US Traces in Iraq, Lebanon Unrest
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Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has warned that the United States and Western spy services, funded by certain reactionary countries of the region, have been fomenting turmoil and insecurity in other regional states, calling for vigilance against such enemy plots.

The Leader made the remarks on October 30 in the wake of the latest bout of violent protests that have gripped Iraq and Lebanon for several weeks.

Ayatollah Khamenei described insecurity as “the biggest damage” a country could suffer, warning against plots being pursued by the enemies to rob regional countries of security.

The elements instigating such “dangerous hostilities” are known, said the Leader, adding that “the US and the Western intelligence services, financed by certain reactionary countries of the region, are behind such incidents.”

“The priority of sympathizers of those countries – such as Iraq and Lebanon which face certain problems – is to cure insecurity. Their people too should know that although they have legitimate demands, those demands can only be met within the law. The enemy wants to upset legal structures. When there is no legal structure in a country and when there is a void in this regard, nothing can be done. No positive course of action can be adopted.”

The Leader said the Iraqi and Lebanese nations need to remain vigilant and realize that the enemies in fact intend to disrupt their domestic legal structures and create a vacuum in those states, advising people in both countries to follow up on their “legitimate demands” through legal channels.

“The top priority for them is to overcome insecurity,” Ayatollah Khamenei said, in an address to those who are concerned for the well-being of the people of Iraq and Lebanon.

The Leader recalled that Iran had been the target of similar conspiracies in the past, but that the country managed to thwart those plots thanks to the nation’s vigilance and the preparedness of its Armed Forces.

“They have devised such plans for our dear country as well. Fortunately, the nation entered the arena on time. It was vigilant and the Armed Forces were present as well and they helped to foil the plot. This cure exists for all the countries who face this problem. This is the first point. You should know that you are the preservers of security – in other words, the preservers of the most important asset that a nation has. Security is a key to other assets.”
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran has emphasized the need for unity and rapport in Lebanon after the country’s Prime Minister Saad Hariri resigned from his post on October 29.

In a statement, Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran Seyyed Abbas Mousavi reacted to the current situation in Lebanon after Prime Minister Saad Hariri turned in his resignation to President Michel Aoun.

“We hope the Lebanese nation and government would successfully get through such serious and sensitive juncture with rapport,” Mousavi noted.

The spokesperson also stressed the need for stability and constancy of the friendly and brotherly country of Lebanon, adding, “The Islamic Republic of Iran emphasizes the need for the solidarity, unity and rapport among all Lebanese clans, parties and characters in order to maintain the country’s stability and security and to respond to the legitimate demands of the Lebanese people at a calm atmosphere.”

The protests first began on October 17, hitting Lebanon at a time of worsening financial crisis — banks were closed for a 10th day on Oct. 29 along with schools and businesses.

Unemployment stands at more than 20 percent, according to official figures.

The Lebanese Finance Ministry says the national debt is hovering around $85 billion, which accounts for more than 150 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

Foreign Ministry’s reaction to Iraq developments

Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran Seyyed Abbas Mousavi says Tehran is closely and sensitively monitoring the ongoing developments and protests in Iraq that have killed dozens of people.

In a statement on Oct. 27 in reaction to the ongoing developments in Iraq, Mousavi said, “The Islamic Republic of Iran supports the Iraqi people’s demands and requests, which have been clearly highlighted in the statements and remarks by the Iraqi religious authorities and Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi.”

Mousavi also expressed deep regret over the recent incidents in Iraq that have killed and injured tens of people and caused damages to public property, at the attempts to take advantage of the public demands, and at the escalation of violence.

“We are confident that the Iraqi government, nation and religious authorities will be able to overcome the problems and work on the prosperity of Iraq through solidarity.”

“Since the formation of the new Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran has always been a supporter of the Iraqi government and nation, and has offered its capacities to the friendly, brotherly and neighboring state, Iraq, at sensitive junctures,” Mousavi concluded.
Secretary-General of Lebanese Hezbollah Hassan Nasrallah has warned against the prospects of political attacks against Lebanon by international and regional powers.

Speaking on Oct. 25, Hezbollah leader said that the Resistance movement will not accept the resignation of the Lebanese government as a solution to end the recent popular protests in the country.

He said that Hezbollah ways ready to discuss ways to end the political sectarianism in Lebanon. Meanwhile, he said that social livelihood demands have been diverted to target the Resistance movement.

He called certain individuals and groups who are behind the protest as corrupt people who are pursuing conspiracies from some regional and international powers.

Certain embassies and suspicious sides are funding protests to achieve their own objectives, what sorts of foreign agendas they are pursuing.

Some corrupt elements have infiltrated in popular movement in Lebanon, according to Hezbollah chief.

Meanwhile, the Hezbollah leader described the protest as spontaneous that raise legitimate demands, while warning that certain sides are seeking to exploit the popular protest to settle accounts with Hezbollah.

In another address on Nov. 1, Nasrallah lashed out at the US for its corruptive role in hindering Lebanon’s path of development.

“The US has always been an obstacle vis a vis Lebanese to make any developments or reformations,” Nasrallah said on Friday in a speech made at the memorial ceremony held for the departure of the Islamic researcher Sayyed Jaafar Mortada.

“The American role creates disruption and crises,” added the Hezbollah chief, Al-Manar reported.

Stressing the resistance’s stance against the hostile measures of the US, he said, “The resistance always keeps its promise and is always ready to defend the Lebanese territories.”

Regarding the recent unrest in the country, he said, “We call for dialogue between political parties, parliamentarians, and honest protest leaders.”

“Our country needs everyone and everyone must shoulder his responsibility,” he stressed.

Noting that “Hezbollah was never in control of any government that passed,” he said, “This is only an attempt to hold Hezbollah responsible for the corruption in the country.”

“Even when we say that we don’t support the resignation of any government, it is for the sake of the country not Hezbollah’s,” he underlined.

Pointing to the resignation of PM Saad Hariri, Nasrallah said, the resistance did not support his resignation. “It was his choice and he had his own reasons.”

“Now the Prime Minister resigned, this means that the whole government fell, so there is no chance to implement any form of reformations or have an economic hope, we just have to wait.”

Nasrallah further said, “Whatever the new government was formed of, its major goals must be to regain the people’s trust. This is why this government must have all the trustworthy elements: Seriousness, constant work, setting priorities, clearance and transparency.”

“We never asked protestors to leave the streets, we asked them to give change for the government to make reformations,” he added.

Elsewhere, he commented on an Israeli drone that was targeted a day prior by the resistance in the Lebanese skies, saying, “This proves that the resistance has a military leadership that works without getting influenced by any internal developments.”
Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani, has penned an article in Persian about the adverse presence of US in the region.

1. Three clear remarks by senior US officials in the past two months reveal some truths which the country’s governing body previously lacked the courage to accept and express.

2. After Yemeni Ansarullah’s drone attack on Aramco oil facilities in Saudi Arabia and in response to Saudi Kingdom’s pressure to confront the perpetrators of this attack, US officials clearly emphasized on not meeting the Saudi request and it was announced that it is the Saudi Arabia which has been attacked not the US.

3. Following consecutive political and military defeats in the region, the $8 Trillion costs of US military presence in the region came to light and it was announced that America’s presence in the Middle East has yielded no result and was a foolish act.

4. Recently and after Turkey’s aggression on northern Syria and the US’s turning its back on its Kurd allies, American officials admitted to having caused a bloody war in Iraq under the false pretext of weapons of mass destruction and stated that stepping into the trap of the Middle East was the worst decision America has ever made in history.

5. It seems that America’s governing body has reached this conclusion through actual experiences that the equation of power and political geometry in the world have changed, especially at its heart, the Middle East; and that the United States can no longer claim reign over the international system despite all its massive propaganda.

6. America has come to realize that it has only two ways to go; either it has to just be content with an empty mask of being a global superpower through bearing its great costs, or to take a realistic approach, acknowledge the present reality of the world, and free itself from enormous costs of this exposed show.

7. The US governing body has realized that today, for any reason, it has no superpower requirements and returning to the peak era is impossible and out of reach; its inability to execute strategic projects such as ‘partitioning the Middle East’, ‘Deal of the Century’, ‘regime change in Iran’, ‘instating Saudi Arabia as the regional police’, ‘Yemen war’, ‘Afghan peace’, and ‘Syrian crisis’ and etc. has been proved to all.

8. The US government’s bitter but instructive admissions have led many West Asian nations, even those who have been preparing the grounds for and hosting America’s presence in the region for years, to acknowledge that ‘the Middle East without America is a safer place’.
The US Special Representative for Iran, Brian Hook, claimed in an interview with Alhurra recently that Iran should decide between its economy or talks with the United States.

The official has called Trump’s policies against Iran “diplomatic” and that Trump has acted so “generously” in this regard!

Hook also said Washington should not reduce sanctions to have a meeting with Iran.

It is obvious that after a nearly three-year failure against Iran’s power, US officials have resorted to a dichotomous approach.

Early in his presidency, Trump and his supporters warned Iran to choose between a complete breakdown of its system or meet US demands. But today following the heavy defeat of the “maximum pressure” strategy against Tehran, the White House’s officials have taken a few steps back and are talking about wrecking Iran’s economy.

On the other hand, many US officials’ measures for confronting Iran have turned out to be wrong, since Trump sought to overthrow the Islamic Republic system by implementing John Bolton’s anti-Iran plans. But, he was finally forced to dismiss Bolton after lots of strategic and tactical blunders. This situation got to the point that Trump, who had appointed Bolton as his national security adviser, blamed him for the mess.

Hook’s recent remarks, also repeated by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, are just an absurd and useless attempt to create duality and dilemma for Iran.

“The Iranian regime must fundamentally change its behavior and act like a normal nation. Or it can watch its economy collapse,” Pompeo said in a tweet on Friday.

In remarks almost a year ago, Pompeo also said Iranian officials must listen to Washington “if they want their people to eat”.

Obviously, there is no dilemma as Iran has rebuffed US demands and its economy has not collapsed. In contrast, there is the dichotomy of Trump’s fall and unconditional acknowledgment to Iranian power.

Now, it is Trump’s turn to choose one of these options.

Indeed, the harder the US tries to deal with Iran dichotomously, the costs of the United States’ defeat against a “powerful Iran” will be increased. This is a matter that many US foreign policy strategists have confirmed.
Marc Finaud, the former French Foreign Ministry spokesman, says that the INSTEX mechanism is operational but has a limited scope.

A senior member of Geneva Centre for Security Policy also says that “Regarding US sanctions in other areas, European companies may be deterred by the impact of secondary sanctions and will most likely not sacrifice their interests on the American market if they have less stakes in Iran. Unfortunately, the EU can offer some legal protection, but the ultimate decisions will be made by the companies.”

Following is the full text of the interview:

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian warned that the United States and Iran have only one month to implement the Paris plan to keep JCPOA alive. Is France in a position to warn against keeping things that the Europeans themselves failed to fulfill?

It is always difficult and it takes time to convince all the EU member states but since there is so far no alternative to the French proposals for mediation to salvage the JCPOA, it is likely that the French initiative will be supported by the EU.

Does this warning mean a defeat in French diplomatic efforts to mediate between Iran and the United States?

French efforts are continuing, so it may be premature to call them a defeat. But the opposition from the United States does make such efforts a hard challenge.

Iran has announced that by early November it will take new measures to reduce its obligations in JCPOA. Why doesn’t Europe make a serious effort to preserve the JCPOA and just announce daily that the country has joined INSTEX but nothing actually happens?

The INSTEX mechanism was always considered as a limited step to facilitate trade in humanitarian goods. The EU and its member states until now have complied with all their commitments in the JCPOA and regret the resumption of U.S. sanctions that also affect their companies wishing to trade with Iran.

Do you think that the INSTEX mechanism will be operational in light of US warnings about sanctions on the companies that work with them and meet Iran’s needs?

The INSTEX mechanism is operational but has a limited scope. Regarding US sanctions in other areas, European companies may be deterred by the impact of secondary sanctions and will most likely not sacrifice their interests on the American market if they have less stakes in Iran. Unfortunately, the EU can offer some legal protection, but the ultimate decisions will be made by the companies.
Bolton’s firing should never be confused with change of course in Trump’s foreign policy towards Iran: Entessar

Interview by Javad Heirannia

Nader Entessar, Professor Emeritus of Political Science from University of South Alabama says that Bolton’s firing was due primarily to personality conflicts in the upper-echelon of Trump’s foreign policy team and had very little to do with policy differences toward Iran.

He adds that “In fact, the whole foreign policy team is composed of hawks.”

Entessar says “Iran should never confuse Bolton’s firing with a change of course in Trump’s foreign policy towards Iran.”

Following is the full text of the interview:

What is your assessment of John Bolton’s dismissal? Will the militant faction become a minority with this layoff?

Bolton’s firing was due primarily to personality conflicts in the upper-echelon of Trump’s foreign policy team and had very little to do with policy differences toward Iran. In fact, the whole foreign policy team is composed of hawks. Iran should never confuse Bolton’s firing with a change of course in Trump’s foreign policy towards Iran. There has been no change in this regard, nor there will be one in the future under Mike Pompeo’s management of the US State Department.

What effect will Bolton’s dismissal have on US foreign policy toward Iran?

