

# Prospect of the U.S.-Iran relations beyond manufactured scare

By Professor Fan Hongda

U.S. State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said in a statement on February 18: "The United States would accept an invitation from the European Union High Representative to attend a meeting of the P5+1 and Iran to discuss a diplomatic way forward on Iran's nuclear program."

This is another easing gesture made by the Biden administration towards Iran. In fact, the Biden administration is changing Trump's Iran policy. It is indeed time for the United States to rethink Iran.

## U.S. lacks objective understanding of Iran

Recently I read an article "Can Washington Rethink Iran" by Mr. Jason Rezaian, a former correspondent of the Washington Post in Tehran. This article pointed out that the United States has quite limited objective knowledge of Iran, and Washington's Iran policy formulated on this basis is also difficult to be effective. Therefore, the United States needs to understand the real Iran.

Mr. Jason Rezaian's article reminded me of an experience in Iran. When traveling in Iran a few years ago, I met an American who was also traveling there. I asked him how he felt about Iran in front of him. The American gentleman said angrily that Washington politicians and the American media were liars, because what they said about Iran was very different from the real Iran.

I agree with Mr. Jason Rezaian that the United States needs to rethink Iran. I also think the American tourist in Iran told the truth. Indeed, the United States should rethink Iran as soon as possible.

For 40 years, not only did the United



States and Iran have no formal diplomatic relations, but their confrontation has also been very serious, which made it possible for not many American scholars to go to Iran to do in-depth fieldwork. Moreover, the combined effect of poor U.S.-Iranian relations and third-party influence has pushed Washington to get used to understanding Iran from a negative perspective. This is an important reason why the United States has implemented a strong suppression policy against Iran for many years.

The lack of objective cognition and the existence of subjective negative cognition make Iran's image in the United States very bad. When I planned to buy books in a large bookstore in New York City many years ago, the clerk quietly and naturally told me that all books on Iran were in the "terrorism" shelf. This episode shows to a large extent that the American public also has a strong sense of disgust towards Iran.

## U.S. policy towards Iran is not conducive to its national interests

Under the dominance of the view of Iran mentioned above, U.S. intelligence agencies often choose to believe information that can confirm the "U.S. view of Iran". This has been clearly reflected in the U.S. attitude towards Iran's nuclear development. Dr. Gareth Porter, American independent investigative journalist and historian in U.S. national security policy, elaborated on the U.S. nuclear policy towards Iran in his 2014 book "Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare". The title of this book clearly shows the author's basic point of view.

In this way, whether intentionally or unintentionally, the negative perception of Iran in the United States is widespread. Obviously, Washington's policy towards Iran on this basis cannot receive a good response from Tehran. Not to mention, Iran's enemies and U.S. allies in West Asia have been persuading Washington to implement a policy of hatred and suppression of Iran.

Judging from my years of fieldwork experience in Iran, Washington's Iran policy does

have serious problems. Although Washington has always claimed that the Iranian people are worthy of respect, the evil is the current Iranian government. But there is no doubt that the Iranian people are the biggest victims of the long-term U.S. sanctions.

## Both sides need to rethink bilateral relations

Objectively speaking, whether it is Washington's hatred of Iran or Tehran's hatred of the United States, they have increasingly deviated from their respective national interests. The time has come for the United States and Iran to look at their bilateral relations from the perspective of national interests.

Iran is a country with splendid culture and strong resurgence capabilities. Isn't a friendly Iran more beneficial to the United States? Iran deserves the United States to rethink itself. Also, I believe the United States is capable of handling relations with other countries in West Asia while developing relations with Iran.

On the other hand, after years of severe international sanctions, even for fundamental national interests, does Tehran really lack the will to improve relations with Washington? In short, when it comes to U.S.-Iran relations, the United States and Iran will not go against their own national interests forever. There are enough smart people in Washington and Tehran. Both countries should together rethink the future development of bilateral relations.

Fan Hongda is a professor of the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University, China

(The views expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect those of the Tehran Times)

## GSA: Saudi-U.S. ties will face major challenges in the next four years

➔ "A repercussion will likely be that the Biden administration will maintain its firm position that the U.S. leadership must recognize King Salman, and not the king's son, as the Saudi leader whom the U.S. government must work with," Cafiero notes.

