis and their OPEC allies seem aware that using their spare capacity is a now a double-edged sword: it may cool down prices, but the impact could be limited by the risk-premium as the market worries about what's left.

Spare capacity is a fluid concept. For some, it means extra output that can flow at the flick of a switch. Realistically, most industry executives define it as production that can be brought on stream in 30 days, and then sustained for at least three months. Be-

yond that, some of the spare capacity is simply oil on the ground that can be pumped by drilling new wells, requiring more time.

Over the years, Saudi Arabia has been traditionally secretive about how much of its spare capacity falls in each bucket. But Ali Al-Naimi, who was oil minister for nearly 25 years until 2016, offered a glimpse in 2012.

"I believe we can easily get up to 11.4, 11.8, almost immediately in a few day," Al-Naimi told CNN in 2012. "All we need is to turn valves," he added. The other 700,000 barrels a day to reach about 12.5 million requires three months of work, however. "And the 90 days is for one thing: to mobilize additional drilling," he said.

There's one more complication: of the 12.5 million barrels a day, only 12 million is controlled directly by state-owned company Saudi Arabian Oil Co,

or Aramco. The other 500,000 barrels a day lies in the so-called Neutral Zone shared with Kuwait. But the region hasn't produced a single barrel for nearly two years due to a dispute between Kuwait and Riyadh.

Beyond production, Riyadh has another line of defense to meet a supply outage like Iran: a vast network of storage facilities, both in the kingdom and overseas, that can be drawn down temporarily.

As well as domestic storage, Saudi Arabia has filled up its strategic storage in Okinawa, Japan; Sidi Kerir in the Mediterranean coast of Egypt; and in the European oil hub of Rotterdam.

Moreover, Riyadh and the rest of OPEC are taking measures to reinforce its production machine: it has brought on stream 300,000 barrels a day of new production from the Khurais oilfield. The expansion was meant to

compensate declines elsewhere, but over the short-term it could help to boost spare capacity.

Others within OPEC are also trying to follow suit. The United Arab Emirates is bringing forward the expansion of the offshore Umm Lulu and SARB fields, which will pump 129,000 barrels a day by the end of the year, up from 50,000 barrels a day now.

Iraq is bringing on stream the expansion of its Halfaya oilfield, doubling output to 400,000 barrels a day."

In conclusion Albert Bininachvili noted, " Yet, despite the efforts, the Saudis and OPEC face a huge challenge to replace Iran. It is hard to disagree with Patrick Pouyanne, the CEO of Total, who puts it in simple terms: "You need to mobilize the wells, the rigs... It's not immediate. In our industry, you don't push a button and then oil flows. It's more complex!"

Al-Fujairah: The result of crimes of Saudi and UAE

By: Moham5mad Ghaderi

Though Emirates officials are trying to censor news of the firing of tankers in the port of al- Fujairah, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi appear to have faced the consequences of their terrorist acts in the West Asian region much earlier than they thought. Now, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, as two failed actors in Yemen and the Western Asia region, feel the crisis in a few steps. Undoubtedly, in the near future, the severity and extent of the crisis will increase.

The fact that the killing of innocent and defenseless Yemenis, including thousands of women and children in Yemen by the hated and hated Saudi regime and the United Arab Emirates, has led to the anger of the Yemeni people and other Muslim nations from Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. It has been repeatedly emphasized that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are considered to be the killers of the Yemeni nation and the United States, and they are doomed to failure.

The fact is that all the western and Arab countries that have been killing and massacring Yemeni people are involved in the numerous crimes committed in this country. The humanitarian crisis in Yemen continues. Famine has spread across Yemen. Meanwhile, the United States, and Germany, Britain and France as its allies continue to maintain arms support for the



Saudi assassination regime. Undoubtedly, the role of Washington and its allies in the killing of Yemeni women and children is very high.

Finally, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and their western supporters have become closer to the final point of the defeat in Yemen. Following the announcement of the Riyadh and Abu Dhabi official failure in the Yemeni war, the leaders of these two countries must be the answer to the public opinion of Muslim countries and people around the world as a war criminal in Yemen. Undoubtedly there is not much time left to reach this point.

B-team and Heightened Tension in Iran-US Ties



Dossier

Trump's decision on IRGC has nothing to do with international law: Prof. Zonis

Interview by Payman Yazdani

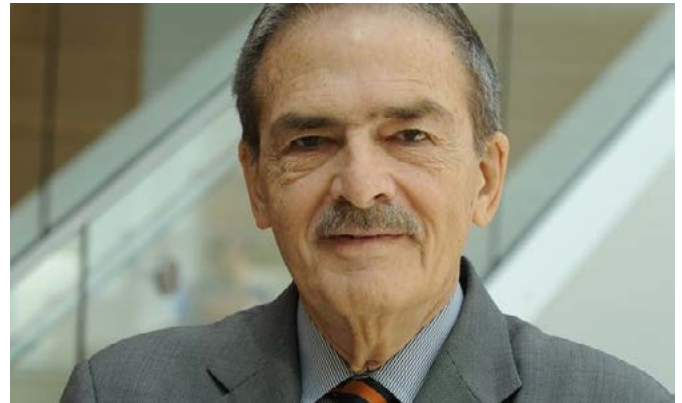
Professor of international political economy in the University of Chicago believes Trump's move against the IRGC is based on the advice of his evangelical supporters and hardline advisers.

The White House's increasingly aggressive approaches towards Iran came to a head as the administration of US President Donald Trump designated the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as a foreign terrorist organization through an official statement.

In light of this development, we reached out to Marvin Zonis, Professor of international political economy and leadership in the University of Chicago.

Commenting on the legitimacy of the President Trump's decision to designate the IRGC as a terrorist group and the reasons behind his unprecedented move, he said, "The US President's decision is based on the advice he has been receiving from his hardline advisers — most especially from John Bolton. Bolton seeks the overthrow of the clerical establishment and the new sanctions are meant to diminish the business success that the IRGC has enjoyed."

He went on to add, "The decision is also a communication



to his evangelical supporters who seek a powerful Israel to prepare for the return of the Christ. It is also a communication to Israel and Saudi Arabia that the US remains an enemy of their enemy. It has nothing to do with international law."

Zonis also emphasized that the reflection of Trump in 2020 US presidential election is another reason behind his decision on the IRGC. Touching upon the consequences of the White House's move and its effects on the security and stability of the region he noted, "Iran is left with bitter choices. It may take steps that would provoke Trump to retaliate with the real possibility of an escalation to a shooting war."

'Bolton, much like his boss, cannot be expected to be moderate'

Translated by Zahra Mirzafarjouyan

A German expert and analyst on Middle East affairs, Peter Phillip, believes that the US National Security Advisor, just like his boss Donald Trump, cannot be expected to adopt moderate positions toward Iran.

The US National Security Advisor John Bolton's anti-Iranian position clearly shows that there is no necessary consensus on international issues in White House.

John Bolton is one of the closest politicians to Donald Trump with a penchant to take strong anti-Iranian positions. He has recently spoken about the necessity of military action against Iran.

To shed more light on the issue Mehr



News reached out to Peter Phillip, a German expert and analyst on Middle East and Iran. He has served as a German radio, Tages Enzeiger newspaper, Deutsche Welle, and a number of German press and media broadcaster for 23 years.

Given that the interest of German and European governments in preserv-

ing the nuclear deal with Iran, Philip said that a mechanism was designed in order to decrease the effects of US sanctions against Iran and boom commercial exchanges between Iran and Europe.

But so far the mechanism has not been implemented and one could even say that it has been ineffective, he added.

Regarding the possibility of German authorities' talks with American diplomats about Iran's nuclear deal and US sanctions against Iran, Philip also noted that as far as he knew, there has been no such talks between them.

Meanwhile, he criticized US ambassador to Germany Richard Grenell for his interventionist measures, and said that the German government has not decided about his actions.

US illusions: from a pretended crisis to a pretended victory



By: Mohammad Ghaderi

The top US military commander in the Middle East General Frank McKenzie said on Thursday that Iran drew back from an apparent attack against US forces in the Persian Gulf region, while it does not precisely mean that the threat is diminished.

This is while, British Army Maj. Gen. Christopher Ghika, a deputy commander with the Operation Inherent Resolve coalition, the US-led coalition fighting Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, said before that there has been no increased threat from Iranian-backed forces in Iraq and Syria.

The top British general comment was at cross purposes with the White House and the Pentagon's assertions used to justify that Iran is building up a military in the region, yet it is noteworthy that the comment was too harsh for the U.S that reprimanded him.

To put it more precisely, US which directs military presence in the Middle East to Iran's aggression, is only a plan against the Islamic Republic of Iran pretending that there will be a crisis or dispute, however, it publicly contradicts their plea to negotiate. This is while;

Trump had repeatedly claimed to be ready to obliterate Iran.

Therefore, the top US military commander claims can be interpreted as a psychological warfare without any real military mobility.

Indeed, the US claims to deploy 120,000 troops to the Persian Gulf, highlighting the presence of USS Abraham Lincoln in the region, military built-up in Iraq, and responding to threats from Iran, are only dimensions of the psychological warfare, and any of which have not actually been enforced.

But on the other hand, the US is pretending to achieve victory with a policy of threat and pressure. The whole evidences suggest that the US did not dare to take military action if had, certainly would have started so far, and on the other hand, Iran had not taken any steps toward disturbing the Middle East security, along with its preparedness to respond to the threats.

The United States also seeks to extort money from the Arab countries under the pretext of confronting Iran.

In fact, the US claiming that Iran's step back and recalculate after making preparations for an apparent attack, seeks to justify the re-imposed sanctions and threats against Iran, pretend-

ing to avoid military confrontation while the world acknowledges that the US is not capable of military action.

The American general's claim is a trick to hide their military disability against Iran, as US Special Representative for Iran Brian Hook said that Iran has photoshopped images of missile launches to try and show its increased missile capabilities.

So, McKenzie's claim is based on the three principles of pretended crisis, psychological warfare, and pretended victory, which has been designed so that to protect Trump from the internal protests and hide the failure of "threat and negotiation" policy.

Moreover, US wants to wipe off global dissatisfaction, which was showed in Britain protests during his last trip to London.

The point is that the world being aware of the United States' inability to spark war against Iran, Iran's persistence in realizing its nuclear rights within the framework of implementation of Supreme National Security Council resolution, emphasis on maintaining missile power and playing an effective role in the region's security all will put an end to the US dreams and unfair policies.

US move to bludgeon Iran into submission to US demands may boomerang: Entessar

Interview by Payman Yazdani

Following US' recent hostile move against the IRGC Nader Entessar says there is nothing more the US can gain by its most recent decision that it has not already achieved.

The United States' increasingly aggressive approaches towards Iran came to a head last night as the administration of US President Donald Trump designated the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as a foreign terrorist organization through an official statement.

In light of this development, Mehr News Agency reached to Nader Entessar, professor emeritus of political science from university of South Alabama.

