

Iran and the European Union: Breath-taking choices and new horizons

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Introduction

- Iran-Europe relations have seen many ups and downs during the course of history, in particular in the last 37 years, as of victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979.
- However in a world which is rapidly changing, it seems new objectives and new obstacles push two sides to be more co-operative
- To this end, we need to set up a workable agenda exchanging communalities and differences among two sides



First section: Isfahan and its culture

- Isfahan is more than 2500 years old. It was the capital of the Persian Empires twice in his history. From this perspective, Isfahan should be viewed as a determining part of Aryanism in its history.
- This well-rooted history of civilization first mirrored itself in a number of impressive and spectacular historical buildings with a head high in the sky all over the country.
- Second, Among Ulama in Safavid era one could find a proliferation of philosophers whose influence was to extend into twentieth century to Iran's Ayatollah Khomaini among many others. Ay. Khomaini as a seminary clergyman and as a pious character became attracted by the deconstructivist method of Mulla Sadra



- As far as the city of Isfahan is concerned, Isfahan received a new political change once turned into capital over the Safavid Empires. Many historical sites, garrisons, artistic evolution of industries and so on were constructed in 17 century.
- Within the regional unrests, one of the most popular safavid empire-Shah Abbas the Great- facilitated the migration of Armenians from northern borders of Iran to the capital, Isfahan onto the River bank of Zayanda Rood for two reasons: their transnational connections with the west and their advanced experiences in diverse domains of industry.
- The same tolerance came up with regard to Jewish minority in Isfahan This tolerance while surfacing in the language of the Safavids with regard to the Jewish community or Armenians yet other minorities such as Zoroastrians or transnational visitors such as Indian and Chinese adventurers benefited from the handout of the state.



The second section: Iranian constitution and the way Iranians look at the present international system

- The Islamic Republic of Iran is situated in the northern hemisphere. Its neighbors are Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Armenia in the north, Afghanistan and Pakistan in the east and Turkey and Iraq in the west. The country is bounded by the sea of Oman and Persian Gulf where the seacoast is for 2000 kilometers.
- The constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran provides a solid foundation and structure for a democratic and Islamic government. The constitution ensures the rejection of all forms of intellectual and social repression and economic monopolies. The Constitution aims at putting an end to autocratic rule allowing the nation to decide its own destiny.



- The leader has a very special status and is the highest authority. Based on the constitution, he is obliged to approve the most determinant decisions provided and ratified by the Expediency Council, to consolidate the relations of Executive Judiciary and legislative branches and to resolve disputes among powers once they remained paralyzed to overcome their tensions in accordance with the law and the constitution.
- In the constitution, the country's affairs rely on public votes and the parliament plays an important role in the vote of confidence to the cabinet members, supervision over budget and questioning and impeaching the cabinet members including the president. No limitation has been specified for the duration of leader's tenure while the president could gain legitimacy via public votes only for two consecutive rounds, each of four years.



- As far as the republicanism of the system is concerned, then, all powers in the country should result from the will of the nation directly or indirectly.
- Based upon the soft power of Iran over 37 years and its reliance on the rule of law as described above, elements of Islamic Republic's power are:
 - **1. Territorial Integration:** With the sacrifice of our soldiers and oversight of the nation our borders are immune from any transnational inroads.
 - **2. Political stability in the chaotic region of the Middle East.** Whereas the whole region is burning with interventionist policies of external powers as well as the widespread of terrorism and extremism, Iran enjoys high level of national security as well as political stability.



- **3. Geopolitics of Iran:** Geo-politics of Iran should be observed as a source of national power. It is rarely possible to compare any emerging power in the region with a geopolitical situation parallel to that of Iran. Only Turkey has surfaced as a regional power in which Turks move ahead just to get to the European Union and at the same time to control the Arab World. Even today, Americans, Europeans and many rival regional powers could not ignore Iran and its position in the region.
- **4. Iran's potential to emerge as a regional power** with regard to its reserve of oil, gas and human resources. Iran's population is projected to reach 100 million people by 2018 and right now about 70 percent of the population is under 30 years.



- However with the rapid process of globalization, Iran needs to construct a nationwide consensus all for gaining more wealth and respect at the international community. To this end, Iran needs to domestically promote more political parties, give currency to NGOs such as municipalities and their role in transnational commerce and a sustainable economic planning for at least five percent and a population of 150 million people in the next thirty years.
- As far as the foreign policy is concerned, and with regard to misunderstandings governing Iran and the European Union, one needs to address the common threats and obstacles deterring both sides from co-operation. A number of these disputes is as follows:



1. Universal values of democracy:

- One needs to think of relinquishing the universal understanding of democratic values in favor of particular democratic principles. Democracy and human rights are among those values that both sides-Iran and the European Union promote.
- However, this does not mean that the two sides should not open a window of negotiation and dialogue over their interested subjects related to the violation of human dignity. For this purpose, a deconstructing strategy is needed to demonstrate that the European Union should examine a new phase of democracy elaborating grounds upon which many marginalized political forces could participate in running their destiny: anti-globalization forces, green movements and a halt to support unelected regional dictators of the Persian Gulf a



