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Special Report: [The US-Iran-Israel Stand-Off: No Conflict in Sight; But for the US, No Success for Embargoes; No Ability to Constrain Nuclear Weapons](#)

Reference Document: [Interview With Former Iranian Foreign Minister Ardeshir Zahedi on the Iran-US Confrontation](#)

Special Report

The US-Iran-Israel Stand-Off: No Conflict in Sight; But for the US, No Success for Embargoes; No Ability to Constrain Nuclear Weapons

The Real War is Between Iran and Turkey

Analysis. By Gregory R. Copley, Editor, GIS/Defense & Foreign Affairs. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the options for US or Israeli military attacks on Iran are limited to the point that any such options would produce profoundly counter-productive results. Equally, it is becoming apparent that Iran's own military options, either to unilaterally close the Strait of Hormuz linking the Persian Gulf with the Arabian Sea or to strategically undertake a first-strike attack against Israel, would be equally profoundly counter-productive for Iran.

At the same time, there is no viable mechanism for any effective economic embargo against Iran by the US and Western states; and there is no real way in which the US and its allies can stop the progress of Iran toward acquiring indigenous nuclear weapons production capability.

It is also apparent that those in the West calling for war against Iran — to “prevent it from acquiring nuclear weapons” — have no strategic understanding of what this would entail, nor do they comprehend the fundamental mathematics involved in achieving such an objective. This applies equally to the media, the politicians, and even the military pundits in the US. It is as though they have forgotten the principles and calculations of strategic warfare which the great thinkers of the Cold War, coming from a World War II experience, grasped absolutely.¹

Moreover, there is no strategic understanding of what a “nuclear Iran” actually means. Does possession of a few nuclear weapons by Iran mean that it could prevail in a total conflict, even with Israel? Let alone the West as a whole. Possession of nuclear weapons has proven, for more than six decades, to be an effective deterrent to potential attackers. Nuclear weapons have never prevailed as the decisive weapon in an actual conflict, not even when the US used two of them against two Japanese cities in 1945. World War II was already decided by the time Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed; the nuclear weapons merely helped determine that there would be fewer Allied and Japanese casualties than if the war had continued to its conventional conclusion.

Then, as now, nuclear weapons are more often (and often more meaningful as) symbolic elements of power than power themselves.

There are several facts to consider in the current childish hysteria about a possible Iran-US-Israeli conflict:

1. **Iran already has a number of imported nuclear weapons**, acquired since 1991.² The US Government knows this, but has — as it did in the case of DPRK (North Korean) nuclear weapons — forbidden open acknowledgement of the fact, or even wide discussion of it within secure groups. The US Government said repeatedly that it would not allow the DPRK or Iran to acquire nuclear weapons, and yet it has proven powerless to prevent the acquisition. **The foolishness was for Western leaders to paint themselves into a position where they could only be proven powerless.** The US Director of National Intelligence (DNI) came as close as any US official, in 2009, when he admitted that Iran could have acquired nuclear weapons from foreign sources.³ *GIS/Defense & Foreign Affairs* has seen absolutely convincing evidence, since 1991, that these weapons were acquired by Iran. They are, however, not militarily meaningful, other than for psychological purposes, and particularly including deterrence of invasion.
2. **The US and its allies lack the economic and military resources to sustain a meaningful conflict against Iran**, just as Iran lacks the resources to sustain a war outside its own boundaries. It is possible for US forces to inflict one, or a few, sharp military strikes at some of Iran's infrastructure, but these would merely reinforce popular support for the clerics, just as Iraq's attacks on Iran saved the Iranian clerics from political collapse so soon after the 1979 start of the clerical era. Iranians rally around their political leaders in the face of foreign attack. **Significantly, punitive US strikes at Iran would (a) not significantly inhibit Iran's strategic weapons or its national command mechanism, which are mobile and hardened; and (b) would force Iran to respond, either immediately or after due consideration.** Bear in mind that the loss of Pan Am PA103 over Lockerbie on December 21, 1988, was a patiently considered response to the shooting down of an Iran Air Airbus airliner (Iran Air flight 655) over the Persian Gulf by the USS *Vincennes* on July 3, 1988, dragging not only Libya into strategic consequences which plagued it until the overthrow of Libyan leader Mu'ammār al-Qadhafi in 2011, but which also sees ongoing US-Iranian mutual antagonism almost a quarter-century later. **All military planners know that the US and NATO lack the resources and will to sustain a major military engagement against Iran. The Iranian leadership also understands this, but recognizes the dangers inherent in an escalation of public rhetoric, such as is now occurring.**
3. **Israel could suffer significant damage if Iran chose to inflict it**, but Iran could suffer even more from an Israeli retaliation. But in fact many in Israel, and some in Iran, recognize the 2,700 years of mutual strategic dependence between Israel and Iran. This is now becoming interesting. Iran's growing, and geo-strategically critical, competition with Turkey comes at a time when Turkey — far from being a modern, secular state with common interests with Israel in the Eastern Mediterranean — has begun to revert to Ottoman pretensions of rightful hegemony over the Levant. It was the destruction of the Ottoman hold on the Levant in 1917-18 which enabled, very specifically, the creation of the modern State of Israel. Iran, despite enormous pressure from Russia to maintain viable relations with Turkey to enable expanded Russian control over oil and gas trade into Europe from Central Asia and the Northern Tier, cannot tolerate an expanded, neo-Ottoman and a pan-Turkish (although not truly pan-Turkic) expansionism from Ankara. Classical geopolitics are again at play, and the Iranian clerics — which depend on religious authority for legitimacy at home and prestige abroad — are now being forced to recognize the historical geographic interests of Iran (perhaps including Israeli support for maintaining a non-Ottoman, non-Sunni domination of Syria) as perhaps being more important than the rhetorical use of Israel as a rallying call.
4. **The US Obama White House remains committed to Turkey**, despite the reality that Turkey has long since departed the Western Alliance (and any pretensions at membership in the European Union). Indeed, Turkey has explicitly posed a threat to US and EU interests in the Eastern Mediterranean, but the Obama White House (and, indeed, the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office) seems oblivious to this, clinging to a vision of Turkey and its context which was created around the time of the Crimean War of 1853-56. There is a growing recognition in Europe and the US, however (including by US Republican Presidential candidate Rick Perry), that the only strategically positive aspect of Turkey from the US standpoint is that it has, under its present leadership, so profoundly betrayed its major (and very recent, since 2008) strategic patron, Russia. What cannot be forgotten is that some seven- to 11-million Turks — out of a population of more