Commenting on the effects of the Trump's move on the IRGC, he said, "The IRGC has been under complete US sanctions regime for some time now. Therefore, there is nothing more the US can gain by its most recent decision that it has not already achieved.



This is generally a political move orchestrated by certain elements of the Trump administration to appease the neocon thirst for forceful, American-induced regime change."

He referred to unprecedented illegal move of Trump and said, "This is the first time in the history of international relations when the government of one nation-state single-handedly has designated a military segment of another recognized nation-state as a terrorist organization."

He called the possible consequences of the White House decision "dangerous" and said, "This is a move with many dangerous consequences.

Iran's Supreme National Security Council has already reciprocated the latest US moves against Iran by issuing a statement declaring the US Central Command (CENTCOM) and forces under its command in Southwest Asia as terrorist entities. Such tit-for-tat moves may indeed generate uncontrollable spiraling consequences. More specifically, Trump's latest move, which is intended to bludgeon Iran into submission to US demands, may boomerang."

The odds of success for Japanese PM's visit to Iran

By: Payman Yazdani

US President's recent retreat from his previous rhetoric stances towards Iran should not be misinterpreted as the White House's retreat from its policy of 'maximum pressure' on Iran.

In line with its maximum pressure on Iran policy, on Friday the United States imposed new sanctions on Iran that target the country's petrochemical industry, including its largest petrochemical holding group, the Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (PGPIC).

The main reason behind the changes to Trump administration's tone against Iran in fact is internal pressure on him. Americans are against a new war in the region. Also opposition from the US allies which will suffer from great losses in case of any war in the region is another reason behind change to Trump's tone.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is slated to visit Tehran on Wednesday June 12. He hopes to use his warm re-



lation with Iran and the US to mediate between the countries.

Besides Abe's warm relations with Iranian and the US leaders there are others reasons that potentially make him a proper mediator including Japan's efforts to have independent Middle East policy and not having imperialistic record in the region which is a good trust building factor for Iran.

Above all, as the third largest economy of the world Japan is very dependent on the energy importing from the region. Japan imports 80 percent of its consuming energy from the Middle East which passes through Hormuz strait, so any war and

confrontation in the region will inflict great losses and damages to the country's economy and consequently to the world economy.

To answer the question that how Mr. Abe's efforts will be effective to settle the tensions depends on two factors.

First on the 'real will' and determination of the US and Iran to solve the ongoing problems especially the US 'real will'. One cannot ask for talk and at the same time further undermine the trust between the two sides by taking some hostile measures like new sanctions that the US slapped against Iran's petrochemical section last night on the eve of Mr. Abe's visit to Tehran. If there is a real will, even no need to mediator.

Second we have to wait to see that how the Japanese PM will be able to affect the US' decisions. Iran's Keivan Khosravi spokesman for the Supreme National Security Council said efforts to remove US extraterritorial sanctions against Iran could guarantee the success of Japanese PM's visit to the Islamic Republic.



Turkish politician:

Impossible to drive Iran's oil export to zero

Interview by Payman Yazdani

Condemning the US move to force Turkey to buy oil from Saudi Arabia and UAE instead of Iran, Faruk Logoglu says the US move is a flagrant violation of international law and the sovereign right of nations to trade freely.

In continuation of the US hostile policies against the Iranian nation, the White House recently announced that it has decided not to reissue waivers on Iranian oil after they expire in May. The statement went on to say that the United States, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates have pledged to ensure that the global market will have sufficient oil supply following Washington's decision to terminate sanctions waivers for countries importing Iranian oil.

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:

Are the US moves to slap unilateral sanctions against Iran and not extending waivers for Iran's oil importers in compliance with international law and regulations?

The US sanctions against Iranian oil ex-

ports are in flagrant violation of international law and regulations as they transgress the sovereign right of nations to trade freely. The sanctions are illegal also because they have been imposed unilaterally without a mandate from the UN Security Council or by any other authorized body. The US is certainly entitled not to import Iranian oil or goods itself but has no right to prevent others from engaging in what is legal and proper.

The US is making efforts to drive the export of Iranian oil to zero. Is it possible? If no, why?

The US effort to drive Iranian oil exports to zero is not possible. There will certainly be buyers of Iranian oil who will not comply with US sanctions. China has already declared that its trade with Iran is legal and normal. Turkey has also taken a stance against the US move. Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu stated that the US decision will not serve regional peace and stability, yet harm the Iranian people and added that Turkey rejects unilateral sanctions and impositions on how to conduct relations with neighbors. Iran's exports might be curtailed for some time to come in the near future, but over time the volume of its exports could/should rise. We should expect adverse reactions to the US decision to grow in time and this

could also help Iran to sell more of its oil.

The US is forcing Turkey to stop buying oil from Iran and replace Saudi and Emirati oil instead of Iranian oil. What are the advantages of Iranian oil for Turkey?

Iran is our neighbor. We have a broad range of economic relations. Oil is one major element in the nexus of our ties with Iran. The physical proximity is also an important asset as far as Iranian oil is concerned. Given the state of our problematic relations with both Saudi Arabia and the UAE, there is no incentive for Turkey to buy oil from them.

Considering the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and UAE from one side with Turkey and their differences, Can't US request threaten Turkey's energy security and maybe consequently it national security due to the fact the UAE is one of the supporters of the PKK terrorist separatist group?

Even if Turkey reduces its Iranian oil imports and starts to look for other sources, the alternative for Turkey will be neither Saudi Arabia nor the UAE. Current conditions will not allow Turkey to turn in that direction. In any case, the US is not in a position to ask Turkey where it is to buy its oil from.

Abe not able to achieve any real breakthrough: Italian expert

Interview by Payman Yazdani

Dr. Pastori Gianluca says that Shinzo Abe will not be able to achieve any real breakthrough in tensions between Iran and the US.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe plans to travel to Iran on June 12, the first visit by a Japanese prime minister in the past four decades as Tokyo hopes to mediate between Washington and Tehran. Tensions between the US and Iran have worsened since Washington withdrew last year from Joint Comprehensive plan of Action (JCPOA) between Iran and several world powers, and re-imposed sanctions on Tehran.

In this regard, some experts believe that Japan did not play much role in the diplomatic arena after World War II, and their political relations with other countries were just limited to bilateral relations. Iran should not take Shinzo Abe's visit to Tehran so seriously on the tensions between Iran and the US because there are doubts about Japan's capability to be able to act independently as a mediator after 74 years of having dependent foreign policy on the US.

To shed more light on the issue we reached out to political science associated professor of Milan Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Dr. Pastori Gianluca.

Here is the full text of our interview with him:

While President Trump repeatedly asks for talks with Iran, on Friday again in a hostile and trust killing act his administration slapped new sanctions against Iran's petrochemical section. How do you interpret his contradictory measures?

President Trump has often used a 'stick-and-carrot' approach to his international intercourses. The 'stick' element theoretically aims at 'softening' the counterpart and making it more amenable to the US requests. In this perspective, I see no real contradiction between the ask for talks and the adoption of new sanc-



tions; it is 'simply' a product of President Trump's vision of negotiation as power struggle. President Trump repeatedly said that his aim is not disrupting the JCPOA but revising it, according to the US interests and visions of security and sanction are only one of the tools that his administration uses to 'pressurize' Iran and try to reach this goal.

What reasons have motivated Japan to try to mediate between Iran and USA?

Japan is heavily dependent on Persian Gulf energy supplies. In FY 2018, it imported approx. 67.7 million kiloliters of crude oil from Saudi Arabia, 44.9 from UAE, 14.2 from Qatar, 13.5 from Kuwait, 6.66 from Iran, and lesser amounts from Bahrain, Oman and Iraq. Currently, energy security is of increasing concern for the Japanese government. In this perspective, the country has a keen interest in keeping the Persian Gulf stable and in avoiding any possible escalation. A diplomatic success could also boost the country's standing and strengthen Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in the domestic field, especially in view of the upcoming elections for the Japanese Upper House.

How successful can Abe's visit to Tehran be under such situation and the Trump's contradictory acts?

It is hard to say how successful Abe's mediation can be. Japan-Iran relations are traditionally good, and Prime Minis-

ter Abe can play the part of the honest broker. Japan is a loyal US ally and Mr. Abe is said to be in good personal relations with President Trump. The Arab monarchies also see Japan as 'not menacing' (i.e.: not too much pro-Iranian). Finally, Mr. Abe has nothing to lose in case of a failure. All these elements can positively impact on the outcome. However, Iranian attitude and willingness to show some flexibility are equally important. I don't think Abe will be able to achieve any real breakthrough, but now breaking the ice is important as well.

Despite its powerful economy Japan has been following the US foreign policy. How will Japan be able to affect the US decisions as an independent mediator between Iran and US?

As already said, the credibility of Japan's mediation is linked to a large extent to the fact that the country is a loyal US ally. Abe's loyalty to the US strengthens his position. Moreover, Japan's initiative seems fitting well into the US 'stick-and-carrot' strategy. Some days ago, State Secretary Mike Pompeo expressed the US willingness to start a dialogue with Iran 'with no precondition'. Now, Abe's task is not affecting the US decisions but facilitating the US-Iran dialogue. Once again, the problem is: are the parties ready to support this dialogue by showing some flexibility? I think this is the most important question to understand the future of the JCPOA.

Abe sought to become Trump's primary ally in Asia: Prof. Zonis

Interview by Payman Yazadni

Professor of international political economy in the University of Chicago believes that Shinzo Abe has sought to become Trump's primary ally in Asia and if the Prime Minister could facilitate some kind of breakthrough with Iran, it would further cement the relationship between Japan and the US.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe plans to travel to Iran on June 12, the first visit by a Japanese prime minister in the past four decades as Tokyo hopes to mediate between Washington and Tehran. Tensions between the US and Iran have worsened since Washington withdrew last year from Joint Comprehensive plan of Action (JCPOA) between Iran and several world powers, and re-imposed sanctions on Tehran.

In this regard, some experts believe that Japan did not play much role in the diplomatic arena after World War II, and their political relations with other countries were just limited to bilateral relations. Iran should not take Shinzo Abe's visit to Tehran so seriously on the tensions between Iran and the US because there are doubts about Japan's capability to be able to act independently as a mediator after 74 years of having dependent foreign policy on the US.

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

Here is the full text of our interview with him:

While President Trump repeatedly asks for talks with Iran, on Friday again in a hostile and trust killing act his administration slapped new sanctions against Iran's petrochemical section. How do you interpret his contradictory measures?

The Trump administration is notoriously disorganized. Policies are not coherent and, in many cases in addition to Iran, contradictory policies are



common. Iran policy is largely driven by Iran "hawks" National Security Adviser Bolton and Secretary of State Pompeo. I think the President would actually like talks with Iran because he fantasizes that he can "make a deal" and become (in his mind) even more of a genius than he already is. Of course, his utter failure in talks with North Korea does not suggest any positive outcome with Iran.

What reasons have motivated Japan to try to mediate between Iran and USA?

