

Trump's "New Adventurism" in the Middle East, Iran's Ballistic Missile Program

Not against International Law

By [Dr. Amir A. Amirshakari](#)

Global Research, March 01, 2017

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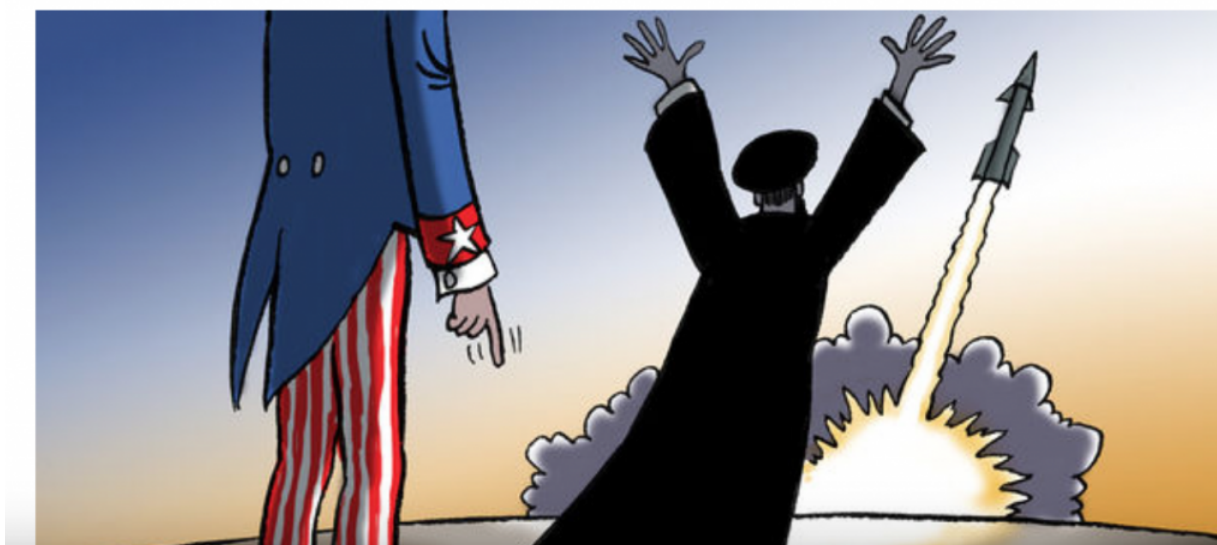
President Trump has embarked upon a "new adventurism" in the Middle East region. Israel and several Arab countries, backed by the US, are trying to create a new intergovernmental military alliance, such as NATO, against Iran.

The Economist weekly, in its issue dated 25 February, casually expresses its support of Trump's illegal sanctions directed against the people of Iran, accusing Iran of recreating the Sassanian Empire by its intervention in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, and Lebanon.

No blank cheque

America's growing toughness towards Iran

The Trump administration is right to keep up the pressure on a belligerent Iran



This accusation is reminiscent of Henry Kissinger's statements in 2015: in his interview with John Hamre at the Centre for Strategic & International Studies, he accused Iran of reviving Shia Safavid Empire in the region. On the other hand, Ayelet Shaked, the minister of justice of Israel, interfering in Iran's internal affairs, called for an independent Kurdistan.

What is the future of Middle East?

On 3 February 2017, President Donald Trump accused Iran of "playing with fire" in relation to Iran's ballistic missile test.

Shortly thereafter, Iran's foreign minister tweeted that Iran had been "unmoved" by the threats of the US and had the right to defend itself.

US-NATO contend that Iran's missile program is in violation of its international commitments and in contravention of UN Security Council resolution 2231 (hereafter referred to as UNSC resolution 2231).

There is no basis to these allegations.

None of the articles of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), concluded between Iran and P5+1 (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US; plus Germany) on 14 July 2015, prescribes a limitation on Iran's ballistic missile program.

According to Annex B paragraph 3 of UNSC resolution 2231:

"Iran is called upon not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons including launches using such ballistic missile technology, until the date eight years after the JCPOA Adoption Day or until the date on which the IAEA submits a report confirming the Broader Conclusion, whichever is earlier."

