

UK-Africa Investment Summit 2020

UK Government supports huge boost to UK investment in Africa, as UK-Africa Investment Summit is held in London.



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The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, the Princess Royal and the Earl and Countess of Wessex join Heads of Government, Ministers and members of NGOs attending the UK-Africa Investment Summit for a group photograph at Buckingham Palace. See page..09

UN Security Council urges quick ceasefire in Libya

The United Nations Security Council called on Libya's warring sides to reach a ceasefire that would pave the way for a political process aimed at ending conflict in the oil-rich state. "We need to move to a ceasefire, and from the ceasefire, we need to move to a real political process and we are not yet there," said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres at the end of the Security Council meeting. The UN meeting followed up on a weekend Libya summit held in Berlin, which saw the formation of a military commission tasked with turning an existing fragile ceasefire into a permanent truce. The commission is set to meet in the coming days and will comprise of five members each from the

UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli led by Fayez al-Sarraj and its opponents from the Libyan National Army (LNA) led by General Khalifa Haftar, with the aim of reaching a ceasefire agreement. Since April last year, the Turkish-backed GNA in Tripoli has fought against an offensive by the LNA, which is reportedly supported by several countries including Russia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and France. The country remains in deadlock, with the LNA blocking oil exports from Libya's main ports to deprive the GNA of a key source of income in a move to protest Turkey's decision to send troops to back the GNA.



Austria leads a European trend to combat political Islam

The Austrian authorities are adopting a strict political line towards extremist political Islam organizations on its soil, with the Brotherhood topping the list. The policy went beyond revealing the activities, roles, and leaders of these organizations to set out steps to combat them, restricting their movements, and ending the phenomenon of parallel insti-

tutions that impede integration into society. The strategy that was passed by the ruling coalition parties, the People "centre-right" and the Green "left," is designed to tighten measures to combat extremist political Islam organizations, putting Vienna at the forefront of a clear and strict political line in Europe against those organization

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Britain's move adds to pressure on Hezbollah

It is now nearly a year since the British government decided to outlaw Hezbollah, the Lebanese group which describes itself as part of the "axis of resistance" against Israel and is widely considered to be an ally or

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Ian Black



Turkey's military expansion in Libya

Former Libyan Prime Minister Ali Zeidan said in 2013: "The international community cannot tolerate a state in the middle of the Mediterranean that is a source of terrorism, violence and murder."

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Olivier Guitta



Egypt 2020: The Unpaved Route to Democratic Reform

Nine years ago, on the 25th of January 2011, Egypt's history was rewritten by a popular non-violent revolution, skilfully organized by young people, whose life-time,

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Dalia Ziada



Is it dangerous to kill an international terrorist ?

When the ISIS leader, Abu Bak-er Al-Baghdadi, was killed in Syria everybody cheered and congratulated the end of ISIS. Same applied to Bin Laden's death.

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ALI REZA



Certified Currency

In the global market, there is an active substitution of the usual bargaining chip – the American dollar, which by the way is not provided with anything and is printed by a private company.

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Olga Tereshchenko



How did Qassem Soleimani cross the "American red line"?

It was remarkable that his ring remained intact despite the confirmation of the news that his body was shattered to pieces. Qassem Soleimani, the man who frightened many especially his supporters, was no longer there. The architect of the Persian expansion in the Arab world was no longer alive; he was gone after being targeted by a US drone. His death marked the end of an era, something greater than the death of a person; it was a huge blow to Iran's presence outside its borders.

UN travel ban
Soleimani, who was killed in Baghdad, was coming from Damascus after visiting Beirut, even though he was subject to an international travel ban U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231. Yet, that meant nothing compared to the power he made for himself. Furthermore, one of his Quds Force commanders dared to recognize the use of civil aviation to transport soldiers after the United States and the European Union included many Iranian airlines in the

sanctions list. This came to light during an interview with Nusratullah Por Hosseini, one of the leaders of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps forces in Syria, by the semi-official Iranian "Mehr" agency on the 29th of October 2019. During the interview he said that "the Mahan company planes were helping us transfer forces to Syria". Although Damascus airport was under bombing, he added, "Iran supports every country that has a treaty of friendship with it."



Abdul-Mahdi. They also reveal that Soleimani determines Iran's policies in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. The American newspaper also referred to the Iranian presence at Baghdad airport, and that Iranian spies at Baghdad airport monitored American soldiers and the flights of the international coalition to fight ISIS.

and Iraq are some of the highest ranking officers of the Revolutionary Guards, confirming that Iraqi political, security and military officials have established secret relations with Iran, noting that Iran focused on appointing high-ranking officials in Iraq and that the former Iraqi Minister of Interior, Bayan Jabr, is one of the most prominent officials close to Iran.

that Iran considers monitoring American activity in Iraq a necessity for its survival and national security, and that Iranian spies are everywhere in southern Iraq, pointing to Iran's keenness to send its students to religious sites in Iraq and to build hotels in Karbala and Najaf. The newspaper also stated that the purges in Jurf al-Sakhr were carried out by Iranian militias.

Soleimani and the Iraqi demonstrations

Thousands of Iraqis took to the streets at the end of October, in the second wave of protests against the government, and what they describe as "the corrupt ruling elite", the number of deaths reached at least 250 people since the second wave of the most significant unrest broke out.

According to the Associated Press, Iran has played a pivotal role in suppressing the protests in Iraq, in which dozens of Iraqis have died, and a day after the outbreak of anti-government protests in Iraq, early last October, Iranian General Qassem Soleimani flew to Baghdad late at night. Soleimani boarded a helicopter to reach the heavily fortified Green Zone in the centre of the Iraqi capital, where he

surprised a group of senior security officials by chairing a meeting to replace the Prime Minister, according to The Associated Press.

Soleimani told Iraqi officials: "We in Iran know how to deal with protests," according to two senior officials who attended the meeting, speaking on condition of anonymity, as they were talking about the content of a secret meeting. Soleimani added at the time: "This happened in Iran, and we had it under control."

Soleimani outlines the policies

On 18 November 2019, the New York Times published leaked Iranian intelligence reports on Iran's plan for regional influence, confirming Iran's hegemony over Iraq. It started in the au-

tumn of 2014, indicating how Iran overtook the United States in Iraq by recruiting previous CIA agents after the US withdrawal from Iraq. Tehran also recruited a US State Department official to provide it with information about Washington's plans in Iraq, adding that the former US President, Barack Obama, demanded the overthrow of Nuri al-Maliki as a condition to renew military support for Iraq.