The following is the text of the interview:

### How do you evaluate Biden's administration policy towards Yemen? Is the U.S. going to reverse previous decisions or just making a gesture to save face?

Biden's speech on Yemen was filled with many qualifications. He stated that the U.S. would cease to support "offensive" Saudi military operations in Yemen. Yet how the administration distinguishes between "offensive" and "defensive" operations remains to be seen, and such language offers Biden room to maneuver.

Nonetheless, the Saudi war in Yemen has lost support from most lawmakers in the U.S. Also, Biden campaigned on ending U.S. support to Riyadh's military operations in Yemen, where the world's worst humanitarian disasters have been unfolding for years, which means that it would be politically popular in America for the new leadership in Washington to make good on Biden's campaign promise.

### How do you see U.S.-Saudi relations in the new Biden administration?

The Biden administration, like all U.S. administrations dating back to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's, will continue to view the Saudi kingdom as an important partner which the U.S. must work in the Middle East (West Asia).

However, the upcoming four years could come with major challenges to Washington-Riyadh relations. Done are the days of the Trump era in which Crown Prince Mo-



ammed bin Salman had a friend in the White House who bent over backward to give him the benefit of the doubt. The Saudis must contend with the fact that the new U.S. administration will have some major disagreements with Riyadh on a host of issues from Yemen to Libya to human rights. It will be important to see the extent to which Saudi conduct changes as a result of pressure from the Biden administration. Already, the al-Ula summit, which led to a Saudi-Qatari rapprochement, was a sign that Riyadh might believe it must change some of its positions and actions in the interest of preserving a close relationship with Washington.

### Do you think that Biden will endorse Abraham Accords? Can you see any shift in U.S. attitude towards Palestine?

Officials in the Biden administration, such as Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, are strong supporters of the Abraham Accords. The new leadership in Washington would like to build on these accords and see more Arab/Muslim countries establish full-fledged diplomatic relations with Israel. Nonetheless, I doubt that the Biden administration

will be as transactional as the Trump administration in pressuring poorer Arab nations such as Sudan to sign the Abraham Accords.

### Some American sources say that the U.S. will release new information about bin Salman's role in the Khassogghi killing. What would be the repercussions of such a step?

The release of a summary of intelligence findings concerning the Saudi Crown Prince's purported role in the murder of Jamal Khassogghi will make it increasingly difficult to defend Mohammed bin Salman on this file. A repercussion will likely be that the Biden administration will maintain its firm position that the U.S. leadership must recognize King Salman, and not the King's son, as the Saudi leader whom the U.S. government must work with. Of course, if/when Mohammed bin Salman becomes King, the U.S. leadership will have no choice but to deal with him, notwithstanding the Khassogghi affair.

### What is the legacy of Trump for West Asia?

The legacy of Trump in the Middle East (West Asia) is one of disregarding international law, avoiding diplomacy, and further militarizing the region with major arms sales. As a consequence of Trump's presidency, the U.S. has far less credibility on the international stage, and many of the last U.S. administration's strategic blunders opened up many opportunities for Washington's geopolitical rivals, chiefly Moscow and Beijing, to gain greater clout in the Middle East (West Asia) and other regions too. Nonetheless, Trump's presidency will be missed by officials in certain Arab states of the Persian Gulf and Israel who strongly supported his "maximum pressure" agenda against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

## Neoliberal institutionalism under a broken hegemony

By Mehrdad Torabi

It is not that if mankind in its international relations has failed to achieve the rational good, it must either have been too stupid to understand that good or too wicked to pursue it, rather relative gains from cooperation, in a world dominated by imperialist agendas, will always be disproportional enough to refute the prisoner's dilemma.

The golden years were 1990 to 2004, but then in 2005, the order started going south. Iraq turned into a disaster, Afghanistan, which first looked like a success to serve the interests of the U.S., as well, the international economy almost went off the cliff in 2008, the Euro crisis happened shortly after, and so on. In recent years, many people believed there was a bug in the system; they thought the problem was Donald Trump, and now that they have gotten rid of him and have put someone else—like Joe Biden—everything will go back to normal.

In particular, Donald Trump was elected, and populism was centered around socio-economic issues, in general, conversely, as a reaction to, and by running against the liberal international order. "I don't see that as a realistic political position within the U.S.," Michael Every, the Head of Financial Markets Research for Asia-Pacific, emphasized in ABARES 2017 conference, "to go back to completely free trade." With China on the rise, trade deficits can reduce employment and income. "If you are importing consumer goods, every dollar you spend is a dollar you could be spending at home," he said.