As I indicated in my previous answer, John Bolton’s firing will have minimal or no impact on US foreign policy toward Iran. Bolton was simply a bolt in the vast cog of the US anti-Iran foreign policy machinery that has deep roots in various elements of the US government, including the US congress.

It was speculated that Trump would be on a diplomatic course with Iran after dismissal of Bolton. On the other hand, Yemeni attacks on Aramco have prompted Washington to declare that it is ready to fight Iran. What is your assessment of this situation?

This incident clearly demonstrates that Bolton’s dismissal didn’t make a dent in the Trump administration’s Iran policy and that the pro-war hawks in the US are still very much in charge.

Since Pompeo has a Bolton-like approach, can Trump change Pompeo as well?

As Trump has demonstrated throughout the course of his presidency, nobody in his administration is immune from being fired. The only exception to this rule is the case of his immediate relatives, like his daughter Ivanka and his son-in-law Jared Kushner. So far, Mike Pompeo has been an obedient soldier and has not challenged any of Trump’s major foreign policy moves. As long he continues to play this role, Pompeo is probably safe.

Given the change of a person like Bolton, will Israeli policies in the US State Department fade or shift?

No. Israel has a staunch and unflinching supporter in Mike Pompeo and his entire US State Department’s upper echelon. Pompeo is the most loyal Likud supporter who has headed the State Department in many years.
Europe’s pretext for evading Iran’s demands

By: Hamid Bayati

The opportunity to save the JCPOA (the nuclear deal concluded between Iran and the 5+1 group in 2015) is narrowing down, but the European signatories of the international deal, known as EU3 (Britain, France and Germany), are not daring enough to counter the US and accept the expenses of their resistance against Washington’s illegal withdrawal from the JCPOA.

The European countries are evading their responsibility to fulfill their commitments under the pretext that companies are private, claiming that due to the companies’ non-governmental status they are not able to force them to trade with or invest in Iran.

Based on the evidence, the EU3 can grant legal guarantees to their companies to protect them against the US sanctions.

Shireen Hunter, a professor at Georgetown University, has said, “The current laws are not very effective in countering American sanctions. Moreover, the real issue is that Europe does not want to escalate confrontation with America for the sake of Iran.”

The European countries’ refusal to fulfill their commitments to the nuclear deal is mostly different from their resistance approach against the US pressure in 1996 when Washington imposed sanctions against Cuba without companionship of its European partners. In 1996, the European nations managed to resist against the US via ratifying new laws. Now there is a question whether Europe is currently able to resist against the US pressure and unilateralism as they did in case of Cuba?

Professor Hunter says, “Iran issue is more complicated than Cuba because it is linked to other Middle East-related issues. Europe has very little economic relations with Cuba. Moreover, America was not so keen in getting European cooperation regarding Cuba than it has been vis a vis Iran. The main issue is that Europe does not want to endanger its economic interests in America for Iran’s sake.”

Bloomberg news network’s analyst Janothan Tirone also believes that the European Union’s reactions towards the US measures against Iran and the JCPOA is mostly summarized in political gestures, holding meetings and issuing statements in support of the nuclear deal. The analyst says Europe has been very slow in applying policies to decrease the US sanction pressure on Iran.

He further said last summer Europe unveiled a new version of blocking law to counter the US secondary sanctions.

The blocking law approach allows the European companies to lodge a complaint before the European courts and demand compensation if they face the US sanctions for their trade with Iran. But the said blocking law approach has not thus far been implemented.

The EU still lacks a united policy to turn rhetoric to applicable policies. In the meantime, deep engagement of the European and US economies means that European politicians do not want to face severe reaction from European companies which do not want to choose one at the cost of the US market.

At the end, it should be mentioned that the European countries’ action over preliminary nuclear deal in 2003 and also over the JCPOA testifies their disloyalty to their promises. The European signatories of the JCPOA have not thus far done any acceptable measure to convince Iran to stay in the deal. Now, instead of pressing Brussels to protect the JCPOA as an important international deal, Paris has given a one-month time to Iran to agree with French President Emmanuel Macron’s plan to save the deal.

Measures adopted by both the EU and the US since May 2018, when Donald Trump withdrew Washington from the JCPOA, have proved that Tehran must never rely on the Western side’s promises and that Brussels must shoulder its responsibility to convince Iran to remain in the deal.
Middle East OSCE would be a major development to settle regional disputes: Logoglu

Turkish veteran politician says creation of a Middle East OSCE, led by Turkey, Iran and others of the region would be a major development to maintain regional security.

Saudi young prince is getting more familiar with the consequences of the illegal war he waged against Yemeni people in 2015 with the green light of the US. Yemenis retaliatory drone attack on Saudi Aramco oil installations cut Saudi oil production seriously which is going to be replaced by US in global oil market.

Pushing the Saudi Arabia to the quagmire of Yemen by the US is interpreted in line with the US long term policy to grab share of other oil producing countries by 2024 as Washington is planning to export 9 million barrel of oil a day thanks to production of Shale oil which has changed the oil consuming country to a major oil producing one.

Dr. Osman Faruk Logoglu Turkish veteran politician and a senior member of CHP was interviewed on the issue.

Touching upon the possible consequences of recent retaliatory Yemeni’s attack on Saudi Aramco plants and the US efforts to drive major oil producing companies out of oil market, logoglu said, “Disrupting the oil flow from the Persian Gulf and removing Venezuela from the circle of oil suppliers will surely have terrible consequences for the global econo-
Turkish offensive into northern Syria

Dossier
Iran welcomes any move toward preservation of Syrian integrity

Iran has expressed its support to an agreement between Russia and Turkey over the recent developments in northern Syria, saying it would welcome any step toward preserving Syria’s territorial integrity.

“Iran welcomes any measure leading to the preservation of Syria’s integrity and sovereignty... Hence, Tehran welcomes the agreement between Russia and Turkey to end the conflicts in northern Syria, considering it as a positive step toward restoring the peace and stability in the region,” Foreign Ministry Spokesman Seyyed Abbas Mousavi said on Oct. 23.

The Iranian spokesman expressed hope that the agreement will both help resolve Turkey’s security concerns and respect Syria’s territorial integrity and national sovereignty. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Russian counterpart reached an agreement on developments going on in northern Syria.

The announcement was made after marathon talks in Sochi between Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday, hours before a five-day truce between Turkish and Kurdish US-backed forces was due to expire.

Turkish military forces launched an invasion of northeast Syria on October 9 in a bid to clear Kurdish militants of the so-called People’s Protection Units (YPG) from its border areas. The Syrian government has condemned the offensive as an act of aggression.

Repeating Iran’s position that none of the existing crises in the Middle East could be resolved through military intervention, Mousavi said that dialogue is the only way to deal with such challenges.

Tehran has shown from the beginning of the Syria crisis that it is looking to reduce tensions in the region and has already tried practical measures to stop the violence, the spokesman said.

“Strategically brilliant” sellout: Trump’s betrayal of the Kurds

By: Yuram Abdallah Weiler

Trump’s betrayal of the Kurds not only should give ample evidence of US perfidy, but also should be a lesson for all who fancy themselves as allies of the United States.

“At last the world knows America as the savior of the world!” —US president Woodrow Wilson

Turkey invaded the Syrian Arab Republic on October 9 following a US pull-out. The US Congress has started an impeachment inquiry of Donald Trump, who apparently gave the green light for the Turkish invasion. The US president’s lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, was accused of operating a “shadow shakedown” operation against Ukraine's president and lobbying for a Turkish bank indicted for evading US sanctions against Iran.

Meanwhile, his secretary of state was pontificating on being a Christian leader who holds himself to a “high set of standards.”

Three days after Trump’s announcement of a US troop withdrawal from Syria, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan ordered Turkish forces to enter the country to neutralize the Kurdish People’s Defense Units (YPK “terrorists”) and stabilize the border zone. Placing his bipolar affliction on full display, Trump has alternated between praise for the Turkish leader’s actions and threats to bring down the Turkish economy. “I view the situation on the Turkish border with Syria to be, for the United States, strategically brilliant,” he exuded, claiming, “Syria is protecting the Kurds.” Earlier, he had stated that he was “fully prepared to swiftly destroy Turkey’s economy if Turkish leaders continue down this dangerous and destructive path.”

In his executive order issued October 14, Trump specifically wrote that Turkey’s assault “undermines the campaign to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or ISIS,” and “constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.” As a consequence, Trump has declared a national emergency, and authorized sanctions against any “current or former official of the Government of Turkey.” Moreover, the order contains broad language that appears to go well beyond sanctions on Turkey and its officials by sanctioning any “foreign...
person” who is found by the US secretary of state to have been complicit in obstructing or preventing a “political solution to the conflict in Syria.”

Minimizing the abrupt abandonment of his Kurdish ally, Trump quipped, “Anyone who wants to assist Syria in protecting the Kurds is good with me, whether it is Russia, China, or Napoleon Bonaparte.” US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi criticized Trump’s impetuous act, noting, “His erratic decision-making is threatening lives, risking regional security and undermining America’s credibility in the world.”

South Carolina Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, perpetually a Trump lapdog, predictably supported his master after some initial squamish protests categorizing the troop withdrawal as “shortsighted,” “irresponsible” and “unnerving to its core.”

Turkey’s actions in Syria present a conundrum for the United States. As a NATO member with an estimated 435,000 troops, the largest contingent of military personnel in the organization outside of the US, Turkey is not a country with which Washington can trifle. Erdogan, after failing to topple the government of President Bashar al-Assad, found his country awash in refugees, some 3.6 million ethnic Arabs. His plan for the so-called “safe zone,” which his invasion is designed to create by purging the indigenous Kurdish population, is to settle the largely Sunni Arab Syrian refugees in place of the Kurds to form a de facto demilitarized zone, thereby eliminating the threat of cross-border raids by separatists aligned with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Scattered across Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, the Kurds form the largest ethnic group in the world without their own country. Erdogan has blatantly threatened the Syrian Kurds, declaring, “If you want to live in Kurdistan, there is a Kurdish state in northern Iraq. Take all the terror lovers with you, clear off and live there.”

Another aspect of the Turkish military operation, which also benefits Trump, is that the resulting chaos will divert public attention from the recently initiated congressional investigation into his impeachment. Shortly after Trump’s election in 2016, Harvard University professor of international relations Stephen Walt warned that Trump might make “an Erdogan-like attempt to use a terrorist attack or some other equally dramatic event as an excuse to declare a ‘state of emergency’ and to assume unprecedented executive authority.” As noted above, by his executive order dated October 14, 2019, Trump has already declared a state of emergency.

In view of the abandonment of the Kurds by the US, not the mention the JCPOA, the “Iran nuclear deal;” how could the Islamic Republic of Iran negotiate with such a “partner?” Of the 374 treaties negotiated by the US with indigenous peoples of North America, only one was honored. Although signing on the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, the US has neither ratified nor enforced it. Trump withdrew from the 2015 Paris Climate Accord; Bush II withdrew from the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The United States is the only nation to have not ratified the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the 1997 Mine-Ban Treaty, and over forty other treaties.

Rather than being “the savior of the world,” as US President Woodrow Wilson haughtily proclaimed at the Treaty of Versailles after the First World War, the US seems hell-bent on being its scourge. Trump’s betrayal of the Kurds not only should give ample evidence of US perfidy, but also should be a lesson for all who fancy themselves as allies of the United States.
Turkey’s Erdogan makes unreasonable demands from Iranian media on Ankara incursion

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tue. said he was upset by some statements by Iranian media on Ankara’s offensive in Syria. Here are some reasons why he shouldn’t have said that.

Iran and Turkey are two neighbors with extensive political, economic and cultural ties which have strengthened Tehran-Ankara relations.

Sometimes, though, the policies of the two countries differ on a particular issue. Turkey, for example, took the side of the rebels at the outset of the Syrian crisis and for a time, it even became a terminal for the transfer of weapons and terrorists of other countries to Syria.

In addition, it is only natural that a government official or the media of the two countries criticize the policy of the other side on a particular issue, which is one of the signs of democracy and freedom of expression.

One of the cases recently criticized by Iranian officials and media is Turkish offensive into north-eastern Syria, code-named by Turkey as Operation Peace Spring.

Whether or not the attack is legitimate under international law or other international regulations is not our concern here, but rather to point out a number of facts to the Turkish president.

The Turkish president on Tuesday said he was upset by some statements by Iran on Ankara’s operation in Syria. “Various statements are unfortunately coming from Iran. But they don’t come from Rouhani. Mr. Rouhani should better force them to keep silence,” Erdogan stated.

Iran has been involved in the nuclear case for 20 years, and everyone knows what Turkey’s position had been during this time. Now “Some cracked voices are raising from Iran. Not only from Rouhani, but from his fellows as well. Of course, these needed to be silenced especially by Mr. Rouhani,” he said.

“We are the three countries (Turkey, Russia, Iran) of the Sochi agreement. How will we carry out this process? Can partnered countries betray each other like this?” he questioned.

Difference between Iran and Turkey

One should remind Erdogan that Iranian media enjoy freedom and they cannot be forced to obey the government and tell whatever the government wishes.

However, in the case of Turkey’s attack on northern Syria, Foreign Minister Zarif had also pointed criticism at Ankara. Tehran has announced that it understands Turkey’s security concerns but military measures cannot be a solution to this problem.

