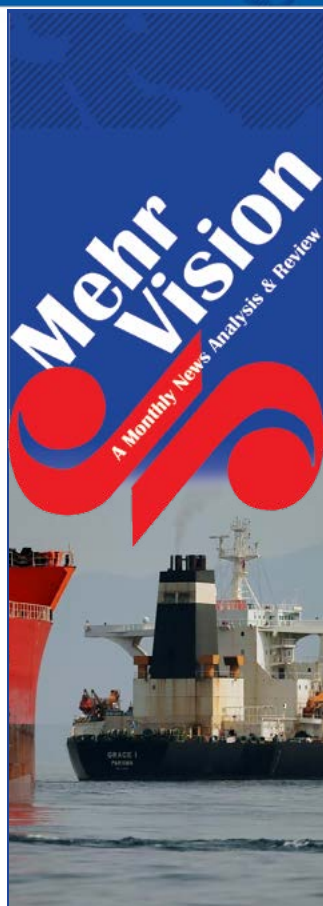




**Iran not to leave
UK piracy unanswered,
says Ayatollah Khamenei**



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Iran not to leave UK piracy unanswered: Ayatollah Khamenei



Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei slammed the UK's illegal seizure of an Iranian supertanker in Gibraltar, saying the act of "piracy" will not go unanswered.

"The wicked Britain commits an act of maritime piracy and steals our ship... They [the British] perpetrate a crime and make it look legal," Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks at a meeting with Friday prayers leaders from across Iran in Tehran.

"The Islamic Republic and faithful elements of the establishment will not leave this wickedness unanswered and will respond to it at an appropriate time and place," the Leader added.

Gibraltar police and customs agencies, aided by a detachment of British Royal Marines, boarded and impounded supertanker Grace 1, on suspicion of carrying crude to Syria in breach of the European Union's unilateral bans on the Arab state.

Reports say the seizure took place at the request of the United States, which has been bent on driving Iranian oil exports to "zero" as part of its sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

Ayatollah Khamenei added that the western govern-

ments' major vice is their arrogance in treating the rest of the world.

"If the country opposing them is a weak one, their arrogance works; but if it's a country that knows and stands against them, they will be defeated," he said, adding that "regarding our ties with Europeans, what makes problems persist is their arrogance."

A diplomatic standoff broke out between Tehran and London after Britain's naval forces unlawfully seized Grace 1 and its cargo in the Strait of Gibraltar.

London says the supertanker was suspected of carrying crude to Syria in violation of the European Union's unilateral sanctions against the Arab country.

Tehran has condemned the seizure as "maritime piracy", vehemently rejecting London's claim that the ship had been bound for Syria.

In an interview with BBC, Zarif stressed that the Iranian ship had never been bound for Syria, but "a place in the Mediterranean other than" the Arab country.

"The UK by confiscating our ship is helping the US in imposing its illegal oil sanctions against Iran," he said.

The confiscation reportedly took place at the request of the US as part of Washington's "maximum pressure" on Iran.

Iran won't allow any disturbances in Persian Gulf, vows Rouhani



President Hassan Rouhani said that Iran will not allow anyone to cause disturbances in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, also noting that the country has no intention to sit at a 'capitulation' table in the name of negotiations.

"We are fully ready to have fair, lawful and dignified negotiations to settle problems. Yet, we have no intention to sit at a 'capitulation' table in the name of negotiations," said Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

Rouhani noted that his administration has never lost and will never lose an opportunity for fair and lawful negotiations.

His remark was in response to the US' call for holding talks with Iran in spite of Washington's unilateral withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal and the re-imposition of economic sanctions on Tehran.

Rouhani maintained that his administration has always made efforts to break political stalemate on the international stage and possible agreements.

The president then lamented the damage done to the nuclear deal (JCPOA) in the wake of US' withdrawal

and lack of effective measures by the European sides to the agreement, saying that the JCPOA was a major and effective factor in the fight against smuggling.

Rouhani blamed Saudi Arabia, Israeli PM Netanyahu, as well as American hardliners for Donald Trump's decision to leave the nuclear deal, saying their undermining measures proved that the JCPOA had been a hard pill to swallow for the Israeli regime and reactionary countries in the region.

Talking about Iran's decision to reduce commitments to the JCPOA, Rouhani said Iran waited one year after the US' withdrawal because it could still export its oil as much as it needed; "but after the US began on a full-fledged approach to sanction our oil, it led to a new situation," said Rouhani.

"We are in contact with the European side and other countries in the world, but their proposals have not been satisfactory for us. We will continue the process of political talks, but if we don't reach a desirable conclusion by the end of the second 60-day deadline, we will definitely begin the third stage," in Iran's cuts to its JCPOA-related commitments, the president added.

Stressing that the security in the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz is of utmost importance to Iran, President Rouhani said "we will not allow anyone to cause disturbances in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. At the same time, we are not seeking tension or military confrontations, and everything we have done so far was proportionate to the violations of the other side."

His remark was in reference to IRGC's downing of a US drone that had violated the Iranian airspace, as well as the seizure of a UK-flagged oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz that was said to have been in violation of international rules and regulations.

"I do believe that the whole world should be grateful to IRGC for preserving security in the Persian Gulf," Rouhani maintained.

"We are not seeking to continue tension with certain European countries. If they are committed to the framework of international rules and stop their wrongdoings such as the one they committed in Gibraltar [by seizing the Iranian oil tanker], they will receive an appropriate response from Iran," Rouhani promised.

New scandal around empire of lies

By: Mohammad Ghaderi

US President Donald Trump, who is also the commander in chief of the country's armed forces, falsely claimed that a US warship had downed an Iranian drone in the Strait of Hormuz.

Speaking at the White House, Trump said the USS Boxer shot down the drone after it got within 1,000 yards, "ignoring multiple calls to stand down and was threatening the safety of the ship and the ship's crew."

Also, the Pentagon announced the Iranian drone was within a "threatening range" of the Boxer.

"At approximately 10 a.m. local time, the amphibious ship USS Boxer was in international waters conducting a planned inbound transit of the Strait of Hormuz," chief Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Hoffman said in a statement.

The interesting point here is that even the Pentagon did not bother to confirm Trump's hallucination regarding downing of an Iranian drone, since its statement does not at all refer to the owner of the drone.

But regarding Trump's false claim, which is an intelligence disaster for a country which boasts of the biggest and most modern army in the world, a few points should be noted:

1- More than approximating reality, Trump's false and hallucinatory claim of having downed an Iranian drone is rather indicative of the great shock the US suffered after Iran's Revolution Guards forces downed the Global Hawk spy drone recently, which has become a bitter nightmare for the US president. America's inability to provide answer in kind to the IRGC's firm action has severely marred the image of US military power.

This is to say that resort to such false claims by the White House de-



part to the public mind nothing but desperation.

2- It seems that for Trump to make such a false claim is in fact the indication of the onset of a new era of media and propaganda campaign against the Islamic Republic, with the hope to realize on the political and media arena what has not been achieved in field, thus concealing a deep degree of military powerlessness of the US.

Although Trump's recent move shows how deeply the US has been impressed by a psychological vibe surrounding the ever-increasing military power of Iran, in case the US Army's decision-making processes are based on such sort of information we should expect increasing risk of US military presence as well as unexpected moves that should ensue.

What should be noted regarding Trump's claim, is that according to statements by Iranian authorities, all Iranian drones in the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz, including the one mentioned by Trump, have returned home after their reconnaissance missions, and that the USS Boxer has been unable to engage in any sort of confrontation with the drone. This is why we should conclude that Trump

has intended to take initiative and create a favourable media vibe for his administration.

3- Creating tension by resorting to false news making is a mechanism constantly tapped by the US and its Western allies, which is especially used over the Persian Gulf with a number of objectives. One of the main objectives is to present Iran as a threat to other regional countries and those whose economy somehow depends on the security of the Persian Gulf. A great part of this hype is created especially to mild the backward Arab leaders, especially those of Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

4- The other noteworthy point is that based on the entire international rights, especially those concerning the rights governing seas, since a great part of the Persian Gulf waters are part of Iran's territory, it is naturally Iran's right to use whatever in its power to secure the region. This is while none of the international protocols allow US presence in the Persian Gulf. This is why the White House, seeking help from its allies such as the UK, is trying to misrepresent the Persian Gulf as insecure, and thereby to justify its bullying presence in the region.



Zarif:

Anti-Iran maximum pressure policy won't work for Trump

Interview by Payman Yazdani

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif, in an interview with the National Interest while in New York, stressed that the US approach of maximum pressure will not get Iran to hold direct talks with US.

Here is the full text of the interview of top diplomat Zarif and National Interest Editor Jacob Heilbrunn, which was held in New York:

With the American shooting down of an Iranian drone in the Strait of Hormuz today, are we on a path of escalation?

I checked with Tehran, and we do not have any information about having lost a drone today. So, we don't know, as of now what has happened. We have the [US] president saying that they shot a drone. We don't know whose drone it is, but we don't have that information. But we are certainly moving in the wrong di-

rection. The fact that the United States has an increased presence in the Persian Gulf doesn't help security or stability in the area—it's a tiny body of water and you cannot have such congested traffic there without something happening.

A lot of the tension is also focused on the tanker that went missing. Is Iran responsible for that?

All the information we have is that we confiscated a small tanker that was only carrying a million liters of smuggled oil products—not oil—and that happens quite often in the Persian Gulf because of heavily subsidized prices in Iran of oil products. There is a lot of smuggling from both sea and land borders and we interdict them on a regular basis. So if that is the tanker they're talking about, that is a smuggling tanker, not a shipping tanker.

Another move that the Trump administration has announced is

sending about five hundred more soldiers to Saudi Arabia. What is your response to that?

It's a symbolic move that doesn't help security for anybody. Certainly, security in our region cannot be purchased from outside. We believe that countries in the region should provide their own security through cooperation and through regional integration, and not through trying to purchase it from outside. It's not usually a tenable avenue to getting security.

Another move that the Trump administration could make would be to try and supply more weapons again in Syria—for example by downgrading Al Nusra's status as a terrorist organization. How would you react to those kinds of moves?

Well, they have already provided weapons—let alone Al Nusra, they have provided weapons to Daesh [ISIS]. Reports in Western media indicate that

American weapons through Saudi Arabia went to Daesh while they were in Syria. You cannot arm terrorist organizations and expect them to win over people's resistance—this is just impossible.

How do you assess the talk of Rand Paul serving as a mediator or negotiator on behalf of Trump as opposed to the National Security Advisor John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo taking the lead?

President Trump said today that he is not an emissary. So we have to take him at his word.

Do you have any comment on any negotiations that might be taking place or any feelers?

I meet with members of Congress but I do not comment on specific meetings with specific members of Congress. But members of Congress, senators, and members of the House are not parties for negotiations. They are representatives of the American people whom we respect and we engage just for clarifications, not for negotiations. We can only negotiate with governments.

We already did come close to war in June when Trump called off strikes at the last minute. Do you think that would have inevitably turned into an all-out response by Iran?

It would've. It would've and the United States was informed of that.

When exactly was it informed?

Immediately after the shooting of the drone.

I see. Is that what you would call a red line? A direct American attack on Iran, or is there something less that would trigger a reaction?

We defend ourselves. Any attack on us will be reciprocated massively.

To sketch it even more broadly, are you more concerned than you have ever been or do you think that Trump's moves—his unpredictability—do hold the chance for some kind of breakthrough?

Well, I believe that President Trump does not want war. He believes he is trying to get a better deal through pres-

sure. If he has been advised that that is how to get a better deal, I think he has been misadvised—or ill-advised. Whichever you like.

Have you been more concerned ever since John Bolton was named national security advisor? Has that been part of your calculus or have you focused more on the president's unpredictability?

I think the presence of Ambassador Bolton in the White House was not good news for anybody in the world.

Do you believe that Trump would like to pull another North Korea in Iran where he would have a direct meeting in Tehran?

I think he said that, but I do not think the approach of maximum pressure will get him that prize.

Why not go for broke with Trump and deal with him directly—which is what he is seeking—and bypass the national security apparatus?

Because we already have an agreement with the government of the United States. Governments deal with each other; they don't deal with individuals. If we agree that an agreement with the previous government could only last until President Trump came to office, then we would automatically have to consider that an agreement with President Trump could only last as long as he is in office—and that would make his natural inclination impossible to conduct.

Do you think there is any conceivable way that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action [JCPOA] can be revived or is there so much mistrust in Iran itself that the calculus has changed?

Well, certainly there is a lot of mistrust in engagement in Iran, but Iran has shown to be committed to its international obligations. So if we see a reciprocal commitment on the other side, then JCPOA is a document that is worthy of resuscitating and we will do our best to keep it afloat.

Has your previous backing for the agreement damaged your position in Iran?

Certainly the people are not happy with the outcome because they see that

the United States is even less trustworthy than they thought.

What is your analysis of relations with Europe? Is Europe going to follow an independent path or is it going to follow the one that the Trump administration is pressuring it to?

If Europe wants to pursue its own interests, it has to follow a different path. I don't think they have gathered the necessary political will in order to pay the price for that independence. It's not going to be free of charge.

Do you see Germany as the key player there?

I believe all three plus the European Union are important players—each one has their own difficulties. The UK is going through Brexit, France has some domestic difficulties, Germany is going through a succession process. So there are difficulties in each of these countries, but I think they are our interlocutors and we will continue to deal with all three of them.

If we were to lurch into war, how would you envision that?

Well, it is something that we all need to avoid but that we cannot run away from. Certainly, we cannot run away from our own region, we are right there—we can't move.

Could it become a World War I scenario where it's the initial spark that triggers a wider conflagration?

I think whoever starts that war will not end it—and we will not be the one starting it.

What would be your assessment of Russia's moves towards Iran if a war did break out?

Well, it's unpredictable, but we consider Russia to be an important partner and an important neighbor. We don't have a military alliance with Russia, but we have good relations.

And currently, what are you hearing from Moscow?

We do not build our foreign policy based on assumptions of anybody else's help. We have learned to rely on our own resources.

Follow the leader – the UK's ill-advised piracy on the high seas

By: Hossein Askari

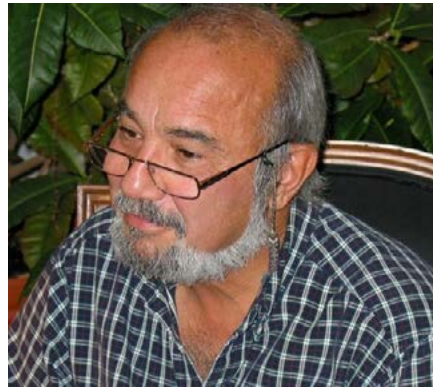
The United Kingdom should recognize what has become its position in the world – an important nation with an imperialistic history but now a much-diminished global power.

Blindly following the United States into hazardous waters could have dangerous results: America might not reward subservience or could change course in its own self-interest. While following George Bush into Iraq is now widely conceded in the UK as having been ill-advised, British leaders seem to have forgotten the consequences of that disastrous decision.

On July 4, UK forces seized an Iranian supertanker, *Grace I*, off the coast of Gibraltar. At first, the reason for the seizure in news reports was that London was responding to a request from the United States because the tanker was carrying oil to the Syrian refinery of Baniyas in violation of UN sanctions. This report was quickly 'corrected' by Jeremy Hunt, the UK Foreign Minister. The official word was that the Iranian vessel had been seized yes because the oil was destined for Syria, but which was in violation of EU (not UN) sanctions on Syria. Iran objected vehemently to this seizure and clearly retaliated by seizing a British tanker, the *Steno Impero*, on July 19 in the Persian Gulf. Then Jeffrey Hunt went on the warpath and threatened Iran with "serious consequences" if Iran does not release the tanker, rhetoric further inflamed by the British defense minister branding the seizure "a hostile act."

Three things stand out for us — the UK in fact seized the Iranian tanker at the request of the US, Mr. Hunt has made matters worse by his rhetoric and the UK and the US are now boxed in without a face-saving exit. Let me explain.

The premise that the oil was destined for Syria is a tough claim that cannot be substantiated. How can the British Foreign Minister prove that the oil was



so destined? Even if he had irrefutable proof, couldn't Iran at some point have changed its mind and diverted the tanker?

If every country acted so, seizing goods because they may be destined to a sanctioned country, world commerce would become entangled and come to a standstill. If the initial media reports were to be believed, namely, that supplying oil to Syria is in violation of UN sanctions, who determined this? Leaving aside the claim of a UN sanctions violation, the British Foreign Minister is clearly reported as saying that the UK took this action because of the EU embargo on oil supplies to Syria. Who in the EU reached this conclusion and made the decision to seize the Iranian tanker? The lie becomes even worse when we note that the EU embargo on oil supplies to Syria applies to EU member states, namely, EU countries cannot supply Syria with oil. This rule does not apply to supplies from Iran or any other third country. Surely the British Foreign Minister must be familiar with EU resolutions seeing as the UK is still in the EU! Clearly, this seizure was not triggered by a violation of the EU but was most likely in response to a US request.

There is another perplexing aspect of this tanker seizure. Even if the EU or just simply the UK had imposed sanctions on the delivery of fuel from any country to Syria, would the seizure of a tanker be "legal" as claimed by a number of UK politicians and military personnel? If so, then any nation could sanction who-

ever they wished and seize tankers, or any other vessel, at will! This would be an unusual interpretation of legality and thus justification of piracy by the powerful.