The information published by the New York Times was drawn from documents issued by the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security officers in 2014 and 2015. The leaked documents confirm the visit of the Quds Force Commander, Qassem Soleimani, to Iraq to support Iraqi Prime Minister Adel

An American anticipation of an irresponsible Iranian act

The Americans sensed an imminent Iranian threat, as media reports quoting the Pentagon said on December 3 that new evidence of an Iranian threat to US forces and interests in the Middle East had been detected. Media outlets quoted the Pentagon saying that Iran had moved forces and weapons in a way that raises US fears of a possible attack under instructions from the Iranian regime. Yet, it stated that there was no evidence of an Iranian threat

The documents revealed

to US officials, while CNN cited a Trump administration official, saying that "it was not clear whether the potential threat would come from the central government or the Iranian Revolutionary Guard." "judging by the past three or four months, I presume that they are likely to do something irresponsible," said US Central Command chief Gen. Kenneth McKenzie. The United States stressed that the Iranians were responsible for many prov-

ocations that targeted commercial shipping in the Gulf earlier this year and were also responsible for a massive drone attack on Saudi Arabia's oil infrastructure. US Defense Secretary Mark Esper said several weeks ago, that "the administration is pleased to see a decline in Iranian public actions in the region. The administration wanted to send a signal that the way forward is through diplomacy. Still, the military is ready to act as needed."

The Red Line and US bases

It seems that the American signals about the need to move away from Iraq have been misunderstood by the Iranian side, as it resorted to taking military steps against American bases, where a senior American military official stated on 11th December 2019 that attacks by armed factions backed by Iran on bases Military hosting American forces in Iraq were increasing and becoming more sophisticated, which pushes all parties towards an escalation that can break out of control. That warning came after four Katyusha rockets landed on a base near Baghdad International Airport, wounding five members of the Iraqi counterterrorism service, the latest in a series of rocket attacks in the five weeks leading up to the statement, targeting military installations hosting US forces affiliated with the coalition to defeat ISIS fighters. In an interview with Reuters, the American official revealed that the attacks jeopardise the ability of the coalition to fight the terrorist organization. This came

American warning

In light of Iran's actions, moving close to the American Red Line, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo issued a warning to Iran on December 13 of a firm response if his country's interests were harmed in Iraq, after a series of missile attacks on military bases, "We must

in conjunction with the heightened tension between the United States and Iran in the region as a result of the US economic sanctions on Iran. The two sides exchanged accusations of responsibility for attacks on oil facilities and weapons stores belonging to the Popular Mobilization. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said: "We are used to the fire, but the frequency of that was accidental in the past. Now the rate of escalation is increasing, and the number of rockets fired in one barrage is increasing, which is very worrying to us." He added: "There is a point at which their actions will cause change on the ground and make it more likely that the actions and other choices that some make, whether they or we, will cause an unintended escalation." The US military official noted that the Iranian-backed factions are approaching the red line, which calls for the coalition forces to respond with force, and "the result will not be liked by anyone."

Although no party has

seize this opportunity to remind Iran's leaders that any attacks, by them or their representatives, of any kind that harm the Americans, our allies, or our interests, will be answered decisively," he said in a statement. Noting that "Iran's agents had recently carried out several attacks on mil-

ity bases sheltering Iraqi security forces and crews from the United States and the international coalition forces," adding: "Iran must respect the sovereignty of its neighbours and immediately stop supporting third parties in Iraq and the region." claimed responsibility for any of these attacks, the US official confirmed that intelligence and forensic analyzes, and the examination of missiles and their launchers, pointed to the responsibility of the Iranian-backed PMF, especially the "Hezbollah Brigades" and "Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq". He explained that the Iraqi government did not take any action against those attacks. He added: "It is very worrying for me to be the target of attacks from elements that are supposed to be under the control of the Iraqi government as part of its security forces." He continued that armed factions used a modified truck to launch 17 missiles at the Qayyarah military base south of Mosul on November 8, highlighting that the attack did not cause casualties or heavy losses, but that the same method was used in attacks on Balad and Ain al-Asad air bases the week before, using missiles large enough to cause severe damage to the housing complexes and runways in Ain al-Assad.

ity bases sheltering Iraqi security forces and crews from the United States and the international coalition forces," adding: "Iran must respect the sovereignty of its neighbours and immediately stop supporting third parties in Iraq and the region."

American mobilization

American mobilization With the escalation of the confrontation between the two parties, the Secretary of Defense and Foreign Affairs headed to Florida on December 30, where President Donald Trump was present, to brief him on the latest developments and American airstrikes on sites said to be belonging to Iran in Iraq, "We came to inform the president about the events that took place during the past 72 hours, we will not let Iran take actions that endanger American men and women," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told a press conference alongside Defense Secretary Mark Esper in the Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida. Pompeo added that he would leave room for Minister Esper to talk about the military aspects. Still, he wanted to clarify US policy regarding Iran.

Esper said, "The Pentagon targeted five sites in Iraq and Syria in response to the attack by an Iranian-backed militia on an Iraqi facility that would endanger American forces." Esper continued that the strikes were successful, and the pilots and planes returned to the base safely. "I want to add that during our meeting today with the President, we discussed the other options available, and I would also point out that we will take the additional measures that we deem necessary. We

confirm that our behavior was in self-defense and to deter more bad behavior by the militias or from Iran" he said.

strikes against Iranian agents

The US made the decision to confront Iran if its arms approach Americans. Iraqi media reported on December 30, that 66 people were killed in American raids on the bases of the Iraqi Hezbollah, including 41 Iranians and 25 members of PMF. The Pentagon announced that American planes targeted the headquarters of the Iraqi Hezbollah militia, which resulted in the death and injury of fighters, including the militia leader, Abu Ali Khazali, which was considered to be an initial response.

According to an American military source, American F-15 fighters targeted five bases belonging to the Iraqi Hezbollah militia: 3 in Anbar and 2 in Syria. Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Hoffman said in a statement that these strikes were carried out "in response to repeated attacks by Iraqi Hezbollah brigades on Iraqi bases that include American forces. Stressing that "it will weaken the capabilities of the Hezbollah Brigades to

launch future attacks on coalition forces," and a statement by the US Army stated that the five facilities targeted by the Iraqi Hezbollah include weapons stores and command and control sites.

America seals the fate of Soleimani

Following all that tension between the US and Iran, and in light of the Iraqi authorities' inability to carry out their duties, as perceived by the Americans, Iraqi state television announced, at the dawn of December 3, the killing of the Iranian General Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force of the Revolutionary Guards, along with the Deputy Leader of the Popular Mobilization Militia, "Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis," in an American attack. American officials told Reuters that Washington had carried out strikes against two targets linked to Iran in Baghdad.

This event announced the end of Soleimani, who terrorized many during the past years, after the spread of ISIS terrorist organization and the success of Iran's military force in extending its influence over large areas of several Arab countries that are still suffering from the fire of sectarianism and sectarian fragmentation.

Austria leads a European trend to combat political Islam



By Hossam Hassan



File Photo: APA Agence France-Presse Austrian Interior Minister Herbert Kickl (left), Chancellor, Sebastian Kurz (in the foreground), and Vice-Chancellor, Heinz-Christian Strache, in Vienna

The Austrian authorities are adopting a strict political line towards extremist political Islam organizations on its soil, with the Brotherhood topping the list. The policy went beyond revealing the activities, roles, and leaders of these organizations to set out steps to combat them, restricting their movements, and ending the phenomenon of parallel insti-

The "Brotherhood" platform in Europe

The Brotherhood, the most prominent organization of political Islam in Austria, first appeared in Western countries in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when the group's leaders, most notably Youssef Nada and Said Ramadan, fled from Arab countries to settle in Europe and North America. According to the study "The Muslim Brotherhood in Austria" carried out by Lorenzo Vidino, the Director of the Program on Extremism at George Washington University in cooperation with the Austrian University of Vienna and the Constitution Protection Authority "internal intelligence" in Austria.

