

West has security goals in Central Asia

Iran should pursue trilateral diplomacy with Europe and Central Asia



By Ebrahim Beheshti
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INTERVIEW

After a meeting between the leaders of five Central Asian countries (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan) with US President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany hosted the countries leaders. The meetings indicate the West's serious intention to strengthen its presence in Central Asia. We have discussed the issue with Abed Akbari, an expert on international issues, and managing director of Abrar Institute of International Studies and Research in Tehran.

IRAN DAILY: Is the West pursuing security or economic benefits from its presence in the Central Asian region?

It is definitely for security reasons. In fact, the West wants to have a stronger presence in Central Asia, in a bid to have more control over its rivals – Russia and China. The Central Asian countries are part of China's major project, the "Belt and Road Initiative". Russia

has always had a traditional influence in these countries, especially in the current situation in which Moscow is under pressure from the West due to the war in Ukraine. The Central Asian countries give Russia the opportunity to meet some of its needs.

Presently, Germany, the United States and, to a lesser extent, France are providing these countries with aid. They have also launched public infrastructure projects in these countries to strengthen their presence there. Therefore, the Central Asia region is of great importance to the West as its presence in the region can help the West contain Russia and China. Of course, commercial and economic issues are also important for the West. Turkmenistan's energy as well as Kazakhstan's geographical position are attractive to the West.

Just as big countries like Russia and China paved the way for Iran's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to influence regional equations, Western countries want to do so with a greater presence in Central Asia.

There are growing concerns about the presence of the US-led NATO

alliance in the Caucasus and the Central Asian regions after recent tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia and talks about the establishment of the Zangezur corridor. Do you think that the presence of Western countries in Central Asia is a matter of security concern for the regional countries?

Yes. The military aid that Western countries have been giving to Central Asian countries is an important issue. They have provided them with tactical weapons, hold joint military maneuvers, or build military infrastructures in these countries. However, this military presence, whether in the name of NATO or the European countries, does not make any difference in the result. The important thing is the presence of Western countries around Iran, which is a matter of concern. Iran should be careful not to be surprised in Central Asia, as it was in the Caucasus.

What policy can Tehran adopt against this threat?

After the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and its change of government, Western countries have made more diplomatic



● ADAM SCHULTZ/WHITE HOUSE

moves in the region. For example, the German foreign minister came to the region and visited eight countries, except Iran. They are investigating whether they can manage the developments and equations in the region without Iran. In my opinion, an active trilateral diplomacy is needed between Iran, Central Asia and Europe. It can be a new agenda for Iran-Europe dialogues. Iran has capacities which the Europeans cannot ignore.

One of the headaches for European countries is the smuggling of drugs through Central Asia to Europe. They can use Iran's experience in fighting against smugglers. This issue could be an opportunity for Tehran to turn threats into opportunities by setting up trilateral negotiations.

Central Asian countries have been Russia's backyard for decades, and they have had good re-

lations with China. Now, these countries are leaning towards the West. Does it contain a special message?

Three decades after the fall of the Soviet Union and the independence of the Central Asian countries, a new generation of politicians are in charge, who are seeking more independence and wish to extricate their countries from Russian influence. To balance Russia's influ-

ence, the governments of the Central Asian countries have turned to China in the last decade. However, Beijing did not meet their expectations in economic investment. Now it seems that by getting closer to the West, these five countries are trying to provoke Russia and China to have a greater economic presence in their countries. In fact, they seek more concessions from Russia and China.

MP: Iran an emerging military superpower

Any military action against Iran 'doomed to failure'



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

An Iranian lawmaker said Iran is now considered an emerging superpower in the world in terms of military and weapons, stressing that any military action against Iran is doomed to failure.

In an exclusive interview with Iran Daily, Morteza Mahmoudvand said at a time when Iran had not come to maturity in the military field, the country fought alone against the world during the Iraqi-im-

posed war. Many countries supported the Iraqi regime, while Iran was actually at war directly with 36 countries, and indirectly with more than 80 countries.

Referring to the war in Syria, he said that many countries sought to occupy the country either directly or indirectly through terrorists. But they did not succeed and only one branch of our ground forces, Quds Ground Force, managed to bring the enemy to its knees in Syria and change the situation in favor of the people of the region.

Today, a military power

such as Russia is stuck in the war in Ukraine, which is supported by the West. During the Iran-Iraq war, these countries also supported Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. However, they did not achieve their goals. Considering that Iran is currently at the peak of its military and security power, the enemy can never take any action against Iran. Mahmoudvand also reacted to repeated claims made by the UAE's representative at the UN General Assembly over the three Iranian islands in the Persian

Gulf, calling it a false and threadbare claim. The enemies of Iran incite the UAE and the Persian Gulf Arab countries every now and then regarding the Iranian islands.

He added, "For the umpteenth time, we are officially telling the UAE and all those who stand behind these false claims that their claims have no historical basis."

Apart from the three islands, we will not even forget Bahrain as part of Iran.

Therefore, they should not brazenly talk about the own-

ership of the three islands. All maps from ancient times until today indicate that these islands have always been part of Iran's territory. Such claims arose during the domination of Britain and foreigners over the Persian Gulf, and have been repeated with falsehoods incited by the West and the Arab League. Britain illegally occupied the three Iranian islands of Abu Musa and the

Greater and Lesser Tunbs – an occupation that lasted 80 years.

Iran and the UK held negotiations for three years, which finally led to the end of Britain's occupation of the three Iranian islands.

In an operation, the Iranian Navy managed to restore Iran's sovereignty over the islands. The three islands were under British occupation for eight decades before the establishment of the United Arab Emirates in 1971.

When the islands were liberated, Iranian authorities emphasized that they would talk about the issue only to the UK, not

the Arab sheikhs. Secondly, Iran declared that the issue of the islands' sovereignty should be determined before the establishment of the United Arab Emirates.

Therefore, on November 30, 1971, the issue of the islands was resolved and they were returned to Iran. The Iranian lawmaker also stressed that media hype is also behind the claims made by the UAE.

The Western media have also launched a campaign over the name of the Persian Gulf. However, they have not been able to provide a historical map proving their claims.