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has sought to become Trump's primary ally in Asia. This idea is compatible with American foreign policy that sees Japan in Asia as comparable with the United Kingdom in Europe — sort of permanent aircraft carriers off the coasts of the continents. A close relationship with the US would also be good for the Japanese economy with its massive exports to the US. If the Prime Minister could facilitate some kind of breakthrough with Iran, it would further cement the relationship between Japan and the US.

How successful can Abe's visit to Tehran be under such situation and the Trump's contradictory acts?

It is highly doubtful that domestic Iranian politics would allow a breakthrough to occur. While President Trump would like talks, the US has hardly treated Iran

with the "respect," which Ayatollah Khamenei has demanded.

Despite its powerful economy Japan has been following the US foreign policy in its foreign policy since the end of the World War II. How will Japan be able to affect the US decisions as an independent mediator between Iran and US?

Japan's close ties to the US are meant to insure continued access for Japanese exports to the US as well as to guarantee US protection of Japan against any threats that may be forthcoming from China. It is well to remember that China has not in any way forgotten or excused Japanese behavior towards China during World War II as has occurred in Europe by Germany's former wartime enemies. In Tehran, Prime Minister Abe may be able to clarify more precisely what the United States needs to do to get talks with Iran. That would be welcome by President Trump but not by Bolton or Pompeo. If Abe can pull off a miracle and actually get talks approved between Trump and Iran, the President will jump at the chance. The chances of that seem non-existent to me. The unfortunate history of Iran-US relations over the last 50 years or so with each country inflicting what each perceive as offenses against the other has made the relationship utterly poisonous.

Tehran should not have high expectation from Abe's visit: Prof. Entessar

Interview by Payman Yazdani

Professor of University of South Alabama in US believes that Tehran should not have high expectations from the Japanese Prime Minister's visit to Iran.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe plans to travel to Iran on June 12, the first visit by a Japanese prime minister in the past four decades as Tokyo hopes to mediate between Washington and Tehran. Tensions between the US and Iran have worsened since Washington withdrew last year from Joint Comprehensive plan of Action (JCPOA) between Iran and several world powers, and re-imposed sanctions on Tehran.

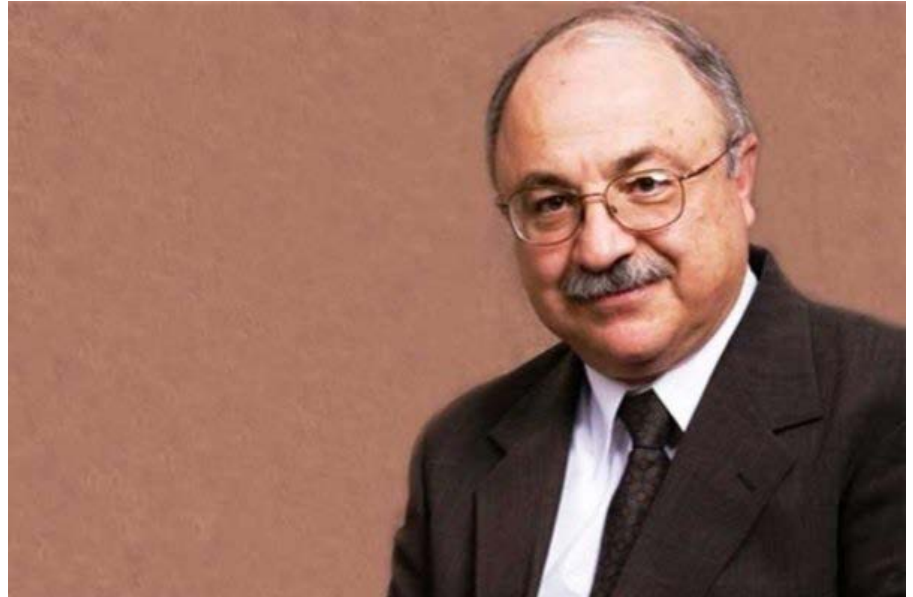
In this regard, some experts believe that Japan did not play much role in the diplomatic arena after World War II, and their political relations with other countries were just limited to bilateral relations. Iran should not take Shinzo Abe's visit to Tehran so seriously on the tensions between Iran and the US because there are doubts about Japan's capability to be able to act independently as a mediator after 74 years of having dependent foreign policy on the US.

To shed more light on the issue we reached out to Prof. Nader Entessar; a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice at the University of South Alabama.

Here is the full text of our interview with him:

While President Trump repeatedly asks for talks with Iran, on Friday again in a hostile and trust killing act his administration slapped new sanctions against Iran's petrochemical section. How do you interpret his contradictory measures?

According to Trump's decision-making calculus, there is no contradiction between taking hostile actions against Iran while simultaneously asking for



face-to-face negotiations. In fact, Trump sees his policy of "maximum pressure" as a tool to enhance his negotiating position with Iran. In other words, Trump wants a weak Iran at the negotiating table so that he can extract maximum concessions from Tehran in any future negotiations.

What reasons have motivated Japan to try to mediate between Iran and the USA?

Japan imports a significant part of its energy needs from the Persian Gulf region and does not want to damage its economy because of conflict in the region. Also, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has apparently established friendly ties with Trump and Trump believes that given Japan's good relations with Iran, Prime Minister Abe is in a good position to act as an intermediary between Washington and Tehran. Trump's modus operandi relies heavily on personal relationships he establishes with individuals, both in domestic and foreign affairs.

How successful can Abe's visit to Tehran be under such situation and Trump's contradictory acts?

I think Prime Minister Abe is carry-

ing Trump's message to Iran as a favor to the American President. But Japan's diplomatic window of opportunity and Abe's diplomatic maneuverability is limited. I don't want to downgrade the importance of Shinzo Abe's visit to Iran, but Tehran should not have high expectations from the Japanese Prime Minister's visit to Iran.

Despite its powerful economy, after World War II Japan has been following the US foreign policy in all areas of foreign affairs. How will Japan be able to affect the US decisions as an independent mediator between Iran and US?

Japan has been dutifully following Washington's line in almost all areas of foreign affairs since the end of the Second World War. Besides, Japan's role as an intermediary in major international disputes has been minimal relative to other major countries. Japan is not in a position to affect US policies towards Iran. The best Japan can do is to act as an honest intermediary between Washington and Tehran. In other words, Tokyo does not have the capability to act as an independent mediator in resolving US-Iran conflict.



Trump's policy towards Iran alienated US from key allies: Sen. Feinstein

*Interview by Javad Heiran-Nia
& Elnaz Safavi*

In an interview with Mehr News agency, US Senator Dianne Feinstein said that the unilateral policy of the Trump administration against Iran has alienated the country from its key allies.

Recently, US based "Politico" reported on Iranian Foreign Minister M.J. Zarif's meeting with Dianne Feinstein, the well-known American Democrat Senator during his recent visit to New York.

"Alireza Miryousefi", spokesman of Iran Mission to the United Nation said that "The visit was in accordance with the usual process of the meetings that Iran holds with the Senate representatives."

Concerning this visit "Seyyed Abbas Mousavi", the spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign affairs also stated, "Visiting and negotiating are two separate issues and this visit cannot be seen as a negotiation. We do not consider the members of the Senate as the US administration. In addition, the members of the US administration do not have permission to do it either. Currently, Iran does not have any plans to negotiate with the officials of the US administration."

Recently, Senator Dianne Feinstein

said, "To solve a problem that everyone wants to be solved there is no need to war."

In an interview with Dianne Feinstein, Mehr News agency asked some questions about the visit, reasons behind it, and about whether the Iranian Foreign Ministry had requested for the meeting or not. Trump's hostile policy toward Iran, US withdrawal from the JCPOA also were discussed in the Interview with the democratic senator.

Dianne Feinstein is "California" Senator and a senior member of the US Senate Committee on the Judiciary and former chief of the Senate intelligence committee. She is considered one of the influential senators of the Democrat party.

In answer to the following questions she told the Mehr News agency:

"Since taking office, President Trump has adopted highly confrontational policies toward Iran. To my strong disappointment, on May 8, 2018, the President announced that he will withdraw the United States from the Iran nuclear agreement by re-imposing sanctions previously lifted by the agreement, even though the U.S. Intelligence Community believes that Iran has complied with its treaty obligations. On April 8, 2019, President Trump also designated the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps—an arm of the Iranian government—as a

foreign terrorist organization (FTO). This marks the first time a government entity has been designated as an FTO, and has the potential to significantly increase tensions with Iran.

While I firmly believe that Iran's government should be held accountable for its sponsorship of terror, regional aggression, illegal detention of dual U.S.-Iranian nationals, and repression of its own citizens, the Trump administration's go-it-alone policy toward Iran has alienated us from our key allies and raised the possibility of sparking another conflict in the Middle East. In fact, on May 8, 2019, Iranian President Rouhani announced that Iran would begin to halt its compliance with portions of the nuclear agreement.

I share your concerns about the Trump administration's actions and policies toward Iran, which is why I am an original cosponsor of the "Prevention of the Unconstitutional War with Iran Act of 2019" (S. 1039) introduced by Senator Tom Udall (D-NM) on April 4, 2019. This bill would prevent the President from using force against Iran without explicit congressional authorization to do so. S. 1039 currently awaits consideration by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, of which I am not a member.

I will be sure to keep your thoughts in mind as I continue to monitor the Trump administration's increasingly hostile actions toward Iran."

Iran and US game, chicken game or prisoner's dilemma?

By: Javad Heirannia

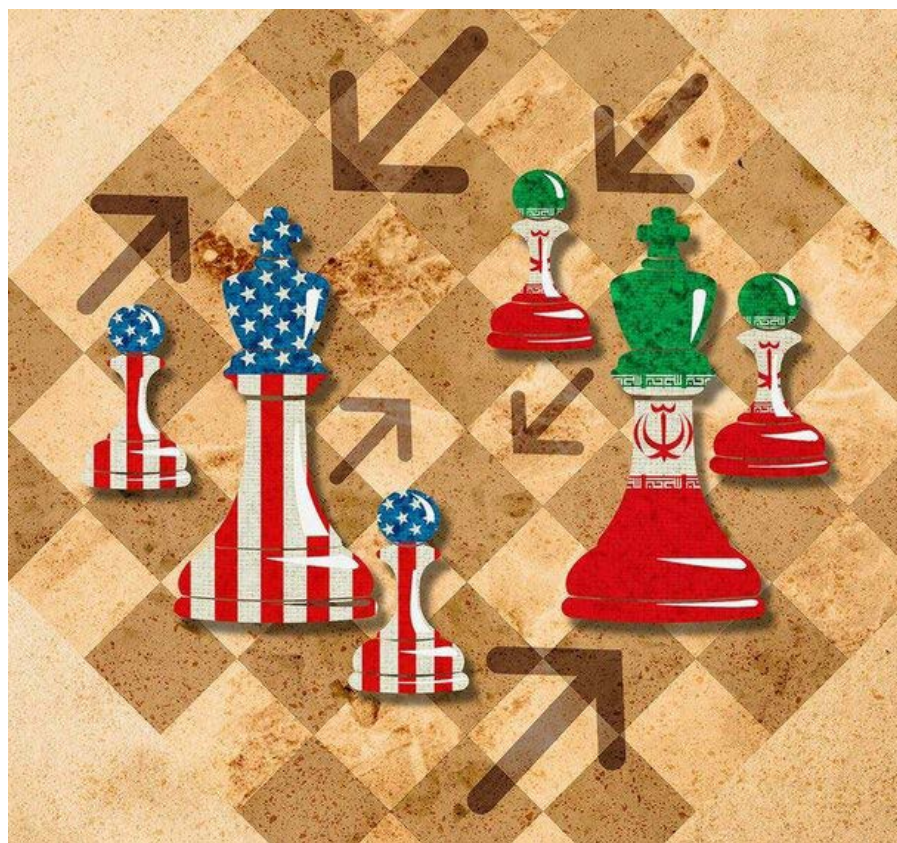
According to game theory, the type of Iran-US behavior can be studied in the form of models. This theory also enables us to create a model for their behavior. Based on this, in the critical circumstances of two countries chicken game can indicate the behavior of Iran and America behavior and determine their strategy towards each other.

