

OPINION

### National leadership in Iran has laid foundation for an effective state

By Ali Abootelebi\*



Some might argue that many Third World countries, however formally sovereign, are still struggling to establish their autonomy and independence vis-a-vis powerful foreign influences, sometimes at the expense of other ideals of governance, and the Islamic Republic of Iran seems to be no exception. I generally agree with the premise.

The fact is that the turning points in the historical rise of the West are multi-dimensional. These include the arrival of the modern state after the conclusion of the 30-year religious/political war in 1648 and the emergence of the Absolutist states throughout Europe in its aftermath, the rise of the European military and mercantile power, the discovery of the New World in 1492, the European colonial conquest and control of much of the world, the rise of the Industrial Age and capitalism since the 1750s, and the nearly total direct and indirect control of the globe by the conclusion of World War I.

The late industrial, developing countries have faced many challenges in the past 100 years, embarking upon modernization and development within a preexisting international capitalist system, divided into competing nation-states. The increase in nation-states from 51 countries in 1945 to nearly 200 today testifies to the competing desires of peoples everywhere for nationalism, independence, and sovereignty.

There are many parameters responsible for the success or the failure in achieving the goals of development, e.g., national cohesion, integrity, and sovereignty, economic prosperity, human security, and effective and good governance. Such factors include natural and human resources, the type of political system, geography, political culture, and external factors.

However, the absence of a strong state capable of defending itself from foreign interference can prove detrimental to national sovereignty and development. The successful developing countries since WWI have all set their first goal of development on securing the nation-state from foreign intervention and meddling through building the foundation of a strong military and security establishment.

The primary examples would include China, Cuba, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brazil, and Chile. Some benefited from the international rivalry during the Cold War to secure their national interests, e.g., South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and Cuba. Nevertheless, the burden of development ultimately falls on the shoulder of the political class in developing countries.

Successful national leaders recognize the complexities of the international system and the intricacies involved in effective national defensive strength and sovereignty, national unity, material prosperity and, ultimately, good governance. The more successful developing countries have practiced 'effective governance', where the political class has taken a pragmatic approach to national development under the guise of nationalism, socialism, liberalism, secularism, or even religion, e.g., Islam, Judaism, or Hinduism.

The national leadership in Iran has laid the foundation for an effective state with a strong national defense and a welfare state economy. Iran is now militarily secure enough to confidently engage with the rest of the world based on its pragmatic national interests.

Iran can rely on its hard and soft power to extend its national influence without a confrontation with the West. Following a Chinese and Russian non-interference policy approach, Iran should establish friendly relations with all countries while quietly using its religious doctrine of justice and the defense of the innocent and its geostrategic location as soft power. With fewer external hostilities, it can focus on political and institutional reforms at home.

The failure of national leaders to deliver good governance is ultimately a failure of the state's leadership, despite claimed or real foreign meddling and intervention.

\*Ali Abootelebi is a professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

## President says no shortage of COVID vaccines, urges all to get third dose

Iran's President Seyyed Ebrahim Raeisi said there is no shortage of COVID-19 vaccines in the country, calling on all Iranians to get a booster dose of the vaccine.

Addressing a meeting of the country's National Headquarters for Managing and Fighting the Coronavirus on Saturday, the president said, "According to the reports provided in the country, there is no shortage of vaccines, both domestically made and imported vaccines, and I invite everyone to receive the third dose of the vaccine to protect the health of the society more effectively," Tasnim News Agency reported.

He appreciated the measures taken to control the traffic at the country's borders and said, "I call on all relevant officials, including governor generals, to continue to take care of traffic at the country's borders with sensitivity, and in particular to precisely control the entry of people."

Raeisi also said decision on the restrictions imposed on the entry of citizens of some countries in which the Omicron variant is present will be left to the Interior Ministry and the relevant headquarters to make appropriate decisions regarding the continuation or removal of these restrictions.



He praised the scientific studies conducted on the vaccination of children against coronavirus and said, "A good report was presented, but given the questions and objections that still remain on this issue, it is necessary to

continue the expert work in this field."

Referring to the decision of the country's coronavirus task force to reopen schools and universities, he said, "In the current situation with the significant drop in new cases and fatality, it was decided that the classes and exams of schools and universities be held in-person, which should be followed up by the relevant agencies."

The Iranian Health Ministry said on Saturday that more than 122 million jabs of COVID-19 vaccines have been injected across the country.

It said that over 60.06 million Iranians have received the first dose of the coronavirus vaccine, over 52.5 million have received the second dosage, and more than 9.8 million have gotten the booster shot.

Iran on Saturday reported 26 fatalities and 701 new positive cases across the country. The figures have drastically decreased in the country due to the people's observance of the health protocols as well as the government's mass vaccination campaign, according to IRNA.

