

Iran Politics Report

Jan. 22, 2019

(Warsaw in focus)

Warsaw Wager

Poland is after making Anti-Iran Conference a platform [for closer ties with US]

Source: Etemad Daily, 21 January, 2019

Warsaw conference is not the first occasion in which Donald Trump seeks international coalition against Iran. Since February 2018, Nikki Hailey has asked for such support in the UNSC and of course left the council empty handed. From a session on revolts in Iran to another one on Iran's role in Yemen, issue announcement to the UNSC members to take part in a meeting on reviewing Iran's role in the region as well as condemning Iran's missile program, all of which have failed due to the council's lack of support. Despite of that, Trump's foreign policy team wouldn't grow weary of the repetition of experiences that are doomed to fail and still insist on taking their chances at Warsaw.

Tehran is not Warsaw's only Target

There's also another side to the Warsaw conference that of course has been the focus of Iranian and foreign analysts; Washington's plan to still division in Europe. The transatlantic relationship is at its worst state in recent history. Washington has exited many of the contracts it has had with Europe without thinking about the costs Europe has to pay for its withdrawals.

Donald Trump spent his first year in office on distancing Europe from the JCPOA and when Washington- Brussels talks failed, he ringed the alarms on withdrawing from the JCPOA in May 2018. Washington then tried to make Europe side with it on Iran's non-nuclear cases, but Brussels has been so busy in the last 7 months on persuading Iran to stay in the deal that it made every effort not to have more frictions with Tehran.

In the end Washington put creating divide between European countries on top of its agenda so that it can fuel the divide in the 28-member institution, whose credibility has been put under question by Trump himself as well as to tell Tehran that not all EU members view it the same.

A part of the US Foreign Secretary's agenda is focused on the political rift in Iran knowing that European's participation in Warsaw conference would be implied as Europe' ignoring the JCPOA, thus providing Rouhani administration's critics with enough material to increase pressure on the government.

According to the Atlantic Council report, about seventy states were approached, but not Iran. If this is true, it would be a mistake—even if Iran is considered a “regional trouble-maker,” it’s hard to imagine that the region’s problems can be solved without Tehran’s involvement.

But the Polish gambit is a risky one. Since the agenda of the summit and the strategy of the United States—the real host of the event—are unknown, it is impossible to forecast its outcome. Polish Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz said that Warsaw’s ambition for the event is to find common ground on Iran and the nuclear deal between the United States and the European Union.

However, if France, the United Kingdom and Germany do not send high-ranking officials, the outcome will be less positive. Worse, if the summit becomes monothematic and focused only on bashing Iran—an “anti-Iran conference” in the words of Iran’s foreign minister—Poland would not only be unable to rate it a diplomatic success, but would also lose its reputation as a relatively neutral country.

A warmongering conference that seeks to organize any kind of military coalition against Iran would be a disaster for Poland.

Saudi Arabia’s Struggle for Warsaw Conference

Source: Mardom Salari, January 20, 2019

Speculations over Theresa May and Emanuel Macron’s absence could lead to America’s yet another failure in garnering international support against Iran. The fact that Pompeo’s international community has strong hesitations over meeting Washington’s demands, is an indicator of slight change in the international order. A change that cannot be taken very seriously, but can be the beginning of a path that would send heavy tremors to the US axis of power.

Europe’s new move can be positively viewed as a newly born revolution sought after by European leaders against Trump’s America. A Europe that has been suspended between political independence and undeniable benefits dependent to the US has a difficult test ahead of itself. Participating in this event would turn the last hopes of complying with the JCPOA to ashes, while not participating means facing American rage. So far Europe has chosen American rage over ceasing ties with Iran.

We need to wait for a month from now to find out how accurate Brussels speculation over west European powers’ unwillingness to participate would turn out to be.

Warsaw, a platform For the Arab NATO

Arab NATO is among the adventurisms that the Saudis had had in their heads from the time, the role of Iran’s Shah was handed over to Salman and Fahd Family in Saudi Arabia. A dream that would create hallucinations out of Arabs’ enmity with Iran coming as a fictional reason for Saudi petro dollars to flow in to Russia and the USA arms manufacturing factories.