Chicken game is an effective model for studying intersections of two players in Game theory. The worst result is gained when none of two players - who are not inclined to give up - stop fighting. In this game two drivers with high speed drive towards each other, one of them must deviate from the way otherwise they will clash with each other and will be killed. The driver that has deviated from the way because of being coward is called Chicken and is the loser and the driver who still remains in the path is the winner.

In fact, the status and reputation that you gain because of this game are very high; continuing and not continuing it the game both leads to a lose-lose result. In other words, the players will be trapped in a vague situation. If they continue the game, then death or perpetual palsy will be inevitable. And if they continue competing despite being survived, they will lose their reputation and status which somehow is equal to death.

Trump's behavior towards Iran is something like this game. On another hand, Trump in this game has tried to pretend himself an unpredictable and moody person who might behave in various ways (Madman Theory). In this way, his baselessness words mostly seem realistic rather than a bluff.

In order to show Trump a madman or (based on necessity) a man with whom we can negotiate, he uses some people such as John Bol-



ton. He during the time of President Bush presidency had also played this role and now again is playing this role in Trump's presidency period, too. Trump aggressive position creates an unstable and frightening atmosphere for his opponents, especially for Iran. Exactly in such an atmosphere, Trump starts to talk about negotiations in order to pretend that he wants to negotiate but it is Iran that rejects. In this way, he also seeks to make Iran endure damage because of not negotiating. At the same time, the aggressive atmosphere that has been created by Bolton is continued.

The recent example of such action is John Bolton's action according to which he said that Pentagon in order to the "confrontation with Iran" has dispatched "Abraham Lincoln" aircraft carrier to the Persian Gulf. As it became clear earlier sailing this aircraft carrier was planned a long time ago, but Bol-

ton intended to use it to show the situation critical.

"Ilan Goldenberg", the previous chief of Iran program in Pentagon and senior fellow in "New America," think tank believes that the US provocative acts in the region is not anything but trying to influence Iran to change its accumulations.

In response to a title in the New York Times which said: "Pentagon was gathering forces against the potential attack to Iran", he tweeted that it was necessary for media to report the armed deployment in the region with responsibility and avoid to exaggerate about war with Iran, which is the goal of aggressive fractions."

"Goldenberg" has written: "I was Iran program chief in Pentagon for three years. Such arrays cannot change the game equations extensively. New York Times must not use such a title for dispatching Patriot missile system, es-

pecially because over the four previous months the US has dispatched four of such missiles to the outside of the region."

Paying attention to the US facilities in the international area which can be seen in sanctions imposed on Iran, armed confrontation with Iran can damage it heavily. Although Iran also can revenge by activating regional leverage and threatening it. Professor Nader Entesar believes that, however, the game of diplomatic chicken game can serve President Trump's goal but it will be a disastrous game for Iran.

Trump's behavior towards Iran in another way is like another game in which he pulls Iran near the edge of a cliff and then changes Iran's position according to its own interests.

But considering time scheduling it might lead to sharp weakening or strengthening his presidential campaign. It also depends on the possible successful or unsuccessful deal with China and North Korea.

Paying attention to the damaging effect of the continuance of trade war with China of which Beijing is completely aware and the importance of economic factor for American electors, Trump would try to halt trade war with China and compromise with them.

But considering North Korea and Iran the situation is different. These two issues can be bargaining chips in Trump's foreign policy. In this field being able to compromise with North Korea can be a bargaining chip in his foreign policy or at least not considered as his Achilles heel. But the process that negotiations go through which and Trump's expectations from Pyongyang make a future view of these negotiations vague, especially because Pyongyang knows the significant role of these negotiations in presidential campaigns very well. If Trump cannot compromise with North Korea, then with the starting of the new campaigns work he will be more fragile considering Iran deal.

In this meanwhile even taking a memorial photo with Iranian officials regarding propaganda can be considered as a big triumph for Trump. However, Trump in this way will not

achieve anything special practically and a new potential deal with Iran might not differ significantly with the previous one.

Even regarding China, a well-known theorist like "Graham Allison" believes that just a few months ago Chinese carefully studied NAFTA (between the US, Canada, and Mexico) and its success and realized that the previous NAFTA deal and the recent one are different just by 10 to 15 percent.

So, they understood that changing what Trump calls "the worst trade deal that has ever concluded" to a "big deal" is not a very complicated task. In such a situation, Xi Jinping without anxiety and comfortably can continue its game. In other words, China has already realized that with such a change (10-15 percent) in the current trade situation they can make Trump satisfied. Once one of my Chinese friends told me a long time before Christopher Columbus explored America, Chinese hypocrisy and deceitfulness.

Beginning of the presidential electoral campaign in America help Iran to play this game with Trump more freely. Some believe that even at that time Trump might start a war with Iran. It is unlikely that Trump can operate freely at this point. Especially since he in his presidential campaign had criticized Middle East wars and the funds that the US had devoted to such wars. Thus starting a war on the threshold of the presidential election is just a dangerous gamble for him. Particularly because convincing the public for starting a war with Iran which according to IAEA reports has committed to its commitments is not an easy task.

In the game of "Prisoner's Dilemma" if two prisoners do not attest against each other (cooperate) with each other than both of them gain benefit. But how the US and Iran can trust each other in the current situation? At first glance cooperation of the two countries may seem impossible but if this game repeats and if the two prisoners have "detailed" and correct information of each other and each other's in-

tentions then the possibility of cooperation will rise.

One of the fields that can help these two countries to have detailed information from each other is international regimes. And Iran nuclear deal as one of such international regime in the field of non-proliferation which was based on the information of IAEA could give the US detailed information about Iran nuclear program, but the US preferred to withdraw from this security regime.

In addition, (with the help of this agreement) the US could find a more detailed and reliable channel than Israel, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and People's Mujahedin of Iran. Each of these countries and groups due to their hostility against Iran pursue their own limited and antagonistic goals towards Iran which are not necessarily in accordance with the US interest. American Iran studies discourse is deficient and disorganized discourse.

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Each of these countries and groups due to their hostility against Iran pursue their own limited and antagonistic goals towards Iran which are not necessarily in accordance with the US interest. American Iran studies discourse is deficient and disorganized discourse. Thus if the US intends to smooth the path of cooperation with Iran in international and regional issues should make some correction to this discourse.

Continuation of "Prisoner's Game" and increase the correct information on both sides provide both countries with the possibility of achieving their utilities and being in a win-win game.

John Bolton's political death

By: Hanif Ghaffari

John Bolton, US National Security Advisor, continues to promote war and terror and violence in his foreign policy. Bolton's title is basically tied to crime, war, and terror. Many American analysts say the National Security Adviser to the Trump government has become the symbol of the White House's failure in the international system.

In George W. Bush's presidency, people like Dick Cheney and John Bolton have become the messengers of the White House's defeat in the world. This time Bolton has also become a messenger for defeating Trump and the US in the world. The US National Security Adviser is having difficult days. John Bolton has not been able to achieve his goals toward the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Bolton's story is a sad story for American citizens! He is today a symbol of the embarrassment of all Americans. Bolton was one of the influential officials in the country since the start of the war in Iraq in 2003, by the George Walker Bush administration until 2008 (when the neocons in the US were at the head of the political and executive equations of the country). Bolton and his entourage have repeatedly become the symbol of the failure of the US in the West Asia region. However, Bolton's defeat in the US is now far broader! John Bolton, the US National Security Adviser, continues his anti-Iranian negotiations in various fields. In recent months, 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. But the existing evidence suggest that the US National Security Adviser is not going to succeed in this regard.

Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders responds to a New York Times report about the Trump administration's potential plan to send thousands of troops to the Middle East, saying national security adviser John Bolton "was one of the architects of the war in Iraq."

As Peter Bergen, CNN National Security Analyst wrote, John Bolton, President Trump's national security adviser, seemingly hasn't met a war he doesn't love. Bolton was a prominent proponent of the Iraq War and he has never evinced any doubt about the wisdom of that de-



cision, telling the Washington Examiner four years ago, "I still think the decision to overthrow Saddam was correct." By contrast, last year President Trump said the Iraq War was "the single worst decision ever made."

Just before he was installed a little over a year ago as Trump's national security adviser, Bolton advocated for a pre-emptive war against North Korea in the Wall Street Journal.

The US government is now ramping up tensions with the volatile North Korean regime, announcing Thursday that it had "recently" taken into custody a North Korean ship that was defying sanctions on the nuclear-armed state -- the first time the US has taken such an action.

But Trump's general approach to North Korea has been to engage in negotiations with its leader, Kim Jong Un. In recent weeks Bolton pushed for a coup in Venezuela involving opposition leader Juan Guaido that was believed to have the backing of key officers of the nation's military. The US-backed uprising seems to have fizzled. Trump has since expressed frustration to White House officials about Bolton's overly aggressive Venezuela policy.

On Thursday, President Trump said that he actually moderates the bellicose Bolton: "I'm the one who tempers him, which is OK. I have John Bolton and I have people who are a little more dovish than him."

Bolton's enthusiasm for the muscular use of the military seems out of place in the administration of a President who has repeatedly questioned and sought to end America's wars in the Middle East. Yet while Trump and Bolton may be out of step with each other on policy toward Venezuela and North Korea, one country they both seem to be on the same page about is Iran.

Bolton, 70, has espoused deeply conservative views since he was a teenager. The son of a Baltimore firefighter, Bolton worked on the Barry Goldwater Republican presidential campaign in 1964, and he later interned for President Richard Nixon's vice president, Spiro Agnew. Bolton went to Yale and then to Yale Law School. He has worked in Republican administrations since Ronald Reagan's first term.

