

Iran (May 12, 2021)

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1a)

The Vienna shadowplay

By Pepe Escobar

April 27, 2021

<https://thesaker.is/the-vienna-shadowplay/s>

„[...] On April 22, in the dead of night before dawn, a Syrian missile exploded only 30 km away from the ultra-sensitive Israeli nuclear reactor of Dimona. The official – and insistent – Israeli spin: this was an “errant”. Well, not really. [...]“

1b)

The Israeli Factor in the US-Iran Nuclear Talks

By Joe Macaron

Arab Center Washington DC (ACW)

May 5, 2021

http://arabcenterdc.org/policy_analyses/the-israeli-factor-in-the-us-iran-nuclear-talks/

„As US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was visiting Israel on April 11, Israel’s Mossad intelligence agency orchestrated a mysterious explosion in Iran’s Natanz nuclear facility, destroying a significant amount of the country’s uranium enrichment capability and complicating the already difficult process of restoring the Iran nuclear deal. This development raised questions about the extent to which the interests of the Biden Administration and the Israeli government are aligned on Iran and how Israel will react if the US and Iran agreed to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).[...]“ „[...] If the Israeli government is not restrained by the Biden Administration, the ability to reach a viable nuclear deal with Iran might be undermined. To be sure, both sides are learning from the lessons of the 2015 nuclear deal. Netanyahu cannot afford to repeat a public confrontation with a Democratic president on Iran, and Biden cannot ignore Netanyahu on Iran as Obama did. Hence, the new equation might mean that Washington will rejoin the nuclear deal while keeping Israel informed every step along the way; and there is nothing Israeli officials can do to halt the process. In return, Israel will continue to target Iran’s nuclear activities, when it evaluates such a need, without surprising Washington – and the Biden administration might not be willing to use leverage to halt this Israeli deterrence.“

1c)

Why the Past Haunts Talks With Iran

By The Editorial Board

April 23, 2021

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/23/opinion/iran-nuclear-deal.html?searchResultPosition=1>

„Nuclear talks in Vienna aimed at bringing the United States and Iran back into compliance with the Iran nuclear deal, otherwise known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, are said to be making progress, which is good news. But there have been predictable roadblocks. Israel, which is not a party to the talks, appeared to sabotage Iran’s centrifuges just as talks were gaining steam. Republicans in Congress are pushing a bill called the Maximum Pressure Act that would strip President Biden’s ability to lift sanctions on Iran without a vote from Congress, making it impossible for the United States to live up to its end of any bargain. [...]“

1d)

U.S. and Iran Want to Restore the Nuclear Deal. They Disagree Deeply on What That Means.

By Steven Erlanger and David E. Sanger

May 9, 2021

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/09/world/middleeast/biden-iran-nuclear.html?searchResultPosition=3>

„After five weeks of diplomatic shadow boxing, it is clear that the old agreement no longer works for Tehran or Washington, except as a steppingstone. [...]“

1e)

The Real Iran Nuclear Talks: Why Did Bill Burns Go To Baghdad?

By Michael Rubin

April 26, 2021

<https://www.19fortyfive.com/2021/04/the-real-iran-nuclear-talks-why-did-bill-burns-go-to-baghdad/>

„[...] In recent weeks, Malley has traveled to Vienna to renew nuclear talks. His position has shifted quickly from tying the lifting of sanctions to Iran returning to JCPOA compliance to simply demanding a commitment to return to the status quo ante. The real talks, however, may not be in Vienna and may not involve Malley directly. In recent days, Bill Burns, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, has quietly traveled to Baghdad, according to multiple Iraqi sources on the ground I have spoken to on background. Rather than hold talks in the U.S. embassy or in any Iraqi government building, he has instead quietly met with Iranian officials in the private home of the Iraqi foreign minister. [...]“

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2a)

U.S. Officials Claim That Iraqi Kurds Helped To Kill Qassam Soleimani

By Moon of Alabama

May 8, 2021

<https://www.moonofalabama.org/2021/05/us-officals-claim-that-iraqi-kurds-helped-to-kill-qassam-soleimani.html#more>

„Yahoo has prominently posted a long piece about the early 2020 murder of the Iranian General Qassem Soleimani and the Iraqi resistance leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. [...]“

2b)

The Way Out of the Impasse Between Iran & U.S.