- “Democracy to come” is a phrase which all sides should make it always negotiable against the rise of populism both in the European Union as well as the region. It is more than three decades that Iran enjoys a particular democracy incomparable to anyone in the region.
- In such an atmosphere, the inclusive economic exchanges should have established between the EU and Iran over the last 37 years. Unfortunately, and contrary to such an expectation, the EU has supported the most reactionary, corrupt and despotic regimes in their drive against Iran.
- The historical observations and the current practices of the EU and European States illustrate an imbalance between values and interests. It sounds that combating Iran in favor of the regional reactionaries over the last decades only wakened “the overall democratic picture of the European countries”



- 2. Exceptionalism and the European “political deviation from multilateralism”
- Nobody could overlook the deep assumption of Europe to multilateralism at the international scale. However the most devastating fact which might put the diplomatic endeavors to jeopardy seems to be the American exceptionalism. One needs to review the National Security Strategy of Obama in 2015. A number of such dangerous exceptionalist thinking could be listed below:
- “We will lead by our example”, we embrace our exceptional role. “The United States will use military force unilaterally if necessary”. “The use of force should not be our first choice, but it will sometimes be the necessary choice”. In the name of “a mission from God”, “manifest destiny”, “messianic invitation” and “difference” America tends to turn the world to architected relations of subordination.



- In such an exceptionalist climate, the European Union has shown vividly an oscillation between multilateralism and obedience to the dictates of American administrations. Signs of such an oscillation and political dizziness surfaced at the political language of a number of the European Union's authorities.
- The wave of travels to Iran by the European political and economic delegations in the Post-JCPOA era was met with a sharp and fast reaction by the US, as it considered imposition of visa regulations on those European nationals who have already made or make a trip to Iran. The same inaction should be mentioned with regard to Airbus company and the European Union's inaction vis-à-vis the Boeing Company.



- 3. Sanctions strategy or a co-operative strategy:
- The Peaceful nuclear program of Iran brought the American exceptionalists to a position to impose a set of sanctions against Iran. Since then, the US with alliance of the European Union did their best to isolate Iran. Contrary to such an aspiration, Iran is today emerging as a regional power with potential capabilities in human resources as well as in various fields such as energy, industries, sciences, cultural discourse, capital, and market, etc.
- The interventions of a number of the European Union have not been so far constructive. For example, the letter signed by 60 EU MPs, addressed to the EU HR Mogherini, insisting that her travel to Tehran should be conditional on discussing “human rights issues” as the most important problem and to have certain promises by Iran regarding its “regional role” sounds unusual and problematic.





Based upon the detailed discussion, the below issue should be agreed upon:

- 1. Democracy and its related concepts such as human rights, freedom, democracy, civil and constitutional rights, etc. should be seen in particular contexts while avoiding sexing them up with universal flavors of democracy or just interest-oriented outlook. The mood of affairs gets worse once the USA and in a repeated manner and the European Union supported regional dictators. Under new circumstances, Iran and the European Union should work together to restore peace, stability and inner-directed beliefs in democracy in the region.



- 2. Multilateralism should replace Exceptionalist foreign policy: As mentioned earlier, Exceptionalism is doomed to failure ontologically. Exceptionalism claims mission and a stand up policy to concert the global society based upon illusory ends. Fortunately, both Iran and the main body of European Union reject exceptionalism with different out-look.
- Specifically, Germans are in the side of Multilateralism in theory. Multilateralism of Europe in essence remains entangled between wait and see strategy without any innovation. As far as the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic is concerned, Iran has never invaded any country in the last two hundred years. Internally, more democratic change is in progress.



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- 3. The geo-politics of terrorism should be contained in and through collective actions:
 - Today, the Specter of terrorism threatens the whole world without any exception. Related to the problem of terrorism is the extended wave of migrations which turned to the most important crisis facing Europe.
 - Comparing three rounds of dialogues in the last thirty seven years, the new round under Dr Rohani's administration is going to be higher than previously. This round is known as "high ranking negotiations".



- Germany now in the Post-JCPOA era is on holiday! Despite all the interest and tendency demonstrated by the German businessmen and industries to engage in renewing the process of their traditional partnership in Iran, the German Chancellor, Mrs. Merkel, has been so far unwilling to give her blessing to this end.
- Fortunately, the European Union has begun to see the Saudi Arabia's destructive role in the region for producing terrorism. This country has lost its previous role.
- Although Europe does not say this loudly, released reports indicate the negative role of the Saudi and its allies in the Persian Gulf



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- 4. Geopolitics of Democracies should work together not to combat one another:
 - The USA and The European Union as well as the club of democracies would be better off without supporting murderous non-democratic states.
 - In the turn of the new millennium, world public opinion still feels double standards with regards to hegemony the United States pursues and indifference the European Union follows in many political domains.
 - Abandoning any kind of exceptionalism, working on multilateralism and keeping under belt the exchanges of experiences on democratic politics, all parts should avoid double standards. In the Post-JCPOA era, one expects not to hear remarks or signals which could endanger the agreement.



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- All in all, sanctions mentality should be given up in favor of realities of true Iranian “role and place” in the region in terms of energy geopolitics, cultural geopolitics, and containing terrorism geopolitics.



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- **Thank you for your attention.**