Bolton has long rejected any constraints on American power. The happiest moment Bolton had when he was working for the US State Department was when he "unsigned" the agreement that made the US a party to the International Criminal Court, which he saw as a risk for US political and military leaders who might be charged with war crimes. After Bolton pulled the US out of the agreement in 2002, he said he felt like a kid on Christmas Day.

When Bolton became Trump's national security adviser, he ensured that anyone on the International Criminal Court who was investigating American soldiers or intelligence officials for possible war crimes in Afghanistan was denied visas to the US.

Bolton's dislike of the Iranian regime is longstanding. In 2015, Bolton wrote in the New York Times that the US should bomb Iran because "Iran will not negotiate away its nuclear program," which is exactly what Iran did that same year when it negotiated an agreement with the Obama administration to halt its nuclear weapons program. The New York Times reported that Bolton has ordered up military options that were presented to top Trump national security officials last week. They include the potential deployment of as many as 120,000 American troops to the Middle East if Iran attacks American targets in the region or resumes work on its nuclear weapons program!

What is certain is that Bolton's political death is very close to the American National Adviser. He is doomed to failure! What is certain is that John Bolton has no choice but to confess to defeat against Iran. 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. 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.

Quds International Day



Dossier

Saudi regime vicious ploy for Quds International Day

By: Mohammad Ghaderi

This year, Quds international Day will be of special importance since US is planning to officially announce the "Deal of the Century", a deal mainly designed to complete the Zionists ominous project for pushing Palestinians out of their lands.

This is a critical time, also, because US is especially at work to heighten pressures on Iran, in a bid to hinder the development of the Islamic Republic government and nation.

Over the past weeks, anti-Iran groups and war-advocates both inside and outside the White House have done the most to fuel fears and to fake a pressing situation in which "war or negation" are the only options. They are in fact putting on this show to achieve their own goals which are limiting Iran's power in the region and preparing the ground for official introduction of "the Deal of the Century".

Based on this scenario, Al Saud regime, who is the top mercenary of US and Zionists in the region, is now trying to hold an urgent meeting with Arab League and Persian Gulf Cooperation Council members in Mecca.

Holding this meeting shows the magnitude of Al Saud vi-



ciousness and is important on several accounts:

- According to Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel al-Jubeir, the meeting is going to be held on Ramadan 25th which coincides the Quds international Day.
- Instead of running in Saudi Arabia capital in Riyadh, the meeting is going to be held in Mecca which is Muslims' holiest city.
- The main topic of this meeting is both "the Deal of the Century" and "the threats of the Islamic Republic of Iran for Arab countries."

By considering these three points it becomes clear that the Arab-Hebraic-Western think tank is aiming to attack the Islamic Republic of Iran which is the heart and soul of Quds Day and to destroy the idea of this day which is the liberation of Palestine and the holy Quds, so that they can stabilize and normalize the shameful and treacherous Deal of the Century.

This year's Quds Day to be special due to 'Deal of the Century'

In an interview with Mehr, Sheikh Hassan Izaddin, the Hezbollah official for Arab-African affairs said that this year's Quds Day is going to be special due to widespread opposition to 'Deal of the Century'.

Sheikh Hassan Izaddin, the Hezbollah official for Arab-African affairs told Mehr correspondent that the so-called 'Deal of the Century', proposed by Donald Trump and backed by those who seek to put an end to the Palestinian issue, will not succeed.

Izaddin also said that the reactionary Arab countries in the region such as the Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates as well as Bahrain, which are the main backer of Trump's 'Deal of the Century' will get nowhere with their new conspiracy.

He further condemned the Manama meeting to discuss the economic aspects of the 'Deal of the Century' on 25-26 of



June, saying that the Arab states' cooperation with the Israeli regime is aimed at distracting attention from their arch-nemesis Israel.

The Hezbollah official went on to highlight that the Manama conference aims to force Palestinians to give up their rights in exchange for money, stressing that the 'Deal of the Century' will be a 'stillborn'.

Izaddin further noted that no Palestinian political group is going to attend the Manama meeting as none

of them will accept to give up the Palestinians' rights and sell out their lands for money.

Furthermore, he praised the role that the International Quds Day plays in solidifying the Islamic unity, adding that this year's Quds Day is going to be special in opposing Donald Trump's moves against Palestine and huge turnout of the people across the world to show their support for Palestinian resistance.



Nasrallah warns against changes in Middle East

By: Hamid Bayati

These days, Middle East is facing a torrent of events that seem to be born out of conspiracies and compromises. The changes that will threaten peace in the region. It seems that US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are trying to draw their own advantages by carrying out new plans in Middle East.

On the one hand, we see that the West, US, and the Zionist Regime are increasing their measures against Syria. After years of war and military activity in Syria was proved to be fruitless and the western countries did not gain what they wanted, they are now trying to reach their goals by exerting enormous pressure on Syria and placing the country under a new round of sanctions.

These countries, on the other hand, are doing their best to prevent the Syrian refugees from going back to their country and they have now come up with new ide-

as such as chemical attacks in Syria.

In the same time, the Deal of the Century is taking its first steps. The deal starts from Bahrain in the form of sessions and economic workshops and will gradually expand to other areas. Everything is moving on quickly and Trump seeks to serve the Zionist regime the best.

For carrying out the Deal of the Century, Trump is trying to put the maximum amount of pressure on Arab countries, but he shows them no respect and expect them to follow his orders without no question.

Amid all these tensions, Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary general of the Lebanese political and paramilitary party Hezbollah pointed out some critical issues in his recent speech:

- Warning that the Deal of the Century is based on an ominous plot to destroy Palestine's hopes and dreams.
- The US and the Zionist regime have conspired so that Palestinian refugees lose their right for going back to their country.

- The first stage of the Deal of the Century will begin by Manama session.

• Advising Lebanese and Palestinian officials to devise plans against the plot for prohibiting Palestinians from returning to their homeland.

- Stressing that resistance is the only way for thwarting Zionists' plans.

Nasrallah also delivered a speech on May 25th on the anniversary of the Resistance and Liberation day. This speech also contained key points, including two important issues:

- First, he stressed that resistance is critically important for Lebanon these days, as the international law is not respected by many countries. If it weren't for the resistance and liberation in 2000, Trump would've granted the south of Lebanon or other parts of it to Israel, just like he did with Al-Quds and the Golan.

- Second, the real reason behind delaying the return of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon to their country is political and it is related to the presidential elections in Syria.

'Deal of the Century' against intl. law: Mahmoud al-Zahar

Mahmoud al-Zahar, a co-founder of Hamas resistance movement, says that the Bahraini-hosted meeting to discuss the economic aspects of the 'Deal of the Century' is doomed to failure due to its contradiction with international law.

In an interview with Mehr, the Hamas senior official Mahmoud al-Zahar referred to the Bahraini-hosted meeting to discuss the economic aspects of the 'Deal of the Century', which is scheduled to be held in Manama on June 25 and 26, and said that the meeting will fail as no Palestinian is going to accept any bribes in exchange for giving up the Palestinian cause.

Al-Zahar said that the Palestinians are not going to exchange their own lands, their holy sites, and the right to return of all Palestinian refugees with money.

The senior Hamas official added that the Palestinians want back the entire Palestinian lands and will not exchange

Palestine with anything else.

On the impact of the world-wide rallies for the International Quds Day, which was initiated by late Iranian Leader Ayatollah Khamenei in 1979, the co-founder of Hamas said "of course measures such as holding Quds Day rallies have had great effects."

He went on to explain that the Quds Day rallies have led to the "reopening of Gaza borders and the entry of food, medicine and humanitarian aid to Palestinians and people of Gaza."

On the cooperation of some Arab states with the US-Israeli plan for the Palestinian issue, Al-Zahar expressed his regret over the Arab countries' submission to the deal.

He went on to state that "Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine and Iran have expressed their opposition to the implementation of the 'Deal of the Century', while other countries have been silent."

He added that the dissolution of Is-



raeli Knesset had nothing to do with the debates on the 'Deal of the Century' and the dissolution of the Israeli regime's parliament was due to internal power struggle.

The Hamas senior official further noted that the implementation of the 'Deal of the Century' has been postponed as many western countries also oppose it, adding that only two "marginal countries" have so far moved their embassies to Jerusalem Al-Quds.

He furthermore added "the trend of the 'Deal of the Century' will not succeed and will not be completed as it is against the international law."

Final statement of Quds Day rallies strongly condemns Manama meeting

By: Kamal Iranidoost

Marchers at the end of International Quds Day rallies in Iran issued a final statement condemning the upcoming Bahraini-hosted meeting to discuss US and Israeli peace plan for Palestine or the so-called 'Deal of the Century'.



On the 40th anniversary of International Quds Day, millions of Iranians across the country took part in rallies to show their support for the Palestinians as well as their opposition to US and Israeli peace plan for Palestine or the so-called 'Deal of the Century'.

A statement was read out in Tehran at the end of the nationwide rallies condemning the US administration's new conspiracy in the form of the so-called 'Deal of the Century'.

The marchers in their statement also strongly condemned the attempts by some Arab rulers to normalize relations with

"fake occupying regime of Israel" and the upcoming Manama meeting to discuss the economic aspects of the 'Deal of the Century'.

The final declaration also considered the continuation of Intifada and resistance against the 'global disbelievers front' led by the United States as the only solution to the Palestini-

an issue and rejected any compromise with the 'cancerous Israel.'

It further called for the realization of 'Palestine for all Palestinian people' and stressed that the future Palestine must include the entire Palestinian lands between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

At the end, the statement called for 'maintaining national unity' and realizing the slogan of this Iranian year set by the Leader of the Islamic Republic as 'Boosting Domestic Production.'

Intl. Quds day marks end of 'Deal of the Century': Hamas official



In an interview with Mehr, Ismail Radwan, a senior member of Hamas, hailed the role that the International Quds Day plays in keeping the Palestinian cause alive, saying that the day this year will mark the total collapse of the 'Deal of the Century.'

Ismail Radwan told Mehr that the International Quds Day, which has been commemorated for years, has restored the credibility of the occupied Quds, as the first Qibla of the Muslims.

Radwan also expressed his appreciation to the Islamic Republic of Iran for the role it plays in informing the young generation of the Islamic Umma about the issue of Palestine.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has always emphasized the importance of the role of the young people in supporting the issue of Palestine and

opposing the occupation," he noted.

In response to a question regarding the US and Israeli regime-proposed 'Deal of the Century', the Hamas senior member said "first of all, the plan targets Quds, then the Palestinians' right to return so that it rejects the Palestinians' right to return to their homeland as impossible."

He further described the Quds Day, which is commemorated each year on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan, as a day this year which would mark the total collapse of the 'Deal of the Century.'

Radwan went on to say that the 'Deal of the Century' aims to legitimize the Zionist regime of Israel's control over the occupied lands.