"The Brotherhood inaugurated their presence in Austria in the

tutions that impede integration into society.

The strategy that was passed by the ruling coalition parties, the People "center-right" and the Green "left," is designed to tighten measures to combat extremist political Islam organizations, putting Vienna at the forefront of a clear and strict political line in Europe against those organization.

1960s, when Yusuf Nada and the other leader of the group, Ahmad al-Qadi, arrived in Vienna before the latter moved to the United States and established the group's network there," the study stated.

"The Brotherhood took advantage of the lack of mosques or organizations for Muslims in European cities, and they began to instil their presence by creating small places for prayer and meetings, then umbrella institutions," the study added. "After that, other political Islam organizations, such as the Turkish Islamic Union," Atib "emerged. , Lebanese Hezbollah, and others. "

While a document issued by the Austrian Parliament dated February 6, 2015, consisting

of two pages, stated that the Brotherhood "has established itself in Austria, during the past decades, and has a vast network of institutions and agencies that raise suspicious activities. " The study continued, "The most prominent Brotherhood institutions in Austria are the Association of Islamic Culture, the Islamic Institute, and the Austrian Islamic Youth Organization." Revealing the group's movements in Austria, Professor of Oriental Studies at the University of Vienna, Rodger Locker said in statements that "the

Infiltration of the political system

Thing do not stop there, as Peter Pilz, the former deputy parliamentarian and leader of the opposition "Now" list, said in an interview with the official Austrian News Agency "APA" last March. He noted that the political system in Austria was infiltrated by Turkish Islamic groups and the Muslim Brotherhood. "The dangers associated with political Islam in Austria have increased dramatically," Pilz said, adding that "the Turkish Islamic Union" Atip "and the Muslim Brotherhood are the two

Response: gradual and substantial Measures

In the face of the threat of the group and other political Islam organizations, the law banning slogans of extremist organizations in Austria came to force on 1st of March 2019. The list of prohibited slogans included the slogans and flags of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Lebanese Hezbollah, and the Turkish Gray Wolves group. With the negotiations to form a new ruling coalition, which is scheduled to rule the country un-

group operates as a closed secret organization, and takes Austria a base for its activities in the Arab countries and Europe". He added: "the Brotherhood holds secret meetings on Austrian territories in the presence of its leaders in Europe, which focus on the group's activities in the continent and ways to expand its spheres of influence."

He continued: "the Brotherhood is the most prominent organization of political Islam, it has strong links, and an alliance with the Turkish institution Atib".

main threats." "Atib and the Muslim Brotherhood, have cemented the presence of political Islam in the country, and it has come to infiltrate our political system," he added. "There are attempts by the Brotherhood to get closer to the ruling People's Party (center right) and the Social Democratic Party (center-left / main opposition party)," he said. "We must also consider whether the Brotherhood affects in one way or another the legislations in Austria," he added

cellor Sebastian Cortes said in statements to the press last Thursday.

Indeed, the government's strategy, which the Levent News received a copy of, included the establishment of a "Documentation of Political Islam Centre" similar to the "Austrian Resistance Archive," which specializes in documenting and analysing the crimes of the extreme right.

The Centre for Documentation of Political Islam analyses the trends and movements of extremist Islamic organizations and documents their crimes. According to the government strategy, the Centre for Documentation of Political Islam will be an independent institution directly supported by the Austrian government, which will publish books, articles and research, and archive existing publications on political Islam.

The Centre will also be in charge of drawing up a comprehensive plan of action to combat extremist Islamic organizations, led by the Brotherhood and the Lebanese Hezbollah, in Austria.

In addition to the Centre, the government strategy proposes legislative amendments to increase the penal sentences for crimes that are motivated by religious extremism, especially political Islam organizations.

As for integration, the government wants to impose state supervision and control over schools and nurseries affiliated with political Islam organizations, as a first step to prevent the emergence of parallel entities that hinder integration into society

In exclusive statements, Lorenzo Vidino, the most prominent Western scholar on political Islam affairs, said: "For the past fifty years, Austria has been a haven for the Brotherhood and other organizations, its leadership and elements, and a base for its activities in Arab countries and Europe."

"These organizations took advantage of Austria's international status as a politically neutral country, having good infrastructure, a free press, good investment opportunities, and an effective banking system." He pointed out that "the group's great influence in Austria, in the past decades, stemmed from a simple equation, which is its financial strength, its great activity, and the previous governments' dealings with it as a partner."

However, he said, "The image of the Brotherhood and other organizations of political Islam has changed a lot in Austria lately." He continued, "A general consensus has been reached within the security services, and in the corridors of politics that these organizations pose security and social threats."

He added, "These organizations are no longer a partners of the government or mediators for communication with the Islamic community in Austria (700,000 people).

Rather, there is a hostile view towards them within the government and the security authorities."

He added, "Austria is currently leading a hostile and strict approach towards the Brotherhood and other extremist organizations in Europe, and considers them a threat to society, and will continue to take measures to limit their influence and hinder their activities."

"The situation has changed in Austria since the Brotherhood study was launched in 2017, where awareness has increased within society, government and the police about the ideology and political agendas of political Islam organizations," he said.

As a result of this study and the hostile approach by the authorities, the Brotherhood has lost much of its influence in Austria over the past two years, and ordinary citizens have become aware of the group's role in stirring trouble," he added.

Rodger Locker also highlighted the main problems facing the Austrian authorities in combating the currents of political Islam, saying that "there is a major crisis facing the work of law enforcement authorities regarding Islamic extremist groups, which is the lack of logistic support."

"There are no members of the security forces who are fluent

in the Arabic language, and therefore the authorities cannot understand what is going on in the corridors of the Brotherhood and the currents of political Islam or conduct effective investigations into their activities," he said.

He continued, "I also doubt the ability of the Constitutional Protection Authority," Internal Intelligence "to deal effectively with this issue, and I do not believe that it is monitoring Brotherhood institutions." "But the Brotherhood must be kept under control and monitoring the group's activities must be a priority."

The Constitutional Protection Authority puts under its control organizations and individuals that pose a significant threat to democracy and aim to undermine the political system.

Since 2014, European countries have been trying to investigate the Brotherhood's activities, such as Britain, which has conducted a comprehensive review of the Brotherhood's file, while other countries such as Germany have put the group's institutions under the control of the Constitution Protection Authority. Yet, Austria remains the toughest policymaker against the group and other extremist organizations

Certified Currency

In the global market, there is an active substitution of the usual bargaining chip – the American dollar, which by the way is not provided with anything and is printed by a private company.