As a mediator, the US has always benefited from this fiction as a catalyst, but Trumps’ US has gone full force in its role in encouraging the ill motives based on its trade based policies. The US

has been so persistent that dismembering human rights in the Saudi consulate couldn't turn this encouragement into punishment for a moment.

Meanwhile when the US calls Iran the number one enemy of Arabs, they would also jump on the train of Iranophobia and capitulate on the hallucination, resorting to strategies such as Arab NATO. The Warsaw conference is a golden opportunity to confirm and validate this hallucination. Basically any gathering aimed at confirming the Iranophobic hallucinations and ways to counter Iran in any part of the world, would have an Hebrew-Arab axis as its participants.

It can be said with strong certainty that with a validation of the hallucination, Saudi Arabia would be after consolidating a strategy to counter in the form of Arab NATO. It remains to be seen how the world would react to such adventurism by Bin Salman as well as how strong this Arab NATO would be in attracting Arab countries. Considering the fact that Saudi Arabia's role as a god father is coming to an end, an indicator of which is the Qatari measures against the Saudis, it remains unclear what trick the Kingdom has under its sleeves against Iran, while it has failed in Yemen front.

From Military Threat to Warsaw Get-together

Source: Vatan-e Emrouz, Jan. 20, 2019

Despite Trump's efforts to exert pressure on Iran with any means possible e.g. Warsaw Conference, but it can be easily understood that Trump is not even thinking about a military attack against Tehran.

Trump has highlighted the US spending in the Middle East on several occasions noting that over \$7 trillion has been spend on the wars in the Middle East which bore no fruit for the US. Time and again, he has blamed George Bush and Barack Obama for waging unnecessary wars, while the money could go for the country's economic growth. It can now be easier understood how shocked the media and the White house became after hearing John Bolton's proposal to attack Iran after a couple of unknown rocket launches in the vicinity of American compound in Iraq.

Publishing the news John Bolton's proposal to start a war against Iran on the fourth day of the US government shut down created such a negative atmosphere against Trump that Gareth Marquez, the spokesman of the US National Security Council told VOX that "John Bolton was not genuinely after the military option against Iran. He wanted to make sure that he had proposed all the alternatives to the President; this is a typical issue that National Security Advisors would do. VOX continued that such measure, even if it wouldn't lead to war, is controversial in the international arena, that's why Mattis didn't officially respond to Bolton's proposal.

Internal War in the White House

Some have had other analysis of the issue believing that internal war inside the WH between Secretary of Defense and the Advisor for National Security made Bolton propose such idea to Pentagon. He was in such bad terms with Mattis that he took every opportunity to push him aside. For the same reason, he tried to put so much pressure on Mattis over the Issue of Iran or the US

troops' withdrawal from Syria so that he would eventually resign or kicked out of the White House. Bolton wanted to say that US intelligence organizations and Pentagon have to coordinate with him. His efforts led to the removal of Mattis from the Pentagon. This is an example of the extent to which an advisor of national security can have influence on the US foreign policy.

Poland's New Proxy Role for US

Source: IrDiplomacy, Jan 15, 2019

The right-wing illiberal Polish government has appeased the Trump administration by agreeing to host a "ministerial" anti-Iran summit as part of the administration's on-going confrontational strategy against Iran. This decision will likely draw Poland closer to US while simultaneously increase the existing policy gap between Poland and the European Union, which has questioned the authoritarian tendency of the Polish government headed by President Andrzej Duda, who recently addressed a fascist flag-waving far-right crowd in Warsaw.

Previously, Duda had claimed to be wearing the hat of "mediator" between Washington and Europe, which is wary of Trump's anti-EU stance, and now he has fully dispensed with that pretension by fully joining the US camp in an important foreign policy matter affecting Europe's security and sovereignty. No doubt, this will not endear Duda to the European power houses -- France, Germany, England -- that have sought to put forth a united front on the Iran question ever since Trump exited the nuclear deal. The EU politicians are not blind and clearly see a cunning Washington policy of 'divide and conquer' by trying to sow division between Central and East European countries on the one hand and Western Europe on the other.