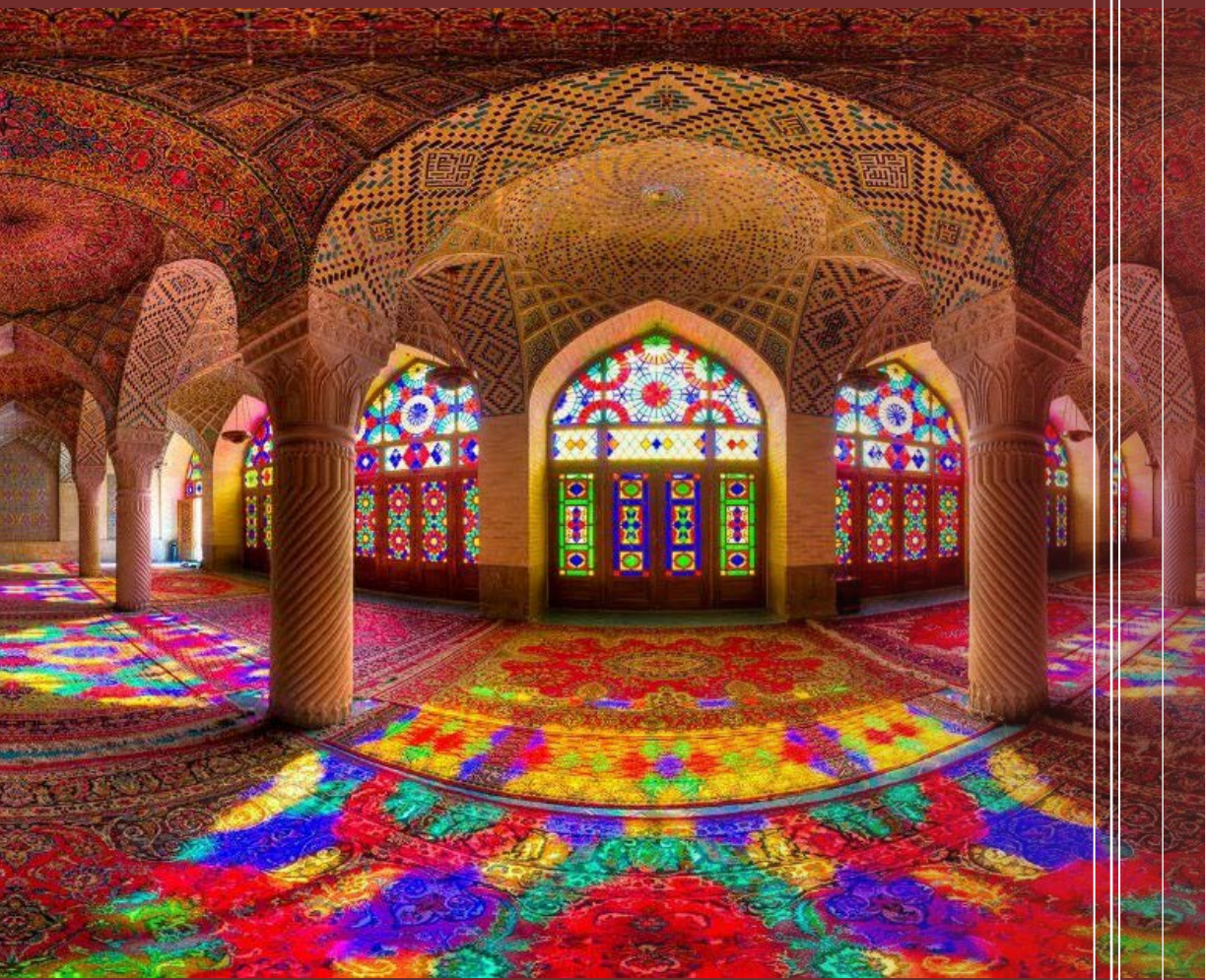
He further condemned attempts by some Arab states to normalize relations with Israel, declaring Quds and the occupied Golan Heights as

part of the Arab and Islamic world forever.

Elsewhere, the Hamas official referred to the Bahraini-hosted meeting to discuss the economic aspects of the 'Deal of the Century' and praised the stance taken by the Bahraini nation against the meeting.

He furthermore called on Arab and Islamic nations to come out on Quds Day this Friday to strongly condemn the 'Deal of the Century' and the attempts by some Arab rulers to normalize relations with Israeli enemy.

And finally, Radwan stressed that resistance will continue as before, hailing the victory in the recent battle in Gaza. He further noted the Israeli regime has been forced into retreat recently, calling for more cooperation and coordination among various factions of the Resistance forces.



Culture

Danish Filmfest. organizers elaborate on Iran-Denmark cultural coop.

By: Haniyeh Sadat Jafariyeh

The Danish Film Festival wrapped up on Saturday night. Running from May 1st to May 4th, the event was held in collaboration between Denmark's Embassy in Iran and the Iranian Youth Cinema Society (IYCS)- an educational film organization and the major supporter of short films and young filmmakers in Iran which is affiliated to Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

A number of thought-provoking Danish movies were screened in theaters in Tehran, Kashan, Yazd, Isfahan and Shiraz through the event.

To get a clear overview of the cultural cooperation between the two sides, Mehr new agency conducted an interview with the Danish Ambassador to Tehran Danny Annan, Danish Deputy Head of Mission Malte Möller-Christensen, and the Director of International Affairs of IYCS Mohammad Fahimi.

The following is the complete transcript of the interview:

How did you decide to run such a program? Where did the idea come from?

Ambassador Annan: We found quite an interest in Danish movies in various film festivals around the world so we decided to find an Iranian partner. The Iranian Youth Cinema Society was a very good option for our cooperation since they have a regional reach not only in showing the films here in Tehran but also in Isfahan, Kashan, Yazd and Shiraz. We approached them and found it a good opportunity for us to cooperate.

Deputy Möller-Christensen: As the Danish Embassy in Tehran we are not experts in cinema but we have an important role to play in bringing together both experts and the general audience in both countries and to facilitate people to people contact and exchange.

Ambassador Annan: First of all, we focused on general Iranian audiences,



and not only the artists circles. We posted the event on social media both in Farsi and in English to get access to the audience. Our Iranian partner organization sent the posters to Iranian universities to find addressees among students there. The audience could have free access to the screenings. They needed no reservations of tickets. People just had to show up.

What criteria were considered in choosing the films?

Ambassador Annan: Our ambition was to show a wide variety of Danish movies in the event: feature films, documentaries, short films and also children movies dubbed into Farsi. The films had both Farsi and English subtitles. We tried to have a broad scope, in fact. Of course, we had to choose the movies that could be screened in Iran but in fact, there are many similarities between Danish filmmaking and Iranian filmmaking in the way they address the social topics.

Advertising the event was mainly done by the Iranian Youth Film society.

Intl. Affairs Director Mr. Fahimi: It was a mutual effort. There was a cooperation between the Danish embassy and our institute but since there were some cultural considerations, we had to do the final selection in terms of cultural

appropriateness. The first criteria to us was the quality of the films, they needed to have artistic value. The selected films were artistically valuable ones. We also tried to have a combination of genres; documentary, drama, animation. The target audience also varies from children to young adults and adults. It also included a wide range of tastes from artistic ones, those different from the business cinema of the Hollywood, some of them were much better if you just ask me. Some others were very good documentaries. Actually, the audience could enjoy them artistically and thematically.

Iranian film fans are familiar with some Danish filmmakers and their works. What is the status of Iranian Cinema in Denmark? Is a similar program going to be run in Denmark?

Ambassador Annan: There was a film festival in Copenhagen in 2016, which focused on Iranian movies from back 1960s to 1990s. Asghar Farhadi' Oscar winner movie has drawn a lot of attention. They have shown 'Separation' on Denmark's television. Danish film-lovers are not unfamiliar with Iranian movies, in fact. But I think that would be interesting if the Iranian embassy in Copenhagen could do a similar initiative there

in cooperation with a Danish film institute to run an Iranian film festival in Denmark. Also, recently on February 19, 2019, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, there was a nice film festival in a cinema in Copenhagen.

Intl. Affairs Director Mr. Fahimi: That is something that we look forward to. There is the will from both sides for such an event to take place.

Fajr Film Festival just ended. Did any films from Denmark participated this year or previous years?

Ambassador Annan: Yes. We had two movies in Fajr festival this year ("The Guilty" and "Before the Frost").

At Fajr festival, we had also Danish theatre groups and musical ensembles in Tehran. In cooperation with Iranian theaters they had some seminars and workshops. I do believe that the Fajr Festival is a very good opportunity for cultural exchange not only between Denmark and Iran but also among other

countries participating in the festival.

Deputy Möller-Christensen: From our perspective, Fajr Festival is a very big success here in Tehran.

Has the Iranian Youth Cinema Society done similar cooperation with other embassies in Iran or not?

Intl. Affairs Director Mr. Fahimi: We have done a quite number of similar cooperation with other embassies in Iran but I cannot put my finger on any of them, now. The recent one, I suppose was either Finland or Spain. They have been successful events. The turnout was actually considerable. The audience liked it. The feedback was great. That encouraged us to do similar events. And we are very glad that we have done this event with Denmark. The cooperation of the cultural department of the embassy was great. We are very happy that we are the first institute in Iran which has run a Danish event in Iran.

Is this the first time that you are screening

movies in cities other than Tehran?

Intl. Affairs Director Mr. Fahimi: It is the first time that we are screening movies in several cities across Iran simultaneously. We did something before in Tehran and later the same in Tabriz and Kashan, for example. But this is the first time we are doing it at the same time. The good news is that except from Kashan, Shiraz, Yazd and Isfahan, there were some other cities which had applied to host the event. But because it was the first time, we thought doing it at large scale, we might not be able to handle it. We then decided to postpone doing same events in a larger scale. Of course, we have done something similar but not with embassies.

How was the festival funded?

Intl. Affairs Director Mr. Fahimi: We tried to run on a low budget, and there were some things we took care of for example editing the films but actually the main funder of the event was the Danish embassy.

Iran moving forward in IP sector

By: Haniyeh Sadat Jafariyeh

Setting and implementing practical Intellectual Property (IP) rules, Iran seeks to make its companies capable of joining domestic stock markets and get developed to compete foreign rivals.

Having a 100-year background in setting IP rights and regulations, Iran has taken some steps in revising and updating the affiliated rules as well as securing copyright for the generated content or new innovations. All is done to support the modern and knowledge-based businesses or information technologies which are generic in the sense of being useful in many places in the economy.

According to the International Property Rights Index 2018, Iran ranks 91st among 125 countries and 13th among 17 MENA countries (including Turkey and Pakistan).

The country has registered an im-

provement of 16 levels from its previous 107th in 2013 to the current 91st, while the major development has occurred during the past recent year, according to the same report.

The index has shown 0.22 percent

increase in 2018 for Iran; gaining 4.74 score out of 10, it says.

During the past eight years, Iran could manage to get the average score of 4.30 (in a zero to 10 scale), while the international average score stands at



5.47.