You will not surprise anyone with the word "cryptocurrency", however still not everyone has figured out how to make money from it. At the same time, many people have already become dollar millionaires, and companies are building their business according to new financial strategies. For example, 40% of the US economy is owned by 1% of its population. Today it is more realistic to become a billionaire as a participant in the financial market

The modern world is determined by the pace of development, technology, huge consumption, slowly changing legislation passing into the control of the authorities and periodic economic crises. Because of this, there was a household need to preserve the accumulated capital and not associate with complex, often risky, banking contractual conditions. The advantage is that cryptocurrencies are not subject to the restrictions of European law. Including the terms of payment restrictions. Moreover, cryptocurrencies are recognized as a means of payment by the leading countries of the world: USA, Japan, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Germany and others.

The nature of the competitive market has created alternative cryptocurrencies. Approximately 2,322 cryptocurrencies with a total market capitalization of \$



Dalia Ziada

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Iranian prison "Evin"

one of the world's most notorious human slaughterhouses



By Shiyar Khaleal

Security authorities in Tehran are committing numerous violations against activists and opponents who are arrested and detained in Iranian prisons known for their poor conditions, in addition to executing several activists and detainees there, the most famous of which is the Evin prison, which has been filled with prisoners of conscience before and after the Iranian revolution in 1979.

Evin University

Evin Prison was named after the Evin University, due to the large number of intellectuals within its walls. It is a cemetery for Iranian politicians and dissidents.

The walls, that contain thousands of detainees, are guarded by security guards with a special connection to the Revolutionary Guards, where prominent Iranian figures, such as Muhammad Reza Rahimi, the right-hand man of the former Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Mahdi Hashemi, son of Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, and activist Dawud Rizvi, labour activist, have been imprisoned.

The prison was built in 1962 during the era of the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, in the Saadatabad region in the capital, Tehran, expanding over



an area of more than 43 hectares. The prison is divided according to figures and charges. Hence, ward 209, which is run by Iranian intelligence and the Revolutionary Guards, is the most infamous.

By bringing well-known opponents to be tortured and killed. There is also Wing 350, which is administered by the judiciary and called the third branch. It was initially designed to accommodate 320 prisoners, including 20 in solitary cells, and 300 in two large collective sectors, which was expanded to contain more than 1500 prisoners, including 100 isolated cells for the most prominent political prisoners. It was later expanded during the reign of the mullahs and it now accommodates 15,000 prisoners.

Reyhaneh Jabbari
She was in prison from 2007 until her execution by hanging in October 2014

Engineer Rehana Jabari: One of the most famous prison victims

The prison's notorious reputation started during the Pahlavi regime, the information about the adverse conditions in this prison began to spread after the Iranian revolution in 1979. With the clergy taking over the government, the harshest treatment in the prison was given to political detainees and opponents of the mullahs' rule. During the reign of Hassan Rouhani, the prison became known globally, where the Iranian engineer Rehana Jabbari was executed, after defending herself in the face of an attempted attack

Sexual assaults on women and executions of children

Alongside the psychological types and methods of torture, international reports have emerged about Iranian women being subjected to torture and ill-treatment by photographing them in the showers, through secret cameras in the second women's section, which is su-

pervised by the IRGC intelligence. The prison administration not only tortured and arrested dissident women and men, but also imprisoned many juveniles under the age of 18, who are effectively children and who were executed in violation of international law.

Lebanese Nizar Zakka, the last survivor of Evin Prison

Nizar Zakka, a former Lebanese technology and information expert, had been detained in Evin Prison where he was subjected to the worst forms of physical torture, followed by psychological torture. He was released after interventions from the Lebanese government. After his release, he confirmed that there were hundreds of detainees were unjustly imprisoned. He was detained along with three other foreigners an American, a British and an Austrian, in Evin prison. He added that there were innocent people of Arab nationalities such as Iraq and others who had been residing in America, Sweden, England, and Austria inside the prison. He revealed that during the first period, he was subjected to unspeakable pressure by the Revolutionary Guards to say that he was a spy. However, he refused, and was placed for more than a year in solitary confinement, then transferred to a shared cell.

After his release and arrival in Lebanon, he confirmed that the Revolutionary Guards were the ones who arrested him, not the official intelligence services, because he was invited to Tehran by the Iranian state, as he was sent an official invitation in 2015 by the Vice-President of the Iranian Republic, Hassan Rouhani, to participate in the information technology conference and create jobs for women. This prison adds to hundreds of violations by the mullahs' authorities in Iran, where the Iranian Evin prison is one of the mass graves in which political prisoners and detainees, activists and journalists are subjected to the most horrendous types of torture, in addition to executions, while preventing any international bodies from visiting or inspecting the prison.



IN his last speech, Khamenei sought to rebuild the broken spirits of his Forces

With widespread publicity and providing extensive logistics to transport the population from various cities across the country for free by subway and buses, Khamenei delivered a speech on Friday, January 17, 2020, in Tehran.

Khamenei's purpose was to divert attention from the consequences of the two-month-long protests and to boost the morale of the regime's repressive forces. It also demonstrates his concerns about the downfall of the regime's various repressive forces.

It was the first time in 8 years that Khamenei had performed Friday prayers. He appeared at a very critical state for the regime. In his remarks, Khamenei emphasized that he had passed the "adventurous and extraordinary 2 weeks". While trying to portray all the fatal blows of the adventurous 2 weeks as victory and illustration of God's power, he shied away from responding to the shooting down of a Ukrainian passenger plane by the Revolutionary Guards. Khamenei did not even apologize to the mourning families of the innocent victims of the downed passenger plane. He said nothing about the responsibility and role of the Revolutionary Guards in the tragedy, he even went as far as thanking them. And of course, Khamenei condemned the protesters of the regime's criminal activity in this painful incident.

Khamenei sought to un-

derestimate the downing of the plane, adding that "they tried to make it a matter of course" to divert the attention from the burial ceremony of Qasem Soleimani and firing missiles at the US bases. In Khamenei's view, the lives of 176 human beings are not important, and they only serve to overshadow Soleimani's funeral. Khamenei did not even regret the death of at least 78 people in Kerman by a stampede during Soleimani's funeral.

The uprising of Iranian students and young people was the most important fact that Khamenei tried not to mention. The uprising that had "Down with Khamenei and Down with the dictator" as its main slogan. Khamenei described the millions of Iranians who chanted "neither Gaza nor Lebanon, my life for the sake of Iran" as being deceived.

He pointed to tearing up of Qasem Soleimani's picture and described the uprising as "The few hundred who insult Soleimani's photo" and said, "The few hundred who insulted Soleimani's photo" were not Iranian people" and called them "enemy's agents".

Khamenei reiterated his grief over the death of Qasem Soleimani as the regime's number two and the Revolutionary Guards' irreplaceable backbone, saying, "Soleimani is literally the most powerful commander fighting terrorists in the region"!

Khamenei also said the recent move by European

countries to refer to the regime's nuclear program to the Security Council and to trigger mechanisms to impose international sanctions were designed to overshadow the funeral of Soleimani. By attacking these three European countries and calling them enemies, he pushed Europe further towards the international community's consensus against the regime; and he sent out the message of no hope to governments that may still have hope of "behaviour change".