But the Foreign Minister's untruths have become magnified after his ill-advised rhetoric. The folks who run Iran's IRGC (Revolutionary Guards) are not traditional military leaders and diplomats. They are intelligent and street smart and have an image to uphold in Iran and in the region. Mr. Hunt clearly has no understanding of their thinking and how they might react to provocation. As to be expected, Iran seized the British tanker, *Steno Impero*, in retaliation. But Mr. Hunt threatened Iran much as he might have done when Great Britain was an imperial power and ruled the waves. Again, with little comprehension of the IRGC and its leadership.

As a result, Mr. Hunt has now backed the UK into an even tighter box. What are the UK's options? They could release the Iranian tanker and get the British tanker released. But this would hurt Britain's global image. They could do nothing, again a stand that would not work well at home and would humiliate Great Britain at the hands of lesser power. Or they could join forces with the US, [P]GCC countries and Israel to bomb or possibly invade Iran, start a regional war and incur the wrath of most Iranians inside and outside of Iran and many other Muslims around the world for years to come.

The short and the long of this is that the seizure of the Iranian tanker was a monumental policy blunder. The UK is trying to divorce itself from its European partners but is in the process falling in line as a devoted follower, not partner, of a power whose influence has already crested. It now does not have a favorable strategy for an exit from its blunder. Future British foreign ministers would do well to better understand the thinking of Britain's adversaries and how they might react, as well as the motives of their closest ally.



What Iran gains, what US loses by downing US drone

By: Majid Rafiee

Last week the US Global Hawk spy drone intruded into Iranian airspace, which was shot down by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps after the dronet violated Iranian airspace and ignored Iran's several warnings.

Although the downing of US military drone by Iranian forces is not unprecedented, but the importance of this matter is double because of special capabilities of the drone and the specific political existing situation between the two countries after the US withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as well as the beginning of a series of steps taken by Iran to reduce its nuclear commitments under the JCPOA.

Here are some of the most important consequences of this confrontation:

It was a sign of the capability of the Islamic Republic of Iran to defend itself beyond the assessments of military experts in the world, including the Americans. The successful performance of Khordad 3 surface-to-air missile system will surely force the Americans to review their military analysis of Iran's defense

capabilities.

Iran's threats in response to US actions were materialized by downing of Global Hawk. As Leader of the Islamic Revolution Seyyed Ali Khamenei had warned the US officials, Iran's move showed that the time of 'getting away with murder' has come to an end for Americans. On the other hand, US inaction against Iran's actions proved that American threats are hollow which is a major blow to the US military credibility.

Iran accepted the responsibility for downing of Global Hawk indicating that it is serious about public punishment of the aggressors, contrary to US accusations against in respect with oil tanker attacks which Iran rejected any involvement in those events and called for identifying offenders of those incidents.

Iranian action practically has seriously challenged the US policy of maximum pressure on Iran to bring it to the negotiating table. In this regard, some analysts have analyzed the continuation of US economic policy against Iran as a provocative act that may provoke Tehran to behave more dangerously against Western interests.

This incident caused Iran to have the

upper hand and be an active player not a passive one so that now the US has to act in response to Iran's behavior passively.

Iran's action has worried the US' Arab and Zionist allies in the region. Americans who are present in the region to defend their regional allies' interests now have to be more vigilant about their own troops.

The clear message of this incident to neighboring countries is that Iran's defense readiness is enough to tackle any threats and also that they can be targeted in case of aiding the US to take any measure against Iran. They have two choices. They can take steps to reduce tensions with Iran or continue tension with Iran and fill the pockets of the US with their dollars to defend them!

Finally, although the initiator of this incident was not Iran but its outcome ultimately inspired the supporters of the powerful Islamic Iran in the region. This incident may raise questions among the nations of the region about the costs and benefits of their rulers' decisions on their security and military expenditures which are mainly in the pocket of the US.

Why should China fully support Iran in Persian Gulf tensions

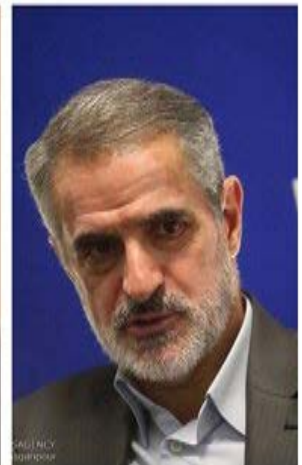
By: Payman Yazdani

According to many international thinkers creating tensions in the Persian Gulf region by the US also aims at containing China and limiting Beijing's access to energy resources of the region, which is driving engine of Chinese economy.

China was one of the oil exporter countries in 70s and 80s, but following its economic growth it has turned into an oil importing country since 1993 and due to continuation of its economic growth now the country is heavily dependent on importing of oil from other countries. Nowadays the country is the second energy consuming and third oil importing country in the world. Despite the Beijing's efforts to provide its energy security by diversifying its energy sources during the past years, the country is still heavily dependent on energy import.

Thanks to its efforts and hardworking people China left its global economic rivals behind and became the second biggest economy of the world after the United States. It seems that due to its plans and initiatives Beijing is also managing to leave behind the US in near future and become the world's biggest economy. The White House has kept an eye the China's development and its plans and initiatives. The US has never been negligent in monitoring China's achievements and ambitions.

By changing its approaches and positive interaction with rest of the world Since 1970s, China has promoted its global position to the second biggest economy of the world while before it the country was among the third world countries. The US's efforts to contain China has become more serious since the beginning of the 21st century. Since Donald Trump took



office the level of conflicts between China and the US has climbed up from economic and trade level and is entering into political and security level. Now, Increase of Chinese power and global influence is a major challenge for the White House. In the first step president Trump waged wagged a trade and economic war against Beijing and in the next stage Trump is going to restrict China's influence globally particularly among the US allies.

To contain China, the US has resorted to many strategies and tactics such as destabilizing west borders of China in Afghanistan and Pakistan and trying to spread to central Asia aiming at thwarting Chinese 'One road-One belt' initiative that many experts believe

that success of this project will let China to determine the word trade orders in the future.

Trying to intensify territorial disputes between China and its neighbors besides its trade war against Beijing are among another US tactics to contain China.

Statistics from www.worldstopexports.com website indicates that China imports its needed crude oil from the following countries:

Russia: US\$37.9 billion (15.8% of China's total imported crude)
Saudi Arabia: \$29.7 billion (12.4%)
Angola: \$24.9 billion (10.4%)
Iraq: \$22.4 billion (9.4%)
Oman: \$17.3 billion (7.2%)
Brazil: \$16.2 billion (6.8%)

Iran: \$15 billion (6.3%)
Kuwait: \$11.9 billion (5%)
Venezuela: \$7 billion (2.9%)
United States: \$6.8 billion (2.8%)
United Arab Emirates: \$6.7 billion (2.8%)
Congo: \$6.4 billion (2.7%)
Colombia: \$5 billion (2.1%)
Malaysia: \$4.8 billion (2%)
Libya: \$4.7 billion (2%)

Crude oil import is driving engine of Chinese economy so any threats to energy security of China will inflict a heavy blow to the country's economic growth and can help US to win trade war against Beijing and contain it.

Above mentioned statistics show that some 43% of the crude oil that China imports goes from Persian Gulf and 4.6% goes from Libya and Venezuela that the US destructive policies has already created a chaotic situation in two countries.

Many experts believe that the US withdrawal from Iran's nuclear deal known as the JCPOA under false pretexts not only aims at pressurizing Iran but also it is a way to pressurize China to compromise in the trade war that Washington has waged against it. Any conflict and tension in the Persian Gulf region which China's economy is heavily dependent on means a great blow to the country's economy, therefore many suspicious incidents and tensions created by Washington and its proxies in Persian Gulf region like attacking oil tankers can be interpreted as the White House's measures to contain China in order to guarantee the US hegemony and influence for the next decades.

Commenting on possible relation between recent developments in Persian Gulf and its effects on China's economy, Dr. Osman Faruk Logoglu a senior member of Tukey's CHP and former diplomat says, "With its provocative actions and sanctions, Washington not only aims to buttress its support for Israel and its Arab allies by punishing Iran but at the same time also intends to deny Chinese access to Iranian oil. The fear of and rivalry with China is today

one of the primary drivers of American foreign policy. Interruption of the oil flow in the Gulf is one way to directly hurt Chinese interests. The Trump administration is, therefore, playing with fire in Iran and a potential conflagration with China."

A senior Iranian analyst Sadeq Maleki also believes, "The rising tensions between the United States and Iran are mainly caused by Tehran's independence policy and Washington's intolerance toward this fact. However, such independence is considered as an exceptional opportunity for the Europeans and other states, especially China, that need to supply their energy from Iran and the Persian Gulf region. A big part of Washington's policy of fomenting tensions against Tehran and making the Persian Gulf region more volatile comes in line with the White House's plan to contain China. Iran's resistance to the US' pressure is in fact shaping an equation, in which the Islamic Republic indirectly contributes to the interests of China and even Europe. So, China and Europe are highly expected to help Iran in this regard. In a long-term strategic perspective, the US' long distance from the Middle East, the dangers of insecurity in the Persian Gulf region, and the proximity of Europe and China to the region, heighten the need for greater coordination between Iran, China and Europe in countering the US' aggressive attitudes."

Zeynep Oktav, an international relation Professor at Istanbul Medeniyet University also sees a close relation between US created tensions in the Persian Gulf and containment of China. She said, "I believe there's a close relation as Washington wants to dominate the Middle East with its efforts to exclude China from the region. In this context containing Iran is of crucial importance as China buys Iranian crude oil. China currently seems to change its previous policies of balancing Iran and USA. Beijing applies latest sanctions on Iran, however, it opposes any possi-

bility of American military attack on Iran. In my opinion, USA challenges China by threatening Iran in the Middle East, the issue is not about Iran, it's about China."

Omid Shokri a US based senior energy security and policy Analyst says, "The trade war between the two world's top economic powers has negatively affected all markets in the world, and many countries are concerned about the slowdown in economic growth. The controversy has begun almost since Trump took office and has been intensified over the past year. Some Iranian officials believe the US-China trade war is a chance for Iran. They believe that China has established good business relations with the countries of the world and has recently made good investments in African countries and has promoted level of its relations with Africa, which has been successful all over the world until now. It is admirable and Iran should also take this to its national interests. During last decade China was of Iran major trade partner."

Referring to tensions in Persian Gulf and the US-China trade war, Shukri says, "These are common threat for Iran and China."

Even some experts who don't believe in close relation between the ongoing US created tensions in Persian Gulf and containment of China by the US don't reject the possibility totally and say the relation is indirect not direct.

Prof. Larry Catá Backer of Pennsylvania State University says, "Relation between Persian Gulf tensions and US-China negotiations may reflect post facto efforts to exploit serendipitous perceive opportunity; it is much less likely to represent the execution of some sort of strategic plan."

Prof. Nader Entessar, a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice at the University of South Alabama believes that if there is any relationship between the tensions in the Persian Gulf and containment of China, it is not direct.

Turkish politician talks of US multiple goals of creating tensions in PG

Interview by: Payman Yazdani

Senior member of Turkey's Republican People's Party (CHP), Faruk logoglu, believes that the United States follows multiple goals by creating tension in the Persian Gulf the world's main route of energy.



While the Japanese Prime Minister was visiting Iran after 4 decades and many expected even more reduction of the tensions in the region due his visit, in another suspicious and provocative move two large tankers were hit by explosions in the Sea of Oman, a move that can intensify the tensions more than before.

Following the attack, the US and its allies hastily accused Iran of carrying out the attacks without providing any evidence and investigation. Meanwhile, many experts believe that the US is the most beneficiary of recent attacks to destabilize Persian.

According to experts, the US is pursuing multiple goals by creating tension in the Persian Gulf. In addition to pressuriz-

ing Iran the US intends to pressurize its rivals and limit rival countries access to the energy source of the Persian Gulf states.

In light of this development, Mehr News Agency reached to a senior member of Turkey's Republican People's Party (CHP), Osman Faruk logoglu, who said that the American sanctions are unlawful and will only serve to exacerbate tensions in the Persian Gulf. The risk of an accidental flare-up escalating into an armed conflict is real and ever-present.

With its provocative actions and sanctions, Washington not only aims to buttress

its support for Israel and its Arab allies by punishing Iran but at the same time also intends to deny Chinese access to Iranian oil, he added referring to US provocative acts in Persian Gulf.

Turkish diplomat stressed that the fear of and rivalry with China is today one of the primary drivers of American foreign policy, adding that interruption of the oil flow in the Persian Gulf is one way to directly hurt Chinese interests and Trump administration is, therefore, playing with fire in Iran and a potential conflagration with China.

Iranian military advisor:

Any change to Hormuz Strait status opens door to dangerous confrontation

A military aide to the Iranian Leader Brigadier General Hossein Dehghan said Wed. that "any change in the status of the Strait of Hormuz would open the door to a dangerous confrontation."

Military adviser to the Iranian Leader Brigadier General Hossein Dehghan made the remarks in an interview with Qatar-based Al Jazeera Arabic TV on Wednesday.

"Any change in the status of the Strait of Hormuz will open the door to a dangerous confrontation," Dehghan said, while warning against the unforeseen consequences of United Kingdom's offer of forming a European force in the Strait of Hormuz.

The military official, who formerly served as Iran's defense minister, added that either everyone enjoys security in the Strait of Hormuz and exports oil or none.

He further warned that Tehran would not negotiate with the US President Donald Trump's administration under any circumstances and that if Washington decided to go to war



then all American bases in the region would be targeted.

The former defense minister also underlined that any war against Iran would be considered a war against Iran and all its allies in the whole region.

Dehghan also warned the United Arab Emirates that it has made Abu Dhabi a center for Americans to target Iran's national interests. He added that the UAE had sent representatives to Iran and they had talked of peace.

With regard to the recent changes in UAE position on the aggression on Yemeni, he said that terrible failure of Saudi Arabia and the UAE in Yemen is the major factor behind their recent changes to their approaches.

He went on to add that Iran is ready to form a coalition with its neighbors in line with its aim of peace and security in the region.

The military advisor further noted that Iran will never negotiate on its defensive missile power.

US is the obvious benefactor of attacks in Oman Sea: Cartalucci

Interview by Payman Yazdani

Referring to US policy papers, Bangkok-based geopolitical expert says familiar pattern by the US to rush to conclusions before any investigation makes the US and its allies the prime suspects of attacks in Oman Sea, not Iran.



While the Japanese Prime Minister was visiting Iran after 4 decades and many expected even more reduction of the tensions in the region due his visit, in another suspicious and provocative move two large tankers were hit by explosions in the Sea of Oman on Thursday, a move that can intensify the tensions more than before.

Following the attack, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo hastily accused Iran of carrying out the attacks without providing any evidence to back up his accusation.

In this regard, Iran rejected US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's anti-Iran accusations, saying the suspicious nature of the recent attacks on two oil tankers in the Sea of Oman is "not funny or ridiculous but alarming".

To shed more light on the issue, an interview was done with Bangkok-based geopolitical researcher Anthony Cartalucci.

Following is the full text of the interview:

The US administration has hastily accused Iran of being behind the attacks on two oil tankers in Oman Sea. How do you assess validity of the accusations?

As the US has done before with now verified fabrications, it has hastily - and without any evidence or investigation - accused Iran of being behind these attacks. It did so within the same day of the attacks. So of course, there is no validity to the accusations. Even a local crime committed within the United States cannot be "solved" in a single day and without any sort of investigation, so how could an incident as serious as this be somehow solved without an investigation or evidence so quickly?

The US reveals its hand by quickly ac-

cusing Iran before any sort of independent investigation can be mounted. We've seen this pattern before in Iraq in 2003 where the rush to war was made before inspectors could confirm US claims of "weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq. We also saw the US did this last year in Syria where it quickly accused the Syrian government of a "sarin chemical attack" in Douma before carrying out military strikes - all done before the OPCW could even begin its investigation - which by the way, concluded claims of sarin gas were false.

This familiar pattern by the US to rush to conclusions before any investigation is mounted makes the US and its allies the prime suspects, not Iran.

Is it rational for Iran to commit such an action, while the Japanese PM is visiting Iran?

For Iran, it is not rational at all to carry out such an attack, and especially so against a ship belonging to Japan while the Japanese Prime Minister is in Iran. Iran's greatest strength at the moment is Washington's lack of credibility and increasingly blatant aggression against Iran. The international community can see that Iran upheld its part of the so-called "Iran Nuclear Deal" and that it was the US who walked away from it without justification. The best cards in Iran's hand are the growing consensus that it is being victimized. Thus Tehran has nothing at all to gain by staging attacks against international shipping through the Strait of Hormuz.

Who in fact is the biggest beneficiary of the provocative incidents taking place

in the region that threatens world energy security and route? Can any instability in the region affect EU interests?

The United States in its own policy papers - like Brookings Institution's 2009 "Which Path to Persia?" report - openly admit that the US would greatly benefit from a "provocation" that would allow them to increase military aggression against Iran.

Brookings policymakers would literally claim, "...it would be far more preferable if the United States could cite an Iranian provocation as justification for the airstrikes before launching them. Clearly, the more outrageous, the more deadly, and the more unprovoked the Iranian action, the better off the United States would be. Of course, it would be very difficult for the United States to goad Iran into such a provocation without the rest of the world recognizing this game, which would then undermine it."

The US is the obvious benefactor. Its partners in the region - believing in whatever promises were made to them by Washington about a "post-Iranian" Middle East - would also benefit by aiding this agenda.

Higher oil prices while sanctions squeeze Iran, Venezuela, and Russia can only benefit Western oil corporations. For the EU - interests are divided between multinational corporations there that seek to dominate the Middle East alongside Washington and Wall Street and those who seek to do business with Iran. Obviously pressure from Washington to accept its version of events would tilt the balance in favor of the former and place greater pressure on those seeking peace and cooperation - just as the staged attacks were designed to do. Higher oil prices as a result of instability and violence in the Middle East will further complicate European energy security which only further plays into Washington's hands which seeks to pry Europe away from Russian and Iranian hydrocarbons in favor of its "freedom gas" and sources from among its allies.