“The imperative now is to end the incursion into #Syria & address all concerns through #ADANA. Meanwhile, it is essential that the core principles of JUS IN BELLUM are fully observed: distinction between civilians and combatant, & prohibition on inflicting unnecessary suffering,” Zarif wrote in a tweet on October 15.

Earlier and in an interview with TRT, Zarif highlighted that security will not be achieved through acts of aggression and invasion against Syria and that Iran has offered better options to Turkey to settle the issue.

Turkey is the fifth country in the world with the most jailed journalists. Critics and the members of the media could face imprisonment for criticizing their in Turkey; but the situation is different in Iran.

In fact, war comes with destruction and ugliness, and whether President Receb Tayeb Erdogan likes it or not, the modern technologies and media will not let him hide the ugly face of war.

Is it normal for a president to ask a counterpart of his to silence the opposing voices in their country?

Recognizing other countries’ sovereignty and not interfering in their internal affairs are vital issues that should be respected by all world leaders, not only in words, but also in deeds.
Veteran Turkish politician says President Recep Tayyab Erdogan should hold direct talks with the Syrian government if he wants to resolve Turkey’s security concerns permanently.

“We must ask ourselves that why Turkey is talking with the US and Russia [over the north Syria developments], but not with the Syrian government?” Dr. Osman Faruk Logoglu, a senior member of Turkey’s Republican People’s Party (CHP), said in an interview with BBC on Wednesday.

He pointed to Turkey’s emphasis on its commitment to “Syria’s independence and territorial integrity”, saying, “Syria is our neighbor and we should directly talk to them” to resolve the issues.

Logoglu noted that regional peace and security will be more beneficial to Turkey than Russia and the US.

Therefore, he added, Ankara should start talks with the Syrian government because other agreements, like the Turkey-Russia deal, will not resolve the security issues permanently and will only lead to renewing the truce.

He was referring to an agreement between Russia and Turkey that was implemented on Wednesday to ensure Kurdish forces withdraw from areas close to Syria’s border with Turkey and to launch joint patrols.

Turkey moved into northern Syria on October 9 after the US President, Donald Trump, pulled American troops out of the area. Tens of thousands of people have fled their homes, amid growing international criticism of the attack.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad says his country’s ultimate goal is to restore state authority over Kurdish-controlled northeastern regions in the wake of an abrupt US troop withdrawal and a Turkish offensive against the Kurds there.

In an interview with state TV on Oct. 31, the Syrian president also said an agreement last week between Turkey and Russia to drive out Kurdish-led People’s Protection Units (YPG) militants from a 30-kilometer “safe zone” along the border was a step that would help Damascus in regaining control, though gradually, over the northeastern areas.

The Turkey-Russia deal, which would halt the weeks-long Turkish invasion, calls for the withdrawal of Syrian Kurdish militiamen from areas along the Turkish border with the aim of establishing a “safe zone” that Ankara claims will be used to repatriate some of the three-million-plus Syrian refugees it currently hosts.

Assad said during the interview that agreement is “temporary.”

“We have to distinguish between ultimate or strategic goals... and tactical approaches,” he said, stressing that his forces will eventually reclaim territory taken by Ankara’s latest offensive. The Kurdish YPG militia had reached a deal with Damascus to take up positions near the border after US President Donald Trump’s announcement of pull-out of US troops in northeastern Syria left them feeling abandoned.

Assad, however, added that Damascus will not demand that armed groups there hand over weapons immediately when the army enters those areas in a final deal with the Kurds that restores state control.

The Syrian head of state said he did not intend to call Turkey an “enemy”, but Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and many Turkish political elite were enemies of Syria because of their hostility towards the Arab neighbor.

“We must ensure that we don’t turn Turkey into an enemy and here comes the role of friends” such as Russia and Iran, he said.

“Erdogan and his group are enemies, because he leads these policies, but until now most of the political forces in Turkey are against Erdogan’s policies,” he argued.

Assad noted that Iran and Russia, as state-guarantors of Syrian peace efforts, have been negotiating with Turkey over the past year.

Both Tehran and Moscow, along with Lebanon’s Hezbollah resistance movement have helped Syria with its war against foreign-backed militancy over the recent years.

The Syrian president asserted that Turkey had agreed as part of the Astana peace talks to end its presence in Idlib province. However, he said, the Syrian forces decided to liberate the province.

“The Turks did not abide by this agreement, but we are liberating Idlib,” he said.

“In the end, we liberated areas gradually through military operations. The same will apply in the northern region after exhausting all political options,” Assad added.
Dossier

Arbaeen Processions
Arbaeen rally is truly an unprecedented event, not only in our own times but also in history. We do not know of any similar gathering in history which is organized more warmly every year. It is unprecedented.

1. Our dear Iraqi brother’s hospitality towards the pilgrims of Imam Hussain is matchless

From the bottom of my heart and on behalf of the great Iranian nation, I would like to thank you mokiebdaran [caterers of pilgrims on the way to Karbala] who perfected the meaning of generosity, affection, and kindness during the days of Arbaeen. Also, I would like to thank the great Iraqi nation and the Iraqi government officials who ensured the safety of pilgrims and who prepared the ground. In particular, I really deem it necessary to thank the esteemed religious scholars and the grand Marja taqlids of Iraq who prepared the ground for pilgrimage and for brotherhood between masses of the people and between our two nations.

What they narrate to us about the behavior of you dear Iraqi brothers at the mawakeb [places set up to cater Hussein pilgrims] on the way to Karbala and your generous behavior towards Hussein pilgrims are things which are unprecedented. Such things are unprecedented in today’s world. The Arbaeen rally is unprecedented in history: such is your generous behavior, in the true sense of the word! You have shown Islamic and Arabian generosity through your conduct and your actions and all originate from the love of the Master of Martyrs (God's greetings be upon him), from the love of Hussein ibn Ali.

You do these things because you greatly love Imam Hussein (as). You wash the feet of Hussein pilgrims, you help their bodies when exposed to extreme fatigue. You massage them, feed them and give them places to sleep because they are the pilgrims of Hussein. This love for Hussein ibn Ali is an extraordinary matter. We do not know of similar events anywhere in the world and at any time in the world. I hope that Allah the Exalted will make you and I, have more of this love in our hearts.

Of course, the opportunity that you have in this regard is a blessing that God has bestowed on you. The blessing that you have at your disposal to cater to the guests of Imam Hussein (greetings be upon him) is a very valuable phenomenon. This is a divine blessing. This is divine mercy that should be appreciated and I know that you already appreciate it.

Arbaeen rally which is truly an unprecedented event, not only in our own times but also in history. We do not know of any similar gathering in history which is organized more warmly every year. It is unprecedented. This Hussein movement is influential in raising aware-
ness about Imam Hussein (greetings be upon him). With the rally that primarily takes place between Najaf and Karbala every year, Arbaeen has become global. The people all over the world are glued to this movement. Imam Hussein (greetings be upon him) and Husseini knowledge have become global thanks to this great popular movement.

2. Hussain ib Ali’s (a.s.) rationale is the rationale of defending the Truth
Today, we need to get the world to know Hussein ibn Ali. The world— which is suffering from oppression, corruption, malevolence, and vice—needs to know the Husseini liberation spirit and sentiment. Today, the hearts of people throughout the world and the hearts of youth and innocent nations beat for such a truth. If Imam Hussein (greetings be upon him) is introduced to the world, it is actually Islam and the Quran which have been introduced.

Today, they propagandize against Islam and Islamic teachings with hundreds of means. Against this hostile move made by the camp of kufr and arrogance, it is the movement of Husseini understanding which can single-handedly resist, stand firm and introduce the truth of Islam and of the Quran to the world.

The logic of Hussein ibn Ali (greetings be upon him) is the logic of defending the truth and resistance against oppression, transgression, deviation, and arrogance. This is the logic of Imam Hussein. Today, the world needs this logic. Today, the world is witness to the rule of kufr, arrogance, and corruption. The world is witness to the rule of oppression. The message of Imam Hussein is the salvation of the world. The great movement of Arbaeen conveys this message to the whole world and by Allah’s favor and grace, this movement should be strengthened on a daily basis.

3. The magnificent Arbaeen rally is a sign that the Will of Allah has opted to assist the Islamic Ummah
Arbaeen has become global and it will be more so in the future. This is the blood of Hussein ibn Ali which is boiling after the passage of 1,400 years! This blood will become fresher and livelier on a daily basis. This is the message of Ashura which was issued from the throat of Abi Abdullah [Imam Hussein] and of Zaynab al-Kubra (God’s greetings be upon her) at the height of their loneliness! Today, this message has imbued the whole world. Hussein (praise be upon him) belongs to humanity. We Shias are proud of being the followers of Imam Hussein, but Imam Hussein does not only belong to us. Islamic denominations, Shia and Sunni, are all standing under the flag of Imam Hussein. Even those who do not follow Islam participate in this rally and this will continue, God willing.

This is a great sign which is being shown by Allah the Exalted. At a time when the enemies of Islam and the enemies of the Islamic Ummah are working against the Islamic Ummah with all sorts of weapons—with money, politics, and guns—all of a sudden, Allah the Exalted gives such greatness and significance to the Arbaeen rally! This is a great sign of God. This is a sign of the divine will to help the Islamic Ummah. This shows that the Will of Allah the Exalted has opted to help the Islamic Ummah.

4. Arbaeen rally can be an expressive means of the actualization of the Islamic Civilization
Today, Islamic nations have thankfully awakened. The Iraqi nation is a great, dignified, cultured and determined nation. In recent events, Iraqi youth have shown that they have the power to protect their nation and their country against global plots. This is very valuable. The youth of Iraq managed to destroy the domestic plot which could have led to a civil war in Iraq. The plot hatched by Daesh and the takfiri group was no small plot. They spent massive amounts of money. They formulated plans to turn Iraq—the one of the main Arab and Islamic countries—into a battlefield and to pit Shias against Sunnis.

With the fatwa issued by the grand Marja taqlids of Iraq, Iraqi youth managed to show resistance and to foil this plot. This was not a minor achievement and feat! The great Iraqi nation can help its country reach the peak of dignity. These capacities should be put into practice. If the capacities of Islamic countries—the capacities of Iran, Iraq and other countries in West Asia and North Africa—are gathered together and if they join hands and are tied together, then the Islamic Ummah will show what divine dignity means! It will show the great Islamic civilization to global societies. Our goal should be this and this Arbaeen rally can prove to be an influential means to that end.

5. Arbaeen rally creates more bond and unity among Muslim brethren
People from tens of countries participate in Arbaeen rally and they become the guests of the people of Iraq. We should try to strengthen the already firm bonds between Muslim brothers: the bond between Iraqis and non-Iraqis, the bond between Shia and Sunni and the bond between Arabs, Fars, Turks, and Kurds. These bonds are a source of bliss. They are a sign of divine mercy. The enemy is trying to create discord, but he has failed and by Allah’s favor and grace, he will continue to fail.

We—Iran and Iraq—are two nations that are interconnected. Our bodies, our hearts, and our souls are connected together. What has created this connection is faith in Allah and love for Ahlul Bayt (greetings be upon them) and for Hussein ibn Ali (praise be upon him). And by Allah’s favor, this will increase on a daily basis. The enemies will hatch plots, but it will be of no avail. From the beginning of the Islamic Revolution until today, it has been 40 years that the US, its cohorts, its agents and its mercenaries have been scheming and doing various activities. They spend money, issue threats and impose sanctions.

However, despite their foolish desires, in the past 40 years, the Islamic Republic has changed from a thin sapling to a strong tree: “Whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches reach to the heavens.” [The Holy Quran, 24: 14] [Audience chant death to America and death to Israel]. I hope that by Allah’s favor, the slogan that you are chanting against the US and the Zionist regime and against the enemies and the arrogant will be realized in a not-too-distant future. And by Allah’s favor, you will succeed in doing that.
US, S Arabia have been trying to derail Arbaeen trek, senior Iranian MP says

A senior Iranian lawmaker said the United States and Saudi Arabia have not been able to affect historical Iran-Iraq relations, adding that the Arbaeen trek has been immune against the plots.

Alaeddin Boroujerdi, a member of Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee told Mehr correspondent that “the US policy in Iraq was to occupy the country. They were trying to make Iraq one of the US states, but the Islamic Republic of Iran along with the Iraqi people and government defeated the United States and will continue to support the Iraqi people and government.”

While ISIL was operating in Iraq, the Islamic Republic together with the Iraqi, Syrian and Russian governments set up a joint operation room in Baghdad and Damascus, the senior lawmaker added.

He also said that the United States and Saudi Arabia have failed to affect historical Iran-Iraq ties, adding that they have been trying to negatively affect public participation in the Arbaeen trek.

Saudi Arabia and the US are angry about Iran’s policies in Iraq and Syria and have engaged in military, propaganda campaigns and political confrontation against Iran, according to Boroujerdi.

Referring to the meetings of Iraqi religious authorities in charge of Arbaeen processions as well as senior Iraqi cleric Muqtada al-Sadr with the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei in Tehran recently, he added that the US and Saudi Arabia are discontent with such meetings and are angry that Ayatollah Khamenei has a special place in Iraq and the region.

