

Iran, Russia absence questions MSC commitment to objectives



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It could also set the groundwork for direct exchange of views about the nuclear talks, claims of Tehran's "military support" for Russia in the war and even issues concerning the protests in Iran.

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This, however, comes as the political objectives pursued by some European states, and in particular Germany, have convinced the conference's organizers to, under political pressure, make alterations the international forum's framework and principles, and by not inviting Russia and Iran, scupper the chance of face-to-face talks. They, in the absence of representatives from Moscow and Tehran, held consultations about the two countries unilaterally and repeated previous accusations against them.

Wolfgang Ischinger, former German ambassador to the United States and Britain, who chaired the conference during 2008-2022 and was replaced by former German diplomat Christoph Heusgen this year, criticized the latest edition of the conference in remarks to the Financial Times, saying, "I always felt the conference was an important platform for talking informally with difficult adversaries – countries with whom our official contacts were poor or didn't exist at all."

American political analyst Barbara Slavin reiterated the same issue in an op-ed, stressing that the MSC has lost its value as a place for dialogue among opposing countries.

In Tehran's absence, the conference's organizers invited three anti-Iran figures, which not only killed the sole opportunity for direct talks with the Iranian government, but will also have negative impacts on relations between the Islamic Republic and the European Union in the future. Commenting on the issue, Slavin said there is no sign suggesting an imminent collapse of the Iranian Islamic Establishment, adding, "The appearance on a grand international stage of Reza Pahlavi, the US-based son of the ousted late Shah of Iran", may further convince Iranian officials that "they face an existential threat from the West and that the only viable course for them to survive is to double down on a military alliance with Russia and an economic partnership with China."

She noted that not inviting Iran deprived the West of the opportunity to interact and exchange views with Tehran about the most important differences between the two sides.

In reaction to the Western states' anti-Iran political moves in the MSC, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani tweeted on Sunday, "The media frenzy of the American regime and some European countries about Iran is a futile attempt in fomenting Iranophobia to justify their illegal and anti-human rights actions against the Iranian people."

In similar remarks, Abbas-Ali Kadkhodaei, a member of the Iranian Constitutional Council, wrote in a Twitter post that inviting those affiliated to the Pahlavi regime to the MSC by German officials was a flagrant instance of interference in other countries' internal affairs and will have legal repercussions for the German government.

Nevertheless, the conference and Reza Pahlavi's remarks about his preference for a "monarchical system in Iran", contradicted claims by the advocates of the establishment of a so-called "democratic system of governance" in Iran instead of the Islamic Republic.

Raeisi: US failed to stop Iran's progress through sanctions



Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi speaks in an exclusive interview with China's state-run and English-language CGTN television news network broadcast on February 18, 2023.

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President Ebrahim Raeisi said the United States and its Western allies sought to stop the Iranian nation's advancement by means of sanctions but failed in their bids, describing the coercive measures as another form of warfare against the country.

Raeisi made the remarks in an exclusive interview with China's state-run and English-language CGTN television news network broadcast on Saturday, according to Press TV.

"In essence, this is also a form of war. The only difference is that the method has changed from the military force to sanctions regimes. Sanctions are incredibly cruel. Essential medications needed by patients, including drugs for treating children with the butterfly skin disease, have been added to the list of the sanctioned items against Iran. This has caused immense sufferings for patients and their families. They also sanctioned COVID-19 vaccines," the Iranian president pointed out.

"When I met with the secretary-general of the United Nations [António Guterres] in New York [on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly], I brought up this issue. He expressed his apologies, saying that despite his best efforts, he could not persuade the United States to lift the ban on vaccine exports to Iran."

"Everyone knows that sanctions hurt ordinary people. They say the sanctions only target the Iranian government, but it is the people who bear the brunt of their cruel impact," Raeisi said.

"They (American politicians) and their supporters often say that the Iranian government will be gone in six months, or in the year of such and such. But now more than 40 years have passed. It is those who made such claims that are gone. Some have passed away, while some have left office. But our Islamic Establishment exists with great vitality. The US wanted to hamper our development through sanctions. But our people, especially our youths, have neither become discouraged nor stopped moving forward," the president said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Raeisi pointed to the Vienna negotiations on the salvage of the 2015 nuclear deal – officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – and removal of anti-Iran sanctions.