The Islamic country is a member of Paris Convention- which secures the protection of industrial property as well as Madrid Protocol that allows a trademark owner to seek registration in any of the countries that have joined the Madrid Protocol. It also seeks to go under Lisbon Agreement, which is a special agreement under Article 19 of the Paris Convention for the protection of industrial property as well as Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) which provides a unified procedure for filing patent applications to protect inventions in each of its contracting states. Berne Convention for the protection of literary and artistic works is the other convention that Iran aims to join.

It has signed several cooperation agreements with various countries and international organizations which have a big name in making IP rights. As reported, Switzerland, France, South Korea, Denmark, China, Turkey, Russia and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) are among Iran's partners in IP sector.

Despite the efforts to improve the status quo of IP in Iran, the country still remains among those with lowest positions in the ranking queue. Unfortunately, majority of Iranians are not yet familiar with IP and the fact can amount to discrimination and is able to impede competitiveness and equal benefiting from resources.

Improving the IP index of the country stands among the requirements of economic development.

Danish Ambassador, expert explain bilateral IP co-op with Iran

Denmark stands among the most cooperative countries with Iran on IP rights.

In an interview with the Mehr news agency, Denmark's Ambassador to Tehran Danny Annan and the IP Sector Counsellor at the Embassy of Denmark in Iran Terkel Hallberg Borg described the status quo of Iran-Denmark cooperation on IP field.

"I can tell you that we have been very busy since the time the Iranian Intellectual Property Center and the Danish Patent and Trademark Office inaugurated their three-year close co-

operation within the area of IP rights in September, 2018," Ambassador Annan said expressing content.

"We have had 29 mutual visits to Iran and Denmark and there has been exchange of experience between patent and trademark experts of judiciary. The project is actually expanding," he added.

"Initially, there was much focus on capacity building and sharing of experience at Iranian patent office. Now, it is not only patents we are talking about but also trademarks, copyright and it is not only the office itself but also the police and judiciary, the whole value chain when it comes to patents and trademarks," the Danish Ambassador said.

"That is one of the projects that I am mostly proud of because it is really moving ahead and it is clear to both sides partners that there is a mutual interest in this project," he concluded.

To provide more detail about the issue Mr. Hallberg went on.

"The main aim of this Danish-Iranian partnership is to positively affect Iran's sustainable and inclusive growth, especially within knowledge-intensive sectors. Iran has a remarkable potential in this area and ranks third worldwide within science and engineering education with more than a quarter million candidates that graduate from Iranian universities each year, of whom 70 per cent are women. If that level of human capital is to be transferred into economic growth, the system for protecting innovation and intellectual property needs to be strong. This is also the policy of the government of Iran and Denmark is happy to contribute with our own experiences to support the Iranian ambitions," the Danish expert told MNA.

"All the Danish expert delegations that we have brought to Iran have been positively surprised by the warm hospitality of Iranian authorities in receiving them and engaging in technical and complicated discussions about how best to protect intellectual property. Our two countries are of course very different but Denmark has worked for many years to bring its intellectual property legislation and institutional practices to a high level and by shar-

ing those experiences with our Iranian partners, the authorities here can get some useful inputs as to how that development is best supported in Iran," he added.

"One of the areas where Denmark public authorities has invested a lot of energy in recent years is within standardizing internal work procedures and building sophisticated quality management systems so that all applications for protection of intellectual property are judged from consistent criteria. This also helps efficiency and speed in case processing. Annually, Iran received more than 15,000 patent applications, which is the fourth highest number amongst the lower and upper middle-income countries, after China, India, and the Russian Federation. The amount of applications continues to rise and shows the importance of having an efficient and first-rate case-processing system in Iran, which is one of the key areas that we work on with the Intellectual Property Office," Mr. Hallberg said.

"Currency, we have experience-sharing activities and workshops with the Intellectual Property Center, Iranian Customs, Office of the Public Prosecutors, judges from criminal and civil courts, and experts from the Iranian Consultative Assembly and the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. And we keep on adding new Iranian partners that have an interest in our project," he informed.

"In my opinion, a project like this shows the clear benefit of countries like Iran and Denmark engaging in long-term technical cooperation and partnerships that will undoubtedly also strengthen our bilateral relations and dialogue about other issues of common interests," he concluded.

The IP contract signed between Iran and Denmark stands among the most influential and practical ones between the two countries. As of December 13, 2016, when the contract was signed in Tehran on a sidelines of a seminar, till the present date, around 15 important types of cooperation such as conducting IP studies, various training workshops about patents and trademarks, and etc. have been done.



Cool destinations to go if you need to escape heat in Tehran

By: Afshin Majlesi

If you can't stand the heat in Tehran and want to take a break, don't be disappointed!

Whether you're in search of an ice-cold adventure or simply a sweat-free vacation, thankfully, there are plenty of destinations dotted around the Iranian capital to escape the summer heat.

It simply means that you don't have to wait until fall or winter to enjoy colder temperatures; just skip the heat for many lush gardens and atmospheric townships in the surroundings.

On the northeast side of the metropolis, you can find plenty of cool townships and villages such as Damavand, Fasham, Oushan, Ahar, Meygoun, Cheshmeh A'la and Garmabdareh to name a few.

Along with the fresh air, fruit gardens and lush gardens, there are recreational facilities and abundant local restaurants as well.

To the eastward, Shahandasht wa-

terfall may be your next destination. It is situated off the Haraz road that connects Tehran to the Caspian Sea coast in the north.

The 50-meter cascade is adjacent to Qaleh Malek-Bahman, a Sassanid era (224 CE to 651) stronghold.

The list also includes Tangeh Vashi, a popular mountainous resort famous for having a cool stream where many opt for walking through.

To commemorate his hunts, Fath Ali Shah Qajar (r. 1797 – 1834) ordered a bas-relief carving in the midway point of the gorge. Today, the relief is very popular among holidaymakers.

Tangeh Vashi is situated some 15 kilometers west of Firouzkouh. It is a heaven for trekking and hiking fans as well.

Apart from the east, you may choose to stay in Kan and Sulaqan, which are riverside rural districts westward. Another cool spot may be colorful valleys across the popular Chalous road that embraces hectic rows of restaurants and coffee shops.

The scenic villages of Darband and Darakeh stand out when it comes to the north. Moreover, they are amongst the most accessible destinations in this article.

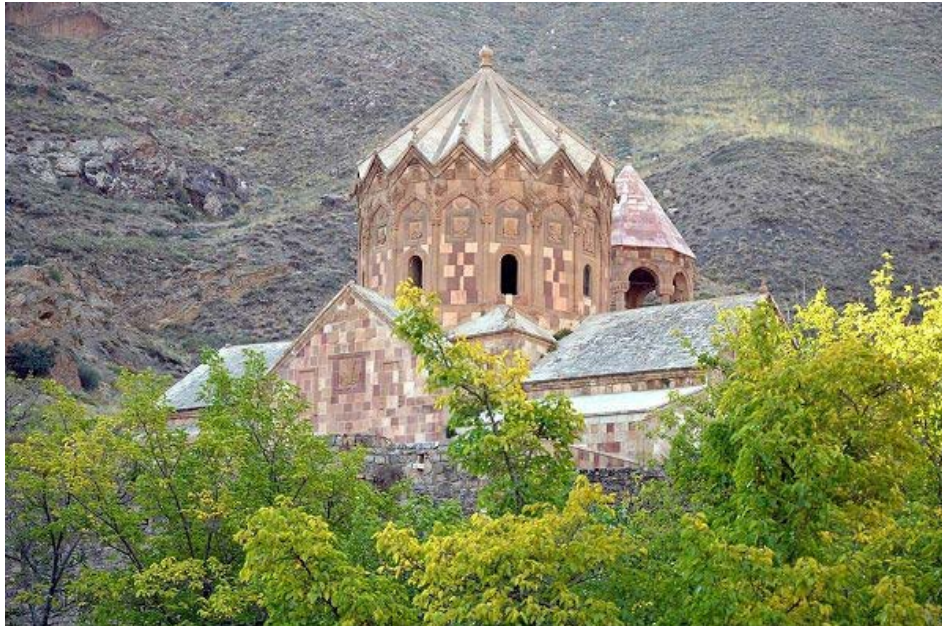
Tajrish Sq. is a gateway to the rocky Darband where people hike upward trails which are teemed with atmospheric teahouses and restaurants.

Likewise, Darakeh embraces countless riverside restaurants. For people who want to do more, it is possible to hike towards the Tochal cable car and beyond.

The bustling Iranian capital, however, never falls short of interesting travel ventures for tourists. Visitors have at their disposal tours to UNESCO-tagged Golestan

Palace, Grand Bazaar, Treasury of National Jewels, National Museum of Iran, Glass & Ceramic Museum, Masoudieh Palace, Sarkis Cathedral, Tehran Museum of

Contemporary Art, Carpet Museum of Iran, to mention but a few.



St. Stepanos Monastery beautiful Armenian church

By: Zahra Mirzafarjouyan

St. Stepanos Monastery is the second most important Armenian Church in Iran after St. Thaddeus Monastery. It is located about 15 km northwest of Julfa, East Azarbaijan Province, northwestern Iran.

Julfa is a city in East Azerbaijan Province, Iran. It is located to the north of Tabriz, separated by the Aras River from its northern neighbor and namesake, the town of Julfa in the Republic of Azerbaijan. It is famous for its historic churches. One of these churches is St. Stepanos Monastery which is the second most important Armenian Church in Iran after St. Thaddeus Monastery.

St. Stepanos Monastery is on the Iranian side of the border between Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and Iran. It was built in the ninth century AD, but it was seriously damaged by earthquake. So, it was refurbished in Safavid period. Also, some measures were taken in Qajar era by Abbas Mirza to maintain and repair it.

The church is surrounded by greenery trees and valleys in the heart of mountains between the border of Julfa

and the Republic of Azerbaijan and situated in a deep canyon along the Aras River.

Stephen St. Stepanos was one of the first martyrs of the Christian religion, as well as missionaries of Christianity and the apostles of Christ. St. Stepanos was stoned to death on December 26, 36th, in Quds by Jews.

The monastery is enclosed in a lush greenery area and the building is shaped like a cylinder with pink and red stones, covered with a cone-shaped dome and above the dome, portrays of bulls, sheep and fishes are visible. Inside the monastery, angels with four wings are carved. All parts of the church have been made of fences and stones. It has seven towers and five stone cylinders like strong fortresses of the Sassanid era. It has two entrances; the west entrance is for singing the chorus, and the south entrance is near the dome bell building. Its exterior walls are covered with beautiful stones.

Architecture, decoration of the building and materials used in its construction are a combination of the Parthian, Roman and Urartu style, similar to the style of the tenth to twelfth century. The church has three main buildings: the

main chapel, the bell tower and Daniel oven.

One of the most beautiful places in this church is its 16-sided dome which is very artistically designed. There is a bell tower in the south of the church; it is a pyramidal and octagonal dome. There are several graves in the courtyard of the tower where prominent Armenians were buried there.