Who benefits most of suspicious attacks on oil tankers, tensions in PG?

By: Payman Yazdani

The events roiling the Persian Gulf in recent weeks and days have the potential to affect everything from the price of gas to the fate of small regional states.

A look at the tensions going on around the world including the Middle East and Persian Gulf region, East Europe, Venezuela all indicate that these tensions originate from the US administration's unilateral unlawful measures.

The White House's unlawful withdrawal from the Iran's nuclear deal (JCPOA), designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist group, reimposing sanctions on Iran and trying to drive Iran's oil export to zero all are provocative and suspicious moves of the US that have fueled the regional tensions.

The US and its regional allies including Saudi Arabia and the UAE's suspicious and provocative move to accuse Iran of being behind the attacks on two ships at Fujairah in the UAE without presenting any document was also foiled by Iran's vigilant approach and reduced tensions to some extent.

While the Japanese Prime Minister is visiting Iran after 4 decades and many expected even more reduction of the tensions in the region due his visit, in another suspicious and provocative move two oil tankers were targeted in Sea of Oman, a move that can intensify the tensions more than before.

Undoubtedly the US and its proxies in the region as usual will accuse of Iran being behind the incident without any document in hours once again, but the main question is that who is benefiting the most of the tensions in the Persian Gulf region?

Pondering the following reasons one can realize that the

number one beneficiary of the tensions and attacks on tankers in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East is the USA and respectively Tel Aviv and the undemocratically appointed rulers of some regional Arab states seeking their survival in following the US policies.

- Contrary to decades ago the US is now one of the biggest oil and gas producers in the world seeking to grab the market share of the other countries in the world. Following US unlawful withdrawal from the JCPOA and its efforts to drive Iran's oil export to zero under the pretext of different accusations, in fact the US is making efforts not only to grab Iran's share of the energy market but also to limit Iran's income to reduce Iran's regional influence. The US move to create tensions in Venezuela and East Europe and slapping sanctions against Caracas and Moscow can also be interpreted in this line.

- Any tension in the Persian Gulf not only will increase the energy price in global market but also will create enough pretexts for Washington to boost its military presence in the region. This means control of energy routes by the US in order to contain its rivals like China, EU, Japan and new rising economies like India which their economies are heavily dependent on the energy coming from the Persian Gulf and Middle East.

- Tensions in the region besides Iranophobia project will guarantee continuation of purchase of American weapons by some regional countries such as Saudi Arabia. By continuation of selling weapons to Saudi Arabia the US not only creates thousands of jobs for Americans but also keeps its rivals like China and Russia out of Middle East weapon market.

- Tensions and conflicts created by the US in Middle East has resulted in great rifts and divergence among regional states which is vital for Tel Aviv's security and its expansionist policies.



Iran's permanent mission to the United Nations has sent a letter to the UN Security Council to clarify on some issues relating to the recent seizure of UK-flagged oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz.

In the letter, Iran has clarified that UK oil tanker collided with an Iranian fishing vessel and inflicted damages on it. The letter added that some of the crew

Iran pens letter to UN to clarify on seizure of UK oil tanker

members of the Iranian vessel are in critical condition as a result of the incident.

It also said that the UK tanker ignored the warning issued by Iranian authorities. The tanker had also switched off its GPS tracker and changed its direction in a dangerous move and sailed in a wrong opposite direction.

Iran's permanent mission to the UN further added that Iran's move in seizing the UK tanker was necessary to maintain order and law as well as preserving maritime security in the Strait of Hormuz in accordance with international rules.

The letter also stated that at the behest of Iran's judicial authorities, an investigation into the violations of the tanker, including the damage to the en-

vironment and the Iranian fishing vessel and its crew, is underway.

Iran's UN mission further said based on the above information, it rejected the United Kingdom's claims relating to the Stena Impero it had submitted to the UN.

Iran further noted in the letter that all its actions have taken place in line with the aim of upholding international maritime laws, maintaining order and law and preserving the security of navigation in the sensitive Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz region.

The Iran UN mission referred to the confiscating of the fuel smuggling 'Riah' in the Persian Gulf as an instance to prove the legitimacy of Iranian actions.

Zarif says Tehran 'will never start a war,' but will defend itself

Iran's foreign minister said the US is waging war against his country through intensifying economic sanctions that make civilians "the primary targets," but told CNN that his country "will never start a war" and that all parties should work to avoid one.

Zarif spoke to CNN's Fareed Zakaria while in New York to attend meetings at the United Nations, where he described the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" campaign as "economic terrorism" for the impact it is having on ordinary Iranians.

Iran's top diplomat also said he hasn't had any briefings on events surrounding the mysterious disappearance of a tanker in the Persian Gulf.

Asked by Zakaria about the possibility of a war with the US, Zarif said, "you cannot simply disregard a possibility of a disaster." Speaking at the residence of Iran's ambassador to the UN, Zarif noted that in 1988, a US warship in the Persian Gulf shot down an Iranian civilian airliner, killing all 290 passengers.

The US-educated foreign minister said that "we all need to work in order to avoid war," but added that "there is a war going on right now. It's an economic war -- an economic war against Iran targets civilian population."

Zarif noted that President Donald Trump is on the record saying "that he is not engaged in military war, but in an economic war." He added that "economic war is nothing to be proud of, because in a military confrontation, civilians may be-

come collateral damage, but in an economic war, civilians are the primary targets."

"We defend our territory," Zarif told CNN. "The United States drone entered Iranian territory, entered Iranian airspace. It was shot down, because even without entering Iranian airspace, it could spy over our entire territory ... it not only threatened our territorial integrity, but it was threatening our national security. We will not tolerate foreigners coming 6,000 miles from their shores to our shores and threatening our national sovereignty and stability."

Zakaria asked Zarif about charges that Iran is interfering with shipping in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, where 20% of the world's oil trade transits, to signal that it could wreak havoc with global oil supplies.

Zarif countered that the Strait of Hormuz is essential to Iran's economy and that his country has long provided security for shipping there.

"We have 1,500 miles of coast line with the Persian Gulf," Zarif said. "I mean, we control the Strait of Hormuz. These waters are our lifeline, so their security is of paramount importance for Iran."

In a reference to the US sending military vessels and trying to organize an international force to patrol the waters, Zarif said, "The United States is intervening in order to make these waters insecure for Iran. You cannot make these waters insecure for one country and secure it for others."

Seizing Grace 1 tanker: An outright theft with no legal justification

By: Mohammad Ghaderi

Seizing the oil tanker Grace 1 is a new event that has heated up the tension between Iran and the United States, but it can also be related to the current disagreements between United Kingdom and the European Union.

British Royal Marines seized the Iranian oil supertanker, Grace 1, in Gibraltar, saying that the tanker was taking oil to Syria that is in violation of EU sanctions.

UK is supposed to leave the European Union within four months and in Britain, the top conservative party members seem inclined to get closer to U.S. and drift apart from other European countries.

In addition, Boris Johnson and Jeremy Hunt, who are likely to replace Theresa May as Britain's next prime minister, both have taken a quite aggressive stand against Iran, a policy that seems closer to that of Donald Trump's rather than to the leaders of other European countries.

It would have made much more sense if UK had seized the ship for carrying weapons, but it was merely carrying oil for the 17 million Syrians who are having a fuel crisis and have to stand in fuel stations for several hours before getting a little fuel. Blocking transportation of oil to Syria is an obvious violation of human rights and is against all moral values; specially because the sanctions against transferring oil to Syria are unilateral ones and are not approved by the United Nations.

On the other hand, it is quite surprising that US and other western countries who send their fighter jets to Syria and Iraq as part of their so called "coalition against terrorism" can spot a fly in Syria's sky but they never seem to notice the tons of oil that ISIS is moving around.

The Syrian nation have to suffer under a cruel siege conducted by Euro-



peans. Posing these sanctions on Syria and preventing the fuel from getting into the country shows the depth of Europeans' hypocrisy and unveils the true face behind all their seemingly humanitarian gestures.

Continuing this blockage means that either more Syrians travel to European countries to get rid of the siege, or they start to bear more grudge against the countries that have laid the siege. Therefore, saying that seizing the ship was in breach of European sanctions against Damascus is only a pretext.

On the other hand, the sanctions against Damascus is imposed by the European Union and US, not the UN, so other countries don't have to observe these sanctions; therefore Iran has done nothing wrong because the EU and US are not allowed to force other countries into following these sanctions; the sanctions are supposed to be followed by the countries who have imposed them, not others, so Iran has not done anything against the international law.

Following the blatant stealing of the Iranian oil tanker in international waters, the UK ambassador to Iran, Robert

Macaire was summoned to Iranian Foreign Ministry on Thursday, July fourth.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry condemned the seizure of the oil tanker, saying that UK has obviously seized the tanker under US orders and asked for the immediate release of the tanker.

Iran's Foreign Ministry announced that seizing the oil tanker was the same as stealing because the sanctions imposed by UK or the European Union do not apply to other countries and UK was not allowed to force them on Iran. This is US bullying other countries, something that European countries had long protested.

Over the meeting, all the documents that showed the movement of the tanker and the goods it carried where completely legal were handed to the UK ambassador.

Iran also announced that it will use all of its legal capacities to release the tanker and ensure that the country's rights are safeguarded.

The UK ambassador to Tehran said that he will inform London immediately, underlining that UK does not abide by US unilateral sanctions against Iran.



Politics

Trump enacting repetitive scenario against Iran

By Haniyeh Sadat Jafariyeh

The behavioral method that the US President is applying against Iran resembles those his country had previously employed for other countries; most recent of which were Iraq and Libya.

The American method includes leading propaganda and psychological war against an intended country, putting maximum pressure on it via imposing economic sanctions to make the country agitate internally, making threats to wage war on it, sowing internal disagreements among the country's nation to shatter its unity, urging disarmament of the country and finally attacking it or forcing its leaders to sit at negotiation table by making promises with no guarantees to be fulfilled.

The US could topple down Saddam Hussein in 2003, after practicing a psychological warfare and attacked the country under the name of removing a regime that developed and used weapons of mass destruction, harbored and supported terrorists, committed outrageous human rights abuses, and defied the just demands of the United Nations and the world.

The story repeated itself when the US kept on applying pressure on Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi to step him down from power. The US believed Gaddafi had funded terror operations against America. The US government cut ties with the regime, and enacted sanctions against senior regime members. The US, along with several European and Arab nations, then began to call for the UN to authorize military intervention in the conflict. When the Libyan civil war broke out in 2011, the US took part in a military intervention in the conflict, aiding anti-Gaddafi rebels with air strikes against the Libyan Army. The US plan bore fruit eventually.

Now, a similar scenario is constructed against Iran.



But will the scenario work as it did previously?

More than a year ago, the US President pulled out from Iran's nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, calling it the worst deal America has ever made. He started an economic war against Iran hoping to oblige Iranian officials start a new round of talks with the US to hammer a new deal. The US president imposed the toughest financial embargo ever in the history to have Iran's economy suffocate. Not having what he expected from his JCPOA withdrawal and draconian sanctions, Trump started claiming that Iran has violated JCPOA covertly enriching uranium. In his latest move, he also sanctioned top Iranian officials including Iranian FM and the Leader of the Islamic Revolution. Trump also introduced Iran as the biggest threat to the security of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. He sought to make his allies accompany him with the idea and also sent troops to the region.

Trump has announced repeatedly that he does not seek war with Iran but thanks to his deeds and the repeated American scenario, and the recent created tensions in the Persian Gulf, the risk of what some call 'an accidental war' is high.

As Dr. Mohammad Marandi, Political analyst and the Head of American Studies Department at the University of Tehran, told Mehr news agency in an interview, "the sanctions imposed on Iran are unprecedented. They are more severe than what the US had imposed on Iraq or Libya. Of course, ultimately the US attacked both Iraq and Libya and destroyed the two countries. But in the case of Iran, the country is much stronger therefore attacking it would be very painful for the US. It is not a war that they can really win."

"Iran is a larger country with a larger population with powerful armed forces plus powerful regional allies including Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, Yemen and Afghanistan. Turkey is moving closer to Iran as well as Qatar and Oman," he noted.

"On the other hand, Iranian economy is much larger than that of Iraq and Libya. It is much diverse. It has a large agricultural, industrial, and mining sector. The country has 15 neighbors and that is very difficult for the US to block Iran's trade with them. They are waging economic warfare against Iran or economic terrorism as some say but Iran has many advantages. In addition, rivals to the US, China and Russia, are moving closer to Iran since the US imposed sanctions on

Russians and due to its economic war with the Chinese,” he added.

Regarding Iran’s reaction to US measures, it should be said that the country has been patient, reasonable but defiant to its definite rights.

After almost a year of patience since US pulling out from the nuclear deal and European’s inactiveness, Iran started reduction of its JCPOA commitments surpassing 3.6 percent uranium enrichment and having its stockpile surpassing 300 kilograms. The job was done to remind the world that Iran is not the only signatory to the deal and to urge other parties to comply with their JCPOA obligations. “If we see a reciprocal commitment on the other side, then JCPOA is a document that is worthy of resuscitating and we will do our best to keep it afloat,” Iranian FM Mohamamd Javad Zarif said. It is worth noting that JCPOA signatories have asserted that they do not see Iran’s reductions in commitments as major non-compliance.

Regarding Iran’s economic status in the past year and despite the great shock it suffered from, the country’s economy seems to be reviving. Some even are talking about reduction in inflation rate and growth in domestic production. Under the toughest sanctions ever, Iran has been learning how to economically survive, some confirm.

“Although last year was difficult to Iran but the country has been able to manage it and as things are stabilized now, the economy will start to bounce back slowly. This does not mean that the situation is not difficult for Iranians. It definitely is. But is obviously much better than what the Americans were hoping,” Dr. Marandi said.

Europe’s stance towards Iran-US standoff, European dilemma

The role of the Europeans, their stance towards Iran-US relations and their own position towards Iran and the JCPOA, is a matter of attention.

Europeans have repeatedly expressed concern about the tensions between Iran and the US. They have expressed worry about Iran’s scaling down of its JCPOA obligations. The E3 established a financial vehicle to ease Iran-EU trade, known as INSTEX. But what Iran has gained from its European relations after US withdrawal from

the nuclear deal, has always been criticized by Iranian officials.

Due to their economic dependence or political subordination to the US, Europeans are facing a dilemma in their Iranian relations. As Zarif said, “if Europe wants to pursue its own interests, it has to follow a different path. I don’t think they have gathered the necessary political will in order to pay the price for that independence [from the US]. It’s not going to be free of charge.”

Standing in the same track with Zarif, Dr. Marandi said “Europe is obviously subordinate to the US. It does want to have some space in independence. But it so far, has not shown the will. The Europeans are in complete violation of the JCPOA although they have not left it. They claim that there is little that they can do and Iranians do not accept that argument.”

“Iranians say that the EU has collected a larger economy of than of the US besides a larger population, which is enormous in average. On the other hand, the Russians and Chinese are resisting the US bullying over Iran. So, it is not really an acceptable argument by the Europeans to justify doing nothing. Europeans could work along with the Chinese and the Russians. The US cannot impose sanctions on all these countries and powers,” Dr. Marandi said.

“Thus, Iranians believe part of the problem with Europe is that they are weak with no backbone, do not want to get into Trump’s bad book and do not want to pay a price for implementing the nuclear deal with Iran. They, sort of, want to have their cake and eat it, too,” he believed.

Future of the JCPOA

With the US out of the JCPOA and Iran stepping back from its commitments, the third part, i.e. the Europe, seems to have the power to determine the final destination for the nuclear deal. The part, whose strength to preserve the deal is under question.

According to Dr. Marandi, “future of the JCPOA, mainly depends on Europe more than anything else. They have a lot of commitments that they must carry out according to the deal and at the moment, they are violating all of them.”

“Iran has been abiding by the nucle-

ar deal for over a year on its own even though the Europeans were violating it and the Americans had left it. Iranians have done more than enough. They have shown an extraordinary great deal of good will and patience. If the Europeans do not begin to implement the nuclear deal, Iranians will gradually decrease their commitments and will ultimately leave it. Iran-EU relationship depends largely on Europe abiding by its commitments. If it fulfills its commitments the relationship will improve and if it does not, it will be the opposite,” the expert said.

“The same is true for Iran-US relations. The US has walked away from the nuclear deal and the negotiating table. The only remaining way for the US is to abide the JCPOA and stop hindering its implementation. If they do so, they can come back to the negotiating table,” he added.

INSTEX an empty vessel

INSTEX, the European mechanism to enable Iran to keep doing business under US sanctions, has become operational nominally and not in practice. To the present moment, INSTEX has been the most done by Europeans for Iran. Even in case of its full implementation, as some express, it cannot satisfy all of Iran’s needs since economic needs of the country go far beyond what INSTEX can offer.

Iran calls the vehicle ‘insufficient’, pinning no hope to it. Iranian officials have repeatedly called for Europeans to purchase our oil or open credit lines for Iran.