Pursuing protectionist policies, the U.S. imposed tariffs on imports, withdrew from

international setups like TPP, and so on, but make no mistake: Trump was not the problem, but a manifestation of the problem. The problem is idealism: liberal democracy has proved not to be the end of history, for as soon as the attempt is made to practice ideals in the political battleground, selfish vested interests of the main actors are exposed from behind the veils of those abstract principles; a reason for this liberal democratic recession, therefore, seems to be the system itself that is self-destructive.

A realist argument is that, firstly, liberal democracy doesn't attract so many people today. In fact, as Zselyke Csaky points out, "a growing number of leaders in Central and Eastern Europe have dropped even the pretense of playing by the rules of democracy." We observe today "a stunning democratic breakdown in the 29 countries covered by Nations in Transit. There are fewer democracies in the region today than at any point since the annual report was launched in 1995."

Secondly, having the force to impose ideas upon others has become like crusader states, fighting endless wars. The United States of America has been at war for two out of every three years since the Cold War ended. Setting aside hypocrisy, which I assume at best for a scientific analysis we must do, it becomes facile to realize that America today is a highly militarized state addicted to war. No wonder to create a liberal international order and reform the world in their own image, liberal democratic crusaders have formed an alliance of balancers against their offenses.

Thirdly, the sole crusading pole has ended up poisoning relations with other major powers in the world. I can tell that in the face

of color revolutions, as well as NATO/EU expansion, pushing towards Russian borders, Russians are not feeling very happy. Chinese are not pleased either to see the U.S. interfering with their politics; in this regard, their concerns over protests in Hong Kong fueled by Americans are not merely logical.

Fourthly, the order clashes with nationalism undermining the sovereignty and national identity. Like the European Union, powerful institutions with a lot of authority to make decisions raise many questions about input and output legitimacy. Decisions about Britain's future, on the other hand, should be made in London and not in Brussels. Regarding national identity, free movement of persons and taking in refugees in Hong Kong of exclusionary nationalism are among matters that have exhausted liberal internationalism to a great extent.

Fifth is the problem of hyper globalization. We have moved from a globalized system to a hyper globalized system, and now it is much easier to move capital around the world, but as a result, many have lost jobs in the Western world. The liberal international order was undermined inside countries like the United States and Britain because of the economic consequences of hyper globalization, and that those problems have led to significant political difficulties leading us to the final but very serious issue that liberal internationalism has yet to face: The rise of China.

"Obviously, we must engage China," Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry said in a major speech on China policy at the Center for American Progress in Washington, stressing the U.S. must "fully integrate China into the global community."

Integrating China into the liberal world order undermines bipolarity. World's structure in favor of Uncle Sam towards expansion being transformed to multipolarity implies both the end and the beginning of a new cycle. A liberal international order may only spread in a unipolar order, for the uni-pole then does not have to worry about the balance of power; once the structure is changed into multipolarity, however, the balance of power politics will ensue. With China looking for high value-added industrial products, the U.S. appears to be moving back to the pre-World War II pattern of thinking about trade.

In such an order, the West and the Rest will try to establish their own protected orders. Just recently, Asia-Pacific nations signed an inclusive trade deal with China, and Joe Biden confirmed that "the United States must align itself with other allies so that they write the rules governing global trade—and not China." Alliance structures will be formed sooner or later with economic relationships; such order will be reminiscent, in some ways, of the Cold War. Of course, as was true in the Cold War, there will be an international realist order as well: that of proliferation control regime through which the Chinese, the Russians, and the Americans will work together at the international level. However, U.S.-led and China-led orders will matter the most, as was the case during the Cold War.

That "unipolar moment" upon which the U.S. had devised its main strategy in the post-Cold War era is over. Utopians have failed to dominate the world, for everything will happen as it always has. (Source: Press TV)

## Satellite images reveal Israel quietly expanding secretive Dimona nuclear site

➔ Dimona, which is widely believed to be key to Israel's nuclear arms manufacturing program, was built with covert assistance from the French government and activated sometime between 1962-1964, according to reports.

Israel has acknowledged the existence of the Dimona nuclear reactor, but neither confirms nor denies the purpose of the facility, which is assumed to be the manufacturing of nukes.