"They (Western parties to the accord) claim to be looking for an agreement, but what we see is that their actions do not correspond to their allegations. While Iran has declared its resolve to reach a good agreement, they do not follow the suit. They have both gone back on their pledges and withdrawn from the JCPOA. They have also left the negotiating table and announced interest to pursue their goals on streets and instigate chaos than to engage in talks," Raeisi said.

What we see in the behavior of the current US administration led by President Joe Biden is no different from those of its predecessors, the Iranian president noted.

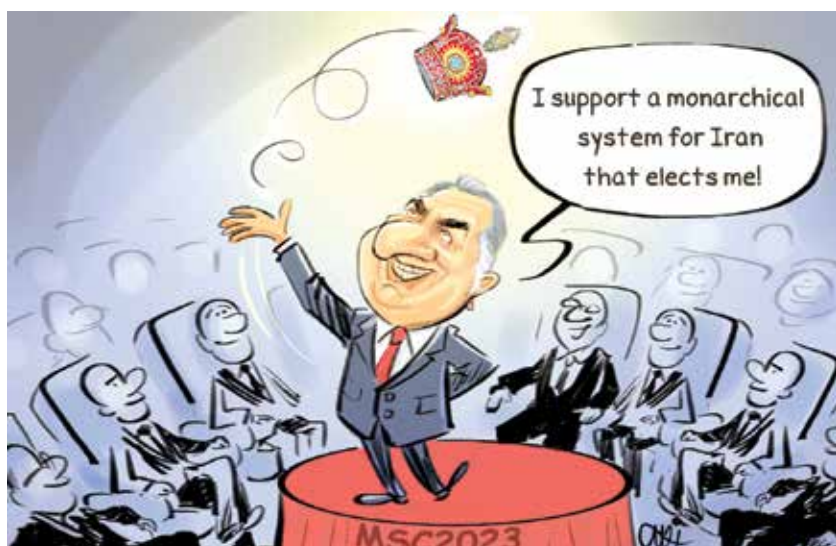
Negotiations between the parties to the deal kicked off in Vienna in April 2021, with the intention of bringing the US back into the deal and putting an end to its "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran.

Tehran, whose strict adherence to the nuclear deal had been certified several times by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), maintains that it is necessary for the US to offer guarantees that it will not withdraw or violate the accord again.

The discussions, however, have been at a standstill since August 2022 due to Washington's insistence on not lifting all of the sanctions slapped on Tehran by the previous US administration and offering the necessary guarantees.

'We believe that Americans are gravely mistaken. They have miscalculations. Some European countries have made miscalculations as well. Their knowledge of Iran and the Iranian nation is off beam.'

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran to unveil unmanned Qaher fighter jet next year: IAIO

The Iran Aviation Industries Organization (IAIO) announced plans to unveil an unmanned version of homegrown Qaher single-seat stealth fighter aircraft in the next solar calendar year that begins on March 21.

Speaking during a TV program on Saturday night, IAIO chief executive Brigadier General Afshin Khajefard said the aircraft was manufactured at the IAIO and the project was first

brought up in the media 10 years ago, Press TV reported.

"The Qaher project has reached full maturity in terms of technology, but we are producing more diversified products. It means that by the middle of next year, you will see [new] versions of this aircraft that will be delivered to the Armed Forces," he said. "The Qaher project will emerge as an unmanned aircraft."

Khajefard also emphasized that Iran is self-reliant in the field of overhauling commercial aircraft and manufacturing components in defiance of sanctions.

"We have reached a level of self-sufficiency in the field of engines so that today we can produce 10 types of engines, most of which are used on drones and cruise missiles. Of course, our defense industries have also reached self-sufficiency in designing and making heavy engines," he added.

Referring to production of electric aircraft, Khajefard said that the IAIO has started working on sever-

al prototypes that will be tested next year.

"Of course, our electric drones have reached full maturity, but manned eclectic aircraft require more improvements," he explained.

Touching on Iran's achievements regarding development of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), he said, "We have various classes of missiles, precision-strike bombs, electronic warfare avionics and reconnaissance drones. However, we are trying to develop drones with civilian applications, because drones can be used for agriculture, mapping and firefighting."