“INSTEX is an empty vessel. It really is not important unless the Europeans carry out their JCPOA commitments. Europeans need Iranian oil especially regarding that some of their refineries are designed for Iranian oil. But Americans are bullying them to refrain from purchasing Iran’s oil. If Europeans don not purchase Iranian oil, Iranian businesses cannot be active in Europe and European countries cannot work in Iran out of the fear of the US. Then what is INSTEX for if there is no money in it? It is just an empty vessel. If other EU countries joined the financial instrument, it could be a good thing but only in case the Europeans carry out their JCPOA commitments. They have

to start sanding up to the US to protect their companies, businesses and their own citizens, purchase Iranian oil and normalize trade with Iran and then INSTEX could work. Otherwise, at the moment INSTEX does not mean much to Iran," Dr. Marandi told Mehr news agency.

In contrast to what Dr. Marandi believes about having other EU countries or non-European ones join the INSTEX, some in Iran warn that the country may repeat the bitter SWIFT experience with INSTEX. They believe that the financial mechanism can act as an instrument

for Europeans to dominate Iran's trade transactions. In fact, Iran has its own financial channels to trade with non-European countries, which rely on mutual cooperation and commercial ties. Some of such transactions are even based on currencies other than euro or dollar. Letting its non-European financial transactions take place in INSTEX, Iran may jeopardize part of its economic independence.

Redemption road

As a matter of fact, no one can deny European's high reliance on the US and

the interwoven financial relations the EU companies have with the Americans. EU is mingled with the US in financial aspects.

Regarding the present circumstances, if Europe wishes to have a word at the international arena and the authority to act independently from the US, rescuing the JCPOA seems an effective thing to do. Helping European companies to skirt the US sanctions and have transactions through INSTEX with Iran is the way to go for European officials. They are better also to convince Trump back to the JCPOA.

The failure of Yemen invaders

By: Hanif Ghaffari

It has been four years since the Yemen war started, but the Saud Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and other invaders have not been able to succeed even in a small part of their plans in Yemen.

The bravery and resistance of Yemenis has now forced UAE to leave the battlefield, even though the country has been among the main invaders of Yemen for years.

After this, the fate of Saudi Arabia in Yemen war is completely clear. UAE's withdrawal from the Yemen war was the worst news ever to Saudi Arabia and now Riyadh can only await a bitter failure.

Now, more than ever, Saudis are alone in Yemen. In this situation, Riyadh has no choice other than accepting the defeat.

According to a New York Times report, UAE has come to the conclusion that the Saudi-Emirati coalition has no chance of winning in Yemen, and has decided to leave the war-torn country, despite pressures from Saudi Arabia.

Many UAE officials have announced that the country is definitely leaving Yemen. An Emirati official, who did not want to reveal his name, has said that "Abu Dhabi aims to change its strategy in Yemen from war to peace," therefore, UAE forces will soon leave Al Hadida port and other parts of Yemen.

According to a report by the New York Times, departure of UAE from Yemen will ruin most of Saudi Arabia's efforts in Yemen, so it has left the Saudis with great frustration and disappointment. Obviously, in the near future, Saudis will become even more vulnerable in Yemen.

Over the last four years of war in Yemen, UAE has had a vital role and provided the lion share of financial and military support. Up to now, UAE has sent thousands of men to Yemen and has led many operations, but now the country has come to the conclusion that it is no longer able to stay in this war.



Now, Saudis have lost their main partner in the war. Soon, Mohammad Bin Salman, crown prince of Saudi Arabia will become the symbol of failure in Yemen and Saudis will accept their defeat.

The burden on Saudi Arabia is so heavy that they have practically begged the UAE to reduce their forces in Yemen instead of leaving the country altogether.

In recent weeks, Emiratis who once had more than five thousand forces in Yemen, said they want to evacuate their forces gradually and the retreat will be a step-by-step process, but some western and Arab diplomats have informed the New York Times that UAE has expedited the process and has already removed a large part of its forces from Yemen.

Anyway, it seems that the huge costs of war started putting a great burden on the UAE, and the country decided to leave the war, despite the anger of Saudi officials. In the near future, more news about the withdrawal of UAE forces from Yemen will come on the air and it will definitely come as a hard blow to the Saudis.



US' referring to trigger mechanism is irrelevant: 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 the US' referring to trigger mechanism "is a bit irrelevant."

The fellow at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University, says that "I understand why Iran is doing what it is doing to react and retaliate against the United States."

Following is the text of the interview:

Do you think President Trump can refer to trigger mechanism (Because the US violated the JCPOA and has not this jurisdiction)?

I think that there is a plausible legal justification for the United States to trigger the mechanism. The terms of the JCPOA and UNSCR 2231 refer to the United States as a "participating government" in different ways. In the JCPOA, it means what is plainly written: that the United States is a party to the agreement and believes itself to be. That is something the United States stopped doing in May 2018.

UNSCR 2231, though, could be read as saying that "participating government" is only short-hand for "this list of states." This is a common legal approach to avoid having lots of the same

words used over and over again.

Some have suggested that this means the United States could trigger the mechanism.

I tend to think that this is a bit irrelevant since the mechanism is also dependent on states agreeing to abide by the terms of the UNSC resolutions that would come back into force. If this is seen as a bit of legal trickery, then the credibility and integrity of the UNSC's own decisions will be undermined. I think, therefore, that this would be highly damaging to the UNSC and that other permanent members of the group would block or seek to block US triggering, or would issue statements that contradict the terms of snapback and create legal confusion.

It is a very difficult and unanticipated situation.

Suppose President Trump can refer to the trigger mechanism. Do you think he can snap back the Iran sanctions? Will UNSC agree with him?

As I said, he may be able to, but I think that the credibility of this decision would be immediately impugned and that would damage implementation of the sanctions to come.

EU is trying to save JCPOA but they do not do anything for it. They just send some political statement. This did

not lead to economic benefit for Iran, INSTEX is an example of this. Do you think they can save JCPOA according to Iran' new paces?

No. The EU's efforts are laudable but I do not believe they will be sufficient to help Iran's leaders justify to themselves staying within the JCPOA.

That said, it remains in Iran's interest to abide by the JCPOA and avoid fueling this crisis. Expanding the nuclear program will not help manage that problem nor will it necessarily improve the atmosphere for negotiations to reduce tensions.

I understand why Iran is doing what it is doing to react and retaliate against the United States. But, I don't agree with it nor think it is helpful, any more than the US decision to withdraw from the JCPOA and impose sanctions was.

According to new development, do you think the JCPOA will survive?

I have been consistent in my view that the JCPOA cannot survive so many different pressures and attacks, especially from the two core states with obligations under it: Iran and the United States.

I cannot predict if and when it will formally die. But, as an agreement that provides for real redress of serious concerns in the two countries and avoids a crisis, it is already functionally dead.

The messages hidden in a meeting

By: Mohammad Ghaderi

The leaders of the United States and North Korea met at the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in the borders that divide North and South Korea. The meeting was about 50 minutes long. The two sides were inside North Korea's borders only for the initial greetings and handshakes and after taking some pictures they had their talks inside the territory of South Korea.

The two sides had last met in late February; after that, the negotiations did not go any further and were practically on hold.

Evidently, Donald Trump is the first US president to step into North Korea; he believes that going across the borders that divide North and South Korea is a cause for pride.

After the meeting, Trump announced that he had invited North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to Washington and they had agreed to restart negotiations, but the sanctions on North Korea were still in place!

Kim Jong Un also said that Trump's coming to the North Korea was a historical and important moment. If Kim Jong Un travels to US as well, he will be the first North Korean president to visit US

This meeting and Trump's strategy in dealing with one of the most important issues of US foreign policy, tells us many important things which we will briefly discuss here:

First, as many international analysts believe, Trump's behavior, as a politician, has a number of features that makes him different from most of other politicians.

Experts believe Trump is a politician who majorly behaves based on advertising techniques; with using these techniques, he plays both his enemies and political rivals.

As he himself has repeatedly said in his electoral campaigns, he is an actor who tries to take the lead in all his interactions and don't let others to design the rules of games he is playing. This strategy is completely evident in



the way he interacted with rich Arab sheikhs and now with boasting about his seemingly bold entrance into North Korea.

Therefore, we can conclude that Trump's actions are not based on any specific set of rules; he has no clear stand in politics; rather, he mainly designs his actions based on an advertising and commercial model. This is completely evident in the way he has been dealing with North Korea.

Trump wants to pretend that he has a specific doctrine in his international policy; he has even tried to come up with "Trumpism" as a new doctrine like "Jacksonism" or "Jefersonism", but it is already clear to everybody, including the republicans, that Trump's international policy is not based on any specific strategy or theory; rather it is merely a show that is rooted in his specific character.

The second point to discuss here is the important role of "foreign policy" in US next presidential elections in 2020.

Based on the latest polls taken by Quinnipiac University, foreign policy is among the most crucial parameters that have severely decreased Trump's popularity, especially in grey, key states such as Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan, Ohio and Florida.

It is expected of democrats to mainly focus on Trump's foreign policy as one of his weaknesses during the next presidential elections; therefore, Trump is now thinking about "changing the current trend" of his foreign policy; in

other words, he mainly wants to create the feeling in American citizens that he is making changes in his foreign policy.

In conclusion, we cannot simply figure out Trump's strategies and judge the limits and parameters of his behavior; because his behaviors are not consistent, they are based on "fleeting tactics" and "momentary emotions", and we have all witnessed numerous examples of this behaviors since he took the office in 2017.

The last point to discuss is the general idea behind the meeting between US and North Korea's leaders. Obviously, in dealing with Pyongyang, Trump is simultaneously using both "threats" and "negotiations", this is the same strategy that he is trying to adopt toward Iran as well.

This paradox is not based on some careful foreign policy plans that US administration has devised; rather, it is the result of Trump's uncertainty about the right way to use US diplomatic and strategic powers. This is a very serious problem and cannot be resolved anytime soon, even with removing people like John Bolton and Mike Pompeo from the cabinet.

Even when Rex W. Tillerson was the Secretary of State and H. R. McMaster was the National Security Advisor, Trump suffered from this chronic uncertainty; therefore Trump will continue to have this paradoxical, dubious and dual behavior until the last day he is in office, whether it would be 2020 or 20224.

Why Europe cannot use 'snap back' mechanism against Iran



Europe cannot use the so-called snapback mechanism stipulated in the 2015 nuclear deal to renew United Nations sanctions against Iran. An international lawyer, Reza Nasri, gives five reasons why.

Western media are likely to jump on the 'snapback mechanism' wagon now that Iran has released details about the second stage of its reduction in commitments to the nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The snap back mechanism is a tool that allows the old United Nations sanctions to be reimposed on Iran without a vote on the Council, in the case of Tehran being found to be in serious violation of the terms of the nuclear agreement, under certain conditions and after following the predefined steps.

The other side wants to make it look as if the recent measures by Iran in reducing the level of its commitments to the JCPOA – which are in accordance with Article 26 and 36 of JCPOA – are a violation of the agreement in order to use the snap back mechanism against Iran.

But there are five reasons as to why the snap back mechanism cannot be used against Iran in this case.

One: The snap back mechanism has been designed to prevent Iran from violating the agreement. In other words, the mechanism has been set up in the case of Iran being the first party to withdraw from the nuclear deal. Of course, the first side to have left the agreement was the United States, and Iran's compliance with its commitments have been confirmed time and again in all of the IAEA's reports.

Two: According to the text of the JCPOA, the other side can use the snap back mechanism only when it "believes" that Iran's performance is an instance of a major lack of compliance. According to a fundamental legal principle, this "belief" must be accompanied by "good faith". This is while none of the remaining parties to the JCPOA can actually claim with "good faith" that they "believe" in Iran's major lack of compliance, since all of Iran's measures have been legal, and are clearly taken so that all sides to the deal would fully implement their own commitments.

Three: Europe's resorting to the snap back mechanism would be in fact a mockery of the international law, the UN Security Council and the UN's collective security system. In other words, it would be the first time in history when the Security Council would be used to punish a country that only intends to use its legal tools to force others to implement a Security Council resolution (2231), and an agreement endorsed by the body.

Four: In order to accuse Iran of a violation, European powers first need to prove Iran's ill intentions. This is while they all know that Iran's only motivation and intention to reduce commitments is a way to actually revive the nuclear agreement.

Five: What European powers promised under the deal was never a "ceremonial" removal of sanctions. Article 3 of Appendix 2 of JCPOA clearly tasks Europe with removing the "impacts" of economic and financial sanctions. This means that the European sides are now clearly in violation of their commitments.



Pompeo knows the real meaning of “disinformation”

By: Mohammad Ghaderi

Mike Pompeo, United States Secretary of State has turned into a symbol of the failure of US foreign policy and in particular, that of Trump's administration.

Pompeo, who had a key role in US pullout of its nuclear deal with Iran and imposing unilateral sanctions on the country, has now a big challenge ahead as he has no choice other than facing the fact that Iran is “powerful.”

Recently, Pompeo accused Iran of spreading disinformation and said that US would exert unprecedented pressures on Iran if Tehran refuses to hold negotiations.

On Saturday, Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif tweeted a series of maps showing where US military drone was shot down by Iran. The maps clearly showed that the location was inside Iran's territorial waters. In an offensive statement, Pompeo called the maps “childlike”, saying that showing them

does not change anything. It seems that Pompeo can no longer hide his anger due to Washington's continuous failures against Iran.

Clearly, the harsh tone of Mike Pompeo in this statement is rooted in his own unstable position in US government and the fact that he has failed in his plans against Iran over the last two years.

Obviously, Pompeo's insults do not deserve a response, but it should be pointed out that US, in fact, better knows the meaning of “disinformation” as they did when they shot down an Iranian passenger flight from Tehran to Dubai in July 1988 and later claimed that they had incorrectly identified the Airbus as an attacking jet fighter.

The airplane was hit when flying over Iran's territorial waters in the Persian Gulf. The attack destroyed the aircraft and killed all 290 people on board, including 66 children.

Just like, Rex W. Tillerson, John Kerry, Hillary Clinton, Madeleine Albright,

Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell and other US officials and secretaries of state, Pompeo also knows the true meaning of spreading “disinformation” and lying when it comes to devising foreign policies.

Every single direct and proxy war started out or encouraged by US all over the world, including Iran-Iraq imposed war, exhibit the cruelty and gravity of US endless crimes against humanity.

US, once again tries to call the truth “disinformation” and in doing so evade assuming any responsibility for the intentional crimes it has committed all over the world. However, now, people from every part of the world, have their eyes wide open, and they scrutinize every move of Washington leaders with their sharp look.

It was far better for Pompeo to stay silent after the clear and credible statements of Iranian foreign minister because the questionable reputation of Pompeo, and the shameful history of White House, leaves no room for believing any of claims made by US officials.



Trump himself is serious about talking to Iran: Shireen Hunter

Interview by Javad Heirannia

Shireen Tahmaasb Hunter, a professor of political science at Georgetown University, says that "Trump himself is serious about talking to Iran and his position is not merely a campaign ploy."

"The problem is unless the position of the two countries become closer and they are willing to make compromises talking by itself would not be able to change anything," Hunter says.

Following is the text of her interview with Tehran Times:

Do you think that the maximum pressure campaign on Iran will have an outcome for the Trump government?

Of course, any policy has an outcome. The question is whether the policy of maximum pressure on Iran will have a positive or negative outcome. So far it seems that this policy has only strengthened Iran's resolve to resist American pressures until Washington changes its behavior. But since it is unlikely that America will change its position faced with Iran's refusal to talk, the outcome of the current standoff might well be a military conflict.

It looks as though we are approaching

the date of the American presidential election, Trump's willingness is increasing to talk with Iranian authorities. Some believe that this tendency is more for electoral advertising than as his foreign policy achievement. What is your opinion?

Trump himself is serious about talking to Iran and his position is not merely a campaign ploy. The problem is unless the position of the two countries become closer and they are willing to make compromises talking by itself would not be able to change anything.

If the policy of maximum pressure on Iran fails to be successful, can there be a change in Trump's warring team, including the expulsion of John Bolton and Mike Pompeo?

Trump has been prone to making sudden changes in his advisers. Therefore, he might appoint someone else as Secretary of State or National Security Adviser. However, personnel changes are never enough to produce fundamental policy change. If Trump decides to change his policy, even Pompeo and Bolton would be forced to implement it.

Given the China's trade war with the US, will it have unfavorable effects on

the US economy in the coming months and the economy as a card winner for the Trump, how do you assess the results of the US elections in 2020 in the shadow of the continuation of the trade war with China?

Trade wars with China but perhaps more importantly with Mexico could have negative repercussions on the US economy. The question is the extent to which the US economy might deteriorate because of these tensions. If the slowdown in the economy leads to more unemployment, which currently is very low, then it might affect Trump's electoral chances. But this will not become clear much later in the next year.

A poll was recently conducted by Fox News, pro- Trump media, shows Trump has fewer votes than five Democrats, including Bernice Sanders and Joe Biden. Given the fact that the poll was held by Fox News, How do you evaluate it? (Of course, there were some differences between Trump and Fox News recently)

As a general rule incumbent presidents poll low during the early stages of the campaign. What are important, are the figures just before the election around September next year.

When a businessman is US President

By: Haniyeh Sadat Jafariyeh

Donald Trump, the 45th US President, is not the first US President who is a businessman but for sure he is the first one who is more a businessman than a man of policy.

The proof is his attitude towards US diplomatic ties with the world and the international face that he has dedicated to US as of taking the office. This does not mean Trump does not care about political issues but he interprets international political issues under the shadow of his own economic calculations.

When he put forward the idea of 'America First' and decided to construct Mexico-US border wall, when he levied tariffs on Chinese goods, his interference with oil market via increasing US shale production and etc. all and all verify his calculative mind and business intelligence to secure his country's benefits even at the price of altering the course of U.S. foreign policy and disrupting the world order.

The highlight of Trump's Presidency, for sure, is his stance and decisions towards Iran.