By Eric Zuesse

May 9, 2021

<https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2021/05/09/way-out-of-impasse-between-iran-us/>

„[...] Biden chose, when he entered office in January, to commit his Administration to Trump’s foreign policies. He accepted the relocation of the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, which was a slap in the face to the Palestinians. He accepted Trump’s acceptance of Obama’s policy that Crimea and Donbass — which had separated themselves from Ukraine after Obama’s coup which had seized Ukraine’s government in February 2014, as a result of a plan by Obama which had started forming in Obama’s Administration in 2011 — must be seized back by Ukraine, and Biden promised that the United States would help Ukraine to do that. And he accepted Trump’s continuation of Obama’s plan to oust Bashar al-Assad from power in Syria and replace him with leaders who would be selected by the Saud family. He also accepted Obama’s and Trump’s change in American policy on Taiwan, toward switching away from the decades-long “one-China” policy of refusing to grant separate-nation status to Taiwan, toward now sending officials to Taiwan in violation of that policy and toward sending warships to the Taiwan Strait (internationally recognized by every nation except America to be Chinese territory) as a threat and preparation for publicly demanding that Taiwan be recognized by the United Nations as being a separate nation and no longer a province of China. All of these policies were build-ups toward some hoped-for surrender by Russia, and by China, and by Iran, to Biden, which would supposedly happen in some way without direct military conflict between the United States and Russia, and/or China, and/or Iran. [...]“

2c)

Oh What a Lovely New War! False Flagging in the Middle East?

By Philip Giraldi

May 6, 2021

<https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2021/05/06/oh-what-a-lovely-new-war-false-flagging-in-the-middle-east/>

„[...] The danger is, of course, that Israel is working hard to suck the United States into a war of its own choosing against Iran and it has a fifth column of allies in the United States that are willing to do its bidding by fair means or foul. Its leadership may be thinking that it is now or never to take the steps to initiate an armed conflict and that just might mean staging a false flag attack on a U.S. merchant or war ship, a diplomatic mission, or a vulnerable military base. The Middle East region is certainly a target-rich environment for those seeking to identify American facilities and vessels, so it wouldn’t be that hard to set up something that could appear to be an Iranian act of aggression that Joe Biden would have to respond

to. And he would find plenty of support both in Congress and in the media to do so. Even if the American counter-attack were strictly limited, the prime beneficiary would of course be Israel, which would have made the possibility of any U.S.-Iranian agreement go away forever. [...]"

2d)

US-Israel Team To Battle Iran Missiles

By Arie Egozi

May 7, 2021

<https://breakingdefense.com/2021/05/us-israel-team-to-battle-iran-missiles/>

„White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan and Israeli national security adviser Meir Ben-Shabbat have agreed to establish an interagency working group to focus on the threat from Iran's precision-guided missiles being shared with Hezbollah and other allies. Israeli defense sources told BD that while the Trump Administration focused on how to stop Iran's gallop towards a nuclear bomb, the issue of Iran's precision ballistic missiles has been ignored. Israel has reportedly launched at least 200 strikes against Iranian weapons shipments in recent years. [...]"

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3)

Russia and Iran: How Far from a Strategic Partnership?

By Andrey Kortunov, Director General of the Russian International Affairs Council, member of the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC)

May 6, 2021

<https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/russia-and-iran-how-far-from-a-strategic-partnership/>

„Should we define the current Russia–Iran relations as a strategic partnership or rather as a tactical alliance between countries with diverging foreign policy aspirations and ambitions? To answer this question, we should clarify what strategic partnership actually means in the modern international relations. [...]"

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4)

Saudi Arabia's New Dialogue With Iran was Long in the Making

New talks reflect a broad range of regional and international developments in recent years.

By Hussein Ibish

May 4, 2021

<https://agsiw.org/saudi-arabias-new-dialogue-with-iran-was-long-in-the-making/>

„Saudi Arabia and Iran reportedly held a significant diplomatic meeting in Iraq in early April, which was itself the product of a series of earlier, more low-key and low-level meetings. The two sides are said to be planning a follow-up soon. And Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, one of the Arab leaders most vociferously critical of Iran, said in a major televised interview that his government seeks “good relations” with Iran and is “working with our partners in the region to overcome our differences with Iran.” The talks in Iraq reportedly focused on the situation in Yemen, but the details are probably less significant than the development of such a dialogue. [...]“

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5)

China and Iran: Resurging Defense Cooperation?