Some bones, pieces of fabric, wax and etc. were found during reparation of the church in 2005. The prelate and archbishop of the Armenian Diocese of Tehran said that these bones probably belonged to John the Baptist.

This monastery is respected by all Christians and almost all other religions. One day in the year, thousands of Armenians gather together in this place to perform their rituals.

St. Stepanos Monastery was registered in Iran's National Heritage on March 6, 1963 under the registration number of 429. It was also registered in the UNESCO World Heritage site in 2007 for its historical and religious background, as well as its unique architecture.

The best season to visit St. Stepanos Monastery is in spring and summer, especially May.



Katale Khor cave, hidden paradise in Zanjan's mountains

By: Zahra Mirzafarjouyan

Katale Khor cave is one the most breathtaking caves in Iran which is located in Zanjan Province. The Katale Khor cave has been chosen as the first cave in terms of its crystals and cave formation, beauty and its numerous layers.

Iran has many caves, some of which are unique and special. There are many natural wonders in these caves; including magnificent stalactite and many million-year-old fossils. One of these beautiful caves in Zanjan city is katale khor cave. It is 150km south of Zanjan, off the Soltaniyeh–Hamadan road near Garmab.

The cave dates back to Jurassic period (120 million years ago) and it had a lot of natural and artificial changes during this period. It was discovered about 67 years ago by a group of Iranian cavers. One of the Zanjani members of the group named Seyyed Asadullah Jamali has registered this cave.

In some western parts of Iran, "Katale" is referred to low altitude mountains and the appellation of this cave is probably due to its existence in one of these mountains. Khor has Avestan root which means Sun. Therefore, Katale Khor means "mount of Sun".

At first, cavers had to crawl to enter the cave 700 meters. This cave was residence of ancient people so that bones of about 80 people are still preserved. Then the region was excavated and a route was created for walking. Researchers found

a strange route in this cave which shows Katale Khor is connected to Ali Sadr Cave in Hamedan Province, at distance of 100km.

Katale Khor and Ali Sadr Cave are roughly homogeneous and created at the same time, but there are two main differences: the Ali Sadr Cave is water cave where you sit in a boat and watch the view but Katale Khor is almost dry. The second distinction of this cave with Ali Sadr Cave is that Katale Khor's limes are purer which makes it more transparent. Lime stalactites and stalagmites, as well as huge halls and corridors which are mainly dry have added to the beauty of the cave.

One of the features that made this cave one of the unique caves in the world is that the cave has 7 floors but so far only 3 floors have been discovered and there are waterfalls on its different floors. The stalactites in this cave are beautifully shaped and some of them are named after those shapes. Some of the most famous parts in this cave are bride and groom, marriage cloth, sleeping lion, hound, lion paw and elephant's foot.

There are two visiting routes inside the cave; 3km open to the public and another 4km available only for experienced cavers. Tourists can visit 2850 meters of the cave in the first floor and visitor are asked to stop touching the stalactites and stalagmites to avoid and devastating.

The best season to visit Katale Khor cave is in spring and summer. Visiting this cave will take half a day.



Strange hotels across Iran constructed to lure tourists

By Fatima Karimi

Residential centers and hotel, with strange and different features, have been constructed in various provinces across Iran to attract tourists.

To have new experiences, tourists prefer to stay in hotels in new destinations that are totally different from those which they have previously stayed in. The more different, the more attractive the new residential centers will be to them.

In foreign countries, the investors do their best to meet the tastes of the tourists by providing a wide range of residential centers and hotel including those made of pipes or ice as well those located in trees and in underground.

In Iran, the story is almost the same. It is a while that the investors are constructing the residential in new styles. For instance, a salt mine in Semnan Province is planned to get equipped for settling down the tourists.

In Kandovan village in East Azerbaijan Province, some residential are carved

in the mountains making it possible for the tourists to reside besides the villagers in those houses. A hotel is also constructed by rocks in the neighborhood.

In Aradan, in Semnan Province, a tourist residential is built under the ground to let the tourists experience the life of Iranian tribes in that region. The residential includes a conference hall, as well.

In Tabriz, tourists can pass a beautiful night in hotels made of rocks with stone walls and doors.

In Ardabil Province, there are some residential made which resemble the houses of the Hobbits in 'Lord of the Rings'. Half of the buildings are underground and the second half above, with windows that open to the exterior.

In Meymand, Kerman, there is a rocky village dating back to 8,000 to 12,000 years ago. It is about 15 years that the area receives domestic and foreign tourist. It gives the visitors the chance to experience Meymandis' lives but in thousand years ago.

Meymand provides cozy caves and rock shelters for the tourists. The village is a UNESCO world heritage site.

Overwater hotels in Kish Island cannot be regarded strange ones but provide tourists with a range of enjoyable variety, in particular, because of their cozy atmosphere and glassy floor with a view of the ocean.

Staying in ecological houses, which can be found in all provinces across Iran, would also be interesting. Tourists who travel to province of provinces of Kerman or Sistan and Baluchestan, can enjoy staying at the hotels dubbed 'Kapar' - local thatched shelters constructed of palm trees logs. In Kerman, Kapars are as equipped as a five-star hotel.

In Bushehr province, Asalouyeh, hotels are easy to find at the beach, made of industrial pipes.

Tourists can stay overnight in residential floating on water or those located up among the tree branches.

In case of being a fan of Skimo life, tourists can find similar residential places with no specific geometrical shape but well-equipped in Shahr-e-Rey, the capital of Rey County in Tehran Province.

An unforgettable experience is possible to be made when tourists can also taste local Iranian food.

World's most valuable house in Tehran

The unique and ancient objects collected at Moghadam Museum in Tehran made this 1960s' monument as the most expensive house in the world.

One of the most expensive houses in the world is in Tehran capital of Iran. A house that is neither very big nor enjoys special facilities. Professor Arthur Upham Pope called this house in an article devoted to the study of arts in Iran; the most valuable house in the world in the 1960s because of the ancient objects used in architecture of house.

This house belonged to a professor of Tehran University Mohsen Moghadam, son of Ehtesab Ol Molk, the mayor of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar era. Because he was very interested in archeology and historical monuments, he collected the antiquities that were on the

verge of destruction or plunder in his house.

Professor Moghadam was the first Iranian archaeologist who worked with other archaeologists in historic sites. He and his wife decided to put their efforts for establishing a museum of priceless objects exposed to destruction. This historical house is about 2117 square meters and it includes three outdoor yards. Colorful tiles, columns and arches creating a unique authentic atmosphere.

The museum consists of the house itself and a beautiful garden, safely hidden from street noise behind thick walls. The entrance of the museum is not obvious from the street, but ready to open all its beauty for travelers who notice the modest door of the museum.

He collected many valuable monuments including tiles, stone

pieces, cloth, hookahs, pottery, glass, paintings, coins and historical documents in the house. Of the manifest features of this museum is the relative assimilation of its architecture with the historical relics inside.

This house has been called the most beautiful and valuable house in the world in an opinion of many writers and visitors. The design and construction of this house have enjoyed the principles of Iranian architecture such as Persian pool, glass and the principles of the gardening.

Professor Moghadam died in 1987 and after the death of his wife in 1990; the house has passed to Tehran University to be supervised. In 2009, the house was opened for public as a museum.

The museum is located on Imam Khomeini St., Hassan Abad Sq.



Sarein, city of magical springs

By: Zahra Mirzafarjouyan

Sarein a city in Ardabil Province, Iran is one of the most beautiful Iranian cities with pristine nature and pure climate that lies at the foot of Sabalan Mountains. It is a natural spa region with numerous hot mineral springs well-known for their therapeutic values.

Spectacular Ardabil Province located in the northwest of Iran bordering the Republic of Azerbaijan is one of Iran's most scenic provinces. Beautiful nature, green plains, and hot mineral springs in Ardabil Province creates pleasant memories, and visiting its historical monuments as well as its villages brings energy and enjoyment along.

The province is divided into 10 counties: Ardabil, Bilasavar, Germe, Khalkhal, Kowsar, Meshginshahr, Namin, Sarein, Nir, and Parsabad.

Sarein or Sareyn is a small city in the west of Ardabil with an area of more than 1.28 square km. It stands 28 km from Ardabil. The city is famous for its numerous spa springs and one of the tourist areas in Ardabil province.

Sarein attracts more than five million tourists annually who travel to this region from different parts of Iran and the world because of climate and hot springs. There are nine hot springs which are very different in terms of composition and properties.

Etymology

The word Sarein in the Persian dictionary means "cool place" and "headwater".

Culture

To study the culture of Sarein's people, we have to study the culture of the Azerbaijani people, especially Ardabil. These people are the creator of one of the richest treasures of oral literature of the nations in the Middle East and Iran. The foundation of the Azerbaijani literature is based on folklore.

Language

The main language of Sarein is the Azeri, however Persian is the official na-



tional language.

Traditional Foods

'Ashe Doogh', also known as 'yogurt soup' is one of the traditional soups in Sarein. It is a soup usually made from yogurt or doogh, as well as chickpeas and vegetables.

Local 'Kebabs' in this area are also very popular and delicious for tourists.

'Doogh' or ayran; a classic Iranian drink which is a combination of water, yogurt, mint and salt.

Souvenir

"Honey" which is produced locally by the bee keepers of the region is one of the famous things in Sarein. It is produced on the hyacinths, basil and vetches slopes of Sabalan Mountains. It has been renowned for its quality.

Sarein Tourist Attractions

Sarein is famous for its numerous hot springs which causes many tourists travel to this city every year in summer. 'Gavmesh Goli' hot spring; one of the popular hot springs in Sarein is very useful for the treatment of general, women and heart diseases, as well as general strengthening of the body.

Sarein hot springs are as follows:
Qarah Soo (A'saab) Thermal Spring
Sari Soo Thermal Spring
Gavmesh Goli Thermal Spring
General Thermal Spring
Besh Bajilar Thermal Spring

Qahveh Suei Thermal Spring

Pehenlu Thermal Spring

Another attraction of Sarein is 'Goor-goor Waterfall' which is located 10 to 15 kilometer from Sarein. It is 12m high and it is located in the northern slopes of Sabalan Mountain. It attracts many nature lovers to the Ardabil province.

'Kanzag' is a historic village in the Central District of Sarein. It has historic caves related to the Parthian period which have been registered in Iran's National Heritage.

'Alvares' is a ski resort located 24 kilometers away from the city of Sarein. Many tourists travel to this area to ski and also enjoy winter sports every year.

'Anahita Hill' in Sarein was once called Water Goddess, it has been discovered on the basis of excavated earthenware and historical documentation.

'Gulistan Valley' is one of the widest and most beautiful valleys in Ardabil province. It is Sabalan's east valley and habitat of partridge, goat and mouflon.

'Vargehsaran waterfall' is one of the most spectacular spots of Sabalan's green slopes.

Best Season to Visit

The best season to visit Sarein is late spring and summer. It is not a favorite destination in autumn and winters since it gets so cold. The minimum temperature is -8° C and the maximum 25° C in Sarein.