Withdrawing from the JCPOA, the deal that was achieved after long and tough negotiations between Iran and 5+1 and had brought its signatories satisfaction, Trump disrespected initially his own country besides proving himself as unreliable.

By pulling out of the deal in the name of stopping Iran from achieving a nuclear weapon, the issue which was fully considered in the JCPOA, the US president ignited a new round and a chain of instabilities in the international relations besides uncertainty about future and lack of trust among the US, Europe and Iran.

Taking further steps off the beaten track, Trump started to put draconian economic embargo on Iran to force the country back to negotiation table for packing a new deal, the one that would match his own taste. Faced with the Islamic Republic's resistance, he continued trying his chance with further sanctions. To fasten the tightest knot and put the maximum pressure on Iran, in his final step he put the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and Iranian Foreign Minister in



the sanctions list.

"Sanctions come off Iran, and they become a productive and prosperous nation again - The sooner the better!" he wrote on Twitter.

His thirst for levying sanctions goes on, while according to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo the US has sanctioned more than 80% of the Iranian economy.

That is exactly the point where diplomacy is missed. In fast, Trump is entrapped, harvesting the fruit of his own mistakes. He was the first one who killed diplomacy and left the negotiations table. Now, he has no other way to reach what he wants except acting as the big bully, which will augment tensions in the region and threat international political relations.

However, as a businessman, he is taking advantage of presenting Iran as a big threat to regional security. He sells weapons to the regional Arab states. Without Iran, earning money from Arab leaders would not be as easy as it is now. He drew back American troops from the Middle East due to the costs imposed on the US and now he is earning from the region without paying on war or having troops here! As the US President who boasts about the economic achievements he brought for his country, Trump cannot enter a war with Iran and in fact he does not need to do that.

Creating a war game with Iran has been a lucrative business for the US President.

Addressing a large "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) rally in Green Bay, Wisconsin, Trump said in late April that he would like to keep Saudi Arabia as a close partner because of the Riyadh regime's extravagant purchases from Amer-

ican companies.

"They [Saudis] have nothing but cash, right?" he told the exuberant crowd. "They buy a lot from us, \$450 billion they bought."

"You had people wanting to cut off Saudi Arabia... I don't want to lose them," he said.

Trump is putting a spanner on the regional peace wheel. Acting a tradesman, he tries to seem negligent and indifferent about the outcomes of what he is making to occur in the Middle East. He calls on regional countries and some other ones including China to take care of their security in the Persian Gulf, telling that the US is not in charge for the issue. In fact, he wants them to rely on the US and via US' hegemony he wants these countries to rely on Americans to guarantee their security. Trump wants to persuade them accompany the US in imposing maximum pressure on Iran.

Meanwhile, Trump tries to suggest that no instability in the Middle East, can make the US incur financial losses. The US President has even announced that the US is not in need for the Persian Gulf oil thanks to its oil resources, which is a false claim, since no one can deny that any shock in global oil prices can make the gasoline prices and imports costs skyrocket in the US.

The US President has 'Hawks' and 'doves', of course, but his administration is the first one that is on the strategic offensive against Iran in 39 years. As he has confirmed, "his top foreign policy adviser wants to embroil the US in multiple international conflicts." No one can say how the unpredictable US President can resist against such pressures.

Trump is in war against Iran but a war of his own type, an economic one.

Presently, the major concern of the US President are the security US' biggest ally in the region, Israel and the upcoming US presidential elections. In addition, enlisting the Leader of Islamic Revolutions has put an end to any probability for Iran-US negotiations, according to Iranian officials. Iran says it does not want war neither negotiations with US but it will respond harshly to any threat. On the other sides, Trump underlines that he is not a fan of war, either but boats about US military powers.

Hitting 300 Saudi- UAE military targets on agenda of Yemeni forces: Official



Abdulaziz Ahmad al-Bakir, deputy minister of the Yemeni National Salvation Government, has said that the headquarters of Saudi and Emirati military commanders inside or outside Yemeni territories are legitimate targets for Yemeni forces.

During a ceremony on July 7, the Yemeni armed forces unveiled their new home-made weapons including Quds-1 winged missile, the high-altitude Sammad-1 (Invincible-1) reconnaissance drone, long-endurance Sammad-3 (Invincible-3) unmanned aerial vehicle as well as Qasef-2k (Striker-2k) combat drones.

High-ranking Yemeni military officials including Defense Minister Major General Mohammad Nasser Al-Atefi and Chief of the General Staff of Armed Forces Marshal Mahdi al-Mashat were attending at the Yemeni Army's exhibition.

Speaking during the meeting, Al-Mashat said that the Yemeni forces will have big surprises for the enemy with their new arms, adding that the new weapons will be a game-changer.

The Defense Minister Al-Atefi foresaw a tragic future for the Saudi and Emirati aggressors if they did not stop their aggression and did opt for peace.

The Mehr news agency conducted an interview with Abdulaziz Ahmad al-Bakir, deputy minister of the Yemeni National Salvation Government to discuss the issue further.

Al-Bakir said that unveiling the new missiles and drones suggested that the Yemeni Army had stepped in a new phase of deterrence.

He also described the new arms as a game-changer that will change the equation in favor of the Yemeni forces.

The deputy minister added that enemies were shocked after they realized that the new arms are long-range enough to target their capitals.

He added that the Yemeni Army Missiles Unit, as well as the Air Force, have added 300 new enemy targets to their list of military targets, which could be hit with the newly unveiled weapons.

The Yemeni official added that the 300 new targets include the headquarters of Saudi and Emirati military commanders inside or outside Yemeni territory as legitimate targets for the Yemeni forces.

In response to a question on recent drone attacks on Saudi airports and the threats against Emirati targets, he said that the drones have increased the deterrence power of the Yemeni side.

Al-Bakir added that the drones are divided into major kinds: some are used for reconnaissance missions while the others are used for offensive purposes.

In response to another question regarding the reports on the withdrawal of the UAE-backed troops from Yemen, the official said it was Americans and the Israelis who decided for them.

He stressed that there is a clear link and cooperation between Israelis and the Emiratis on the Yemeni issue, adding that any achievement by the Yemeni forces would be a huge blow to the Israeli enemy.

He further noted that the Israelis are handling the aggression on Yemen and the Saudi and Emiratis are just an instrument in their hands.



Speculations rise over Israeli Assassination of Amano: reports

With the Israelis and the US hitting a wall to put pressure on the late IAEA chief Yukiya Amano to raise new fabricated allegations against Iran's nuclear program, speculations have now been intensified over the assassination of the Japanese diplomat.

Yukiya Amano, who led the International Atomic Energy Agency for a decade and was extensively involved in negotiations over Iran's nuclear program, died on Tuesday at the age of 72.

He was heavily involved in the years-long negotiations that led to the landmark Iran nuclear deal.

Under the agreement, reached between Iran and the P5+1 group of countries in 2015, Tehran undertook to put limits on its nuclear program in exchange for the removal of nuclear-related sanctions.

United States President Donald Trump, however, withdrew Washington from the landmark agreement last May and decided to re-impose what it described as the "toughest" sanctions ever against Tehran.

The news of Amano's death comes at a time of increasing concerns and escalating tensions between US and Iran, with Washington and Tel Aviv having failed to create a crisis in Iran's cooperation with the UN atomic agency which has repeatedly confirmed the peaceful nature of the country's nuclear program.

In this regard, some reports are now suggesting that Amano could have been "eliminated" for refusing to give in to pressures regarding Iran's nuclear program.

The late Japanese secretary-general of the IAEA was reportedly standing against the US and Israeli heavy pressures to open a false case against Iran on the nuclear issue.

While there is evidence that the Trump administration and the Israeli regime were constantly pressuring Amano to accuse Iran of violation of the 2015 nuclear deal, in all his reports, Amano had reaffirmed Iran's compliance with its nuclear-related commitments under the deal.

Keeping the news of Amano's death

in the dark for a couple of days after his funeral by the US is another reason increasing the speculations over his assassination.

Besides, happy to remove a big hurdle to their ambitions, they have assigned Amano's American deputy Mary Alice Hayward -- a close ally to the Trump administration -- to fill his position.

The international community should wait and see if the assumptions come true in the next IAEA reports on Iran's nuclear program under the chairmanship of Hayward.

Amano died on July 18 at the age of 72. Reports said his family had only informed the IAEA late on Sunday, "with the specific request not to disclose it until the family funeral had taken place on 22 July in a quiet atmosphere".

Amano, who had wide experience in disarmament, nonproliferation diplomacy and nuclear energy issues, had been chief of the key U.N. agency that regulates nuclear use worldwide since 2009. He had wide experience in disarmament, non-proliferation diplomacy and nuclear energy.

INSTEX



Dossier



INSTEX cannot satisfy all of Iran's needs: Shireen Hunter

Interview by Javad Heirannia

Shireen Tahmaasb Hunter, a professor of political science at Georgetown University, tells "By its very structure, Instex cannot satisfy all of Iran's needs, including its desire to sell oil and access the revenues earned by its sale. But Iran's economic needs go beyond mere sale of oil."

"If Iran wants to develop economically, it must secure foreign investment and up-to date technology, especially in its oil industry," Hunter says.

Following is the text of the interview:

As a consequence of the fact that Europe could not completely stand by its commitments, Iran has taken the second step in suspending its commitments under the JCPOA. The reason for Iran's action is to profit from the benefits of the JCPOA. Can Europe stand to its JCPOA commitments?

It was clear from the beginning that if the United States did not remove its sanctions and objections to trade with Iran, the European states would not be able to do much. The reasons for this are obvious. Europe has a free market economy and therefore, governments do not interfere in the economic activities of companies and businesses. The latter make their decisions based on the loss and profits calculations. In view of the inter-connectedness of European economies with that of America, European business are unwilling to risk losing American markets by trading with Iran. Also, it is very difficult to circumvent the international banking mechanisms. Again, American banks and dollar are very influential within this banking system. In short, it is not so much that Europe does not want to live up to its commitments. Rather the fact is that it cannot even if it wanted to.

According to some reports, France has decided to try to conceive the United States to return to JCPOA. Can it be true?

It would be very good if President Macron could convince Donald Trump to return to JCPOA. However, I doubt that the US would be convinced by France unless Macron comes up with a formula involving some mutual concessions by both US and Iran, including Iran's agreement to talk to America if at least some sanctions are reduced. Otherwise, I doubt that Macron could be successful. In general, Iran's efforts to bypass America in its efforts to get sanctions relief are unlikely to succeed.

We are witnessing the last breaths of JCPOA and its survival depends on Europe's commitment to secure the sale of Iranian oil and Iran's banking transactions. Can Europe accomplish this task or does it practically accompany with the United States?

Given the characteristics of the international banking and financial systems and Europe's close economic and strategic relations with the US, despite some recent disagreements, I doubt that Europe could succeed in meeting Iran's needs.

Although INSTEX proposed to be operational earlier, its utilization has been postponed by Europe on various pretexts. Paying attention to the fact that it is just proposed to be used for humanitarian aims, can it meet the needs of Iran?

By its very structure, Instex cannot satisfy all of Iran's needs, including its desire to sell oil and access the revenues earned by its sale. But Iran's economic needs go beyond mere sale of oil. If Iran wants to develop economically, it must secure foreign investment and up-to date technology, especially in its oil industry. This is impossible as long as sanctions are in place and Instex cannot change the situation. At best, Instex is an economic palliative or a band aid.

European states can inject significant amount of export credit into INSTEX: Ali Vaez



Interview by: Javad Heirannia

Ali Vaez, director of the Iran program for International Crisis Group says that “European states have almost no influence on the risk calculus of their private sector and their financial sector is deeply intertwined with the US economy.”

“But they can inject a significant amount of export credit into INSTEX to lift it off the ground and turn it into a meaningful channel. More EU states can also join in or establish similar mechanisms,” Dr.Vaez tells the Tehran Times.

Following is the full text of the interview:

As a consequence of the fact that Europe could not completely stand by its commitments, Iran has taken the second step in suspending its commitments under the JCPOA. The reason for Iran’s action is to profit from the benefits of the JCPOA. Can Europe stand to its JCPOA commitments?

There is a limit to how far Europe can go in shielding the Iranian economy from the effects of US sanctions. This is mostly because the European states have almost no influence on the risk calculus of their private sector and their fi-

nancial sector is deeply intertwined with the US economy. But they can inject a significant amount of export credit into INSTEX to lift it off the ground and turn it into a meaningful channel. More EU states can also join in or establish similar mechanisms.

According to some reports, France has decided to try to conceive the United States to return to JCPOA. Can this be true?

Neither France nor any other country is likely able to restore status quo ante. But they might be able to facilitate discussions between Iran and the US. The problem is that President Trump does seem interested neither in multilateral frameworks nor in sharing the credit with others. At best, mediators can try to deescalate tensions and buy more time in the hope that cooler heads prevail.

We are witnessing the last breaths of JCPOA and its survival depends on Europe’s commitment to secure the sale of Iranian oil and Iran’s banking transactions. Can Europe accomplish this task or does it practically accompany with the United States?

It’d be a mistake to put all the burden on Europe. China on its own can make or

break Trump’s maximum pressure policy. If China were to restore its own imports to the 2017-2018 levels, the boost would be sufficient for Iran to keep its economy afloat until the next US presidential elections.

Although INSTEX proposed to be operational earlier, its utilization has been postponed by Europe on various pretexts. Paying attention to the fact that it is just proposed to be used for humanitarian aims, can it meet the needs of Iran?

INSTEX is a major undertaking and has an enormous political value for Iran, which has succeeded for the first time to get America’s traditional allies in Europe to try to actively undermine its sanctions. It usually takes 2 years to establish a new bank in Europe. INSTEX, which is an incredibly complex mechanism, was established in 6 months. While it is not going to be a lifeline for the Iranian economy, it can have a significant impact if the E3 were to inject significant export credit into it. There might still be a way that EU-China cooperation could help inject Iran’s oil revenue into the mechanism. But a smart Iranian strategy would pursue political incentives in Europe and economic incentives in Asia.

'Useless' INSTEX cannot solve Iran's economic problems: MP

An Iranian lawmaker described the EU-proposed INSTEX as a 'useless' mechanism which cannot solve Iran's economic problems.

"INSTEX is a useless mechanism which cannot solve economic problems created by [US] sanctions," Mohammadreza Pour-Ebrahimi, a member of the Parliament's Economic Committee, told Mehr News Agency on Sunday.

"Europe should return to its commitments under the JCPOA [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action] because INSTEX has no effect on Iran's economy," he added.

The remarks came as the Joint Commission of the JCPOA announced on Friday that long-awaited INSTEX had finally been made operational and available to all EU Member States and that the first transactions are being processed.

According to the Nuclear Deal, the Europeans were obliged to establish trade relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran and to allow banking transactions to take place in the European banking network, however, after the JCPOA implementation, Europeans did not fulfill these two commitments, noted the MP.

Pour-Ebrahimi went on to say that recent developments, including the downing of an intruding US spy drone by Iranian Armed Forces and Iran's announcement on reducing commitments to the deal, made Europeans feel that they should pay the price for Iran's remaining in the JCPOA. "So they an-

nounced that INSTEX had been operational but this mechanism is not related to JCPOA commitments, rather, it can be a beginning for implementation of the deal."

"INSTEX is actually banking transactions for trading food, medicine and medical equipment; this an insult the Iranian nation," he lamented, adding, "the way Europeans act on INSTEX is not acceptable ... Europe should honor its JCPOA commitments in trading and banking sectors with Iran. The export of Iranian oil and products are an important part of the JCPOA."

In late January 2018, Europe announced the establishment of a special trade mechanism dubbed as INSTEX (Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges) in a bid to save JCPOA after the withdrawal of the United States. The mechanism, which is yet to prove its effectiveness, is said to initially cover trades of food, medicine and medical devices and to gradually include other areas.

Also earlier on Saturday, Iranian envoy to the United Nations Majid Takht-e Ravanchi said "I personally believe that INSTEX is not enough in the current circumstances. Without money, this mechanism is like a beautiful vehicle without fuel."



Iran, Turkey ditched dollar for 35% of trade last year: Zarif

Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif, while stressing the dwindling power of US dollar in international transactions, said Iran and Turkey used national currencies for 35% of their bilateral trade last year.

Mohammad Javad Zarif made the remarks at a ceremony marking the National Day of Industry and Mine on Monday.

"The role of US dollar in international transactions is diminishing," said the top diplomat, adding "recently, Russia and China agreed to conduct their transactions without dollar. Last year, 35% of our trade transactions with Turkey was done without dollar. Even the UAE and India, which are the US' allies, have decided to ditch dollar for part of their

business."

"We need to rely on domestic productions to further diminish the impact of US dollar on our economy," said Zarif.

"The pressures imposed by the US on Iran do not indicate the US' power and our weakness, but rather, the pressures are the result of the US' repeated failures against the Islamic Republic," Zarif stressed.

About the EU's announcement that its trade mechanism for Iran, dubbed INSTEX, has become operational, Zarif said "although INSTEX is not what we wanted and it is not a sufficient answer to Europe's compliance with its commitments, but it has a strategic value, which is the fact that the US' closest allies are distancing themselves from Washington."



At a meeting of the Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in Vienna on 28 June, France, Germany and the UK, as the European sides to the agreement, announced that INSTEX, EU's trade mechanism for Iran aimed at skirting US sanctions, had been made operational and available to all EU Member States and that the first transactions are being processed.

Iran says as long as the trade mechanism does not cover oil exports and banking transactions, it is of no use to the country.

Mirage named INSTEX; A review over European JCPOA: Report

Interview by Payman Yazdani

INSTEX (Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges), does not guarantee sales of Iranian oil and is limited to trade of unsanctioned goods such as food and medicine.