Khamenei praised the Quds Terrorist Force, headed by Qassem Soleimani that created the blood bath and suppressed Iranian cities and countries in the region, calling them "warriors without borders". Interestingly, Khamenei once again emphasized the regime's

aim behind the strategy and crimes of the Quds Force in the region; it is to secure the regime inside Iran against the uprising of the people.

Khamenei's stance was not surprising, but even the most optimistic people can no longer hope to find some sort of solution within the existing framework to respond to the mass demands of the Iranian people and uprisings.

The inevitable consequence of this situation is further deterioration of the conditions in Iran's explosive society and continuation of maximum pressure by the international community. The European Union has also come to realize that the only option left was to stand with the United States to confront nuclear, missile and regional policies of the Iranian regime.

The fact is that Khamenei, in his January 17 speech following the bloody protests in November, which was the bloodiest suppression of popular protests in the country's contemporary history, once again chose contraction and called for both crackdowns on domestic and confrontation on international fronts.

Of course, Khamenei's stance, and the reiteration of his previous positions will not have an impact on the regime's irreversible path. Khamenei's January 17 speech only proved that the regime was in a deadlock and that its leader had no power or will to take the initiative and exit the deadlock.



By Hassan Mahmoudi



Khalifa Haftar shows diplomatic skill as Libya conflict sucks in world powers

No one, it seems, was able to reason with Khalifa Haftar. If the idea was for an impressive cast of big hitters to apply enough pressure to bring the 76-year-old Libyan military commander to heel, it didn't work.

On the eve of an international summit in Berlin on Sunday, Haftar followed through on months of private warnings and crippled his country's oil supplies by shutting down half of production.

That was less than a week after he had walked out of talks in Moscow aimed at a durable cease-fire in Libya's increasingly intractable civil war.

As leaders and diplomats prepared to leave the German capital, they had agreed common ground to work toward peace. Haftar and Libya's prime minister, Fayed al-Sarraj, must now each name a five-person committee that can meet in Geneva in coming days. But Haftar remains the wildcard, a man who is – for now – proving adept at leveraging his influence as world powers become more entangled in Libya's conflict.

His recalcitrance is particularly vexing for Russia and Turkey, which are giving military support to opposing sides. Russian President Vladimir Putin has backed Haftar, who controls the east of Libya and is trying to take the capital, Tripoli. Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan props up al-Sarraj's UN-recognized government.

Rival Powers

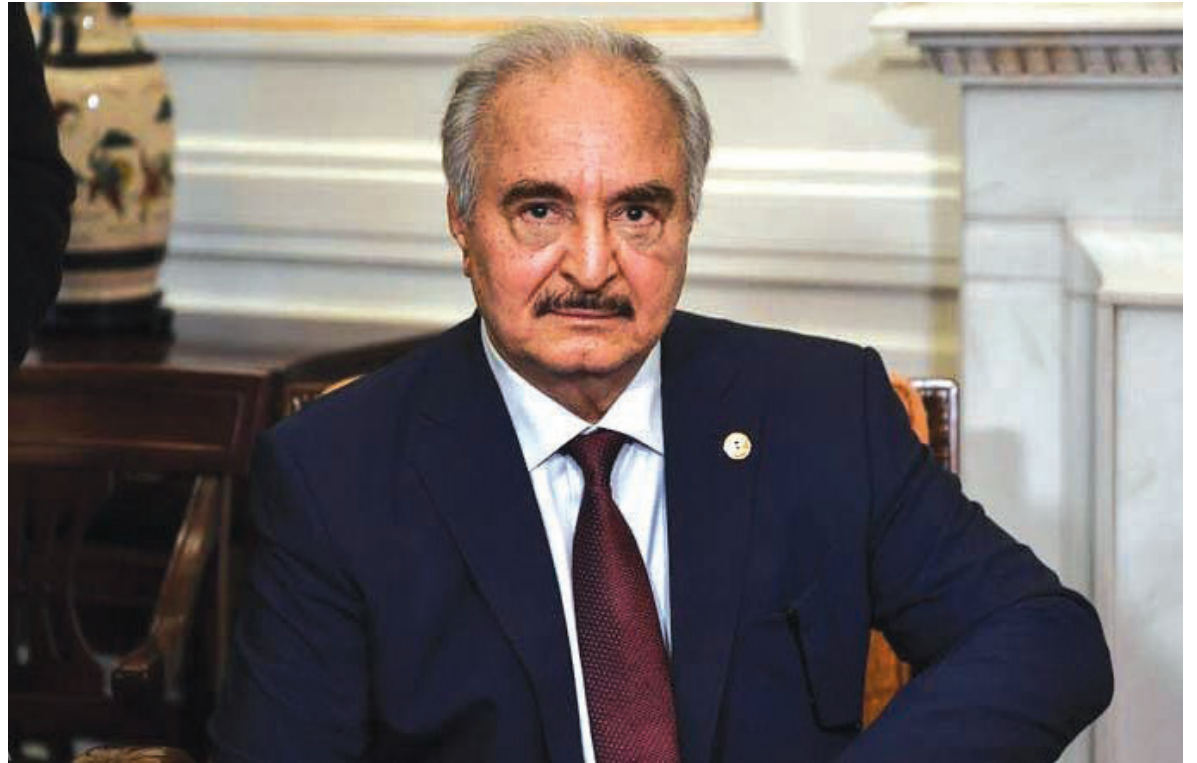
Both leaders have exploited the vacuum left by the US retreat from the Middle East to carve up spheres of influence, yet they appear to have come to a mutually convenient understanding: bring the rivals to the table to sign a cease-fire and split the geopolitical and commercial spoils in the holder of Africa's largest oil reserves. It's not going to plan, though.

Al-Sarraj has signed; Haftar is resisting. Five days ago, Erdogan threatened to teach the army officer a lesson with a commitment to send troops. That rapidly changed the calculus in what has spiraled into a multi-faceted proxy war, though it seems more for Putin than Haftar at the moment.

Erdogan's forceful entry into the fray thrust Libya to the top of the diplomatic agenda, according to Jalel Harchaoui, a research fellow specializing in Libya at the Clingendael Institute in the Netherlands. It was like "an abscess finally bursting, he said.

It certainly added a degree of urgency to the desire of Europeans, themselves split over how to solve the conflict, to be seen to at least be trying to do something almost a decade after airstrikes led by France and the UK helped rebels topple dictator Muammar Qaddafi.

France and Germany want to prevent militants and migrants from crossing into the European Union. Turkey, with now an outsized role in Syria and Libya, has the ability to control those flows, while Haftar is considered key in the fight against extremist groups.



Bloomberg Libyan General Khalifa Haftar. (AFP)

Kept Apart

That was the backdrop as Chancellor Angela Merkel went into high gear to summon Libya stakeholders to Berlin. The powwow may, though, have always been doomed.

Haftar and al-Sarraj, 59, have not met in person in a year and were kept studiously apart in Berlin, attending separate meetings and staying in different hotels. Efforts to bring them together have failed too many times in recent memory.

