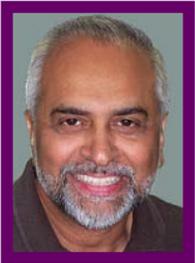


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Re-Engaging Iran – As China Dis-Engages



For a brief moment the world seemed to turn towards peace as the "Super Power", the United States, lowered its guns on the next possible target, Iran, and extended an olive branch instead (*even though it resembled more of a stripped branch meant to spank*). Nevertheless it was a significant turn toward engagement and diplomacy. But, the sense of lessened threats and hostilities in the world lasted but a moment, as China, the emerging possible future "Super Power", unexpectedly raised its guns and fired the proverbial shot across the bow of its neighbours and the United States, unilaterally and unequivocally, claiming the disputed waters and islands in the East China Sea, for its very own.



The collective sigh of relief over the initial 'Iran Agreement' (*except from Israel, Saudi Arabia and implausibly from Canada*) turned into a metaphorical gasp of disbelief as China threw down the gauntlet to Japan, Taiwan and South Korea, and their de-facto backer the United States. The global "Super Power", the United States, reacted by picking up the gauntlet and unequivocally rejected China's claim to the region by flying two B-52 bombers in the stated 'East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone', ignoring all of China's assertions. Japan and South Korea has done the same. China's



So, the hope for increased global peace, through the lessening of tensions between Iran and the West, lasted less than a day or two, as the emerging "Super Power" China, picked up where the first "Super Power", the United States, has left off, after decades of conducting International diplomacy through intimidation and bellicose behaviour. In the past few years, as China's wealth and influence grew, it has increasingly become more assertive and belligerent towards its neighbours, where disputed territories are concerned, and has begun to test the resolve of its neighbours and the outside power in the region (*the United States*), by flexing its own growing military muscle.



This trend is disturbing for it portends the greater likelihood of rising tensions and high defense budgets that take away from economic and social development in the region, and a risk of military confrontation between age old rivals Japan and China, thereby drawing in the United States and others. Plus North Korea will once again be unleashed by China to create additional headaches for South Korea and the United States.

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Nothing China does is ad hoc. Therefore it is puzzling as to why, at this time, China would decide to take a step that is not defensible, diplomatically or militarily, against all who would resist such a move, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and the United States directly, and most other nations indirectly, and in an already unstable global economic environment, why it would risk further economic disruption?



We believe that such a move at this time by China can only mean that it has very serious problems internally, and it needs to deflect its people's attention to a perceived outside threat and thereby whip up national sentiment, and bury its internal problems in the subsequent noise and emotions thus created.



(Previous mass protest against Japan)

So we can see China in the near future treading that fine line of baiting its neighbours as well as the United States, whipping up internal nationalistic sentiment, while making sure it does not cross the line that may trigger active military engagement. Although, on second thought, this is China's leadership we are talking about, and in its need to preserve itself at all cost, it cannot be entirely ruled out that the Communist Party will not cross that line. Because, if the internal threats

become grave enough, we believe it will risk measured military engagement to galvanize its people and preserve itself. China knows that no one would want to risk an all out war with it, so it could count on a limited conflict that it can control by its aggressive or passive moves. We believe China's actions are stemming from the need to control or mask internal problems as it attempts a most difficult internal economic and social transformation currently underway, and the perennial need for the Party's preservation through the ever convenient escalation of border disputes.

As for Iran, we believe that the reigning Theocracy has come to the conclusion that the prolonged and ongoing confrontation with the West, in particular the United States, is well past its usefulness, and has become threatening because of its potential to destabilize the Theocracy's grip on the Country and its citizenry, not to mention the possibility of external attack by the United States, its allies, and Israel, with the possibility of regime change. So in contrast to China, Iran's rulers are de-escalating tensions to preserve their hold on the Country and have started down the path of re-engagement.



From the American side, with some semblance of foreign policy sanity having returned to the United States with the election and re-election, of Barack Obama and the Democrats, and the defeat of the hawkish and rapacious Republicans, the return of diplomacy as a preferred means of dealing with sovereign nations, rather than the Republican way: "bomb them back into stone age", the United States and their 'Allies' are finally starting to do the 'right thing' and lower their guns on Iran.

That 'right thing' has resulted in the initial

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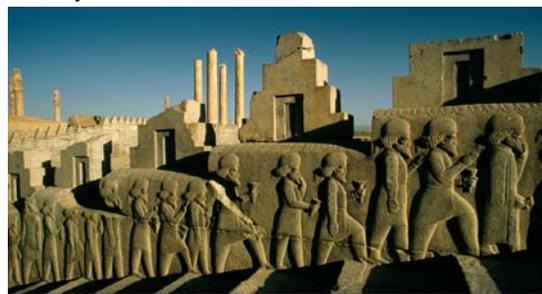
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Agreement with Iran, which hopefully morphs towards a more stable and lasting peaceful settlement of differences over time, and turns the World from witnessing another war by the United States and its allies, in the name of fighting terrorism and exporting democracy. *[Those wars have damaged terrorism leadership, nests and networks no doubt, but their imported 'democracy' has been of questionable merit so far, wracked as the countries are with violence and corruption, as in Iraq and Afghanistan. And the wars on terrorism have exacted a horrendous price on hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians in the target countries, and on the frontline soldiers on both sides, and their families, all of who became unfortunately and merely "collateral damage", to the 'distant from the battlefield' political leaders, and the more distant public in the rest of the impersonal unaffected world.]*

Like China, Iran is a great and ancient civilization with a long, colourful and illustrious history.



Both countries have seen their greatness ebb and flow over thousands of years of their known history.



Over the last couple of decades China has been in ascendance, while from the West's perspective, Iran has declined.



Iran is not only viewed suspiciously by the West and in particular by Israel, but by its prime traditional Middle Eastern 'Sunni' rival Saudi Arabia; Iran being predominately 'Shia'. So this initial 'Agreement', while hailed by the rest of the world as a step in the right direction, was vehemently opposed by Israel and Saudi Arabia, and incongruously by Canada, whose current government seems to be inexplicably beholden to Israel and has lost all semblance of independent thought.



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Extremism
Doesn't Pay –
Not Even In
America

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In spite of an openly scolding and berating Benjamin Netanyahu, and a not so open but equally opposed Saudi Arabia, the Obama Administration has pressed ahead and with the other permanent members of the UN Security Council, Britain, France, Russia, China and Germany (5+1) in tow, hammered out an initial Agreement, taking the first step towards bringing Iran back into the mainstream of global nations. And that is a good thing, as it could bring with it a considerable ratcheting down of tensions and the avoidance of another possible war.



Unfortunately, at about the same time, China, that has been increasingly accepted, and elevated, into the mainstream of nations over the past two decades, seemingly and inexplicably stepped out to a degree, and ratcheted up tensions and the possibility, however remote it may seem at this time, of war!



To what extent will ruling entities not go, whether democratic, autocratic, communists, theocracies or monarchies, to preserve their privilege and power? Well, if history is any gauge, rulers have too often destroyed theirs and others countries and societies, to hang on to personal power (*in current times Syria's regime comes to mind*). Iran's leadership's latest moves maybe driven by painful sanctions long imposed by the West, and/or by the need of self-preservation of the Theocratic leadership, but this time it fortunately

also protects the country and its people from a punishing war and severe economic deprivation.