Meanwhile, environmentalists have warned that Dimona — one of the world's oldest nuclear facilities — could pose enormous environmental and security threats to those living in the area and to the entire Middle East, calling on the regime to shut down the complex.

Turning a deaf ear to international calls for nuclear transparency, the regime has so far refused, with the U.S.'s invariable support, to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that is aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.

## Iraqi officials, scholars protest NATO plan to increase troops in Iraq eightfold

Iraqi officials and religious scholars have lambasted NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg's latest remarks that the U.S.-led military alliance plans to significantly increase its forces in the Arab country, describing the measure as unacceptable and unjustified.

Amer al-Faez, a member of the Iraqi Parliament's Foreign Relations Committee, said on Friday that "the increase in the number of NATO forces in Iraq is unjustified," stressing that the country "does not need any foreign forces."

"Iraqi security forces are capable of deterring any aggression against the country, and they have proven this during the war against Daesh," Faez added.

"Therefore, I do not see any need for the presence of any foreign troops, either from NATO or other forces."

Faez said the Iraqi parliament will inquire the government about its request for an increase in the number of NATO forces, and the reasons why it has circumvented the legislature in this regard, Press TV reported.

Stoltenberg told reporters at the conclusion of a two-day virtual NATO defense ministers meeting on February 18 that the Western military alliance will expand its mission in Iraq.

## Battle for Ma'rib: Yemeni army, allies make big advances on eastern front

Yemeni army troops and allied fighters from Popular Committees have made new advances against Saudi-led coalition militants in Yemen's central province of Ma'rib, flushing them out of several districts and edging closer to the final victory.

Lebanon-based Arabic-language al-Mayadeen television news network reported that the Yemeni soldiers and their allies have wrested control over Raqan district, and are working to take over al-Alam al-Abayad and al-Nadoudh regions, which lie northeast of Ma'rib city.

Local sources said Yemeni army forces and fighters from Popular Committees have been able to purge a number of positions from Saudi-led forces and militants loyal to former Yemeni president Abd Rabbuh Mansour, and have also laid a siege to militants affiliated to al-Qaeda terror group on the outskirts of al-Nadoudh district.

The sources added that Yemeni forces are currently advancing towards the al-Wadiyah border crossing with Saudi Arabia.

## Russia approves its COVID-19 vaccine, Sputnik V

Russia on Saturday approved a third COVID-19 vaccine, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said, though large-scale clinical trials of the shot, produced by the Chumakov Centre, have not yet begun.

Russia has already approved two COVID-19 vaccines, the Sputnik V shot, developed by Moscow's Gamaleya Institute, following a similar approval of granting approval before seeing any late-stage trial results.

According to Reuters, the preemptive approvals had raised concerns among some scientists in the West, but inoculations with those first two shots began on a mass scale in Russia only after trials were concluded and showed success.

Sputnik V was approved in August and late-stage trials began in September. Mass vaccination was launched in December, after preliminary trial results showed the vaccine to be 91.4% effective.

Since then, more than two million Russians have been vaccinated with at least the first dose of Sputnik V, Health Minister Mikhail Murashko said on Feb. 10.

## Resistance News: Dozens of Palestinians injured by Israeli forces in West Bank

INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN — Israeli forces have fired rubber bullets and teargas to disperse weekly anti-settlement protests in several areas across the occupied West Bank, leaving dozens of people injured.

Israeli forces violently attacked hundreds of Palestinians participating in a peaceful rally in the village of Beit Dajan, east of Nablus City, on Friday, according to the Palestinian Quds News Network. A Palestinian was also injured during a weekly protest in the village of Kafir Qaddum, near the city of Qalqilia, in the occupied West Bank.

"Despite bad rainy weather, clashes broke out today between #Palestinian protesters and Israeli occupation forces in the village of Kafir Qaddum in the occupied West Bank, today," the news network said in a tweet.

The West Bank has long been a scene of weekly peaceful protests against the Israel regime's settlement expansion policy.

According to a recent report by the anti-settlement monitoring group Peace Now, Israel has advanced plans for the construction of 780 new illegal settler units in the occupied West Bank. According to a recent report by the anti-settlement monitoring group Peace Now, Israel advanced plans for the construction of 780 new illegal settler units in the occupied West Bank.