The two men could not be more different in both their background and temperaments. Haftar is a military veteran who served under Qaddafi in the 1980s only to fall out with him and wind up spending two decades in exile in the US trying to topple the dictator. Al-Sarraj is an architect by training.

The Libyan prime minister openly despaired at the abandonment of the Europeans after the overthrow of Qaddafi in 2011. "Where were you?" he said in an interview in Ber-

lin. "Why didn't you step up? The field was open to you." Haftar, meanwhile, has shown an unpredictable quality that has caught leaders off guard. After his move to stifle Libya's oil industry, crude jumped in Asian trading. The blockage at ports is expected to cut the country's output by about 800,000 barrels a day.

No Illusions

His presence in Berlin could be felt even when he was not in the room. As US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo was getting ready to leave, a rumor took hold that Haftar too had departed Berlin. It turned out not to be true, but it spoke to the aura of suspense around a man who dared walk out on Putin when he was summoned to Moscow last week. He was no more amenable to Egypt, which provides military assistance, and the United Arab Emirates, which conducts drone strikes on his behalf, as they tried to get him to sign on the dotted line. The German hosts, managing

expectations, said that neither Haftar nor al-Sarraj were official participants. Merkel saw both in the morning. The US camp wasn't impressed. The inability to bring those directly fighting each face to face means nothing can really change, according to one senior US official. The sense of impotence and frustration bled into the open.

"Come on folks, this has gone on long enough, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson told television cameras as he arrived at airport. "It's a disgrace. Yes we got rid of Qaddafi back in 2011, but it's time now to move on."

Merkel herself, in the final news conference, said that she was "under no illusions and that the road ahead was still hard."

Sergei Lavrov, Russia's top diplomat and foreign minister for 16 years, was blunt. "It's clear that it is not yet possible to establish a stable serious dialog between them, he said. "The differences in approaches are too great."

UK-Africa Investment Summit 2020

UK Government supports huge boost to UK investment in Africa, as UK-Africa Investment Summit is held in London.

digital networks, and jobs and business opportunities for women, as well as improving trade infrastructure.

In the lead up to the UK-Africa Investment Summit, which was held in London on (20 January 2020), £6.5 billion of commercial deals have already been signed by British companies to deliver jobs, growth and investment across the UK and Africa, with deals worth billions more expected to be made during the course of the day. They are expected to mobilise billions of pounds in private sector investment for Africa, marking a new era of trade between the UK and Africa. Africa has 8 of the world's 15 fastest growing economies and there is huge demand on the continent for clean, sustainable and innovative investment. As home to some of the world's most enterprising technologies and the financial centre of the world in the City of

London, the UK is perfectly placed to meet that demand and be the continent's investment partner of choice. DFID's programmes, totalling £370 million, include: Supporting African countries to meet their rapidly growing energy demands through green energy, including better access to solar energy and electricity. Helping Africa thrive digitally through a £45 million programme helping young Africans, especially women, access the internet, develop digital skills and find jobs.

Enabling at least 100,000 more women in Africa to secure high-quality jobs by funding their education and training.

A £200 million programme to help build basic trade infrastructure in southern Africa. The new programme will support upgrades to border posts, ports and roads. It will also work with governments and businesses to improve trade policies

and cut red tape.

Boosting the flow of private financing into African projects supporting girls' education, healthcare and climate resilience.

Two joint DFID-DIT programmes, totalling £57 million, include:

A £37 million programme to help businesses, trade with and invest across Africa.

A £20 million programme that will support businesses in developing countries to increase trade with international markets.

A separate Climate Finance Accelerator programme, worth £10 million from the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), will help developing countries reduce emissions by attracting more foreign investment and helping to build renewable energy sources, like wind farms.

The announcement comes as British and African firms announce £6.5 billion worth

of commercial deals today, including:

A £25 million investment by Matalan in Egypt to launch 11 new shopping outlets.

GSK, who are investing a further £5 million in their operations in Egypt.

Diageo's £167 million investment in Kenya and East Africa to support sustainability of breweries.

To date, the UK has signed trade agreements with 11 African countries, covering 43% of the UK's total trade with Africa and legislated for a trade preferences scheme with a further 35 African countries, with the ambition to build and deepen existing agreements in the future.

International Development Secretary Alok Sharma said:

Africa's economic potential is huge, with eight of the world's 15 fastest growing economies and a population set to double to over 2 billion by 2050.

We have much to offer African nations - UK aid is tackling climate change and supporting women entrepreneurs, our tech and digital expertise is helping Africa grow new industries and the City of London is channelling billions of private investment into Africa, boosting jobs and growth.

This Summit is a major step in unlocking the UK's unique offer, becoming Africa's investment partner of choice and benefiting people and businesses across the UK and Africa.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

Trade with countries across Africa has never been more exciting. As opportunities there grow, it's great to see so many British firms paving the way in trading and investing in the region to drive growth, create jobs and boost vital infrastructure.

We want the UK to be the investment partner of choice for African businesses and their governments. Our world-leading expertise in finance, tech, and innovation should make us the obvious choice and mark the UK and Africa out as natural partners for mutual prosperity.

The deals announced today show the massive potential of UK-Africa trade and the investment programmes we're launching will ensure UK and African businesses are able to capitalise on trade and investment opportunities, now and in the future.



Britain's move adds to pressure on Hezbollah



Ian Black

It is now nearly a year since the British government decided to outlaw Hezbollah, the Lebanese group which describes itself as part of the “axis of resistance” against Israel and is widely considered to be an ally or a proxy of Iran across the Middle East, especially in neighbouring Syria, where it has helped Bashar al-Assad win the war.

The original UK decision was announced in March 2019 by Sajid Javid, the Home Secretary (Minister of the interior). It ended the long-standing distinction that had been maintained between Hezbollah's political and military wings, and listed both as a terrorist organization.

Last week, however, the Treasury (Britain's ministry of finance) declared that it was freezing the group's assets in the UK and making it illegal to provide any services for it. The change requires any individual or institution in Britain with accounts or financial services connected to Hezbollah to suspend

them or face prosecution. The announcement followed the Treasury's annual review of its asset-freezing register, and brought it into line with the 2019 decision.

This is the latest chapter in a long-running story. Hezbollah has been viewed with suspicion since it was founded in 1982 to fight Israel in the wake of that year's invasion. In the 1990s it was allegedly responsible for attacks on Israeli and Jewish targets in Argentina. The US designated Hezbollah in its entirety as a terrorist organization in 1997. The UK proscribed its external security unit in 2001 and its military wing in 2008 after Hezbollah was involved in operations targeting British forces in Iraq.

In 2005 it was implicated in the assassination of Lebanon's prime minister Rafiq al-Hariri. The following year it provoked the second Lebanon war with Israel with a cross-border raid. As a close ally of Iran, it attracted the hostility of Saudi Arabia and Gulf allies. In 2013 the European Union put Hezbollah's armed wing on its terrorism blacklist due to the organisation's role in blowing up an Israeli tour bus in Bulgaria. But unlike the US all European countries, had until last year, maintained a distinction between the group's military and political wings.