In fact, it is merely an accounting office established due to lack of banking relations between Iran and Europe. The issue proves that INSTEX is not capable of meeting Iran's least expectations considered in JCPOA.

After withdrawal of Trump from the nuclear deal in May 2018, the Iranian government did not decide to reduce its commitments to JCPOA. Instead, on the way to guarantee its interests and preserve the nuclear deal, Iran preferred to act upon the deal unilaterally and kept negotiations with Europeans.

Talks with Europe started just a few days after withdrawal of the US from JCPOA. Europeans vowed that they would stand against US sanctions via fulfilling their commitments under JCPOA and to continue trading gold, precious metals and cars, purchasing oil and petrochemicals, having cooperation on ports and shipping sector, having banking ties and brokerage relations with Iran. Europe announced its four decisions to counter US sanctions, afterwards. The ones proved to be futile very soon.

Practicality of Europe's four promises

1. Having Blocking Statute operational

The updated Blocking Statute- part of the EU's support for the continued full and effective implementation of JCPOA- was implemented on August 8, 2018. The act, however, can be translated into a political gesture, since in practice it could not persuade European companies to stay in Iran and they started to leave the country one after another. The EU remained silent.

On November 10, 2018, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif explained the reason Iran remained in



JCPOA. "It is a fact that Europeans have not been able to fulfill their commitments to JCPOA but this does not do any harm to the benefits of the JCPOA and to international and regional peace."

2. Enabling European Investment Bank (EIB) to finance EU investment in Iran

The EU ratified a plan on July 5, 2018, to ease finance activities of EIB in Iran. But it was not put into practice since EIB did not accord to act upon due to US sanctions.

3. Reinforcing non-stop cooperation with Iran on energy sector and SMEs

Despite the made statements by Europeans, no specific result was obtained in this field.

4. Investigating possibility of banking transactions with Iran's central bank

After imposition of US sanctions on Iran, European banks, concerned about US' heavy fines and secondary sanctions, rejected all the banking transactions with Iran. They even quit doing transactions related to trade on non-sanctioned goods including food and medicine with the country.

Europeans took advantage of Iran's inactiveness against US sanctions and could keep Iran in JCPOA without paying any specific cost.

Failure of SPV and Iran's passivity

Europe established a barter system, Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), to ease oil and trade financial transactions with Iran. The channel was supposed to become operational before US oil sanc-

tions imposed on November 4, 2018. But the plan was defeated since no European country accepted to host it.

Despite Europeans' vows and announcements, SPV did not become operational even by the end of 2018 i.e. Iran spent months waiting for Europeans to make their promises.

INSTEX less than Oil-for-Food Program (OIF)

Europe minimized SPV into from an exchange mechanism to what is called INSTEX, which is merely a trade instrument. No money is exchanged in INSTEX but it acts as an accounting office in where mortgages and debts among European companies and Iran are registered. Goods are swapped with oil without having any monetary transaction done.

In their joint statement on the last day of January, France, Germany and UK introduced the INSTEX which was aimed at facilitating legitimate trade between European economic operators and Iran and making exchange of basic goods including food and medical equipment and medicine between Iranian companies and foreign ones by circumventing the American banking system and currency. This was neither put into practice.

Eventually after almost a year of Iran's inactiveness, the country decided to reduce its commitments to JCPOA giving Europeans a 60-day ultimatum to fulfill their commitments.

On June 28, 2019, JCPOA joint com-

mission announced that INSTEX had been made operational.

However, despite EU's promises after US withdrawal from JCPOA, INSTEX is only practical for trade of non-sanctioned goods, including food and medicine, while such types of goods are exempted from all types of sanctions due to humanitarian reasons. If the US wanted to implement a system to put its sanctions into practice, its supposed system would definitely be something exactly the same as INSTEX.

The European mechanism is much worse than what was applied in Iraq to swap oil for food in 1990s.

It is much more humiliating. Today, Europe's purchase of oil from Iran is near to zero and Iran should inject its oil revenues to INSTEX to be able to merely import food and medicine.

In addition, INSTEX is in contrast with

JCPOA's appendix 2, which urged it to facilitate trading gold, precious metals, cars, purchasing oil and petrochemicals, having cooperation on ports and shipping sector, having banking ties and brokerage relations with Iran. It does not facilitate sales of Iranian oil and is not capable of meeting the least expectations of Iran under JCPOA.

Europe big brother for Iran's foreign trade

INSTEX would act as Europe's observatory mechanism on Iran's foreign trade in an economic war.

While its purchase of Iranian oil stands at zero, Europe requires Iran to inject its revenues from selling oil to China, Turkey, India and etc. into INSTEX to provide the country with food and medicine. This would give Europe an upper hand in controlling Iran's foreign trade transactions.

INSTEX an introduction to new banking, missile, regional JCPOAs

Europeans have established INSTEX under US sanctions and with humanitarian aims. They, however, have required Iran to implement FATF for having INSTEX fully implemented. In fact, Europe is using extortion against Iran.

This makes INSTEX an instrument for controlling Iran's missile capabilities and regional power, as well.

Today, that the European INSTEX has failed to secure Iran's minimum expectations in oil and banking sectors - as stated in the State Security Council's statement.

The Islamic Republic of Iran should take the second step about JCPOA to make the other side fulfill its commitments. Otherwise, no achievements would there for Iran and its authority would be questioned.

Rouhani to Macron:

Iran determined to keep all routes open for preserving JCPOA

The Iranian and French presidents spoke by telephone and discussed the most important bilateral, regional and international issues, stressing that efforts for safeguarding the JCPOA should be continued.

In the phone call with President Emmanuel Macron of France that was made on July 18, President Hassan Rouhani stressed that France should make efforts for saving the nuclear deal (JCPOA) and said "the Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to keep all routes open for safeguarding the JCPOA".

Referring to the visit of the French President's special envoy to Tehran, Rouhani said "the Iranian and European parties to the JCPOA must make efforts to take equal steps in saving the deal."

The Iranian President went on to state that the United States' intensified sanctions obstruct JCPOA's protection, saying "there are some in the United States who do not want efforts for saving the deal to be successful, an example of it is the recent decision by the US Congress to steal over \$1.5 billion of Iranian nation's money."

"Europe should accelerate its efforts to ensure Iran's legitimate interests are met, and the United States' economic war is over," he said.

Rouhani also described transactions through INSTEX and transfer of Iran's oil money from the channel important for



safeguarding the JCPOA, and continued "passing of time and losing opportunities will force Iran to take its third step."

Rouhani described the lift of US sanctions as another solution for saving the deal, saying "few-month solutions are not acceptable at all for stopping Iran's activities".

During the same telephone call, President of France Emmanuel Macron underscored ease of tensions and efforts by all parties to save the JCPOA, saying "unfortunately, there are always extremists who prevent other countries' efforts for reaching peace, and the United States' announcement about intensification of sanctions against Iran is in the same vein."

Stating that Europe has accelerated its actions for practical activation of INSTEX, the French President referred to the joint statement of three European countries for securing Iran's interests in the JCPOA.

He said "sanctions by the United States have made problems for many countries' commercial activities with Iran."

"France is very determined to resolve all problems regarding safeguarding the JCPOA, and this requires all parties' efforts," he said.

ECONOMY-



Economy



Iran resolved to expand regional railway ties: RAI head

Managing director of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RAI) Saeed Rasouli said in an interview with Mehr news agency that Iran is resolved to improve its regional railway ties and will help Jordan improve its railway infrastructure and fleet by producing wagons and constructing railroad for the country.

Rasouli, who was appointed as the first vice chairman of the Regional Assembly for Middle East (RAME) during its 23rd meeting held on July 6 in Aqaba, Jordan, informed that, currently, RAI's main policies include reducing the tensions with members of International Union of Railways (UIC), increasing cooperation with regional countries, and developing Iran's rail transit capacities.

"Iran will cooperate with Jordan on technical and engineering sector and improving railway infrastructure and will produce wagons and construct railroads for the country," he said, "Jordanians are to visit Iranian rail companies in this regard."

"In the Middle-East, we severely seek expansion of ties with regional countries," he said referring to the held RAME in Aqaba, "We have signed bilateral protocols with each of Turkey and Turkmenistan and we have also signed a trilateral protocol with Syria and Iraq."

"Iran enjoys high manufacturing capacities in railway sector and is ready to exports products to regional and neighboring countries to find new markets for its companies," the RAI head added.

The 22nd RAME was held on November 26, 2018 in Isfahan, Iran in the presence of UIC Director General, RAME chairman and Vice-Chairmen, Acting Governor General of Isfahan, UIC coordinator for Middle East, Railways Presidents of the member states, some RAI managers, and representative of ECO.

Addressing the Isfahan assembly, the time Managing Director of RAI Saied Mohammadzadeh called for establishment of an integrated railway network in the region saying, "Iran expects this regional assembly meeting to focus on establishing an integrated network and a co-ordinated management in order to achieve higher efficiency."

The official further praised UIC's supports for Middle East railway activities stressing the needs for acceleration of cooperation and strong support for regional programs and projects.

According to Mohammadzadeh, due to its strategic location, Iran has a privileged position which makes it potent for becoming a transit hub in the region.

Having several free trade zones, especially in the Persian Gulf region, the existence of a wide network of roads in the country, low prices for fuel and energy carriers in Iran, and a suitable rail transport network in the country, are some of the country's advantages.

Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE are members of UIC regional assembly for Middle East.

MP urges gov. to submit cryptocurrency bill amid surge in power consumption

By: Mohammad Ali Haqshenas

An Iranian lawmaker called on the government to prepare and submit a bill on cryptocurrencies while reports indicate a surge in the country's power consumption due to bitcoin mining.

"Unfortunately, there is no specific law to monitor activities around cryptocurrencies in the country and it is essential that the government prepares a specific bill for determining the fate of cryptocurrencies' mining, such as bitcoin, and exchanging currencies using this digital money and submit the bill to the Parliament so that the power rate of those who are mining across the country would be determined," MP Ali Akbar Karimi, a member of Iranian Parliament's Economic Committee, told Mehr News Agency on Saturday.

"Mining cryptocurrencies has become



a common and widespread activity in Iran and it consumes considerable power which has caused problems for the country, especially in the hot season."

A mechanism should be defined to control power consumption and also to punish those who mine using subsidized power rates, he added.

The Central Bank of Iran has just announced a ban on activities around cryptocurrencies while such measure has not still turned into a law, he highlight-

ed, adding, "using digital currencies is a good solution for ditching sanctions but it needs to be regulated."

The remarks came as reports indicate that bitcoin mining is mushrooming across the country where subsidized power rates are attracting prospectors from countries as far as China, Ukraine and France.

Saeed Zarandi, the deputy industry, mining and trade minister for planning, said Wednesday several government committees were examining the issue, with a number of ministries and the central bank about to make a final decision, PressTV reported.

Bitcoin mining consumes large quantities of energy because it uses costly software to solve complex math puzzles to validate transactions in the cryptocurrency. The first miner to solve the problem is rewarded in bitcoin and the transaction is added to the blockchain or digital ledger.

Iran's non-oil trade witnessing mild growth

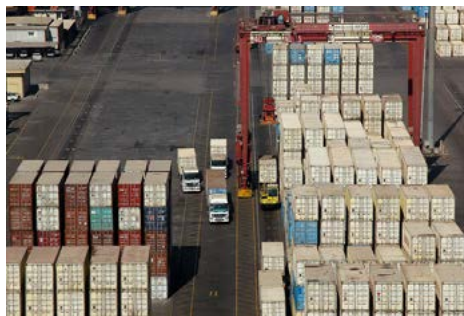
By: Morteza Rahmani

Iran's non-oil trade has been posting a mild growth in the past months, thanks to the government's push to create a positive trade balance through deregulating foreign trade and empowering domestic businesses to compete in international markets.

Latest data released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) show that Iran witnessed a non-oil trade surplus of \$1.649 billion in the first two months of the current fiscal (March 21- May 21).

Although the surplus in foreign trades does not show a significant jump from that of the last fiscal's (March 2018-2019), which stood close to \$1.6 billion, Iran has been observing a consistent and month-by-month improvement in its foreign commerce. The country ended a year before (March 2017-2018) with a trade deficit of \$7.4 billion.

Iran has been seeking different strategies to diversify its revenue sources to reduce the reliance on crude oil sales -- a move which has been intensified, especially after the United States reimposed its unilateral sanctions on the country's banking and oil sectors last year.



The mild increase in exports and decrease in imports show that the government has achieved a certain level of success in this regard.

During the first two months of current fiscal, non-oil exports stood at 30,273 tons worth \$8.412 billion, indicating an 8% growth in terms of value compared with the similar period of last year.

In return, the country imported some 5,654 tons of non-oil commodities

in the first two Iranian months, worth \$6.763 billion. The figure shows an 8% decrease in terms of value year-on-year.

By non-oil trade, IRICA refers to all commercial exchanges, excluding crude oil. Oil-based products such as gas condensate, liquefied natural gas, liquefied propane, petroleum gases, liquefied hydrocarbons or even light oil are categorized by IRICA as "non-oil".

The exports mainly included liquefied natural gas, gas condensates, and light oils except for gasoline.

China, UAE, Iraq, and Turkey were the top destinations of Iran's exports.

The imports mainly constituted rice, field corn, and soybeans. These mainly originated from China, the UAE, India and Turkey.



Culture

Iceland's Ambátt gives a chilling reprieve from a hot summer day in Tehran

By: Marjohn Sheikhi

Icelandic electronic duo act Ambátt, comprising Pan Thorarensen and Þorkell Atlason, gave a chilling performance on Sun. in the Iranian capital, as part of the 4th Tehran International Contemporary Music Festival.

Sunday, June 23, 2019. It's one of those unbearably hot days in Tehran, temperature rising as high as 40 degrees Celsius in the afternoon with a vengeful sun beating down on rushing pedestrians and too few clouds scattered in the sky to be able to shield us from that scorching heat that seems to have it in for us today. You don't really get used to hot temperatures in Tehran, because while summers feel literally like a season in hell, winters by contrast can get extremely cold, so your body is always going through these two phases of extreme temperatures without getting a chance to just settle down with one.

At any rate, one would think we in Tehran are still better suited to a 40-degree temperature than people from Iceland, whose hottest day of 30 degrees was in 1939, almost a century ago. But for Pan Thorarensen and Þorkell Atlason, two prolific electronic musicians from the faraway Nordic island nation, the heat was tolerable as the two were already used to it during their many trips to other countries.

Pan and Þorkell, the former lauded as a catalyst of electronic music in Iceland and the latter a classically-trained guitarist and composer, have made the long trip to Tehran as part of a duo act, Ambátt, to participate at the 4th Tehran International Contemporary Music Festival, the idea of which was originally thought of by Navid Gohari and Ehsan Tarokh in the spring of 2014. A very young festival, no doubt, but with great potential and aspirations, still experimenting, still learning, improving, expanding. The festival this year has invited musicians from Poland, Iceland, Sweden, and Belgium to accompany the



Iranian artists in their pursuit of wooing the ever-esurient ears of music lovers during a five-day program of contemporary music.

Ambátt's performance is held at Hafez Black Box, and I only realize why the workshop next to Hafez Music Hall in downtown Tehran is called a black box when I step into it. It looks like a garage, small but with a high ceiling, and the walls are painted an aesthetic, chiaroscuro black that actually look much cooler in photos than in real life. To be honest, I am a little surprised at the choice of the venue. It looks better suited for a garage punk performance with the crowd banging heads in a mosh pit than an electronic duo act with their equipment (two computers, a sampler and wires – lots and lots of wires) crammed on top of a metal, rolling table and the audience sitting awkwardly on plastic chairs. The festival artistic director, Navid Gohari, explains that the choice of the venue was intentional, as the festival aims to make use of other places besides the capital's reliable, go-to music halls such as Vahdat opera house, which sits, interestingly enough, just opposite of Hafez Black Box.

When the performance starts, it no longer matters where you are, as you

begin to lose yourself in the ambient soundscape created by brooding, relaxing, sometimes eerie melodies, and then as the show progresses and nears its end, the sounds of birds chirping, and heavy trudging on snow, becomes less and less peaceful, until it becomes close to a sense of impending doom, but less subtle and more urgent, more certain, with music booming loudly in the crevices of your chest like there is someone beating heavily on a drum in there.

There is something truly peculiar about an electronic live performance. On the one hand, seeing how the music is actually made, with software and samplers, the awareness that there is no bird or a streaming river or rain, gives the crowd a kind of self-aware, meta experience. Something like metatheatre, in which the play draws your attention to its nature as theater, reminding you of the artificiality of the presentation. Yet, you can't deny that the experience is at the same time immersive. The music lulls you into a trance, the melodies engulf your senses like a continuous streaming river. You are both seeing and not seeing the equipment on the table. The musicians are solely focused on their computers, they can't afford even a moment of eye contact with the audi-

ence. But you can hardly bring yourself to care. You see how the music is made, beat by beat, every twitch of a hand on the computer or the sampler is visible, but deep down you are ready to commit yourself to a 'willing suspension of disbelief'. Ambátt's performance helps you to see what is not there, besides what obviously is.

Their debut collaborative album, and the only one to date, 'Flugufen' (2016) is a mix of different music styles, experimenting with trumpet in one track, and vocals in another. But their show

in Tehran was even more unrestrained than the album. It relied heavily on improvisation, on what the musicians felt sounded right in the moment, and the end result was one hour of immersive, unbound and liberating electronic music that both soothed and invigorated your senses.