But, he added, that their anger will get nowhere.

Boroujerdi further noted that Iran’s actions and recent meetings of Popular Mobilizations Forces (PMF) leaders and the visit of Muqtada al-Sadr further deepened Iran-Iraq relations.

The senior Iranian lawmaker also noted that Saudi Arabia has been trying recently to gain the support of Muqtada al-Sadr, that is why his meeting with the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran was crucial.

It is noteworthy that every year, millions of Shia Muslims even Sunni Muslims, Christians and Zoroastrians, etc. from various nationalities depart for the holy Iraqi cities of Najaf and Karbala to commemorate the 40th day (Arbaeen in Arabic) after the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (PBUH) in the battle of Karbala on Ashura Day in 680 AD.

Arbaeen security provided by all Iraqi forces: Iraqi envoy

Iraq’s Ambassador to Tehran Sa’ad Jawad Qandil said that security measures for Arbaeen pilgrimage are provided by all Iraqi forces.

He made the remarks in an interview with Mehr News Agency on Oct. 17.

In response to a question on the number of Iranian pilgrims who participated at Arbaeen rituals this year, he said the estimated number stood that about three million Iranian pilgrims.

“Iraqi government has mobilized all its forces and facilities for rendering high-quality services to pilgrims in border regions,” he said.

Moreover, full security has been provided at border crossings, he said, adding, “major measures have been taken on all routes leading to Karbala for transferring pilgrims to this holy city.”

Turning to the role of Hashd Al Shabi in providing security during Arbaeen ceremonies, he said, “all Iraqi armed and police forces, Hashd Al Shabi (Popular Mobilization Forces) and intelligence services of the country provide full security for Arbaeen pilgrims.”

He then responded to a question on trade transactions between the two countries, saying “Iran and Iraq enjoy high potentials for boosting trade activities.”

He put the current trade volume exchanges between Iran and Iraq at about $12 billion, expandable to $20 billion under the new agreement made between the two countries.
From October 5 to October 19, over 15.22 million pilgrims entered the holy city of Karbala from five cities of Baghdad, Najaf, Babylon, al-Hurr and Hussainiyeh, according to the statistics given by the electronic counting system for the arrivals from the main entrances of Karbala.

The al-Abbas’s Holy Shrine announced on Saturday, in an official statement received by the al-Kafeel Global Network, that the number of the visitors during the Arba’een of Imam Hussein (peace be upon him) of this year, i.e. from October 6 to 19, 2019, has reached 15,229,955 visitors, according to the statistics given by the electronic counting system for the arrivals from the main entrances of Karbala.

The following is the text of the statement:

“As usual for more than 13 centuries, the holy city of Karbala was honored by the guests and visitors of Aba Abdillah al-Hussein (peace be upon him) in the blessed Ziyarat of Arba’een this year.

The servants of the holy shrines had the great honor to receive them and render their services to the visitors. These services included many activities such as documenting the number of visitors by the electronic counting system for arrival at the main entrances of Karbala. This system was installed and managed by the Communications’ division of the al-Abbas’s Holy Shrine for the fourth year in a row, and the statistical analysis documentation of the rest of the services in the holy city of Karbala by the al-Kafeel Center for Information and Statistical Studies.

The number of visitors registered according to the electronic counting system in five axes (Baghdad - Karbala, Najaf - Karbala, Babylon - Karbala, Hussaynia - Karbala, and al-Hurr-Karbala) is 15,229,955 visitors, in the said period.

The number of visitors in the preceding year was 15,322,949."

On October 20, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani sent a message to Iraqi President Barham Salih and Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi to appreciate efforts of the country in holding this year’s Arbaeen pilgrimage.
Dossier

Reactions to ISIL chieftain Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi’s death
Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Abbas Mousavi, reacting to the reports on Baghdadi’s death in a US military raid, said the ISIL terrorist group had been long defeated by Iraqi and Syrian nations with Iran’s logistic support.

He said characters like Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and other similar terrorists, have been trained and supported by the US itself, which takes them out of the picture once their expiration date is due.

“ISIL was defeated by the youth from the Resistance Front. Iraqi and Syrian nations, with Iran’s logistic support, had defeated this terrorist group long before,” Mousavi said.

He went on to warn, “although we defeated ISIL with help from other regional nations, their ideology is still alive, and it is likely that the survivors of this group would be reorganized by the US to carry out further destructive measures in the region.”

“It’s not that surprising that the US’ move in killing Baghdadi is receiving so much media hype,” he said. “Every year close to the US elections, Americans play such cards for domestic consumption.”

“Killing Baghdadi was no big deal, since ISIL had been defeated by us and other countries in the region. We should wait and see what other plans the region’s enemies have in mind for the future,” Mousavi added.

Iranian government spokesman Ali Rabiei said that just as Bin Laden’s death did not eradicate the roots of terrorism, the death of ISIL leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi will not be an end to ‘Daeshism’.

He made the remark in reaction to reports that the US military had managed to kill Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Daesh (ISIL) Takfiri terrorist group, during a raid on Oct. 28.

“Iran, with its World Against Violence and Extremism plan, is at the forefront of combating Daesh and promoting a diplomatic, strategic and ideological approach against Daeshism,” Ali Rabiei, the government spokesman said on Sunday.

“Terrorism in the Middle East and northern Africa stems from military policies, oil money, and the US support for despotism,” he added.

“The Daeshism foundation will not be destroyed by bombs and missiles as long as regional petrodollars and Takfiri ideology exist,” Rabiei said, adding that these two sources must be first eradicated.

“Just as the death of [al-Qaeda founder] Bin Laden did not eradicate the roots of terror, the death of al-Baghdadi will not be an end to Daeshism,” he said.
A ranking IRGC commander said that Washington aims to play down the role of Resistance Axis in fighting terrorism in the region.

“ISIL has been defeated by regional nations and the Resistance Axis and Americans aim to question the role of Resistance in the fight against terrorism and say that ‘we are the one undermining ISIL and fighting terrorism’, but this is not the case,” Brigadier General Ismail Kowsari, Deputy Commander of IRGC’s Sarollah Base, told Mehr News Agency on Oct. 29, a day after reports on the death of ISIL leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in a US raid was released.

Despite creating an anti-ISIL coalition, Americans didn’t adopt any measure against terrorists and rather, backed these terror groups with all might and the support still continues, he added.

Trump has repeatedly admitted during his presidential election campaign that ISIL was founded by the United States, Kowsari said.

“ISIL was created by Americans and supported by them during the past years; so Americans were well aware of the terror leader’s hiding place,” he added.

“US leaders came to this conclusion that ISIL was of no use for them any longer,” he said adding that they are now mounting propaganda to claim that they are the ones fighting with terrorism.

He noted that al-Baghdadi’s story is very similar to the case of Bin-Laden al-Qaeda, saying US created both and then as soon as their expiration date arrived, made a media buzz and said that they have killed leaders of Takifiri terrorism.

Meanwhile, UN spokesperson Farhan Haq said in a press briefing said the United Nations cannot verify the credibility of the United States’ statement announcing the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and believes that such information has to be confirmed by the various authorities on the ground.
Enjoying the world’s major shale oil reserves and thanks to its technological power the United States has become independent from the Persian Gulf and the Middle East oil and is positioning itself to play a major role in world energy market.

Former US President Barak Obama’s strategy of “pivot to east” which was based on the above mentioned fact is now confirmed by Donald Trump after recent drone attack on Saudi Aramco oil installations.

Despite the US independence of the Persian Gulf energy, the country will not close its eyes on controlling the energy routes in the region to keep pressure on rivals like China.

A report by Rystad Energy shows that production of shale oil in the US has changed the country to enjoy the biggest oil reserves in the world. (264 billion barrels). 50 percent of the US oil reserve is shale oil. The report says the US shale oil production is going to exceed 14.5 million barrel a day.

In 2012 the US Department of Energy announced that production of shale oil would have been economical if the price of the oil had been above 54 dollar for a barrel, but World Energy agency findings showed that the price for each barrel of oil should be over 60$ if the shale oil production is going to be economically justified.

Development of shale oil production has paved the way for Washington to use it as a political tool against other major oil producers in the world to materialize its geopolitical goals. Sanctioning of major oil producing countries and creating tensions in oil rich regions like Persian Gulf by the US in recent years all can be interpreted in line with the US efforts to position itself as a major player in world energy market.

Reuters in a September 2019 report revealed that overall exports of crude and refined products by state-run oil company Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) and its joint ventures declined to some 770,000 barrels per day (bpd) from 992,565 bpd in July and 1.13 million bpd in June, according to revised data. It is noteworthy that the countries oil production was 2 million and 373 thousand barrels a day in 2016.

Iran’s oil production has also decreased some 1.5 to 2 million barrels a day during the last 10 years due to the US sanctions.

Washington is also trying to reduce the Russia’s share of global oil market by slapping sanctions against the country and threatening its European consumers.

The US’ green light to Saudi Arabia to attack Yemen which led the country to a quagmire can also be interpreted in line with the US efforts to grab its ally’s share of oil market to materialize its geopolitical goals. A couple of days ago Yemeni’s retaliatory drone attack on Saudi Aramco oil plant forced Saudi Arabia to cut half of its oil production and immediately the US announced Washington is ready to replace Saudi oil in the world market. In the long term this can result in grabbing of Saudi share of market by the US.

By sanctioning oil producing countries and creating tensions in oil rich regions the US is pursuing its geopolitical goals:

First, by disrupting existing major exporters including Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Iran and Russia and raising prices, the US is able to make its own exports more competitive. Second, grabbing share of other producers by tools of sanction and disturbing their oil export. Third, containing and keeping pressure on rivals like China, EU and Japan by creating tensions in Persian Gulf which their economies are heavily dependent on the oil coming from the region. Fourth, creating a lucrative market for the US military industry and weapons by adding to tensions in the Persian Gulf region. Saudi Arabia has been the world biggest weapon importer in 2018. Fifth, keeping pressure on Persian Gulf nondemocratic kingdoms who are reluctant to join the US proposed naval security mission in Strait of Hormuz.
Referring to EU and the US partial policy toward energy resources in Mediterranean Sea and the Middle East, Mehmet Ogutcu says Turkey might bring in Russia, China and Iran to team up in the new energy corridors in this region.

The Eastern Mediterranean region is rapidly changing. The turbulent political transition in Egypt after the Arab Spring, the war in Syria, the tensions between Israeli regime and Gaza and the never-ending dispute between Turkey and the Republic of Cyprus are all together reshuffling the regional geopolitical equilibrium. At the same time natural gas findings are flourishing in the offshore of Egypt, Israeli-occupied territories and Cyprus, reshaping the regional energy map and rapidly making the Eastern Mediterranean a world-class natural gas province. These geopolitical and energy pressures are rapidly converging, generating a number of new challenges and opportunities for each player in the region.

To know more insight about the issue, we have reached out to Mehmet Ogutcu, Chairman of London Energy Club.

Following is the text of our interview with him:

What is the strategic and geo-economic importance of the Mediterranean Sea for Turkey?

We like it or not, Turkey is unquestionably the regional superpower in the East Mediterranean by virtue of its economy, military, human capital and cultural hinterland. It is also the region’s largest energy economy, which can purchase the pipeline or LNG gas from the recent discoveries and can provide transit facilities from the region to high demand and value European markets through its reliable gas infrastructure already in place. It is also the bridge for Russian, Caspian and Black Sea crude oil, chemicals, coal and nuclear fuels to reach the international markets via the Bosphorus and Mediterranean.

Historically, Turkey has been the chief advocate and champion of free trade, freedom of movement and cultural exchanges in the Mediterranean and can still serve this purpose if a soft, but assertive power strategy can be re-engineered as in early 2000s without having to resort to what some analysts call “gunboat” diplomacy.

However, due to some miscalculations and self-imposed distancing itself from Egypt, Israel and Syria as well as a new axis of Saudi Arabia and some other Persian Gulf nations formed against Turkey in the Middle East and North Africa, coupled with an alliance of Egypt, Greece, Israel and South Cyprus), there are strong efforts to exclude Turkey from the regional game over the past decade.

I do not believe that, without Turkey - the most important power and source of certain disagreements in the region - it is possible to bring lasting peace and prosperity to the East Mediterranean and the newly created 7-country East Mediterranean Natural Gas Forum will function. It is, in a nutshell, a must to engage Turkey constructively in the Mediterranean and seek “win-win” solutions rather than even talking about isolating it.

For Ankara, having free maritime access to the Mediterranean all the way from the Bosphorus down the Aegean Sea to Gibraltar and Suez are of critical strategic importance. In my view, freedom of navigation is more vital for Turkey than the current natural gas related disputes. It is for this reason that Turkey is not shying away from escalating the situation in the region and most recently in Libya even though it is already under pressure on multiple fronts.

Could you please explain why Ankara argues that Turkish Cypriots have the right to exploit gas in the region? (According to Turkey’s own interpretation of international maritime law)

Although the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is recognized only by Turkey, it is an entity that represents slightly less than half of the island’s 1.2 million population and Turkish Cypriots were recognized as an equal
founder of the Republic of Cyprus in the 1960s till 1974 when Turkey was forced to militarily intervene to protect the Turkish Cypriots against an Athens engineered coup attempt.