The dangers of over-interpreting the latest British move are considerable given the current escalation in the Middle East: the US assassi-

nation of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani ; Iranian retaliation against US bases in Iraq; the shooting down of an Ukrainian passenger plane with 176 people on board; Tehran's threats of revenge, and mounting uncertainty about the future of the 2015 nuclear agreement are all elements – as are the continuing domestic political turmoil in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon.

Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, echoed Tehran in calling America “the Great Satan.” The last known images of Soleimani before he was killed show him hugging and praying with Nasrallah in Beirut. “The American leadership said in the days after Soleimani's death that the world was a safer place,” Nasrallah said. “They will discover in blood that they were wrong. The Americans should get their army out of our region—and the alternative to them leaving vertically is leaving horizontally [in coffins].”

In a rare interview last October, Soleimani reminisced about overseeing Hezbollah units alongside Nasrallah during the 2006 war, and revealed that he had spent all 34 days of the fighting in Lebanon. Soleimani's role in that conflict, during which much of the Dahiya – Beirut's southern suburb - was flattened by Israeli airstrikes, was seen as vital in holding off an even more serious Israeli incursion. Giant images of the Iranian general's face are now plastered all over

the area. The British Treasury's decision was welcomed by the Trump administration's special envoy on Iran, Britain Hook, who commented that Washington “had long been seeking such a move from European allies. “We would like to congratulate the United Kingdom,” he said. “There is no distinction between Hezbollah's political arm and its military arm.” France and Germany, however, have not followed Britain's example. “No other power has the right to decide what Lebanese political parties are good and which are not,” President Emmanuel Macron said last year. “This is up to the Lebanese people.” Last year Britain's opposition Labour Party objected to the ban, insisting that it had been issued under US pressure. Its leader, Jeremy Corbyn, once referred to Hezbollah and the Palestini-

an movement Hamas as his “friends.” Hezbollah itself described Britain's move as showing “servile obedience” to the US. Arguments against the blanket British ban included objections that it would inevitably mean an end to British contacts with Hezbollah members of the Lebanese parliament. A broader one was on the more principled grounds of engagement with militant groups as a way of understanding their mindset and demands. Peace in Northern Ireland, it is often said, would not have been achieved in 1997 unless the government of the Labour prime minister Tony Blair had been prepared to talk to the Irish Republican Army (IRA) - an organisation it had long defined as terrorist. Even Ireland, however, is not as complicated and beset by regional rivalries as the Middle East.



Is it dangerous to kill an international terrorist ?

When ISIS leader, Abu Baker Al-Baghdadi, was killed in Syria everybody cheered and celebrated the end of ISIS. Same applied to Bin Laden's death. The only discussion circulating at the time was about who deserves to get the credit; the president or the Special Forces who conducted the operation. However, with the elimination of Qassem Soleimani, the reactions were different. Some reactions were primarily due to the blind hate towards President Donald Trump but many were fearful of retaliation and even another war. Congressmen complained being unaware, and others said, there was no imminent threat and therefore Soleimani should have been free to go!

Again, none of these discussions were made when Baghdadi or Bin Laden were killed. Qassem Soleimani has for a long time been a major threat to American Forces in Iraq, exactly the same place he was caught with his hands in the cookie jar planning for the next step.

He flew to Baghdad International Airport to meet with Abu Mehdi Al Mohandas, whom just returned from a two day attack and siege of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, crossing all security checkpoints and reaching the gate of the embassy wearing military uniforms with the flags of Kataeb Hezbollah and the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF).

The message of the Embassy attack was crystal clear; Qassem Soleimani is the ruler of Iraq and if he decides to attack the U.S. Embassy he can easily do so.

According to retired General David Petraeus, who led the U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan "Soleimani was, in US terms, a combination of CIA Director, JSOC Com-

mander, and Special Presidential Envoy for the Mideast. He was the second most important person in Iran and the architect and commander of Iranian initiatives to solidify control over the Shia Crescent.

He had the blood of hundreds of American and coalition soldiers on his hands and that of countless of our Iraqi and partner elements in the region."

As U.S. forces left Iraq in 2011, Qassem Soleimani became the shadow ruler of Iraq. As the Syrian revolution began, he was the only man in rescue of Bashar Al Assad with boots on the ground, deploying mercenaries not only from neighbouring Lebanon and Iraq but also from Afghanistan and Pakistan under the pretext of defending religious shrines in Damascus.

While many European countries took caution in congratulating his elimination, some even showed fear. They forgot about the European Refugee crisis that was solely caused by Qassem Soleimani's key role during the past years.

He caused the death of hundreds of thousands of Syrians and millions of displacements from Aleppo, Qusayr, Madaya, Zabadani and Eastern Ghouta.

Barack Obama and the Europeans turned a blind eye on Qassem Soleimani's role in the Middle East as an unwritten part of the Nuclear Agreement. The idea was to bring the theocratic rulers of Iran back to the international community with the notion of reform from within the regime.

During 2019, IRGC under Soleimani's rule, got away with the May 12 and June 13 oil tanker explosions. In June 20, 2019 IRGC shot down a United States RQ-4A Global Hawk BAMS-D surveillance drone with a surface-to-air



missile over the Strait of Hormuz and claimed responsibility. President Trump Stopped a retaliation operation only 10 minutes before the strike.

Lastly in September 14, 2019 major Saudi Arabia oil facility, Aramco, was hit by a drone strike. Houthi militias sponsored and trained by Qassim Soleimani claimed responsibility.

No military action had taken so far against the hostile acts of the Iranian regime, emboldening Soleimani to test the water a bit further. In December 27, 2019 Kataib Hezbollah fired 30 rockets at an Iraqi base that hosted U.S. forces, killing an American contractor. U.S. responded back with attacking Kataib Hezbollah's bases in the Syria-Iraq border.

Soleimani's last operation against the United States was to send his militias and political proxies to the U.S Embassy in Baghdad in order to create a new long term crisis. He wanted to make sure Ameri-

can's understood that he is in control of the Green Zone in Baghdad by letting his thugs cross a key bridge and all heavily armed checkpoints leading to the U.S. Embassy. The attack on New Year's Eve was an imminent threat to all U.S. staff in America's largest embassy in the world and some compared it with Benghazi or Tehran Embassy moment and even reminded about the Saigon helicopter evacuation.

No doubt that killing an International terrorist who has the blood of thousands of people in the Middle East on his hands, can be dangerous. But maybe now in the aftermath of his death we can really understand that IRGC is the Godfather of ISIS and Al-Qaeda and the largest State Sponsored Terrorist Organization in the world. The world is definitely a safer place without Qassem Soleimani today. All the discussions about the threat his killing would cause is just

proving the fact that he caused a big threat to the U.S. national security.

Make no mistake it is dangerous to confront and eliminate international terrorism but the policy of appeasement towards Iran's rulers is what brought us here.



ALI REZA

Turkey's military expansion in Libya

Former Libyan Prime Minister Ali Zeidan said in 2013: “The international community cannot tolerate a state in the middle of the Mediterranean that is a source of terrorism, violence and murder.

