

Iran (March 22, 2021)

=====

1a)

Presidential Elections in Iran: Procedures, Candidates, and the Persistent Clout of Key Institutions

Most speculation about the candidates and outcome of Iran's upcoming presidential election appears premature, and assessments about potential impact on U.S.-Iranian relations seem exaggerated.

By Ali Alfoneh

The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington (AGSIW)

March 19, 2021

<https://agsiw.org/presidential-elections-in-iran-procedures-candidates-and-the-persistent-clout-of-key-institutions/>

„As the Islamic Republic prepares for the June 18 presidential election, Iranian and international media are boiling over with speculations concerning who is likely to prevail and how the outcome may impact Iran's relations with the United States. A review of the basic procedures and political dynamics of presidential elections as well as strategic decision making in Iran since 1979 serves as a cautionary antidote to such speculation: If history is any guide, serious presidential contenders will not join the race until five weeks prior to the election, and the president is but one among multiple institutional decision makers in Iran's highest strategic decision-making body, the Supreme National Security Council. [...]“

1b)

Hard-liners Fight for Iran's Presidency and Foreign Policy

By Daniel Brumberg

Arab Center Washington DC (ACW)

March 17, 2021

http://arabcenterdc.org/policy_analyses/hard-liners-fight-for-irans-presidency-and-foreign-policy/

„Former US Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz, who during the Obama Administration played a pivotal role in negotiating the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, recently asserted in an interview with CNBC that “there are probably ... about 10 weeks left for some serious diplomacy ... before the Iranian elections will naturally call for a bit of a reset.” That certainly is an understatement. While experience suggests that Iran's electoral politics can produce sudden and sometimes welcome surprises, the chances that the June 18 presidential election will go to a hard-liner are very strong. [...]“

=====

2a)

Iranian tankers and covert attacks

By Nat South

March 13, 2021

<https://thesaker.is/iranian-tankers-and-covert-attacks/>

„The WSJ published an exclusive article on covert Israeli targeting of Iranian ships and shipments going to Syria, going back several years. Here is the headline: “WSJ News Exclusive | Israeli Strikes Target Iranian Oil Bound for Syria” To shed some light on the matter and give some broader context to the WSJ exclusive, I produced a draft visual timeline of notable events, of maritime incidents occurring to Iranian ships or those connected to Iran in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea, as well as the timeline of some of the highly publicised sabotage attacks in the MEG / Arabian Sea / Gulf of Oman region. The visual is not a complete list of the incidents but just an outline. [...]“

2b)

Finger of Blame for Attack on Iranian Freighter Pointed at Israel: Spokesman

By Tasnim News Agency

March, 15, 2021

<https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2021/03/15/2470535/finger-of-blame-for-attack-on-iranian-freighter-pointed-at-israel-spokesman>

„Evidence suggests that Israel may have been behind a recent attack on an Iranian container ship in the Mediterranean Sea, the spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry said, warning that Iran would consider resorting to “all options” to protect its interests. Speaking at a weekly press conference on Monday, Saeed Khatibzadeh said the General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces is competent to give a detailed opinion about the attack on Iran’s ‘Shahr-e Kord’ container ship in the Mediterranean Sea, although the location of such an act of sabotage points the finger of blame at the Zionist regime. [...]“

2c)

Iran’s defense minister says country must ready for nuclear, chemical attacks

By Times of Israel Staff and Agencies

March 16, 2021

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/irans-defense-minister-says-country-must-ready-for-nuclear-chemical-attacks/>

„Iran’s defense minister said on Tuesday that the country must be ready to defend itself against nuclear, biological and chemical attacks. “We should be prepared to defend our nation against all threats and whatever the enemy may one day use as an offensive tool, including chemical, nuclear and biological weapons,” said Iran’s Defense Minister Amir Hatami, according to the semi-official Fars news agency. Hatami said the “enemies of humanity” were prepared to use all means to achieve their military goals. Iran’s defense ministry “had adopted all the necessary measures against all threats,” he said. [...]“

2d)

AP sources: Iran threatens US Army post and top general

By James Laporta

March 21, 2021

<https://apnews.com/article/national-security-iran-only-on-ap-army-1285df40348182e1b74dc403607c5928>

„Iran has made threats against Fort McNair, an Army post in the U.S. capital, and against the Army’s vice chief of staff, two senior U.S. intelligence officials said. They said communications intercepted by the National Security Agency in January showed that Iran’s Revolutionary Guard discussed mounting “USS Cole-style attacks” against the Army post, referring to the October 2000 suicide attack in which a small boat pulled up alongside the Navy destroyer in the Yemeni port of Aden and exploded, killing 17 sailors. [...]“

2e)

Iran Unveils 'Missile City' Of The IRGC Navy, Showcases Various Anti-Ship Missiles, Drones, Naval Mines, And Equipment For Electronic Warfare

March 15, 2021

<https://www.memri.org/tv/irgc-unveils-irgc-navy-missile-base-drones-anti-ship-missiles-naval-mines>

„IRGC Commander-in-Chief General Hossein Salami spoke at a ceremony marking the unveiling of an IRGC Navy "Missile City," introducing the various weapons added to the IRGC navy arsenal. The unveiling was aired on Channel 1 (Iran) on March 15, 2021. He said that the IRGC has UAVs, land-based anti-ship missiles, anti-ship missiles, sea mines, and various types of naval systems for electronic warfare, intelligence, naval mine warfare, and weapons that cannot be unveiled. [...]“

=====

3a)

In the Service of Ideology: Iran's Religious and Socioeconomic Activities in Syria

By Oula A. Alrifai

The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

March 14, 2021

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/service-ideology-irans-religious-and-socioeconomic-activities-syria>

„The dalliance between the Assad family and Iran’s Shia clerics began in the 1970s. But whereas the Syrian leader held leverage in those days predating Iran’s Islamic Revolution, the tables have now been turned. Observers of the decade-long Syria war understand the indispensable role Tehran has played in ensuring the Assad regime’s survival. But they may be less familiar with its stunning breadth—or its historical roots.“ [...]“

3b)

Russian foreign minister’s visit aimed at challenging US influence in Gulf

By Kirill Semenov

March 19, 2021

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/03/russian-foreign-ministers-visit-aimed-challenging-us-influence-gulf>

„Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s visit to the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Qatar on March 9-11 took place against the backdrop of uncertainty among these states about their future relations with the new US administration, which is rethinking many of President Donald Trump’s approaches to

Middle East affairs. Amid this context, Moscow is seeking to remind the leading Arab monarchies of its readiness to fill the possible "void" that could arise if their ties with Washington stagnate, both in the security sphere and in the military-technical and military-political spheres. [...]"

=====

4)

Iran, China propose plan to form coalition against sanctions

By Mehr News Agency

Marc 12, 2021

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/170988/Iran-China-propose-plan-to-form-coalition-against-sanctions>

„Sixteen countries, including Iran and China, have proposed forming a coalition to defend the UN Charter and counter unilateral sanctions and coercion. China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, and others are seeking support for a coalition to defend the United Nations Charter by pushing back against the use or threat of force and unilateral sanctions, according to a letter seen by Reuters on Thursday. [...] Other founding members of the group are Algeria, Angola, Belarus, Bolivia, Cambodia, Cuba, Eritrea, Laos, Nicaragua, Saint Vincent, and the Grenadines, Syria, and Venezuela.“