International legal considerations aside, there is a reality on the ground, which must be taken into consideration when it comes to natural gas discoveries, exploitation, and sharing of revenues. They have not been consulted or brought into decision-making processes from the outset. There were only vague statements from Nicosia that when value will be generated they will be given their fair share. This is not the way to go, offering handouts arbitrarily. Ankara as a guarantor is advocating TRNC’s right to the resources endowment in the island. This is separate from Ankara’s own assertion about violations of its own continental shelf and exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the East Mediterranean.

What do EU sanctions to Turkey mean? Do they have power to stop Turkey from drilling around the Cyprus coast? Or are they rather considered symbolic? Considering the EU-Turkey migration deal and cooperation in security policy and energy transport?

EU sanctions have been adopted under pressure from South Cyprus and Greece, two EU member countries, which sought assurance from other fellow members for protecting what they call “the EU territory” no matter how disputed and controversial borders and EEZs could be.

Sanctions are important only in symbolic terms - they are not the ones that are likely to seriously hurt the already worsening Turco-EU ties. They will not stop Turkey seeking its protection of interests in the region at all - to the contrary, they have caused anger and frustration, arguing that the EU can no longer be a “honest broker” for resolving the disputes in the region. There are some deep-rooted fundamental interests of the EU that drive the relations with Turkey, which cannot in my opinion be sacrificed under any circumstances for the sake of appeasing Greece and Greek Cyprus.

Migration deal, energy security, environment, neighbourhood policy, and security collaboration are only a few areas where both sides work together. However, it is much bigger than that picture involving Turkey’s place in the new world and regional order and how the EU and Turkey can work together in a win-win fashion, irrespective of the failing accession process Turkey has been in for longer than half a century.

How could Turkey’s actions in the Eastern Mediterranean alter its relation with NATO?

For NATO, Turkey is a vital ally in a region where NATO borders are surrounded by instabilities and security risks such as Russia, Syria, Iraq, Caspian and Southeast Europe. Despite difficulties with the US particularly in Syria, the East Mediterranean and Black Sea, NATO still values Turkey’s strong engagement with and contribution to the Alliance and wants to avoid the risk of a disentangled Turkey shifting towards greater military co-operation with Russia, China and Iran.

Overall, I believe that NATO will strive to keep Turkey engaged as a constructive force in the region that should not be upset and that should be somehow accommodated. It seems that Turkey will not allow South Cyprus to join the Alliance despite repeated attempts and will also remain a stumbling block to greater collaboration with Israel in the region given their not so friendly attitude towards Turkey on a score of issues in the region.

It is said that one of the reasons that pulled Turkey into crisis in Syria is the matter of energy transit. I mean Iran could transit its oil and gas to Europe via Iraq and Syria and also it is said that Turkey has territorial dispute. What do you think of this?

It is no secret that Turkey wants to become a regional energy hub for the crude oil, gas and electricity flows from Russia, Iran, the Caspian, Iraq and East Mediterranean. Despite there is a long way to go for the early materialization of this Turkish ambition, still any efforts to undercut or bypass Turkey will not be welcomed in Ankara.

We know that the wars and conflicts in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean are caused in large measure by an energy war, either over resources or control of shipping/pipe-line routes to high value and secure markets. The insecurity of the Strait of Hormuz, as experienced recently, and the influence of Iran on the Persian Gulf and other Middle Eastern disputes, have led to the proposals to create several new Energy Corridor proposals, some overtly and some covertly. This corridor business will perhaps emerge as the most important conflict area of the next century. All the major players of the world are now struggling to have their share in such corridors including the linking of Iran-Iraq-Syria to the Mediterranean or connecting the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean in order to bypass the Strait of Hormuz. Turkey is particularly sensitive to the Kurdish energy corridor over Iraq and Syria and has been a fiercest opponent to such design.

What is the US stance toward disputes over the energy sources in Mediterranean Sea?

Clearly, neither the EU nor the US follow a neutral position in the East Med energy and geopolitical disputes - definitely far from Turkey’s position regarding natural gas exploration in disputed areas and exclusive economic zone assertions. ExxonMobil is already active in Cyprus for natural gas exploration. The US continues to support Israeli, Egyptian and Cypriot stances, and warns Turkey to respect sovereignty of these countries particularly as regards acreages distributed to international oil and gas companies in the disputed areas. The US has also joined the latest meeting of the East Mediterranean Natural Gas Forum as an observer. It is unlikely that Ankara will change its position no matter what pressures might come from Washington DC or Brussels. If further pushed to the corner, it will not be surprising for Turkey to bring in Russia, China and Iran to team up in the new energy corridors in this region.

Mehmet Ogutcu is Chairman of London Energy Club, and CEO for Global Resources Partnership. He was a former Turkish diplomat, advisor to the Prime Minister, senior executive of International Energy Agency, OECD and British Gas.
In wake of the air strikes on two Saudi oil facilities on September 14, the US President Donald Trump sanctioned the Iran Central Bank (CBI) and two other financial bodies, claiming that they have supported the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), its Quds Force and the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah.

In a statement on September 20, the US Treasury Department said its Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) took action against the CBI, the National Development Fund of Iran (NDFI), and Etemad Tejarate Pars Co. under its counter-terrorism authority.

“Iran’s NDF, which is Iran’s sovereign wealth fund and whose board of trustees include Iran’s president, oil minister, and the governor of the Central Bank, has been a major source of foreign currency and funding for the IRGC-QF and Iran’s Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics (MODAFL),” the Treasury said in its statement.

“Etemad Tejarate Pars, also designated, is an Iran-based company that is used to conceal financial transfers for MODAFL’s military purchases, including funds originating from the NDF,” the same statement added.

Iran’s reaction

Reacting to the new embargo, Iran Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Seyyed Abbas Mousavi said “Americans should acknowledge that imposition of sanctions is a failed policy and the excessive use of this trick and wielding dollar like a weapon have called the US credibility and economy into question. The era of recognizing America as a credible economic partner has long passed.”

In the same statement, Mousavi added. “The new sanctions are aimed at blocking Iran’s international transactions and its access to food and medicine. This move is unacceptable and dangerous.”

Sanctions in practice

The question is now about the impacts of this new round of sanctions on the international transactions of CBI and NDFI, which are intended to safeguard the welfare of the Iranian people as main state-run bodies.

As discussed, sanctions are not new since CBI has been subject to US sanctions for a while, including under the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The sanctions may not put the European created financial mechanism for trade with Tehran, known as INSTEX, into trouble, because the European mechanism has been created to circumvent the US sanctions. However, the new embargo is able to target transactions of humanitarian goods including food and medicine, some express worry.

NDFI had also been severely affected by the US sanctions imposed on Iran’s oil and banking sectors over the past months and new US sanctions are believed to have not significant influence on the performance of the Fund.
Iranian financial and banking system have gained favorable achievements and experiences in the sanctions era. For example, Iran has learnt how to skirt SWIFT and US dollar in its financial transactions with some specific countries.

Governor Hemmati said in a statement on 18 September that the country is ‘planning to evade American economic sanctions by switching entirely away from the dollar to national currencies in mutual trade and by bypassing SWIFT. Such steps have been discussed with Turkey and Russia.’

In an interview with Mehr news agency Iranian banking expert, Bahaodin Hosseini Hashemi said “we cannot deny the impacts of the sanctions at any level, they will fortify the previous embargoes and will create some difficulties, for sure. They will increase Iran’s costs of having its international financial transactions.”

“About the recent sanctions, I can say that, since CBI and Melli Bank of Iran had been put under sanctions by the US previously, the main consequences of the sanctions had already been witnessed and the recent embargo is not new, in practice. The deadlocks for the CBI had been previously created,” Hosseini Hashemi told Mehr news, “By the way, no one can ignore the probable influence of the recent designation of CBI since it can put monetary transactions in new challenges or put CBI foreign assets at risk of getting blocked.”

“Since the sanctions target dollar-based transactions, Iran has been seeking new financial channels during the past recent years such as replacing dollar and in some cases euro with other currencies, including Rupiah, Yuan, Lira, Dirham and Ruble, in its transactions with foreign partners in a bid to prevent OFAC from imposing sanctions,” Hosseini Hashemi explained.

In addition, by putting sanctions on CBI, the US has sought to expand US’ restriction to a wider range on financial entities who cooperate with the Iranian central bank. However, in practice, sanctioning trade banks of a country is more practical than its central one because, for example, punishing central bank of Turkey for its cooperation with CBI would be much more difficult than putting restrictions on private Turkish banks.

It is worth noting that as of CBI designation, Iran’s forex market has witnessed no fluctuations, which can be a proof for inefficiency of the new sanctions.

**War of words, futile restrictions**

Iran and US are in a cold war and president Trump is using economic tools to put political pressure against Iran.

New round of sanctions on CBI is more of a propaganda, which will for sure reinforce the previous sanctions and will act as an option for taking advantage from Iran in case of any future negotiations.

Iran has called on the international community to consider establishing a new economic system, which would minimize the effects of US hostile policies on international free trade.

The country officials urge the US to understand that it is no longer the sole economic superpower in the world and as they announced, there are many countries, which are interested in Iran’s market and in the opportunities of establishing good economic ties with Iran.

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**Chairman of London Energy Club:**

**US might topple Saudi Arabia as the world’s top oil exporter sooner than planned**

*Commenting on recent drone attack on Saudi Aramco, Mehmet Ogutcu says prior to this attack, the US was planning to double its crude oil exports to 9 million barrels per day by 2024. That means the US might topple Saudi Arabia as the world’s top oil exporter sooner than planned.*

Following drone attacks on Saudi oil plants, the White House said on Saturday that the United States was committed to keeping oil markets well-supplied in the wake of an attack on Saudi Arabian oil plants by Yemen.

According to some sources in Saudi Arabia, its return to full oil supply capacity after Saturday’s attacks on Aramco oil plants could take “weeks not days”.

An attack on Saudi oil facilities on Saturday is believed to have disrupted half the country’s production capacity, making the United States the only real holder of the global supply cushion via its ability to raise own output or to soften sanctions against other major oil producers.

Some believe that it surely is no coincidence the US is targeting virtually every major energy producer from Iran, Venezuela, and Russia, but also including its own “allies” such as Saudi Arabia.

We reached out to Mehmet Ogutcu, Chairman of London Energy Club to shed more light on the issue.

Referring to the drone attacks on Saudi oil plants, he said, “I believe that we have experienced the “Pearl Harbour of the oil industry” on 14 September. Saudi Aramco lost about 5.7 million barrels per day of output after 10 unmanned aerial vehicles struck the world’s biggest crude-processing facility in Abqaiq and the Kingdom’s second-biggest oil field in Khurais.”

“The drone attack, removing 5 percent of the global oil production, will be remembered as a watershed incident in the world oil history. Its impact will be severely felt not only for a few weeks when damaged Saudi oil installations will be repaired and crude supplies will start flowing again business as usual.
The impact will be much longer. The world’s largest oil exporter is vulnerable and its air defense system has proven to be ineffective,” he added.

Ogutcu went on to say, “For oil markets, it is the single worst sudden disruption ever, and while Saudi Arabia may be able to return some supply within days, the attacks highlight the vulnerability of the world’s most important exporter. They also add further political risk to prices, raising the specter of more destabilization in the Middle East and the threat of US retaliation against Iran. Even, with a price that could easily double, the Saudi remaining exports will still earn amounts close to what they earned before.”

Commenting on who are the most beneficiaries of the tension in the region, he mentioned, “The Russians will be great beneficiaries of this escalating crisis as they will earn much more per barrel on their oil and gas exports. Of course, the United States, now the largest exporter in the world, will also benefit greatly. Remember, prior to this attack, the US was planning to double its crude oil exports to 9 million barrels per day by 2024. That means the US might topple Saudi Arabia as the world’s top oil exporter sooner than planned.

The US is pointing a finger to Iran as behind this attack and said it would provide evidence. Traditional US allies are however not on-board. Geopolitics and great-power competition are playing a greater role these days, and while that may satisfy some narrow interests, it does not bode well for stable energy prices, or for the secure and dependable delivery of energy along global supply chains.

Only China, which imports most of its crude from the Persian Gulf, will be financially hit at the tune of $1.1 billion for each dollar increase per barrel. Thus, except for China, few of the players will seek to defuse the situation, all feeling that they have little to lose and much to gain. Hence, it would seem that the September 14 attack stands a strong chance of escalating into an all-out conflict.

The sanctions are already cutting $42 billion/year of oil exports from Iran’s economy. They have slashed Iran’s oil production and exports to historic lows. Before the US sanctions, Iran produced 3.8 million barrels/day and exported 2.5 million barrels. Oil made up 80% of Iran’s exports. The US ended sanctions waivers for major importers of Iranian oil in May 2019. Iran’s oil exports were down about 2 million barrels and oil production hit its lowest levels since the Iran-Iraq war.”

Regarding the Iran-Saudi Arabia relation in recent years, Ogutcu noted, “While Saudi Arabia supports economically squeezing the Iranian regime, they may not wish to see a war with Iran. While the context has changed in light of the weekend attack, the reasons have not. Saudi Arabia would find itself on the front line of an armed conflict, with Iran or its proxies to the east, south, and north. Such a conflict would also cripple plans for an Aramco IPO and would cause driving foreign investment from the country.