On Friday, the Health Ministry reported only 19 deaths in 24 hours, which was the lowest daily toll in almost two years.

### Taliban's acting FM in Tehran to meet Iranian officials

International Desk

Taliban's acting foreign minister arrived in Tehran on Saturday to hold talks with Iranian officials.

Heading a political delegation, Amir Khan Muttaqi will meet Iranian officials to discuss bilateral ties and economic relations, according to Fars News Agency.

Earlier on Saturday, the Afghan Foreign Minis-

try's spokesman Abdul Qahar Balkhi, in a Twitter message, said the two sides will exchange views on political and economic issues, as well as Afghan migrants in Iran.

In December, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and Muttaqi held a meeting in the Pakistani capital Islamabad.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the 17th extraordinary session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

### January 8: When Iran shattered US facade of invincibility

January 8 marks the anniversary of an attack by Iran on an Iraqi air base housing American troops in retaliation for the US assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

On January 8, 2020, Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps launched a barrage of missiles at the Ain al-Asad air base in Iraq's Anbar Province. The attack codenamed operation Martyr Soleimani was in retaliation for the US assassination of top Iranian General Qassem Soleimani, Press TV wrote.

He was martyred near Baghdad International Airport on January 3, 2020 in a drone strike authorized by former US president Donald Trump.

All of the missiles hit their designated targets as American forces failed to intercept any missile despite a high level

of readiness in American bases across the region in the wake of Iran's pledge to avenge the assassination.

In the meantime, Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei stressed that the attack on Ain al-Asad was just a warning.

Meanwhile, Trump sought to portray the missile strike as a minor incident. Shortly after the attack, he tweeted "All is well." Later, in a press conference at the White House, he tried to play down the magnitude of the attack.

Controversially, media reports along with satellite images showed that the damage done to the base was much greater than what US officials acknowledged. They were also

conflicting reports on the number of those wounded. Despite initially claiming that the strike resulted in no casualties, the Trump administration ultimately announced that 110 US suffered traumatic brain injuries

Since the assassination of General Soleimani, Iraqis repeatedly took to the streets and called for an end to the US presence in their country. Protests were followed by the country's parliament holding an extraordinary session in which the lawmakers voted to expel foreign forces.

Eventually, the US announced the end of its combat operation in Baghdad back in December 2021 under an agreement with Baghdad, but said some 2,500 of its troops will remain on the ground as military advisors.



US soldiers and journalists inspect the rubble at a site of Iranian missile attack on Ain al-Asad air base, Anbar Province, Iraq, on Jan. 13, 2020.

### Tajik president hails anniversary of establishment of ties with Iran



Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon congratulated his Iranian counterpart Seyyed Ebrahim Raeisi on the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

In his message on Saturday, Rahmon hailed the occasion as a memorable event for both nations, according to Tasnim News Agency.

He said that over the past three decades, the two countries have constantly devised plans and made efforts to elevate the level of bilateral ties and find new ways to boost comprehensive cooperation, adding that Tajikistan considers continuation of such efforts as important.

The Tajik president also underlined his country's resolve to develop relations with Iran in various fields with a spirit of understanding, synergy and trust.

"We can enrich the ties between the two countries, which have historical and cultural commonalities, with strong resolve and sincere joint efforts ... in line with the interests of our peoples," Rahmon added.

He also wished health and success for Raeisi and peace, stability, happiness and prosperity for the friendly Iranian nation.

The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Tajikistan established diplomatic relations on January 9, 1992.

The two countries have enjoyed a close and strong relationship since then.

### Iran slams Wall Street Journal's hostile article

Iran's Permanent Mission to the United Nations reacted to an article published by the Wall Street Journal which argues in favor of American military strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities.

"Encouraging and advising leaders to opt for war, especially when a serious diplomatic process is underway is ignorant, hostile and in contravention of the principles of international law,"

Iran's Permanent Mission wrote on its Twitter page on Friday, Iran Front Page reported.

It added that those who design and implement such reckless plans will bear responsibility for the consequences.

The Wall Street Journal article entitled, "Biden's Moment of Truth in Iran," by Mark Dubowitz and Matthew Kroenig,

was published on January 6.

It accuses Iran of pursuing nuclear weapons and of having little interest in a diplomatic breakthrough in the Vienna talks.

"With negotiations likely to fail, he'd better be prepared for a military strike," the opinion piece read.

Iran and the P4+1 group have held many rounds of talks since 2021 to try

to restore the 2015 nuclear deal that has unraveled since the United States unilaterally withdrew from it in 2018 drawing worldwide condemnation.

Iran has said it will implement its nuclear commitments under the deal if the United States removes its illegal sanctions and offers credible guarantees that it will not abandon the deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi