

Iran (October 20, 2020)

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1a)

There won't be an Iran October Surprise

By Pepe Escobar

October 18, 2020

<http://thesaker.is/there-wont-be-an-iran-october-surprise/>

„No Washington-designed “maximum pressure” has been able to derail a crucial milestone this Sunday: the end of the UN arms embargo on Iran, in accordance with UN Security Council 2231, which has endorsed the 2015 JCPOA deal. [...] The end of the arms embargo does not imply a renewed arms race in Southwest Asia. The real story is how the Russia-China strategic partnership will be collaborating with their key geostrategic ally. It's never enough to remember that this Eurasian integration trio is regarded as the top “existential threat” to Washington. Tehran patiently waited for October 18. Now it's free to import a full range of advanced weaponry, especially from Moscow and Beijing. [...]“

1b)

Factsheet on ARM-RELATED TRANSFERS TERMINATION

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran

October 18, 2020

[https://en.mfa.ir/files/mfaen/Factsheet%20on%20Arm-related%20Transfers%20Termination%20\(2\).pdf](https://en.mfa.ir/files/mfaen/Factsheet%20on%20Arm-related%20Transfers%20Termination%20(2).pdf)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran issued a factsheet on the arm-related transfer termination according to the UNSC Resolution 2231 that endorses the 2015 nuclear deal.

1c)

Statement by the Foreign Ministry of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the Termination of UN Security Council Provisions on Arms Restrictions and Travel Ban 18 October 2020

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran

October 18, 2020

<https://en.mfa.ir/files/mfaen/FM%20Statement%20-%20Final.pdf>

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran issued a statement on the termination of the UN arms embargo on Tehran according to the UNSC Resolution 2231 that endorses the 2015 nuclear deal.

1d)

Do not expect a rush of arms sales to Iran

By Ellie Geranmayeh

European Council on Foreign Relations

October 16, 2020

https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_do_not_expect_a_rush_of_arms_sales_to_iran

„A broad range of political and financial problems are likely to prevent Iran from importing advanced weapons systems in the coming years. [...] No doubt, Moscow and Beijing will sign arms deals with Tehran – and perhaps even major ones, such as those involving the Russian S-400 missile defence system, which Iran is eager to acquire. [...] However, given precedent and a series of political and economic restraints, it is unclear whether these deals would result in delivery in the near future. [...] A pressing concern for European capitals should be that, in the coming months, the Trump administration may deploy its unilateral sanctions on the arms trade with Iran to increase interdictions of Iranian vessels and cargo (including those in the Gulf, and even those headed to Venezuela). Some hawkish voices in Washington have even called for the US to impose a naval blockade on Iran, which would amount to an act of war. Such measures to ratchet up the pressure on Iran – as the Trump administration moves into a second term or its final months in office – could provoke a military clash between Iran and the US in the Middle East. These measures can quickly spiral out of control – as became apparent after the US imposed an oil embargo on Iran in 2019, and assassinated General Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force, early this year. European capitals should focus their immediate efforts on preventing such escalation and mitigating the threat to their interests in the region. Working with Moscow and Beijing to assuage US fears should be part of this. But Europeans should also reach out to various interlocutors in Washington, primarily the defence community, to reduce the likelihood of escalation with Tehran in the coming months – especially if the advent of a Biden administration provides an opening for a return to diplomacy in January.“

1e)

China Will Not Capitalise on the End of the Iran Arms Embargo

By Lucille Greer

October 19, 2020

<https://www.bourseandbazaar.com/articles/2020/10/17/china-will-not-capitalize-on-the-end-of-the-iran-arms-embargo>

„On October 18, the arms embargo imposed on Iran by the United Nations expired. The provision, which was part of UN Resolution 2231 (2015) that endorsed the Iran Nuclear Deal, expired five years after the resolution's endorsement and a month after the failure of a U.S. attempt to extend its terms. There has been some speculation that China will rush in to export conventional weapons to the Islamic Republic. Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif's visit to Beijing two weeks ago no doubt set off alarm bells in Washington. China appears keen to maintain its reputation as a legitimate international player that abides by the rules. In July, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying stated, "China has practiced caution and responsibility in arms exports. And no one can criticize China for conducting regular arms trade with any country that does not violate international obligations." [...] When it comes to trade, politics, and wider security, Chinese and Iranian interests can often align, but the partnership between the countries has not developed into a functional alliance. Certainly, the end of the UN arms embargo on Iran presents a long-term commercial opportunity for China's defense industry. But in concert with both China's ambitions and restraint in the region, it is unlikely that China will move to capitalise on the expiration of the arms embargo.“

1f)

Tehran Eyes Lifting of Arms Embargo

By Farzin Nadimi

The Washington Institute

October 16, 2020

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/tehran-eyes-lifting-of-arms-embargo>

„[...] The Persian Gulf region will remain a yardstick for tense U.S.-Iran relations as well. Despite the official rhetoric, the strong possibility for escalation in recent months has reportedly made the Tehran regime's top clergy very concerned, forcing IRGC commander Gen. Hossein Salami to publicly rule out any such eventuality, thanks to the IRGC's very expensive "strong deterrent." Meanwhile, the United States has conducted several assertive drills in the Persian Gulf, while avoiding measures elsewhere that could provide Iran with immediate justification for military escalation. For example, the United States has so far refrained from actively intercepting Iranian gasoline shipments to Venezuela, choosing "persuasive" methods instead. There are limits to this approach, however, as Iran's continued gasoline lifeline to Venezuela has shown. The U.S. "maximum pressure" policy is unlikely to affect Iran's overall military capability, given that the lifting of arms sanctions will hardly affect the arms markets. They will be seen as proof by regime hardliners, especially within the IRGC, that the United States is caught in a no-win situation and should either leave the region and relinquish the ability to fight Iran, or stay and be at the mercy of Iran's accumulated power. Although the portrayal of an invincible front against the enemy is partly to boost morale in a country battered by economic hardship and the COVID-19 pandemic, that should not obscure the fact that, for an aggressively ideological enemy now assured of its military might, bending under pressure will not be an option.“

1g)

Iran has developed a totally native defence capability as a result of sanctions

By Press TV

September 24, 2020

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2020/09/24/634936/imposed-war-with-iraq-missile-capability-benefits>

„[...] Following the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, Iran sensed a new and more serious threat on its doorstep. By 2005 it developed the "mosaic defense" doctrine. There is still a focus on naval and air-defense, to disrupt the enemy's control of sea and air lanes, but it also employs an asymmetrical approach by the IRGC and regular ground forces, mobilizing a large, dispersed militia force to engage in a war of attrition. Since 2012 Iran has been adding an offensive dimension to its defense capabilities by adopting hybrid warfare, which includes the use of "unmanned explosive boats, naval mines, submarines and advanced torpedoes, armed and attack UAVs, anti-ship and land-attack cruise missiles [and] anti-ship ballistic missiles." Known as the "forward defense" doctrine, it recommends fighting opponents off, outside Iran's borders, before they get too close. Its four dimensions are proxies, drone and naval guerrilla warfare and cyber capabilities and intelligence operations. [...]"

1h)

Iran To Import North Korean missiles In 25-Year Military Deal With China

By Simon Watkins

October 19, 2020

<https://oilprice.com/Energy/Energy-General/Iran-To-Import-North-Korean-missiles-In-25-Year-Military-Deal-With-China.html>

„Following the end on the 18th of October of the 13-year United Nations’ embargo on Iran buying or selling weapons, the roll-out of the military component of the 25-year deal between China and Iran will begin in November, as exclusively revealed by Oil Price.com. After a series of meetings in China on the 9th and 10th of October between Iran’s Foreign Minister, Mohammad Zarif, and his China counterpart, Wang Yi, this military component may now also feature the deployment in Iran of North Korean weaponry and technology, in exchange for oil, according to sources very close to the Iranian government spoken to by OilPrice.com last week. Most notably this would include Hwasong-12 mobile ballistic missiles, with a range of 4,500 kilometres, and the development of liquid propellant rocket engines suitable for intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) or satellite launch vehicles (SLVs). This will all be part of a broader triangular relationship co-ordinated by Beijing and further facilitated by the imminent launch of a new digitised currency system by China. [...]“

1i)

Iran's Drone Fleet

By Douglas Barrie

United States Institute of Peace

Original: August 20, 2020

Updated: October 13, 2020

<https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2020/aug/20/irans-drone-fleet>

„Iran’s interest in drones and uninhabited vehicles really goes back to the Iran-Iraq war in the mid-1980s. The Iranians have been in the UAV business for several decades. The first generation of the Ababil that was used during the Iran-Iraq war appears to have been a low-cost attack munition, rather than an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) platform. [...]“

2a)

Iran warns Karabakh warring sides it won't remain indifferent to more shelling

By Press TV

October 16, 2020

<https://www.presstv.com/Detail/2020/10/16/636520/Iran-karabakh-warring-sides-border-hit-reciprocation>

„Iran has denied media reports that its border guards have launched retaliatory attacks after rockets fired by Karabakh warring sides hit its border areas, but pledged to take action if such attacks are repeated. [...] On Thursday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Tehran was ready to help find a sustainable solution to the ongoing dispute through a joint initiative with Russia and Turkey. During a Thursday phone call with his Azeri counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov, Zarif discussed the proposal that foresees the Islamic Republic, Turkey, and Russia boosting a standing Minsk Group that has failed so far to resolve decades of territorial dispute between Baku and Yerevan. [...]“

2b)

With an Eye on Nearby Iran, Israeli Weapons Fuel the Violence in Azerbaijan

Hoping to profit, protect an important source of oil, and to antagonize nearby Iran, Israel is selling drones and weapons to Azerbaijan, fueling the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

By Raul Diego

October 19, 2020

<https://www.mintpressnews.com/iran-israel-drones-arms-sales-violence-azerbaijan/272131/>

„[...] Today, the apartheid state obtains 40 percent of its oil from Baku, leaving little to the imagination about its interest in the regional conflict. In order to protect those interests, Israel has become one of Azerbaijan's largest arms suppliers in recent years, providing up to 61 percent of all Azeri arms imports this past year, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. [...] More importantly, Iran could also be dragged into a larger war and could hold the key to unraveling Israel's geopolitical motivation for their significant involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Iran shares a common cultural heritage with Armenia, despite religious differences, and counts the Christian nation as a strategic partner. One day before the second cease-fire was supposed to take effect, the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry accused Armenian forces of launching rocket attacks into Iranian territory as a provocation, which led the Iranian Foreign Ministry to issue a statement clarifying that "aggression against our country's territories by any party" in the conflict would not be tolerated.“

3)

A "\$400 billion" China-Iran Deal? The View from History

By Bill Figueroa

October 14, 2020

[https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/41852/A-\\$400-billion-China-Iran-Deal-The-View-From-History](https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/41852/A-$400-billion-China-Iran-Deal-The-View-From-History)

„The leak of a document attributed to the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs made waves on social media in June 2020. The document outlined a statement of intent to pursue a strategic partnership between China and Iran that would enhance political, military, cultural, and economic cooperation between the two nations. Called a "deal," a "pact," and even an "alliance" as it filtered into the mainstream media, this news has been received in the United States with predictable panic. Foreign policy commentators proclaimed it was the beginning of an "Iran-China axis" between "totalitarian twins" that plans to "dominate the Middle East" through "defying the U.S.," a plan that would be "bad news for the West" and make China "the Middle East arbiter." Despite the document's nebulous nature, commentators asserted that the agreement would fundamentally alter geostrategic calculations in the Middle East. Comments on social media were similarly outraged, with some comparing the alleged deal to Iran's past exploitation by imperial Britain and Russia. These alarmist predictions stand in contrast to analysts like Jacopo Scita, Lucille Greer, Esfandiyar Batmanghelidj, Julia Gurol, Maysam Behraves, and Jonathan Fulton. Through careful quantitative analysis, they have pointed out several inconsistencies between the reality of the proposed agreement and the response it has generated. [...]“

4)

A Musician Revered by Iranians, But Banned by the State

Mohammad Reza Shajarian's politics were almost never explicit, but the Iranian people knew he stood with them.

By Nahid Siamdoust

October 17, 2020

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/17/opinion/shajarian-death-iranian-singer.html?searchResultPosition=1>

„Within minutes of the death of the Iranian vocalist Mohammad Reza Shajarian last week, thousands streamed into the streets surrounding his hospital in Tehran, openly wept and sang his songs in unison. [...] For more than 40 years, Mr. Shajarian channeled the hopes and frustrations of Iranians and became the “people’s voice.” He delved into the country’s rich poetic heritage and sang verses that directly addressed people’s political and social problems. This turned his concerts into one of the few public places where crowds of strangers could get together and openly express their discontent through music. [...]“

5)

Analysis: Even With Trump Defeat, Iran Nuclear Deal Is Uncertain

By Kayhan Life Staff

October 20, 2020

<https://kayhanlife.com/feature/analysis-even-with-trump-defeat-iran-nuclear-deal-is-uncertain/>

„[...] While Khamenei’s supporters consider the JCPOA a failure of President Hassan Rouhani and his government, everyone knows that Iran would not have signed the agreement without the Leader’s blessing. Khamenei’s face-saving “heroic flexibility” enabled Mr. Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to sign the JCPOA in 2015 and make several crucial concessions to the West, including curbing Iran’s nuclear program significantly. However, senior Iranian officials have always maintained that signing the JCPOA was part of the state’s overall policy and not a single person’s decision. [...] The current situation is similar to that of 2015, except that Trump and his administration have set more stringent conditions for holding talks with Iran. Tehran had a much easier time complying with Obama’s list of demands. The JCPOA allowed Iran to restart its nuclear program after a certain period. Even with a Trump defeat, the future of the nuclear deal is uncertain.“

6)

Nobel Prizewinner Shirin Ebadi Joins Campaign To Ban Iran From International Sporting Events

By Natasha Phillips

October 15, 2020

<https://kayhanlife.com/authors/nobel-prizewinner-shirin-ebadi-joins-campaign-to-ban-iran-from-international-sporting-events/>

„Shirin Ebadi, a former judge who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 for pioneering the rights of children, women and refugees in Iran, has joined a campaign led by human-rights activists and athletes to ban the Islamic Republic from international sports tournaments, following Iran’s state execution of champion wrestler Navid Afkari. The viral campaign, United4Navid, was launched by anti-compulsory hijab campaigner Masih Alinejad on Twitter last Friday. [...]“

7a)

Iran: The Double Jeopardy of Sanctions and COVID-19

By Djavad Salehi-Isfahani

The India China Institute

September 19, 2020

<https://www.indiachinainstitute.org/2020/09/19/iran-the-double-jeopardy-of-sanctions-and-covid-19/>

„In March 2020, Iran became the epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic outside China. [...] Although the early predictions that the virus would kill between 250,000 and 500,000 Iranians by August 2020 have failed to materialize, and the second wave is slowly flattening, Iran is by no means out of the woods. Its economy is still in tatters, its currency is depreciating, and inflation is still above 30%. Given how far apart the positions of Iran's leaders and the Trump administration are, there is little hope for any improvement in the near future. The situation could change significantly if the Democrats win the White House in November and decide to return the US to the JCPOA. It is ironic how intertwined the lives of ordinary Iranians with US politics is given how hard the Islamic Republic has tried to distance itself from the US over the past four decades.[...]“

7b)

The "Chilling Effect" of U.S. Sanctions on Iran

By Richard Nephew

United States Institute of Peace

October 11, 2020

<https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2020/oct/11/chilling-effect-us-sanctions-iran>

„[...] As a legal matter, the next U.S. president could remove sanctions on Iranian banks immediately, although there could be practical limitations, such as how quickly the bureaucracy updates regulations and documentation for compliance officers worldwide. But the president has wide-ranging authorities under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act to suspend or terminate the sanctions under which these designations were made. He could simply instruct the Treasury Department to terminate the designations. Politically, it may be more complicated. The terms of the designations do not identify any illicit conduct by these institutions, which makes it easier to argue for their termination. But it would be more controversial politically to remove sanctions on banks identified as facilitating terrorism, human rights violations, or the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Trump's "maximum pressure" strategy also has support outside the administration; any move to lift sanctions could face opposition and claims that lifting sanctions undermines the broader effort to contain Iran's ability to conduct terrorism, repress its own population, or build up its military.“

8)

Why Nasrin Sotoudeh Went on Hunger Strike to Protest Iran's Prison Conditions

October 9, 2020

<https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/41828/Why-Nasrin-Sotoudeh-is-on-Hunger-Strike-to-Protest-Iran%E2%80%99s-Dire-Prison-Conditions>

„In this interview, Malihe Razazan spoke to Human Rights Watch (HRW) Iran Researcher Tara Sepehri Far about Nasrin Sotoudeh's hunger strike and the criminalization of peaceful protests in Iran. Sotoudeh is an Iranian human rights lawyer, who was arrested in 2010 and started her second hunger strike this year in August to protest the inhumane treatment of Iranian political prisoners during the COVID pandemic. Courtesy of Voices of the Middle East and North Africa (VOMENA).“