Saudi Arabia has many long term reasons to showcase its resilience and de-escalate. Until now, Iran and Saudi Arabia were protected by the fear of mutual destruction of their main oil export assets, should one attack the other’s facilities. Now that the Iranians have lost most of their export capacity due to the sanctions, this fear of mutual destruction is no longer there.

How Washington and Riyadh choose to respond (for now limited to rhetoric) will show exactly whether this is a flash in the pan or a step-change in Persian Gulf tensions.”
Anthony Cartalucci says it surely is no coincidence the US is targeting virtually every major energy producer from Iran, Venezuela, and Russia, but also including its own “allies” such as Saudi Arabia.

Following drone attacks on Saudi oil plants by Yemenis, the White House said on Saturday that the United States was committed to keeping oil markets well-supplied in the wake of an attack on Saudi Arabian oil plants by Yemen’s Houthi group. Many believe since the US has become a major oil producer in the world it is trying to grab the share of the major oil producing countries in global energy market by different tools like sanctioning and creating tensions.

Sanctioning Iran, Russia and Venezuela in recent years can be interpreted in this context. To this end even the US is trying to grab its regional ally’s share, Saudi Arabia.

To touch upon the issue we reached out to Bangkok-based geopolitical researcher Anthony Cartalucci.

Referring to US real goal of creating tensions in the Persian Gulf and dragging Saudi Arabia to the quagmire of Yemen war, he said, “The US is positioning itself as an exporter of energy. However its gas and oil is more expensive to extract, process, and ship overseas. By disrupting existing major exporters and raising prices, the US is able to make its own exports more competitive. It surely is no coincidence the US is targeting virtually every major energy producer from Iran, Venezuela, and Russia, but also including its own “allies” such as Saudi Arabia.”

He added, “The resulting conflict is also a huge boon for America’s other major export - weapons.”

Cartalucci went on to say, “The US has used Saudi Arabia as a pawn for decades - encouraging the worst and most unsustainable kinds economic and foreign policies, keeping them dependent on US protection and placing them directly at the center of US-driven conflict in the Middle East.

In addition to the energy oriented implications of this recent incident - the attacks and how they are being exploited by the White House helps move forward Washington’s plans to provoke wider conflict with Iran. The US has recently placed troops in Saudi Arabia and as it continues to ratchet up tensions with Iran, is creating a potential conflict that will consume not the US, its territory, people, and resources, but Saudi Arabia’s and other Persian Gulf nations aligned with the US.”

Commenting on the ways to tackle the tensions in the region, he noted, “As US power wanes, the ability for nations traditionally aligned with the US and the wider West have an opportunity to build ties with emerging global powers like China and re-emerging global powers like Russia. For example, while the US was “pivoting” toward Southeast Asia - the region itself made its own pivot toward China and other Eurasian powers. Nations once thought of as close US allies are now deeply invested in moving into the future as close Chinese and Russian allies.

Another aspect of Southeast Asia’s transformation out from under US primacy was the improvement of relations between nations pitted against one another by US interests.

Saudi Arabia and other nations in the region currently suffering because of their “allied” status with the US must perform a similar “pivot.” Just like in Southeast Asia, the Persian Gulf will benefit greatly if relations were improved between nations like Saudi Arabia and Iran. But also just like in Southeast Asia where the US targeted each and every nation escaping out from under its regional primacy with political instability, economic extortion, and even terrorism, the Persian Gulf will have to prepare for some hard times before its situation improves. Of course, the alternative is allowing the US to fight its regional allies down to the last Saudi, Emirati, and Qatari, leaving nations entirely broken.”
Culture
‘Passion, penchant for uncertainty’ are what you need for archaeology, says Prof. Barbara Kaim

By: Marjohn Sheikhi

Renowned Polish Professor Barbara Kaim, an archaeologist with a focus on Iran and Central Asia, says you need passion and a penchant for uncertainty to venture into the realm of archaeology.

Professor Barbara Kaim is a renowned scholar and scientist from the Warsaw University, Poland, specializing in the archaeology of Iran and Central Asia. Her archaeological excavations in Turkmenistan and Persia, particularly the Sassanian era, shed more light on the culture and heritage of Iran. Her focus has been directed to fire temples in Central Asia for the most part. Since 1997, Prof. Kaim has been conducting excavations in the Serakhs region in Turkmenistan, in the remnants of one of the best preserved Partho-Sasanian temples. This experience enabled her to compare the Central Asian temples with the Iranian ones and then share her knowledge with Iranian scientists. She is also an author of many publications on the Zoroastrian fire temples, as well as ancient Iranian art and culture.

Last Sunday, the University of Tehran, in collaboration with the Polish embassy, organized a program in honor of Professor Kaim, for her valuable achievements while conducting extensive research and excavations in Iran.

After the event, I had a chance to sit down with the renowned, yet extremely humble scholar, for an interview.

Prof. Kaim believes in the value of even the smallest of discoveries, ‘the not-so-interesting piece of pottery’, and how that value is not inherent in the object itself, but in the way the people from all walks of life interact with it.

Here’s what this great scholar had to share about her experiences as an archaeologist:

Will you please tell me a little about yourself, and how you got into archaeology and ended up here in Iran?

I was always interested in history, but because I also wanted to travel, I chose archaeology. During my studies, I didn’t know what branch of archaeology I wanted to get into deeper, but then I made a trip to Iran with a group of other students, which proved to be an eye-opener for me. This was the first time I saw the famous Persian monuments such as Pasargadae and Persepolis, not in the books but with my own eyes. And I realized this is exactly what I wanted to do: To study Iran’s past. While on the trip, we met several Iranian people who were really kind and friendly, so I thought it would be good to work here. This is how I realized what my dream was.

When I was finishing my PhD on a scholarship in Belgium, I had the pleasure to work with Professor Louis Vanden Berghe, who was very famous at the time in Iran because he spent several years in excavations in Lorestan. In fact, the ‘Luristan Bronzes’ were his subject. While in Belgium, I met Masoud Azarnoush, who became the director of the Iranian Center Archaeological Research several years later, and he invited me to visit Iran and maybe work on a site there. But at that time, I was already working in Turkmenistan. More precisely, on the border of Iran and Turkmenistan; which, I should note that while the border nowadays divides the two countries, the culture of antiquity is the same. It is the Iranian culture. So, for me it was very interesting and relevant to come here. For the excavations, we chose one place in Khorasan. The name of the place is Khune-ye Div, ‘House of Devil’ –

Did you choose that place for the name?

No, No. We chose that place because we were told that there’s probably remains of a fire temple. Because I was working on fire temples in Turkmenistan, it seemed natural to follow up the same subject in Iran. So, we signed the agreement, but after we returned to Warsaw, Dr. Azarnoush called me and told me he needs my help with an important rescue excavation in Tange Bulaghi near Pasargadae, where an artificial lake was going to be constructed and there was the fear that many archaeological objects would be submerged. So, it was our obligation as archaeologists to be there. That’s how my first mission in Iran began.

We started working on the Sivand dam project there. We excavated some Achaemenid remains and also Sassanian villages. This was very important to me, because usually archaeologists choose a significant place to work on, like cities or temples, something exceptional, but
when it comes to life in villages in antiquity, we know almost nothing. So, I think the results of that excavation are very important as they shed more light on rural settlements.

After that, we went to Sabzevar to start working on the Khune-ye Div. After three years of excavation, we could finally say it was another fire temple. Maybe a pilgrim center. And it was also in function during the Islamic period, which was another important finding.

Now, I’m still working in Turkmenistan on a Sassanian site. The site is important because it was a place where a big owner of land was living. So, we can see how life in this province was like. They were involved mostly in agriculture, which is very important for the reconstruction of ancient economy.

You mentioned that fire temples have been your main focus during the excavations. What about fire temples interests you so much? What secrets do they hold?

As you know, Zarathushtrianism is a very traditional religion. For me, the most exciting thing is that we could find from the Parthian period, let’s say from the 1st century AD, the same instruments that they use nowadays. It is something exceptional that you can reconstruct religion having only the modern sources. While we don’t have any sources on the religious ceremonies in the past, when you see the same instruments being used you can imagine that they were used during the same ceremony. And this is a fantastic find.

Speaking of, what has been one of your most exciting discoveries?

The most exciting discovery was made before me, I think (laughs). But maybe Mele Hairam fire temple in the Sarakhs oasis in south-western Turkmenistan, which was very well-preserved. For an archaeologist, it is very unique to find a site that has been well-preserved through ancient times. And we also managed to uncover several items which are very important for the iconography of Zoroastrianism.

Have you ever unearthed an artifact that you wished you could keep for yourself?

No. Certainly not. Because I am convinced that not only me but a very broad audience should know about the discoveries. It is a pleasure for an archaeologist to see that the object which she has found is put into the museum.

So, you don’t find the value in the object itself but in the way other people could interact with it.

Yes, exactly. This is some kind of an ethic of our job.

What advice do you have for students wishing to become an archaeologist? What skill sets are required?

The passion is the most important quality to have. I think archaeology is a very good job for people who like to be in situations where you don’t know what tomorrow has in store for you. Because of the new discoveries, new obstacles... you can plan something but after several days, there’s nothing left of your plans because somebody in the team has decided something else. For Iranian archaeologists, what is important, I think, is to work on the archaeology of the modern time. When I see here in Tehran the buildings from the Qajar period, which are so beautiful, I think it’s very important to document these buildings. Maybe carry out some small excavations to know when exactly the building was constructed, when it stopped to be in function, and so on. You have so many beautiful and old buildings in Tehran, which you have to care about. I think working on these buildings is very important for the future.

So, although archaeology is the study of the past, you think the discoveries can be relevant to the future?

Of course. We are all still very much involved in the past because our culture has roots in the past. It’s not possible for the human beings to cast aside the past of previous generations. Everything we do now has roots in the experiences of our previous generations. This is very important for the human race.

In your opinion, what makes being an archaeologist so rewarding?

Our work is very hard, but it becomes better as we work in teams. The collective efforts of our research are very important. The discussions that happen among your colleagues is very important. And also, the uncertainty. You are never certain that you will still be working in this place tomorrow. This is, for me, very exciting.

Most people, when they think about archaeological discoveries, tend to think in terms of conventionally valuable objects like gold artifacts or something like that, but this is usually not the case. Making major discoveries is of course important, but what is even more important to us is the small things, the not-so-interesting pieces of pottery, for example. This kind of object is important for chronology. So, it’s not just about the big discoveries, but also the small things.

Looking back, how do you view the changes in archaeology since you started out working in the field?

The most important change is the more attention that has been given to stratigraphy while excavating. The Layer by layer process. For example, if this building became an archaeological site, and unprofessional archaeologists were to carry out excavations on it, they could just say that this is the floor, but they couldn’t tell you this building was in function from this year, for several years or even centuries, and when it went out of function. Therefore, the most important thing to pay attention to on excavation sites is stratigraphic principles.

Another important change is that archaeologists have been publishing the results of their excavations. If you don’t publish the results, your work is for nothing. How can we make archaeological discoveries more accessible and relevant to the public?

There is in fact a branch of archaeology called ‘public archaeology’, in which the excavation team is obliged to organize a lesson for the local people about what they have worked on and discovered. This is very important work, because if people understand about their past, they could inform the relevant bodies about the discoveries they made by chance. This is how public archaeology introduces our work to the public.

Archaeological discoveries are nowadays being used in reimagining and rebuilding ancient civilizations in the world of entertainment, for
example in video games. There are certain games in which you as the player can walk through, for example ancient Egypt or Renaissance Italy, and interact with the people and take into the scenery. If you were approached by a game studio team and consulted about ancient Persia, what aspect of it would you like to see come to life?

Well, last year, I had a lecture about the Achaemenid court. After the lecture, a student of history told me that in their class, they are taught about the Greek civilization and the barbarians, and that I was the first who opened their eyes and showed them that there was another great civilization at the same time as the Greek. And I think that it is important for all students, no matter which field they’re studying, be it engineering or medicine, to know that during the ancient times, the people tried to discover some instruments to make their lives easier as they do now, and it was a practice carried out throughout the whole world, not just in Greece. And if you do this reconstruction, what is important is to make it as exact as possible. It’s not easy to make a movie or a video game about the past. For that, you have to make extensive studies to make the reconstruction as true as possible.

Veterinary services, crucial but less appreciated

Interview by By Faranak Bakhtiari

Iran marks the National Veterinary Day on October 6. Despite the high contribution of veterinary services to the health of both animals and humans, measures done to appreciate the services are not sufficient and the sector needs more serious attention, Payam Mohebbi, head of Tehran Pet Hospital told the Tehran Times on Friday.

National Veterinary Day history

October 6 was designated as the National Veterinary Day in 1990, which was supposed to be celebrated each year.

After trying to dedicate a day to the veterinary, Dr. Hassan Tajbakhsh proposed a day in Mid-October, which was a blessed day in ancient Iran.

In the past, the 14th day of each month was called goosh rooz (derived from the name of an angel named Gaoosh; the guardian angel of cattle and useful animals).