By Hiddai Segev

The Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv University

May 10, 2021

<https://www.inss.org.il/publication/china-iran/?INSSS>

„Assistance by one of Israel’s most important friends to its greatest enemy has risen steadily under Xi Jinping. The closer relations between Beijing and Tehran, which include joint military exercises, a significant strategic agreement, and according to reports, assistance to Iran’s nuclear and missile programs, demand serious attention in Jerusalem – as well as throughout the Middle East and Washington [...]“

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6)

The gulf between them: What Arab Gulf countries can learn from Iran’s approach to Iraq

By Nussaibah Younis

The European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR)

May 5, 2021

<https://ecfr.eu/publication/the-gulf-between-them-what-gulf-countries-can-learn-from-irans-approach-to-iraq/>

„Summary: The strong Iranian presence in Iraq troubles Arab Gulf leaders and discourages them from engaging with the country more deeply. / Iran adopts a strategically pragmatic approach to Iraq, cooperating widely to maximise its influence while working hard to retain vital Iraqi economic support, especially vis-à-vis its rivalry with the US. / In contrast, Arab Gulf states’ approaches to Iraq have been stop-start – although Iraq’s own weak governance also contributes to this. / Popular Iraqi anger at Iranian influence allows Arab Gulf states to present a positive image of themselves as potential investors in Iraq’s

economy. / Europeans should encourage Arab Gulf states to act more strategically on Iraq. /An Iraq that has diverse regional relationships is more likely to be stable and secure, in line with European interests in the Middle East.“

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7a)

Iran's Zarif Says Leaked Tape Sparked 'Domestic Infighting', Touts 'Synergy' of Military & Diplomacy

By Svetlana Ekimenko

April 28, 2021

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/202104281082747173-irans-zarif-says-leaked-tape-sparked-domestic-infighting-touts-synergy-of-military--diplomacy/>

„Iranian President Hassan Rouhani earlier ordered an investigation into the leak of an audiotape of Foreign Minister Javad Zarif's interview, not intended for public release, where he alleges that his diplomatic efforts within the government are overshadowed by the demands of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has expressed deep regret over the potential fallout from a recently leaked audio of him expounding on the decision-making process in the Islamic Republic [...]“

7b)

Saudi Broadcaster 'Leaks' Context Free Quotes From Iran's Foreign Minister Talk - Should It Be Trusted?

By Moon of Alabama

April 26, 2021

<https://www.moonofalabama.org/2021/04/saudi-broadcaster-leaks-context-free-quotes-from-irans-foreign-minister-talk-should-it-be-trusted.html>

„[...] In a leaked audiotape that offers a glimpse into the behind-the scenes power struggles of Iranian leaders, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the Revolutionary Guards Corps call the shots, overruling many government decisions and ignoring advice. In one extraordinary moment on the tape that surfaced Sunday, Mr. Zarif departed from the reverential official line on Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani, the commander of the Guards' elite Quds Force, the foreign-facing arm of Iran's security apparatus, who was killed by the United States in January 2020. The general, Mr. Zarif said, undermined him at many steps, working with Russia to sabotage the nuclear deal between Iran and world powers and adopting policies toward Syria's long war that damaged Iran's interests. If the Revolutionary Guard really 'calls the shots' and was against the nuclear deal why was it signed and sealed? [...]“

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8)

Iran's presidential elections don't matter. Here's why.

By Shahin Milani

The Atlantic Council

May 7, 2021

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/irans-presidential-elections-dont-matter-heres-why/>

„The Islamic Republic will hold its thirteenth presidential election on June 18. The Guardian Council, a twelve-member body comprised of six clerics and six attorneys, will announce the list of candidates allowed to run for president. While the final list of candidates will not be announced by the Guardian Council before May 26, it can be said with certainty that whoever emerges victorious will not have a material impact on Iran's domestic or foreign policy. Iran has had seven presidents. The first one, Abolhassan Bani-Sadr—who served a little over a year from 1980 until 1981—is in exile in France. The second one, Mohammad Ali Rajaei, was assassinated in a bombing in 1981. The third one, Ali Khamenei—who was president during 1981-1989—is the current Supreme Leader. The fourth, fifth, and sixth presidents have been sidelined after the end of their respective presidencies. Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani—who served from 1989 to 1997—was disqualified by the Guardian Council when he sought a third term in 2013. Mohammad Khatami, who was president from 1997 to 2005, has faced severe restrictions due to the 2009-2011 Green Movement; newspapers are barred from mentioning his name or printing his image until this day. His successor, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad—who was president during 2005-2013—has fared better, but he was also disqualified by the Guardian Council when he sought a third term in 2017. [...]“

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9)

Iranian Alternative to the Suez Canal

By Valery Kulikov

April 30, 2021

<https://journal-neo.org/2021/04/30/iranian-alternative-to-the-suez-canal/>

„With the recent blockage of the Suez Canal by the container ship Ever Given, many countries are already actively involved in the search and discussion of a possible future alternative to this maritime transport route connecting Europe and Asia. For instance, Russia proposed the Northern Sea Route, and Israel recalled the idea of the Ben-Gurion Canal, which could connect the Mediterranean with the Red Sea, bypassing the Suez Canal. Iran is not far behind in this regard, proposing as one of the “bypass routes” the North-South transport corridor from the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea, the idea of which it suggested way back in 2016. [...]“

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