Washington's intention of this conference is, of course, to reverse its diplomatic isolation in the international community as a result of its rogue behavior in unilaterally scuttling an international nuclear agreement, hoping to demonstrate the popularity of its anti-Iran approach and, simultaneously, apply added pressure on the EU to give up its independent course of action on Iran. With Britain consumed by the Brexit drama, Germany experiencing a leadership transition, and Macron's France grappling with domestic unrest, the stage is set for a new US diplomatic offensive that seeks to reassert American hegemony over Europe, which has made a feeble heroic effort to chart its own map of action on Iran and the Middle East yet falling dreadfully short due to a variety of internal and external factors, including the stern opposition by US and Israel.

Thus, the Trump administration through this conference is escalating the tension with Iran to a higher gear, by seeking to 'globalize' its anti-Iran crusade and to create an international united front against the "Iran threat" that would, in turn, facilitate the parallel effort at the regional level in Persian Gulf and the Middle East. Connecting the dots between the regional and the global, the Trump administration, which has failed to gain any traction for its Iran policy at the United Nations, is now essentially bypassing the UN and hoping to create a new "coalition of the willing" against Iran, reminiscent of the Iraq invasion of 2003.

As a result, some Western analysts have raised the alarm that we are witnessing a new Iraq war in slow motion, in light of the economic war waged against Iran by US government, as a prelude for a full-scale open confrontation after having weakened Iran's economy and Iran's will to resist. This is a familiar script, though with some significant differences that cast important

question marks on the wisdom of this policy. Indeed, the pitfalls of the US strategy are quite numerous and present formidable challenges to US uber hawks plotting war with Iran.

First, there is no consensus on Iran and even the Israeli and Saudi threat perceptions don't exactly match. The Saudis have raised Israel's concern with their extensive plans for nuclear power, and the Saudis cannot risk their legitimacy by moving too close to Israel, which continues to oppress the Palestinians. Certainly, in the Muslim Middle East today there is a great deal of apprehension about the lop-sided pro-Israel policy of Trump administration and the prominent role played by ardent Zionist Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law. A balanced Middle East policy by this administration is conspicuously missing, otherwise it would have launched an international conference on the (missing) Middle East peace process, instead of Iran, which is used as a scapegoat.

Second, Poland is slated as the home for US's sophisticated radar and air defense system in the post-INF environment, thus exacerbating the Polish-Russia tensions, which is why the Iran conference must be viewed in tandem with US's Russia policy that is also questioned by European leaders, who oppose US's withdrawal from INF Treaty and the acceleration of nuclear arms race as a result of it. Acting as the spear of US's policy in Europe will only add to Warsaw's headaches with other European governments as well as with Russia at exorbitant price for Poland's national security. Hence, the Polish government ought to ask itself if this is worth it and makes any sense at all from the prism of Poland' national interests?

Third, Duda is throwing his lots with a US president who is under growing investigation and faces mounting political problems as a result of new revelations concerning FBI investigation of Trump as a potential Russian asset. The majority democrats in US House of Representatives are also asserting themselves and working to slow Trump's march to another war, which may happen if countries like Poland lend their souls to this hawkish and reactionary administration that has upended international norms. Trump may manufacture a foreign war in order to salvage his presidency by whipping up jingoism and mobilizing the nation against a foreign threat. Increasingly under siege at home, the second half of Trump's presidency may indeed turn out to be disastrous for international peace and security, as well as world economy since a Persian Gulf conflict is sure to spike oil prices and hurt global economic recovery. In that case, any US-derived benefit to Poland for its new subservient role in hosting the said conference and assisting the White House's 'war party' would prove elusive and trumped by the negative economic fallout of Trump's bellicose posture vis-à-vis Iran. A small step in arresting the world's evolution toward a post-Cold War multipolar reality, the conference initiative is laden with symbolic significance outweighing its actual importance. Iran threat is the excuse by which US is seeking to re-wind the clock back to unipolarism, which cannot possibly be successful as long as other centers of global power including Europe sing a different tune. The American leitmotif is transparent, yet the net result of the Polish-orchestrated symphony against Iran is far less clear and laden in ambiguity.