Also, according to paragraphs 7(a) and 8 of the resolution, *all* the provisions of resolutions 1696 (2006), 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008), 1929 (2010) and 2224 (2015), which had previously been laid down by the UN Security Council against Iran *shall be terminated*.

Therefore, although in the aforementioned resolutions, specifically resolution 1929, Iran had been prohibited from accomplishing every ballistic missile program, in UNSC resolution 2231 Iran is *called upon* not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles *designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons*.

Thus, the tone of UNSC resolution 2231 has changed in comparison to that of previous resolutions issued against Iran. According to Annex B paragraph 4 of the resolution, if the Security Council decides, all states may participate in the supply, sale or transfer all items and technology set out in S/2015/546 which also includes ballistic missile technology.

Therefore, it can be inferred from UNSC resolution 2231 that the legitimate national defence military activities of Iran have not been prohibited. Iran has never sought and will not seek the development of nuclear weapons. Respecting all its international commitments, including NPT and JCPOA, Iran has proved recurrently its *bona fide intent* which is one of the constituent elements of international law of treaties according to article 26 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties Concluded at Vienna on 23 May 1969.



Also, according to the reports of IAEA, Iran has respected all its international commitments with regard to its nuclear activities, including the reduction of its nuclear fuel as well as its centrifuges. It follows that the ballistic missile program of Iran is neither for launching non-conventional weapons nor can be planned for that purpose. In addition, just testing ballistic missiles *designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons* is forbidden; hence, testing other ballistic missiles by Iran does not contravene UNSC resolution 2231, and is not a problem which can be considered under chapter VII of the UN Charter. It cannot be considered as threat to the peace and/or breach of the peace to be faced with international sanctions or military intervention. Therefore, not only the US, but also the Security Council and P5+1 cannot impose sanctions on Iran under any circumstances.

According to a report published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in 2015, Iran's military expenditure, which was ranked 22 Worldwide (all countries) in 2015, was \$10.3 billion (%2.5 of its GDP), decreased by 30 per cent between 2006 and 2015.

It should be noted that there are many countries in the Middle East region whose military expenditures are higher than Iran. According to the same statistics (2015), Saudi Arabia, which allocates 13.7% of its GDP to the military expenditure of, overtook Russia to become the third-largest military spender Worldwide: \$87.2 billion which was more than 8 times of Iran. United Arab Emirates, the second highest military expenditure rank in the Middle East, was ranked 14 Worldwide with spending of \$22.8 billion.

Israel, whose global rank is 15, is ranked 3 in the region with spending of \$16.1 billion; and Iran is ranked 4 in the Middle East after Iraq whose military expenditure was \$13.1 billion, with a global rank of 19. The US occupied the first rank with \$596 billion which is more than 57 times Iran's military expenditure.

These US-NATO "partners" including Israel, Saudi Arabia, the UAE constitute a formidable force with a combined military budget of the order of \$120 billion.

Both the US and Israel, which maintain that they have the right to conduct pre-emptive or preventive attacks on Iran, have both nuclear-armed missiles and nuclear-armed aircraft. Israel is not a member of NPT. The US, although is a member of NPT, disregards its commitments on nuclear disarmament according to article VI of NPT.

Saudi Arabia, the traditional adversary of Iran in the region, has become a member of NPT despite the fact that it does not (officially) possess nuclear technology. Saudi Arabia has ballistic missiles with a range significantly greater than Iran. If some day Saudi Arabia were to develop nuclear warheads, its ballistic missiles would be capable of delivering them.

Therefore, Iran's ballistic missile program is neither in violation of its international commitments, nor does it threaten international peace and security.

While Iran has accepted voluntarily to limit its nuclear programs, every attempt to constrain its ballistic missile program has been set in motion. This is not a "reasonable behaviour" on

behalf of the US and its allies. Although the aspiration of humankind is a world free of weapons, until that day, every double-standard, based on discrimination, on behalf of international community is against justice and fairness.

Amir Abbas Amirshkari, PhD in International Law (University of Tehran, Iran), Advocate (Iran Bar Association)

a_amir_shekari@hotmail.com

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