” Unfortunately, seven years later, the situation has only gotten worse and Libya has become one of the theaters of violence in which all the world powers wage war on a proxy basis. Each nation defends the camp it has chosen to support, but more direct involvement from a country like Turkey will only fuel chaos and violence.

Unsurprisingly, on January 2, the Turkish parliament voted for a one-year authorization to send troops to Libya to support the Fayez al-Sarraj Government of National Accord (GNA). President Erdogan had not really waited for this vote since in the last few weeks 300 Syrian mercenaries have already been fighting in Libya alongside the GNA. In addition, 1,000 other Syrian mercenaries are undergoing training in Turkish camps before being sent to Libya. Turkey is already de facto the

subcontractor of the GNA, carrying out military operations from Tripoli and Misrata. Also, Ankara had already sent -in 2019- military advisers, weapons and 20 drones, supplied directly by a company belonging to Erdogan's son-in-law. The GNA openly prides itself on receiving military equipment directly from Turkey. This is all the more ironic since GNA, which is the government set up and approved by the United Nations, is in full violation of UN resolutions banning the importation of weapons into Libya.

What are the main reasons for this massive involvement of Turkey in Libya?

First of all, there is a historical factor which is far from negligible and utterly symbolic. Indeed for Erdogan who sees himself as the new Caliph who will do everything to restore the Ottoman Empire, Libya was not only part of the old Ottoman Empire but was even the last territory lost by the Turks. Another symbol is the fact that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk fought there and was injured in Libya.

Then there is an “ethnic” factor: in fact, Misrata, where Islamist groups are based and which are part of the GNA, is mainly populated by Turkish ethnicities.

The ideological factor is also important because Erdogan is one of the most fervent supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood and wants to help the Islamist group to be in control in Libya.

The energy factor is para-



mount: wanting to protect his TurkStream pipeline project, Erdogan signed a maritime agreement with the GNA that creates an exclusive economic zone which almost encompasses Crete and the islands of Rhodes. Above all, he is seeking by all means to sabotage the East Med gas pipeline project, 2,000 kilometers long, which should transport gas discovered off the coast of Israel and Lebanon- through Cyprus and Greece and to the rest of Europe.

The economic factor is just as vital. Indeed, it is a question of defending the as the economic agreement inked with the GNA along with investments carried out under Gaddafi: Turkish companies had invested nearly 30 billion \$ in Libya.

Finally the geopolitical and

strategic factor is the icing on the cake: Erdogan is positioning himself in Libya to be part of the negotiation in the future. He is also at the same time countering his deadly enemies: Egypt, Greece, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and to a lesser extent France.

What will the international community do?

Europe cannot really get in the way of Turkey because of the blackmail of the refugees. Despite a good relationship with US President Trump, Erdogan has been warned not to intervene in Libya, but Trump has other cats to whip at the moment.

Only Russia, which supports Marshal Haftar's Libyan Na-

tional Army (LNA) by sending weapons and mercenaries from the Wagner group – between 500 and 1,500 men there – could possibly rub against Erdogan. However, it is clear that Russia is hedging its bets itself because it is not only behind the LNA but also has a good diplomatic policy with the GNA and keeps Seif al Islam, the son of the late Gaddafi, on hand. However, it is very likely that we will arrive at a Modus Vivendi between the two countries as in Syria.

Since the vote in the Turkish parliament, the African Union, the United Nations and France have issued warnings of the risks of Turkish military intervention in Libya. Unfortunately a scenario similar to post-2016 Syria cannot be excluded ...



Olivier Guitta

Egypt 2020: The Unpaved Route to Democratic Reform



Dalia Ziada

Nine years ago, on the 25th of January 2011, Egypt's history was rewritten by a popular non-violent revolution, skilfully organized by young people, whose life-time, then, was lesser than the time-span of the thirty-years rule of the autocratic regime they brought down, within only eighteen days. I was one of those pro-democracy anti-dictatorship revolutionaries. I had my fair share of exaggerated optimism, stemming from deep political naivety, that characterized most of the young revolutionaries in Tahrir Square, at that time. We believed that the miraculous spill that enabled us to overthrow Mubarak's regime, in eighteen days, would empower us to build a liberal democratic state within a year or less. Eighteen months later, we woke up from our dreamy optimism to the super awakening shock of watching the Muslim Brotherhood in presidential office and the extremist Salafists making legislations in Parliament. It took us another popular revolution, supported by the military institute, to remove them from

power and get back on track for rebuilding our new democratic state.

Getting back on the track of liberal democratization, after removing Islamists from power, was not an easy mission. The Muslim Brotherhood was not as accepting as Mubarak and his affiliates to the political defeat they encountered. They swore to ensue death and blood against those who removed them from power. They targeted innocent civilians, military personnel, policemen, and state institutions, with the purpose to create a state of extreme chaos, similar to the post Arab Spring Syria or Libya, so they can find their way back in power, as a "parallel" government. It was impossible to pursue democratic reform under this constant security threat.

For two years, between 2013 and 2015, Egypt was heavily invested in controlling that domestic security threat, while lobbying international support for the new elected political regime of President El-Sisi. By 2016, the police forces managed to successfully restore security in the main cities, including the capital city of Cairo, while the military was busy with the war on Islamist terrorist groups in northern Sinai. Hence, the Egyptian state got a chance to plan for socio-political reform.

For President El-Sisi, social and economic reform was a higher priority to democratization and political reform. While this approach invigorated a lot of media criticism against El-Sisi's regime, time

has proven its validity for the unique case of Egypt. It was almost impossible to rush into building a liberal democratic state, in a country that suffers from strong political divisions, severe economic depression, and lack of security. Nigeria is one example of many states that failed by rushing into western-style democratic reform before laying the proper foundation for a stable democratic state, by first stabilizing economy and improving the state of security and social development.

As we are about to enter a new decade in the age of the post-Arab-Spring Egypt, it is time for the political leadership and citizens to consider taking serious steps towards building a stable liberal democratic state; based on multi-party system and peaceful

devolution of power. In a recent statement, President El-Sisi hinted on the importance of considering a merger plan amongst the active political parties, noting that one of the obstacles in the way for appropriate and rapid political reform is the huge number of ineffective political parties. Egypt has more than one hundred registered political parties in addition to a dozen of non-registered political blocs. An average Egyptian would hardly recognize or remember the name of only two of those parties, not because their political reputation, but because of their charity initiatives around elections.

The main guarantee for Egypt's successful progression towards economic reform and social development is ensuring state stability. In

turn, the main guarantee for state stability is by pursuing a long-term plan for liberal democratic reform. The first step in building a stable liberal democratic state should be creating a reasonable number of efficient and vibrant political parties, that can peacefully compete against each other for the benefit of the citizens. Over the coming five years, Egypt is expected to organize a series of elections starting with municipal council elections in 2020, parliamentary elections in 2021, and presidential elections in 2024. This week, parliamentary discussions around the parties' merger plan has been initiated by Al-Wafd Party; hopefully resulting into a workable solution, in the near future.



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