Although, any national day observances contribute to the achievement of different purposes like promoting awareness and action on important issues, stimulate interest in activities and programs; about this day neither sufficient attention is paid to, nor effective efforts are done to overcome the challenges in this field, Mohebbi lamented.

What are the main role of veterinary and challenges facing it?

Mohebbi explained that “Veterinarians highly contribute to health infrastructure in the country. In other words, veterinary services play a crucial role in human health as well as livestock with controlling highly contagious diseases and infections which threaten the people’s lives in case of lack of food safety.

Human have been living with animals and their world swirled together from long ago to an extent that human started using the animals to stay alive; so that there have been complications along with benefits, he said.

However, in many contexts, veterinary services could contribute to the provision of essential public health interventions by providing food security as well as livestock and animal safety.

This is while, veterinary, most of the time if not always, have been overlooked in our country either by the people or by the officials, mostly because of the poor management and lack of a single responsible body for the veterinary system.”

Unfortunately, physicians have been the focus of attention, with veterinari-
But human has always strived to survive, to do so, had interfered with nature and wildlife, namely, mass production of livestock, destroying forests or wild habitats for farmland, producing emissions driving the climate crisis, polluting rivers and oceans.

Today, the shift towards flexitarian, vegetarian and vegan lifestyles is undeniable, with some people cutting down on their meat consumption as a result of becoming more conscious towards the environment and animal welfare.

Reducing meat consumption may contribute to a decline in some environmental issues such as methane gas as cows and other ruminant animals emit methane, a potent greenhouse gas, when they digest grasses and plants, he explained, noting, the world needs to reduce emissions from fossil fuels and agriculture to sufficiently rein in climate change.

“However, it cannot be completely done in the world, we cannot persuade billions of people who have been feeding on meat for hundred years as well as those producing it to cut meat consumption and production.

It might be even effective in having a better world, but people and manufacturers’ uneasiness about less use of meat will be a barrier despite the problems that may appear as a result, including, a drop in milk consumption and consequently diseases.

Moreover, dismantling livestock industry will bring our country huge losses and many active in agricultural sector will also lose career,” he lamented.

A recently launched campaign went viral among people highlighting the heavy environmental impacts of conventional meat production and the concerns people have about the welfare of animals under industrial farming, how much is it reliable?

“Many years ago, the population of humans was much less than that of today because nature was managing it, whenever the population exceeded the natural resources capacity, diseases and microbes have shown up and balanced the population.

Can we take a chance at being managed by nature once again?

“As I mentioned before, we increased our chance of survival among other creatures, changing the animals, lands and nature over time, which might not necessarily have been the right option, but stopping it today is impossible, so the best and only way is proper and sustainable management.

Poor environmental policies are definitely the main reason behind running off resources, such as water, forests, soil and so on; which is mostly facing the world; to overcome it, we must make a fair share of resources.

Because, if we stop using technologies or medicine or any modern ways of tackling issues, then nature even cannot control it; and the prevalence of many life-threatening diseases along with huge consequences of interference with nature will blow up the world, he also highlighted.

Animal cruelty cases are believed to be increased, is it right? How can it be stopped?

Animal cruelty cases have not been recently increased in the society, this our attention that got more attracted to such happenings which mostly comes from the increased interaction between human and animals, Mohebbi said.

He went on to add that there have always been people who were mentally ill and aggressive to animals everywhere in the world, and this is a social phenomenon and requires social solutions as well.

“But what can really stop acts of cruelty to animals is only training and educating the people, otherwise no fining, jailing or threatening can efficiently prevent such behavior.

Culture promotion and changing people’s behavior toward animals is of great importance while the role of the media is undeniable,” he suggested.

How veterinarians can promote animal protection?

Mohebbi noted that not any veterinarian is an animal supporter, but as long as they are involved in ensuring the health of people and animals, they play a part role in animal protection.

Here are two debates on animal rights and welfare, veterinarians are supposed to enforce the animal right with offering adequate care for injured or ill animals and not to abuse them, but when it comes to animal welfare all parts of the society are responsible, he explained.

On the other hand, concern for animals’ welfare is also deeply embedded in duties of veterinarians toward animals; but being an animal right advocate or supporter totally depends on the personality, he concluded.
For the first time, the Iranian cinema has introduced nominees for four categories of the 92nd Academy Awards, including a documentary which is also Iran’s entry for international feature, an animated feature film and two short films.

The preliminary list of nominees for the 92nd Academy Awards includes four titles from Iran in four different categories: a documentary which is also the country’s entry for the best international feature, an animated feature and two short films.

Interestingly, there is no feature film from Iran, which won the Academy Award for the Best Foreign Language Film in 2017 for ‘The Salesman’ and in 2012 for ‘A Separation’, both of which directed by Iranian filmmaker Asghar Farhadi.

Out of the four submissions, the animated feature ‘The Last Fiction’ has a slightly better chance to make it into the final list of nominees as it is competing with only 31 other titles for the five available slots.

For the first time, the Iranian cinema has introduced nominees for four categories of the 92nd Academy Awards, including a documentary which is also Iran’s entry for international feature, an animated feature film and two short films.

International Feature and Documentary

Iran selected the documentary ‘Finding Farideh’, co-directed by Azadeh Mousavi and Kourosh Atai, as its entry for the best international feature category (formerly foreign language film) in the 92nd Academy Awards.

‘Finding Farideh’ is about an Iranian girl named Farideh, who has been adopted by a Dutch couple 40 years ago, and now she overcomes her fears and travels to her motherland Iran for the first time to meet three families who claim to be her real family, and to find out about her Iranian identity and culture.

The documentary has taken part in a number of international film festivals such as the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival in the US, and was selected as best documentary at the 20th Iran Cinema Celebration in Tehran in September 2013.

‘Finding Farideh’ is also eligible for the Feature Documentaries category of the 92nd Academy Awards.

The ten-nominee list for the best international feature category will be announced in December. The final nominees, which include five titles, will be announced on 13 January.

Animated Feature Film

‘The Last Fiction’, written and directed by Ashkan Rahgozar and produced by Ehsan Rasulof at Hoorakhsh Studios, is one of the 32 submissions for this year’s Animated Feature category of the Academy Awards.

The Iranian animation is an open interpretation of the story of ‘Zahhak’, a page from one of the central tales of the ‘Book of Kings/Shahnameh’ written by acclaimed Persian poet Ferdowsi between 977 and 1010.

The film follows Zahhak’s treacherous rise to the throne in Jamkard in Persia. The young and naive hero Afaridoun will have to save the kingdom and its people from darkness. But he must first conquer his own demons in this portrayal of Persian mythology which reveals human nature.

‘The Last Fiction’ premiered at Annecy, the world’s top animation film festival in France, and won several awards at international film festivals including the best feature animation award at the 3rd international South American films festival in Chile, the best film award at the 3rd Ajayu International Animation Festival in Peru, the best score award at the 22nd Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival in South Korea, as well as Best Animated Future Film at the 16th edition of San Diego International Kids’ Film Festival in the US.

While submissions reached a record high this year, only five slots are guaranteed for the best animated feature Oscar category, which include Pixar’s
‘Toy Story 4’ and DreamWorks’ ‘How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World’, as well as Netflix’s ‘I Lost My Body’.

According to Indiewire, the members of the Short Films and Feature Animation Branch are automatically eligible to nominate the films for the five available slots, with other Academy members invited to opt in by watching a minimum number of films.

**Short Film (Live Action)**

‘Tattoo’, directed by Farhad Delaram, was introduced to the 92nd Academy Awards after winning the best film award at the 17th edition of the Oscar-Qualifying Tirana International Film Festival in Albania. The film is about a young girl who wants to renew her driving license but she is sent to the traffic police center for her tattoos.

‘Tattoo’, as Delaram’s seventh experience as a director and first time as the producer, had previously won the Crystal Bear for best short in the Generation 14plus at the 69th Berlin International Film Festival. The short film had also taken part at other prestigious festivals such as Melbourne and Raindance in the UK.

This is the second Iranian short film introduced to the 2020 Academy Awards. ‘Pedovore’ by Mohammad Kart was the first after winning the main award at the International Cinema section of the 19th Odense International Film Festival in Denmark.

‘Pedovore’ is a social drama which zeros in on the issues of the youngsters dealing with problems like child labor, bad parenting or having no parents at all.

Iran has participated at the Academy Awards 24 times. Three times, the Iranian submissions had managed to make it into the final list of nominees and two times they won the Oscar (‘The Salesman’, ‘A Separation’).

The 92nd Academy Awards ceremony is slated to be held on February 9, 2020 at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, Los Angeles, California.

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**Persian leopard’s global range**

By: Jamshid Parchizadeh

The Persian leopard is classed as “Endangered” on the Red List of the “International Union for Conservation of Nature” with an estimated population size of 871 to 1,290 individuals.

It occurs: 1) throughout Iran, 2) southern Turkmenistan, 3) parts of Afghanistan, 4) northwestern and southern Azerbaijan, 5) northeastern Iraq, 6) southwestern Dagestan in the Russian Federation, 7) southern and southwestern Armenia, 8) eastern and southeastern Turkey, 9) eastern and southeastern Georgia, 10) parts of Pakistan, 11) small parts of Tajikistan, and 12) probably small parts of Uzbekistan.

1) Iran: after the extinction of the Persian lion and Caspian tiger from Iran’s fauna, the leopard is now the largest member of eight felid species surviving today in Iran with between 550 and 850 individuals.

2) Turkmenistan: the mountainous southern edge of Turkmenistan holds an estimated 78 to 90 Persian leopards.

3) Afghanistan: it is believed that Persian leopard occurs in the central highland regions of Afghanistan, such as the Hindu Kush and the Wakhan Corridor, but at very low numbers.


5) Iraq: there may be as many as 10 Persian leopards in the mountainous areas of northeastern Iraq’s Kurdistan region along the border with Iran and Turkey.

6) The Russian Federation: totally, no more than 10 Persian leopards inhabit four places in Russian Federation: a) Assa River Valley in Ingushetia, b) Armkh River Valley in Ossetia, c) Andiskoye Koyusu and Avarskoye Koyusu headwaters in Dagestan, and d) Sharoargun and Argun river valleys in Chechnya.

7) Armenia: fewer than 10 individual leopards are restricted to the Zangezur Mountains that defines the border between Armenia’s southern province of Syunik and Azerbaijan’s Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic.

8) Turkey: there may be fewer than 5 Persian leopards in Turkey. The leopard lives in the southeastern frontier region of Anatolia in areas close to the eastern or northeastern Turkish border.

9) Georgia: there are very few Persian leopards (i.e., fewer than 5 individuals) left in the wild in this country.

10) Pakistan: the regions located to the west of the Indus River in Swat, Dir, Indus Kohistan, and Baluchistan are believed to hold an unknown number of Persian leopards in Pakistan.

11) Tajikistan and Uzbekistan: if the leopard is present in Uzbekistan, there could be as many as 10 individuals in the Babatag Mountains and the Kugitang Mountains in the far southeastern region of Uzbekistan bordering Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.
Shahr-e Sukhteh, Iran’s archaeological gem

By: Zahra Mirzafarjouyan

Shahr-e Sukhteh is a lost jewel in Iran which archeologists consider it as the world’s first city in terms of urban texture, population and urban planning. It is the remains of an ancient city and archaeological site of a sizable Bronze Age in southwestern Iran.

Ranked among the most ancient countries of the world, Iran is house to numerous old, mysterious and peculiar civilizations. Sistan and Baluchistan Province is an old province in Iran. It has many monuments including Shahr-e Sukhteh.

The civilization of Shahr-e Sukhteh is one of the wonders of the ancient world. The archeological findings in this area testify to the emergence of the first human settlements in eastern Iran. Shahr-e Sukhteh, meaning burnt city, which dates back to more than 5000 years ago, is one of the heritages of Iran. It is located near Zabol road to Zahedan in Sistan and Baluchistan Province, southeast of Iran. The city was built in 3200 B.C and people were living in four eras between 3200-1800 B.C.

The total area of the city is 280 hectares and is divided into residential, central and industrial area, as well as cemetery and monuments. The residential area of the city is 80 hectares where people lived in this part at that time.

It is built in a completely non-earthquake zone and during the history, it was completely burnt 3 times before being abandoned in 1800 BCE. Once in the initial level of its growth and the other times are at the moment of its destruction. However, in 2100 BC, the city was suddenly evacuated without any signs.

The site was discovered and investigated by Aurel Stein in the early 1900s. It was excavated in 1967, and has been under constant exploration by Italian and Iranian archaeologists until the 1970s. Shahr-e Sukhteh remained under a 20-centimeter thick layer of ash and dust for around 4000 years before being discovered. The dry desert climate of the region also helped to preserve the remaining of this civilization.

It is not only the extent of this city that has made Shahr-e Sukhteh as one of the largest ancient cities in Iran and the Middle East. The discoveries demonstrate a great deal of development and advancement of these civilizations which sound really incredible.

There were various industries such as textile, masonry, jewelry, etc. in this city which made it one of the most advanced cities in the world. 12 kinds of fabric are found among the ruins of the Shahr-e Sukhteh that indicate the textile industry of the city.

The world’s first known artificial eyeball, with 2 holes in both sides and a golden thread to hold it in place, has been unearthed from the skeleton of a woman’s body in Shahr-e Sukhteh.