Ambátt performed a duet with Iranian-Polish SpectroDuo ensemble on Monday. SpectroDuo was founded in 2013 by Polish composer and conductor Martyna Kosecka and Iranian composer and musician Idin Samimi

Mofakham. The contemporary music ensemble has a focus on electronic and electroacoustic experimental live shows, sometimes structured in complex forms, and other times performed on free improvisation. SpectroDuo, according to Pan, is taking part at the upcoming Icelandic experimental music festival 'Extreme Chill' in September. The festival, which aims to create connections between Icelandic and foreign musicians, has been founded and organized by Pan in Reykjavík since 2010.

Ambátt, an Icelandic duo act of immersive, 'multidimensional' electronic music

By: Marjohn Sheikhi

On June 23, Tehran hosted a performance by Icelandic duo act Ambátt, which combines electronic music with instruments. The musicians Pan Thorarensen and Thorkell Atlason define their project as a pursuit of immersive, multidimensional and freeform music.

Ambátt is an Icelandic collaborative duo act formed by Pan Thorarensen and Thorkell Atlason in 2014. The two musicians and composers work so well in tandem, so seamlessly, that they even complete each other's sentences during an interview done right after their one-hour live show at Hafez Black Box in downtown Tehran, on a hot summer day on June 23.

The performance was part of the 4th Tehran International Contemporary Music Festival. A very young festival, no doubt, but with great potential and aspirations, still experimenting, still learning, improving, expanding. The festival this year invited musicians from Poland, Iceland, Sweden, and Belgium to accompany the Iranian artists in their pursuit of wooing the ever-esurient ears of music lovers during a five-day program of contemporary music.

Ambátt defines itself as a multidimensional, immersive music act with

a special focus on freeform, experimentation and improvisation. The duo act's emphasis on the liberating and adventurous sense and sound of music was so strong that their show in Tehran was in fact an improvisation.

The following is my interview with the two talented, yet humbled, musicians, Pan Thorarensen and Thorkell Atlason:

So, Ambátt. Icelandic for 'handmaid'?

Thorkell: In a sense, yes. It's a very old word, almost forgotten in our language. But we liked the sound of it --- ambátt, ambience. Our kind of music.

Tell me about this duo act you've got going. How did you two come together? What were your music backgrounds?

Thorkell: We both come from a very different music background. Pan is active in the electronic scene in Reykjavík, while I come from a more classical background. I'm a guitarist and a classical composer. One day, Pan asked me to play some guitar -

Pan: Yeah, and he pulled some tricks!

Thorkell: And we realized that we are in the same group.

Pan: We are also in an electronic trio, called Stereo Hypnosis, which we

founded with my father Óskar in 2006. It was in 2014, I think, that we started the Ambátt project.

What were your visions for Ambátt, and how do you define your music?

Pan: We tried to make something different.

Thorkell: We tried to combine electronic music with instruments. We collaborated with trumpet players and drummers on our album. Now it's just the two of us though, and we try to make ambient music with guitar and field recordings - recording the sounds of nature and combining them with our own music. Our vision for Ambátt was to create multidimensional music. Something to immerse yourself into and forget the world around you. But then again, we are always open to whatever comes to hand.

Performing this kind of music on stage, working ceaselessly with computers, software, samplers and instruments, it all looks more complex to me than an instrument-only performance. How do you manage to keep your concentration on stage?

Thorkell: It's all about experience and practice. We've done it enough times that it all just comes to us when we get on the stage. We even write some of the software ourselves. We've been per-



forming live during the past three years, done a lot of travelling, playing concerts in Europe. And now here we are in Tehran.

What was about music that pulled you in? That steered you away from pursuing other artistic vocations?

Pan: That's kind of difficult to answer!

Thorkell: Well, we both were exposed to music at a very early stage in our lives. There are a lot of music schools in Reykjavik. Pan also got very much influenced by his father, who's a musician and collaborated with us on Stereo Hypnosis.

What does music mean to you now?

Pan: It gives me energy and always manages to make me feel good.

Thorkell: It's something that is always developing and we try to develop with it. We try to get better, to improve with every piece we create. It's comforting.

What's the appeal of electronic music to you?

Pan: I guess our musical backgrounds had a big impact on shaping and guiding our focus onto electronic music.

Thorkell: Also, making sounds with classical instruments, like violin – people have been doing that for hundreds of years. Electronic music, by contrast, is new. It's like an open palette for sounds and you can make your own kind of sounds.

Pan: There is this misconception among people that electronic music is techno music. But there are many styles to work with, techno is just one of them.

And every musician that experiments with the genre adds something of their own styles to this palette...

Pan: Yeah, the styles are endless!

Your debut collaborative album, and the only one to date, 'Flugufen', was

nominated 'Electronic Album of the Year' at Icelandic Music Awards 2017. The album experiments with different music styles. How did it come to be?

Thorkell: That's like another side of Ambátt, to experiment with different styles, to work with beats and vocals, and other instruments. We worked on another album before 'Flugufen', and our debut is in fact a continuation and expansion of the ideas we worked on in the previous album. We brought our different musical influences and combined them together for this album. We then invited other musicians to come play for our album. We had a trumpet player from Berlin, Sebastian Studnitzky, and other musicians as well, to play the drums or do the vocals on different tracks. Some of the tracks are freeform, in a sense, improvised.

Pan: We are working on a new album now, which will be released later this year. We've been recording it in Berlin and Reykjavik.

Thorkell: You could say that it's a continuation of 'Flugufun'. We are getting other people to come and play.

Pan: Our albums are much different from our live shows, though. Here, we are more experimental.

Thorkell: For live shows, we have the idea, but we improvise a lot. We never really know what exactly will happen. We just like to start playing. Sometimes we do it without an audience.

We actually had another Icelandic musician in Tehran, a few years ago; Olafur Arnalds. I remember I asked him about the Icelandic music scene, and if it was true that the general sound of Icelandic music was dominated by dark, melancholic and brooding melodies. He said nothing could be further from the truth. How do you define Iceland's contemporary music scene?

Pan: Well, I think musicians like us are actually pretty underground. Iceland is a small country with a small population and sometimes half of the population is listening to the same artist.

Thorkell: Some say [the somber mood] has something to do with the nature in Iceland. Of course, we can't say whether it's true or not, because we're living there and just playing our music.

Pan: Sometimes when we're playing, we have people tell us, 'ah, that's a very Nordic sound!'

And you're probably like, 'what even is a Nordic sound?'

Thorkell: Yeah, we're just playing our music.

Pan, you are credited with founding and organizing an electronic music festival in Iceland, called "Extreme Chill,". Tell me more about it.

Pan: The festival has been around for ten years. In fact, we'll be having its tenth anniversary this September. It's the longest-running electronic festival in Iceland.

Thorkell: It's a small festival, and we

don't really like to expand it. Just keep it close.

Pan: We want to keep it special. Kind of eclectic, with a cozy, family feeling to it.

How did the idea to found the festival come to you?

Pan: We were recording our album in 2009 in the Westfjords, in north-western Iceland. And we played our released concert there in this town. The location was so beautiful that a year after we decided to organize a small festival there. We had the festival there for four years, and then moved to Berlin in Germany for its fifth anniversary. Then we moved back to Iceland, and we've been organizing the event in Reykjavik for three years now. I think having it in the capital is better, because we can have a bigger crowd, and more venues to play in.

Has there ever been any Iranian musicians at the event?

Pan: No.

Well, you totally should invite some. Our electronic music scene is pretty good.

Pan: Yeah, I wasn't being exactly truthful on that. As a matter of fact, this September we'll have Idin (Samimi Mofakham) and Martyna (Kosecka) from the Iranian-Polish 'SpectroDuo' ensemble at Extreme Chill. They're going to play for us.

[Ambátt also performed a duet with SpectroDuo on June 24 at Tehran Contemporary Music Festival. The Iranian-Polish ensemble has a focus on electronic and electroacoustic experimental live shows, sometimes structured in complex forms, and other times performed on free improvisation.]

You both have performed extensively in Europe and America. How different or similar did you find the experience of performing for an Iranian audience?

Pan: I found that people here are more focused on the performance than in most other places.

Thorkell: Sometimes, when we're

playing, there are people speaking in the background –

Pan: But here you can say that people are actually listening to the music, they're really focused.

Thorkell: The experience was the same in Poland, the Baltic countries –

Pan: Yeah, like in Estonia; people there were really listening to our music. We had the same feeling here. It's a good crowd.

I gather, this is your first time at Tehran Contemporary Music Festival? How were you introduced to it?

Pan: Well, it was through SpectroDuo. They're playing in our festival, we're playing in theirs. It's like an artists' exchange sort of thing.

Thorkell: And it was a long process, too, making this trip. We've been thinking about organizing this trip since October.

So, what do you think of it?

Pan: It's amazing. But there are too many cars.

Thorkell: Yeah, the traffic is insane.

So, apart from insane traffic and the scorching heat of the summer, how have you been finding the experience of being in Tehran for the first time?

Thorkell: It's been great. Everything's so new for us.

Pan: It's very different.

Thorkell: We've never been to the Middle East, you could say. But while the scenery is definitely different, the people here are the same as anywhere else. They're nice and helpful. We had a lot of people helping us to make this trip happen.

Pan: And we're used to the hot weather, because we've been traveling a lot.

Thorkell: But if it gets too much, we can always remain indoors and take advantage of the air conditioners!

Of cramped minds and murdering of self; Servati's ambitious staging of 'Crime and Punishment' in Tehran

By: Marjohn Sheikhi

Iranian director Reza Servati took a more ambitious step in his theater career by staging Fyodor Dostoevsky's complex and highly-praised novel 'Crime and Punishment'. The result was jaw-dropping stage design and convincing performance.

'Crimes and Punishment' is Reza Servati's ambitious stage adaptation of Fyodor Dostoevsky's well-read and highly-praised novel 'Crime and Punishment' (1866), which has been on stage at Tehran's Vahdat Hall since June 11 and will wrap up a month-long successful run on Friday, July 19.

The 36-year-old Servati is just as ambitious as his latest stage production. He appears as the author, the scenic designer and of course the director of a 135-minute long stage- rendition of such an intimidating novel that few stage directors would dare to approach. The production also enjoys a solid cast of familiar names in the Iranian cinema, such as Babak Hamidian, Pantea Bahram, Mehdi Soltani and Tannaz Tabatabaei, which renders itself to a flawless performance no doubt, but inevitably ends up with a considerable hike in the ticket price, which might have failed to convince many casual theater-goers to part ways with their money just to watch a play.

At any rate, the 740-seat opera house in downtown Tehran was never found wanting of enough spectators during the whole showtime, with the best seats in the house selling out in the first few hours after the tickets went on sale. Whether the enthusiasm was because of Servati's already well-established name behind the production ('The List', 'Macbeth', 'The Wonders of Creation' and 'Woyzeck' are some of his most successful works), or the impressive cast, good marketing, the favorable audience feedback, the actual adaptation of a celebrated novel, or all of these reasons, 'Crimes and Punishment' (with a presumably deliberate plural form of the word 'crime') was entitled to its



MEHR NEWSAGENCY
Photo: Behnam Tofighi

success, more or less, with its jaw-dropping stage design, a nearly faithful rendition of Dostoevsky's masterpiece, and moving, flawless acting, even if one would complain about the length of the performance or repetitive moves and long-winded monologues that sometimes dragged on and laid further emphasis on the slow passage of time.

The play's strongest feature, I would argue, was the stage design. A giant three-level structure resembling a building, with a similarly giant tree complete with roots and branches striking through it. Servati, as the scenographer, had made a skillful use of all that Vahdat Hall had to offer, even with the grand drape that one rarely sees dropping to signal the end of the performance.

Actors moved between the levels with ease by climbing the spiraling staircases on either side of the structure, and the lighting was on point and stage props on the middle level, where most of the action took place, were moved around and changed immaculately to signify a change of scenery. The addition of the tree was a clever idea, as it gave the whole solid performance a symbolic layer as well. Perhaps, it is almost too easy to read the tree with its distinct three levels as a Freudian structural model of the psyche, with the roots standing for Id (it's a level where the

bar is situated, where Raskolnikov first meets Marmeladov and is told about the drunkard's pitiful life, his wife Katearina, and his teenage daughter, Sonya), the trunk signifying Ego (this is where Raskolnikov commits murder, is interrogated by the police, and meets Sonya), and the branches indicating Raskolnikov's Superego (this is Raskolnikov's room, where we are witness to his delirium and the slow deterioration of his mind.)

Close on the heels of the impressive stage design is of course Babak Hamidian's arresting and convincing portrait of Raskolnikov's dual personality – one of a murderer who later succumbs to his guilty conscience, and one of a charitable person that gives his money to Sonya's family. With his receding hairline, scruffy chin, and delirious eyes he reminds me too much of Gustaf Skarsgård's Floki in the Vikings drama series. But perhaps that is merely a coincidence. This was Hamidian's third appearance in Servati's stage productions, with the previous two being 'Woyzeck' and 'Macbeth', in both of which he played the leading role. He's perhaps Servati's safe bet when it comes to delirious characters with bouts of nervous breakdown and speeches slurred with insanity and hysteria. But Raskolnikov was not the only character in Servati's 'Crimes and Punishment' inflicted with demen-

tia. Behnaz Jafari was also convincing in her portrayal of Katerina's gradual mental breakdown, especially during the scene leading to her ultimate demise, wherein wrecked by destitute after being evicted from her home, she goes completely mad on the streets, forcing her petrified children to dance and perform for money.

The play itself follows the major events of the novel closely, even quoting directly from the book in many instances. Raskolnikov murders the elderly pawn-broker with an axe, and is forced to kill her half-sister, Lizaveta, when she stumbles upon the scene of murder. In his panic, he fails to grab all the money and leaves a witness behind. His relationships with all other major characters are also the same. His motive for the murder, and his gradual spiral into a feverish, delirious state are just as one already knows from the novel. There are some small changes, though. Marmeladov, for instance, is mobbed and stabbed in the chest and the money he got from Sonya is stolen, instead

of being struck by a carriage; or the Razumikhin character, who takes care of the delirious Raskolnikov is completely absent, perhaps to further highlight the utter loneliness and suffering of the lead character. The play also does away with the epilogue, deciding instead to make the final scene a powerful breakdown of Raskolnikov as he kneels on the cobble street and confesses to the murder as the personification of his guilty conscience takes the axe to the trunk of the tree in a highly symbolic gesture.

'Crimes and Punishment' the play is immersed in acute human suffering, stemmed from destitute, questions of faith, and minds serving as prisons, personal hells, a torture chamber. Every character suffers either in their own ways, or in relation to the lead character. Even the spectator suffers, at the profound sense of erasure wherein the female characters, many as they are, feel nothing like human beings, but mere stage props, in the servitude of the male characters who

drive the narrative forward in their pursuit of forgiveness and the evasive sense of clarity.

The music was captivating, especially during the final scene, but by no means dominating, which was a pity. Unlike his 'List', there was no trace of grotesque dancing and music to give a layer of absurd to the glaring sense of pain and loss. The only dance in 'Crimes and Punishment' was Katerina's feverish one on the street at the peak of her mental breakdown, and it was painful to watch in its realistic overtones. There was no black comedy or grotesque element to the play this time; only bare, blatant human suffering, and ghosts that walked on the stage, seen by those 'running a fever' and with a 'guilty conscience'.

"And do you know, Sonya, that low ceilings and tiny rooms cramp the soul and the mind?," said Servati's Raskolnikov, quoting a passage from chapter 4 of the novel, as he was lying on a bench during his confession to Sonya. "I murdered myself."

Badab-e Surt, seven colors springs

By: Zahra Mirzafarjouyan

Badab-e Surt is a rare geologic place which attracts geology lovers to one of the most beautiful tourist attractions in Mazandaran province, northern Iran. It comprises a range of stepped travertine terrace formations that has been created over thousands of years as flowing water from two mineral hot springs cooled and deposited carbonate minerals on the mountainside.



The beautiful springs of Badab-e Surt, also known as color springs, attracts a lot of tourists to this place every year. It is located 95 kilometers south of Sari city, Capital of Mazandaran province and 7 kilometers west of Orost village. It sits at 1,840 meters above sea level and is the culmination of thousands of years of limestone deposited by water flowing from two mineral hot springs during Pleistocene and Pliocene geological periods.

Badab-e Surt includes two springs with different natural characteristics in terms of color, smell, taste and volume of the water. The first spring has very salty water that gathers in a small natural pool; its water is useful for medicinal properties, especially as a cure for rheumatism and some types of skin diseases, migraine and foot pain. It is appropriate at summer and also, will not freeze in winter due to its salt.

The second spring located in the northwest of the first spring has a sour taste and is mostly orange and red mainly due to the large iron oxide sediments at its outlet. In one part of a floor of the pond, there is a deep hole is called the Bermuda Erost. The depth of this hole is estimated 98 meters.