One of the most wonderful things which discovered in this city is the oldest signs of brain surgery. The skeleton of a 14-years-old girl was discovered in the graveyard of this city which shows that doctors did a brain surgery for her 4800 years ago.

A 10-centimeter (3.937-inch) ruler, accurate to half a millimeter has been found in Shahr-e Sukhteh which means people who lived in this city had a lot of developments in mathematics.

There was a well-managed pottery system in the city for water supply and sewage. It is interesting to know that the people of Shahr-e Sukhteh played with backgammon in that period.

Around 21000 graves have been discovered in the west and south part of the city and analyzing the remains of the dead bodies has led to very unique and absorbing findings. One of the biggest skeletons of the world has been unearthed here with 5 meter and 21 centimeter height which belongs to a 35 to 40-year old man.

During the archaeological excavations at Shahr-e Sukhteh in 1970s was found a pottery vessel which has pattern of a goat and tree on it. The artifact bears five images depicting a wild goat jumping up to eat the leaves of a tree. When the vessel is twisted you can see the images merge and make a “bounce back” animation telling the story of the goat eating from a tree. This also means that the world oldest cartoon character is a goat.

Shahr-e Sukhteh is one of the UNESCO’s world heritage centers in this region which is associated with Jiroft culture, one of the oldest civilizations on earth along with Helmand culture. It was registered in the UNESCO World Heritage List in June 2014.

The best time to visit Shahr-e Sukhteh is in winter and spring and visiting this place will take one hour to one day.
The North Pole is one of the most remote, yet inaccessible places on Earth. However, it is possible to reach there particularly in June and July when the ice is thinner.

Hossein Naseri, an avid Iranian voyager, has recently come back from an epic journey to the North Pole. He tells us about the expedition in an interview with the Tehran Times.

“Planning for my journey took some 35 months because it concerned some fitness measures to enhance physical strength needed for kayaking and ice-climbing to name a few,” Naseri explained.

He said that the journey required some time-consuming paperwork and legal issues, including a Schengen Visa, adding “Even in an earlier attempt last year, I was deported from one of the Norwegian islands, because I didn’t have a visa for entering the free zone.”

“Prior to the tough voyage, I made massive efforts to win support from the [Iranian] government or the private sector. Unfortunately I wasn’t successful. However, Iran named me a goodwill ambassador of the environment to the North Pole. I also stayed some time in Canada to complete some fitness programs.”

He stated that his departure point was from Imam Khomeini International Airport, when he left Tehran for Istanbul on August 14. Paris and Oslo were his following stopovers.

“We (travelers to the North Pole) were a group of 12 people from nine countries, including Finland, England, Australia and the U.S., the Czech Republic and Iran. We had a year of interaction in order to plan our journey,” he said.

In response to a question regarding how they organized the journey, he answered, “We coordinated our departure date and got together in Oslo. That wasn’t easy at all because everyone wanted to come from somewhere in the world, some from long distances, but eventually we were together; beginning our adventure.”

“Well, so many are traveling to the Arctic by boat or car, as tourists but our itinerary was the same as that of Iranian brothers, Abdullah and Issa Omidvar, had some 65 years ago.”

In the 1950s, the Omidvar brothers set out on a 10-year expedition around the world on motorbikes and in a Citroen 2CV, a journey that deliberately passed through places that include Congo, the Arctic Circle and the entire length of the Andes.

“It might be interesting to know that we had about two trucks of burden that included security devises, guns, medical supplies, tents, boxes of food and clothing, amongst many other things such as kayaks, motor boats. Bringing together such stuff by icebreakers was a huge and tough project itself.”

He added, “We eventually left our campsite, moving some eight hours per day. However, every two hours at night, two of us were guarding with open eyes to notice polar bears, which were abundant there.”

Talking about tough moments, he noted, “During the darkness, two of us were guarding others during posts that changed every two hours. Our special outfits helped us to tolerate 60 degrees below zero.”

“The weather in those days varied between 17 to 33 degrees below zero, as a very fierce wind was blowing. There we examined environmental issues such as extinction of animals, clean Earth, clean air, melting polar ice, rising water levels and global warming.”

Talking about cultural scene of the journey, the adventurer said, “In addition to our adventurous journey, I carried three flags as ambassadors of Iranian artists, ambassador of Iranian music, and ambassador of Iranian sports, which the three were planted there for the first time.”

“I came back home on August 22.”

Naseri has so far visited 75 fascinating spots of the world including, the Grand Canyon, the Antelope Canyon, Amazon rainforest, various waterfalls and mountains and the most recently the North Pole.
As the International Judo Federation imposed a ban on Iran’s judo, it’s now time to take a closer look at the incident.

IJK’s disciplinary commission announced that it has imposed an indefinite ban on Iran and that the ban will stand until the Iranian Judo Federation respect the IJK Statutes. The ban came as Saeid Mollaei of Iran allegedly conceded a defeat against Belgian rival in 2019 World Championships in Tokyo to avoid a potential opponent from an Israeli regime’s athlete.

Iranian athletes do not take on rivals from the Israeli regime and the reason goes back to the history of conflicts between Iran and the regime.

Tehran doesn’t recognize Israel as a state and considers it an occupying regime that is illegally being settled in Palestine. It’s been decades that Tehran is calling on the international bodies to stop the regime in Tel Aviv from oppressing the Palestinian nation.

A UN report in 2017 highlights that “Israel has established an apartheid regime that dominates the Palestinian people as a whole.” The fact is that a statement from the UN cannot be neglected unless one enjoys strong lobbies in various bodies.

But what is the role of independent states in fighting against ‘apartheid’ if the UN fails to do so? There are many options on the table and one of them is putting limits on an apartheid regime’s participation in global events, including sports events. Such as the one Malaysia put on Israeli swimmers in 2019 World Para Swimming Championships. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said that the Israeli swimmers would not be let into the country. Also, Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah said that Malaysia “will not host any more events involving Israel or its representatives.” Due to Tel Aviv’s pressure, International Paralympic Committee stripped Malaysia of hosting the event but that is the price you have to pay for supporting an oppressed nation.

Another instance is the case of South Africa when the International Olympics Committee banned the apartheid regime from participating in international events such as the Olympics for some 20 years. The measure proved to be a move forward in the fight against racial discrimination in the African country. But what about ethnic and religious discrimination of Israel?

One cannot ignore that Israel has become so powerful in sports diplomacy and has managed to realize its goals in the international sports body. There are many examples to be discussed. Through Israeli pressure, UEFA fined the Celtic club after Scottish fans displayed Palestinian flags in a game with an Israeli opponent in 2016. However, waving an Israeli flag is a norm in Ajax games!

Or you can study the case of raising Israeli flag by Ghana’s John Paintsil after scoring a match against the Czech Republic in the 2006 World Cup. FIFA didn’t fine the player or the federation and just "hoped" that some incidents would not repeat. However, Egyptian players were fined for showing pro-Gaza slogans under their shirt during the Gaza war.

From another perspective, one can point criticism to the Iranian sports officials for failing to defend the interest of the country in the international bodies. We have a list of countries that their teams don’t play each other because of their intense political disputes such as the case of Azerbaijan and Armenia. The same can happen with Iran and the Israeli regime.

Time to re-enforce fight against apartheid via sports
The defeat of Team Melli against Bahrain on Oct. 15 warned Marc Wilmots and his men of the difficult path ahead of the team to reach its third consecutive FIFA World Cup finals.

Team Melli’s Belgian coach came across his first major obstacle on Tuesday and the team should now cope with many difficulties to overcome this barrier.

It could be anticipated that who succeeds Carlos Queiroz, the Portuguese coach who had managed the team for eight years and achieved fair results, would have a hard time in Team Melli to maintain the results and improve the overall performance. Finally, the Iranian football federation reached an agreement with the former Belgian national team’s head coach Marc Wilmots in May 2019.

Wilmots accepted this responsibility while Team Melli had experience back-to-back World Cup finals under Queiroz and although the team didn’t advance to the quarterfinals, it fulfilled and aroused the expectations of Iranian fans.

Wilmots invited the same players as Queiroz did in the first team’s announcement; a logical move to trust the previous coach till you get a better understanding of your new team. As expected, he has gradually changed the invitation list in the past two months as one can see the elimination of some main players such as Alireza Jahanbakhsh and the inclusion of new players such as Mohammad Mohebbi.

Moderate results in five matches

Wilmots has so far guided the team in three official and two friendly games, collecting three wins, one draw, and one defeat. In his first match as the team’s coach, Iran defeated Syria 5-0 and then came a 1-1 draw against South Korea in Seoul. World Cup 2022 and AFC Asian Cup 2023 qualifiers campaign started for Iran in Group C with a 2-0 away victory over Hong Kong and then an unexpected 14-0 victory over Cambodia in Tehran. But less than a week after this sweet victory came a 1-0 bitter defeat against Bahrain.

Neither Hong Kong nor Cambodia was equipped enough to truly evaluate Wilmot’s team and experts believed that matches against Iraq and Bahrain would be the real tests.

Rough road began with ‘rude’ Bahraini fans

The match against Bahrain started with fans’ disrespect for Iran’s national anthem and demonstrated part of reality about Team Melli’s readiness. The team’s failure to reach full readiness is natural for a new coach who has just sit on the bench. Also, Team Melli has not held regular training in this period and Wilmots has not had the required time to build the team he wants.

A lackluster first half against Bahrain proved that the players required more time to fit in Wilmot’s style of football. In the first half, one could clearly feel the players’ arrogance for that 14-0 victory over Cambodia; they underestimated their rival and were punished by a team that was ready for victory.

The fact is that neither the two victories over Hong Kong and Cambodia nor the loss against Bahrain was the total reality of the team. Team Melli enjoys great capabilities and just needs more time. Mainly entered the team under Queiroz, this generation has now grown to maturity and most of them can play for the team in the coming years.

Iran doesn’t lack good and reliable players in any post. The question is whether Wilmots can make the best use of this human resource or not.

It is too early to judge Team Melli. Defeat against Bahrain came at the best time possible; it both get players out of the air of conceit for the victory against Cambodia and warned of the match against Iraq. This defeat made the team understand that they have a tough way to go to advance to the next round of qualifications from this group.
Iran national volleyball team is going to take part in the 2019 FIVB World Cup with its main players while experts are worried about consequences of Igor kolakovic’s decision to use the same squad in successive events.

Iran recently lifted the Asian trophy at home with its main players and less than a week after the event’s final, they again have to prepare for another important world competition, 2019 FIVB World Cup.

Amir Khoshkhabar, the team’s manager, told Mehr News Agency on Sunday that 14 players who were part of the team in Asian Senior Men’s Volleyball Championship will be dispatched to Japan for the World Cup. He said that Mohammad Mousavi has asked not to be part of the team in the upcoming competition.

“I’m neither injured nor there is any other issue; my body just needs more rest,” Mousavi, the Asian Championship’s best middle blocker, told Fars News Agency on Monday about his decision.

“We are soldiers of Team Melli and whenever coaches ask, we should play. Any decision by coaches is respectable and we should follow it. I think the team is doing a good job in giving space to the youth but I believe technical staff can do more in this regard,” Mousavi added.

Iran has used almost the same squad in the past several years under Igor kolakovic, raising criticism from experts in the field that he may be putting the future of Iran volleyball at risk.

“We should not seek podium in the World Cup and we should set the stage for younger players because in the near future we will need most of these younger athletes. The belief and confidence should be injected to the youth through formation change and what a better place than FIVB World Cup to take the risk of doing this,” Jabbar Ghouchannejad, a volleyball expert told Mehr on Sunday.

“We should provide more space for the youth so that we can use them in major competitions like Olympics qualifiers and even in the Olympics in case the main player suffer from fatigue or injuries.”

“Players such as Saeid Marouf, Amir Ghafor, Mousavi, and need Milad Ebadipour to rest and we should not put pressure on them more than usual,” he said, adding, “Every individual has a different line of thinking. Igor doesn’t have the courage to change and I think he is making a mistake.”

Iran volleyball technical staff have repeatedly said that their main is to secure a berth to 2020 Tokyo Olympics; its qualifications will be held in China’s Jiangmen on January 7-12 where the team has to compete with top eight Asian rivals to win the event and secure its second presence in Olympics after 2016 Rio.

The Iranian team will start training again on Tuesday for 2019 FIVB World Cup which is going to be held in Japan from October 1 to 15. A total of 12 teams which are top two teams of each continent, plus Japan as host and Poland as World champion, will compete in the World Cup in a round-robin format. So Iran has to play 11 high-pressure matches which will start with an encounter against 2019 VNL’s winner Russia on October 1.

Fielding top guns in an event where the team has a little chance of podium certainly increases the risk of injuries.

It also should be noted that Kolakovic has not totally eliminated the younger players. He invited the MPV of 2019 FIVB Men’s U21 World Championship, Amir Hossein Esfandiar, to Team Melli for the first time in the Asian event and he proved his qualities in the competition.

The coach has also trusted some younger talents like Mohamadreza Hazratpour, Aliaqghar Mojarad, Porya Yali, and Javad Karimi who have not let him down with their world-class performances.

What experts say is that giving the younger generation a chance to experience world-class events would give them the courage and confidence to build a shinier future for Iran volleyball.