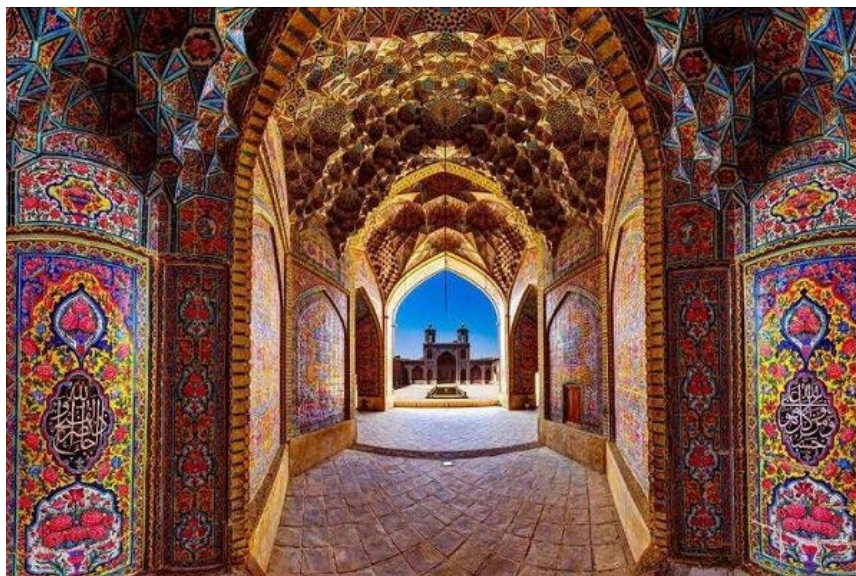
Badab-e Surt was recorded as the second Iran's natural heritage list in 2008. It is the second largest salt spring of the world after Turkey's Pamukkale. It is one of the most important programs of Iranian authorities to register it on UNESCO World Heritage List as a unique natural place.

There are only six somewhat similar spring like Badab-e Surt in the world; Pamukkale in Turkey, Bagni San Filippo in Italy, Agoura El Hierro in Mexico, White-Water Terraces (Baishuitai) in China, yellow stones in the US and The Pink Terraces (Otuka-puarangi) in New Zealand.

The place gets its name from a combination of the Persian words for "gassed water" and the old name of the nearest village, which means "intensity."

The best time to visit Badab-e-Surt is April and May, Although it is beautiful in all seasons. The most breathtaking scenes and wonderful view of light reflection on the ponds are during sunset or sunrise. When the lights shine the traces, it makes the ponds glow with red, orange, brown and yellow.

Nasir-ol-Molk Mosque, stunning whirling colors



By: Zahra Mirzafarjouyan

One of the most beautiful and photographed pieces of architecture in southern Iran, is Nasir-ol-Molk Mosque. It is one of the tourist attractions of Iran's historic city of Shiraz which is known for its colorful lights that are formed by stained glass windows.

Shiraz is one of the most beautiful cities in south of Iran, where many tourists visit it every year. It is one of the oldest cities of ancient Persia and is known as the city of poets, literature, flowers and gardens. It is one of the main tourism sites in Iran and its cultural heritage is of global importance. Due to many historical, cultural, religious and natural attractions, Shiraz has always attracted many tourists. One of these magnificent places is Nasir-ol-molk Mosque.

Nasir-ol-molk Mosque is one the tourist attractions of Shiraz which was built during the Qajar dynasty at the end of the 19th century. It is one of the most unique and different mosques in Iran. The mosque is famous for its colored glasses and its tiles are unique in their kind.

This mosque is called by many different names. Mostly known as the "Pink Mosque" because its tiles are beautifully decorated with a pre-eminently pinkish rose color, it is also called the "Mosque of colors," the "Rainbow Mosque" or the "Kaleidoscope Mosque".

It is located in a region in the southern part of Lotf Ali Khan Zand Street. The mosque was built by order of Mirza Hasan Ali Nasir ol Molk, a Qajar ruler. Mohammad Hasan-e-Memar, an Iranian architect, and Mohammad Reza KashiSaz were two designers of this mosque. The construction of this elegant mosque was finished after 12 years.

It is 2890 square meters and considered as one of the most valuable mosques in Iran in terms of construction, especially tiling and muqarnas (a form of ornamented vaulting in Islamic architecture). It has two shabestan (an underground space that can be usually found in traditional architecture of mosques, houses, and schools in ancient Iran which were usually used during summers) in east and west.

The eastern Shabestan has seven columns that are located in the middle of the space and are in a row. The most amazing part of the mosque is the western Shabestan. There are twelve columns which are placed in two rows of six. Seven arches are located between the two pillars, and at the end, there is an attractive tiled altar. The floor of the altar is made of marble and its surface is lower than the floor of the Shabestan. The western Shabestan has seven wooden doors with colored glasses that open to the courtyard.

With dazzling stained glass, thousands of painted tiles on the ceiling and Persian rugs covering the floor, this

place of worship is a gorgeous rainbow of color in every direction, like stepping into a kaleidoscope.

There is an open courtyard with a rectangular pool in the center of the mosque, surrounded by flowers. The building's facade features dozens of Islamic arches, adding to the beauty of the light show from the stained glass.

Despite other mosques, Nasir-ol-molk Mosque has no dome, which indicates that this religious building was quite personal and not used by the public. The tiling of this mosque is unique and the use of pink color is one of the features of the mosque which is not usual in any other Iranian mosques.

In autumn and winter, when the sunlight shines through the colorful glasses, and reflexes it on blue mosaics, make a dazzling view inside this mosque which making this mosque outstandingly aesthetic among other mosques of Iran.

Recently, Nasir-ol-molk Mosque has been lighted at nights as well; the light passes through the colored glasses and spreads into the yard and all over the mosque.

Nasir-ol-molk Mosque is still used for worship. It was registered in Iran's National Heritage on February 1955 under the registration number of 369.

The best time to visit Nasir-ol-molk Mosque is early in the morning before 9 a.m when the hall and its Persian carpets are illuminated with a kaleidoscope of patterned flecks of light.



Astronomical tourism; What Iran has to offer to stargazers

By: Morteza Rahmani

Tourism industry has gained momentum in recent years with the government redoubling efforts to boost the sector for increasing foreign currency revenues and creating jobs under the current economic conditions.

Iran is a country of immense beauty, charm, and ancient-world mystery. From the Caspian Sea in the north to the Persian Gulf in the south, Iran is filled with numerous tourist attractions—mostly untouched.

Among many attractions, astronomy tourism, a type of tour which can flow a big sum of money to the sector's pockets, has garnered a lot of attention lately.

Iran – a land covered with wide deserts in the eastern and central parts, where the melody of the wind is the only sound that reaches the visitor's ears – offers some of the most pristine star-gazing conditions in the world.

To make the best of such opportunities, travel agencies have been trying to organize tours on this ancient fascination to allow interested individuals to witness the beauty of the night sky in all its glory, far away from cities' light pollution.

Worth to mention, the deserts of Dasht-e Kavir and Dasht-e Lut provide clear skies for astronomy enthusiasts, making them some of the greatest places on the planet to witness the Heavens, and learn about the mythology of the stars, find constellations in the sky, listen to their stories in an interactive experience.

There are many other ancient sites in the country used to be the centers for mathematical astronomy. It should come as a little surprise that such places have now become top travel destinations for the aficionados.

Mathematical astronomy was used to build multistory ziggurat towers, such as Chogha Zanbil in Susa (in present-day

Khuzestan province), dating back to the Elamite Era. Ziggurats functioned as observatories; at seven-floors high, ziggurats were used by astronomers to observe and record the movement of celestial bodies. Tables with astronomical computations of the distances between stars have been preserved and contain information on the basic fixed stars and constellations, their relative positions, and periods of the solar rising and settings, among others.

Ka'ba-ye Zartosht in Naqsh-e Rostam (located in present-day Shiraz), which was built during the Achaemenid Era, bears surprisingly detailed inscriptions of the cycle of days.

In the following centuries, more advanced structures called Chahar Taghi (meaning 'four arches' in Farsi) were used by astronomers to create calendars and almanacs. The most famous of such structures are the Niasar Chahar Taghi, Isfahan Province and the Radakan Chahar Taghi, Khorasan Razavi Province.

Sadly, not everyone has the time to take an astronomy tour; life has a habit of getting in the way of living; so, the stars have been brought to the city.

Gonbad-e Mina Planetarium

The Gonbad-e Mina Planetarium, located in the Abbasabad Hills area of Tehran, is designed to show the night sky in all its glory – even during the day.

The planetarium makes sure everyone gets a chance to gaze upon the stars without the nuisance of light pollution.

Featuring a full-dome 3D planetarium, Gonbad-e-Mina is said to be the largest in the Middle East. It provides astounding views of the sky reflected upon the ceiling.

There is a projector at the center of the planetarium and separate projectors for the Sun, the Moon and other planets and stars. It has been primarily built for presenting educational and entertaining shows on astronomy.

One of the most intriguing star shows at the planetarium is the projections of the night sky at various latitudes and

longitudes at any moment in the past. Visitors are also treated to the position of unique constellations as seen from the northern and southern hemispheres.

The projection system, paired with the digital surround sound channels provide a surreal experience as you are taken on a journey through space.

The planetarium also houses a museum, showcasing ancient artifacts used thousands of years ago to observe and study the sky. One such artifact is the 2000-year-old Parthian Battery - discovered in the ancient city of Ctesiphon in 1936 – which is said to have been used as an electrical storage device. Another item of note is an astrolabe; a very ancient astronomical computer for solving problems relating to time and the position of the Sun and stars in the sky.

Other projects

There are a few other projects underway across the country to boost astronomical tourism capacities.

A major one is the Iran National Observatory in Kashan, Isfahan province.

The observatory is currently under construction and is slated to become operational by Autumn 2020.

Its design includes three stations with one large and two smaller telescopes, making it possible for the aficionados to enjoy looking deep into the skies.

The government is paying special attention to the tourism sector in line with the policies to diversify its revenue sources and reduce reliance on selling crude oil.

According to World Travel and Tourism Council's annual research, the travel and tourism sector grew at 1.9% to contribute 1,158 trillion rials (\$8.83 billion) or 6.5% of overall GDP and 1,334 jobs (5.4% of total employment) to the economy in 2018.

The WTTC report also shows international visitors spent 168,954 billion rials (\$1.28 billion) in Iran in 2018. The council expects the number of international arrivals to stand at 6.5 million in 2019.

Air of caution at 11th Tehran Auction, total proceeds still set record high

By: Marjohn Sheikhi

There was a palpable air of caution at the 11th Tehran Auction on July 5, yet the total proceeds of over 42 billion tomans still set a record high, with 79 classic and modern Iranian artworks under the hammer.

Some people invest their money in stocks, some in real estate, some in dollar, and some in art. Tehran Auction is the major venue in Iran for marketing artworks, classical or contemporary, by big names or no-names, old, young or no longer living, priced as low as 30 million to over 4 billion tomans.

The Auction, which was launched as a private initiative in June 2012, held its 11th edition at its usual venue at the luxurious Azadi Hotel in northern part of the capital on Friday evening. The place

was already jammed-packed when the Auction went underway at 19:00, with some bidders having to remain standing for the entire duration of two and a half hours. As many as 800 people were present in the room, including 140 registered bidders.

In this edition, a collection of 79 classic and modern artworks by 60 artists went under the hammer, generating a record high of 42.204 billion tomans (\$10,048,571 at official rate and \$3,836,727 at market rate), driving the total sale up by almost 35% compared to the last Auction of both classic and modern art in June 2018. Although a one-billion-toman-priced work was removed from the collection (an Untitled mixed media on paper by Hossein Zenderoudi), six works did not sell, and some were sold at the reserve price, the total

proceeds still registered a record high, due to as many as 12 works hammered at over one billion tomans.

The atmosphere of the Auction last night was perhaps a little more subdued than the 10th edition in January, with bidders being extra cautious and contemplative while raising the bid, especially on works that were priced at over one billion tomans. The shock of the event was when the final bidding on a work by Mohammad Ehsai, a contemporary artist whose work is characterized by a melding of Arabic calligraphy, graphic design, and modernist abstraction, did not reach the reserve price of 1-1.5 billion tomans, and thus was not sold.

Meanwhile, some artists set their national records last night, including Jazeh Tabatabai, Mahmoud Farshchian, Aydin



Aghdashloo, and Leyli Matin Daftari.

The most expensive piece sold at the 11th Tehran Auction was 'The Poet's Head' by Parviz Tanavoli (b. 1937), a bronze sculpture made in 2011, which was hammered at 3.2 billion tomans, roughly \$7.6 million (OR)/\$290,910 (MR). Tanavoli is a well-established name in auctions – domestic and overseas – whose bronze sculptures are characterized by combining the semiotics of Persian and Arabic language with the formal language of abstract sculpture.

The next most expensive work was an Untitled mirror mosaic piece by Monir (Shahroudy) Farmanfarmaian (1922-2019), executed in 2017. The work was sold at 3 billion tomans, roughly \$7.1 million (OR)/\$272,728 (MR). Farmanfarmaian, the highly prolific artist who was best known for her mirror mosaics and geometric drawings that set records at Tehran auctions, passed away at the age of 97 this April. The collection last night included two more works by her; 'Blue Sky' (2005) which was hammered at 2.1 billion tomans (the fourth highest-priced work), and an Untitled watercolor painting of a vase of flowers

(1966) which sold at 340 million tomans.

An artwork by notable Iranian poet and a painter, Sohrab Sepehri (1928-1980), also made an appearance at 11th Tehran Auction. An Untitled oil on canvas (circa 1960s), which sold under the hammer at 2.2 billion tomans (roughly \$5.2 million/\$200,000). The painting was offered at Christie's Auction in Oct. 2017.

Another work by Sepehri, an Untitled oil painting executed circa 1960s, was the fifth highest priced work at the Auction, sold at 2 billion tomans. The work belonged to Dr. Mohammad Ali Movahed's private collection, and was offered at the São Paulo Art Biennial in Sep. 1963, Brazil. The proceeds of the sale of this work was said to be donated to the Safaye Omid Art and Culture Institute in the Iranian city Tabriz, for the purpose of building a school and public library and for granting scholarships to honor students.

The sixth most expensive piece was an Untitled gouache and watercolor painting by Mahmoud Farshchian (b. 1929), who is known worldwide for his miniature paintings. The work, depicting the crucifixion of Jesus Christ,

was sold at 2 billion tomans (roughly \$4.7 million/\$181,819).

Although one of Zenderoudi's works was removed from the collection, another oil painting by him, 'SINE+LAME' (1970), sold at 2 billion tomans. The artwork was used as the face for the Auction's catalogue.

Other notable sales include a metal sculpture by Jazeh Tabataba'i (1930-2008) sold at 1.6 billion tomans, an oil on canvas triptych titled 'Galactic Destruction' by Aydin Aghdashloo (b. 1940), hammered at 1.6 billion tomans, another bronze sculpture, 'Heech' by Parviz Tanavoli, sold at 1.6 billion tomans, an impressive artwork of oil on aluminum mounted on fiberboard by Behjat Sadr (1924-2009), hammered at 1.5 billion tomans, and a beautiful mixed media on canvas artwork by Masoud Arabshahi (b. 1935), which sold at one billion tomans.

Other works were hammered at under one billion tomans. The least-priced work sold at the Auction last night was an Untitled mixed media work by Jamshid Samavatian (b. 1938), hammered at \$40 million tomans (\$95,239/\$3,637).

For lovers of Persian handicrafts: 'Parvaneh' Friday bazaar is made for you!



By: Marjohn Sheikhi

If you are tourist in Tehran yearning to see the best and the most of Iranian handicrafts in one place, I suggest you pay a visit to the 'Friday Bazaar' at Parvaneh Parking Garage on Jomhuri Street.

As the name suggests, the bazaar is set up on Fridays only (any other day, it's just an ordinary, multi-floored parking garage jam-packed with cars), open from 8 AM to 4 PM (better to visit in the morning, though, as the place becomes overcrowded and difficult to navigate through as the day progresses). The easiest way to get there is to use the subway. While it is true that being underground deprives you of much sight-seeing, Tehran's subway system is actually pretty decent, very clean and efficient, if only a bit bland in appearance, and it helps you avoid traffic jams and the scorching sun if you made the brave choice of traveling to Tehran during summer. On the subway, get off at Sa'adi Station on Line 1, and from there, it's a four-minute walk up the Jomhuri St. to your destination.

Over the years, the 'Parvaneh' Friday Bazaar has become an iconic spot for many artists, artisans and sellers from all across Iran, who gather every Friday in downtown Tehran to put their handicrafts, antique objects, and so many trinkets and weird-looking works of art that you can't find anywhere else, on sale for the interested visitors and tourists.

The first floor gives you a staggering view of a huge collection of new and second-hand antique objects, such as very old jewelry that probably has a more spiritual and aesthetic value than a monetary one, paintings, books, phonographs and old vinyls, really old telephones that don't work, type-

writers, polaroids, traditional samovars (a metal container for boiling water for tea), sewing machines, and many more weird household appliances that have stopped being much of use a long time ago.

But the second floor is probably where you'd like to see first before you get yourself lost in the sea of items on sale or squashed in the rushing crowd. This place is basically a handicrafts heaven. I have seen many tourists (especially the European ones) charmed and awed (and maybe a little bit intimidated, too) by the insane variety of colorful traditional clothes, leather products, hand-woven rugs, delicate wood and metal works, copper, brass, or silver containers inlaid with turquoise (these are a true work of art), 'Termeh' hand-woven cloths (so beautiful and subtle and intricate you'd cry), 'Ghalamkari' on hand-painted tapestries, and fantastic works of art created by vitreous enamel on metal, glass, ceramics and stones.

The third floor, meanwhile, is probably less traditional in its collections of handicrafts, but the modern works of art created by young artists (clothes, jewelry, toys, buttons, etc.) lack nothing in creativity, aesthetics, intricacy and colors. Many of these artists have a profile on Instagram, showcasing their merchandise. If you see something you like, you can place an order for it, and go pick it up at the bazaar on a Friday.

There is too much to see (and buy!) in this place, so make sure you plan carefully for your purchases (or risk having to go back home on foot and with empty pockets.) But you don't have to worry about buyer's remorse, at least. The things you have bought at the Friday Bazaar (or Jomeh Bazaar, as is said in Persian), rest assured, you can't find them anywhere else in the world.