than 75-million — are Shi'a, and very much under the influence of the Iranian-controlled Grand *Ayatollahs*. There is a very large population of Kurds in Turkey, consistently under-reported as to size, but at least 14-million in number. There is also a substantial population of 'Alawites in Turkey, most of whom owe at least nominal allegiance to Shi'ism. As well, a population of Armenians still exists in Turkey. Only some 14 percent of Turkey's population has Turkic blood. This makes Turkey extremely vulnerable, and also at a time of great internal schisms, a weakened military, a weakened economy, and a Prime Minister who was, by November 2011, reportedly seriously ill from Rectosigmoid cancer, and had apparently undergone treatment at Istanbul hospital and then at Hacettepe Hospital in Ankara. Even during his illness, Pres. Abdullah Gül had, by December 18, 2011, held a meeting with the military command to discuss the prospect of a war against both Syria and Iran. Within all of this fragile matrix, the prospect exists for Turkey to face real existential challenges in the coming year and years. A question which faces Europe, the US, and Israel is whether a stable and prosperous Iran could be a more important Western entrée into Central Asia — as it promised to be under the late Shah of Iran — than a troublesome and ambitious Turkey?

5. **Does Iran “Need” the Israeli Threat Any More?** The Iranian Government escalated its hostility toward Israel in 2002 for very pragmatic reasons. It saw the US-led Coalition invasion of Iraq as a move which had the potential to seriously isolate Iran geographically and geopolitically.⁴ It attempted to outflank this move by broadening the scope of the conflict and making Israel — easily painted as the nemesis of the Arab/Muslim world — the problem. This move substantially escalated the clerics' already hostile attitudes toward Israel, which differed dramatically from the traditional Persian (and pre-Islamic origin) friendship and strategic alliance with Israel, which had been strong until the overthrow of the Shah in 1979. Today, Israel is a “threat” of significantly lower magnitude as far as the clerics are concerned, but it is not immediately possible for the clerics to overturn their anti-Israeli rhetoric at short notice. But the prospect exists for Iran and Israel to rebuild their mutuality of interests.
6. **Can Iran Close the Strait of Hormuz?** Theoretically, Iran could close the Strait of Hormuz and shut down a significant oil and gas shipping choke-point, but it would be a self-destructive act. More likely is the fact that the threat of Iranian attacks on tanker traffic — or the threat of military conflict which would impact tanker traffic — would significantly impact shipping insurance rates in a fashion similar to the Libyan act of dropping three floating sea mines in the Red Sea from the minelayer *Ghat* in 1984. The escalation in insurance rates was sufficient to cause tanker traffic to divert from the Red Sea-Suez sea lane, and transit around the Cape of Good Hope, a substantially more expensive option. The US and Iranian rhetoric on the subject is what is most damaging. A US military spokesman noted recently: “The naval forces of the United States stand ready to oppose any action that is aimed at the free passage of ships through the straits.” An Iranian military spokesman then said in reply: “America is not in a position to oppose the decision of Iran in this matter Iran does not need permission to take whatever steps is necessary to defend itself.”⁵ And, indeed, although the US had by January 24, 2012, reportedly had three carrier battle groups in or ready to deploy to the Persian Gulf or the broader region as a show of force on the matter, the reality is that these capital ships are extremely vulnerable, and the Iranian *Pasdaran* and naval forces have, in recent years, ensured that the US is aware of the ships' vulnerability. The US has no ironclad protection against either Iran's *Kilo*-class (Project 877 EKM) submarines or Iranian supersonic anti-ship cruise missiles. A US carrier-launched strike at Iranian targets would probably invoke an anti-ship response, and yet neither the US nor Iran have viable follow-on capabilities to follow such politically irreversible actions. The real concern is that tactically-minded operational officers (on either side) could initiate an action which has consequences which take both parties into uncharted territory, much as the staggeringly inadvisable rules of engagement — apparently drafted by a US Marine Corps colonel lawyer with no understanding of the contextual situation — caused the USS *Vincennes* to shoot down the Iran Air Airbus A300. Western analysts talk about such a confrontation occurring imminently, but the reality is that the new embargoes against Iran do not come into effect for months, and they are more rhetoric than substance (especially given Iran's options to circumvent them with the help of Russia and the People's Republic of China).

7. **Who Promotes Military Action Against Iran?** The main, discreet proponents of military containment or engagement against Iran are Saudi Arabia and Turkey, both of which desire a reduction in Iran's growing regional dominance, which severely threatens their own influence and security. Indeed, Iran has been extremely active in working against the sovereignty and unity of Saudi Arabia, promoting the existence of an "Islamic Republic of Eastern Arabia", a Shi'ite region carved out of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.⁵ And Iran is all that stands between Ankara and its goal of re-asserting influence over Syria (and Turkey severely threatens Iran's historical links to the Mediterranean through Syria). Little wonder, then, that Greece — which has legitimate fears, along with Cyprus, of Turkish territorial claims in the Aegean Sea — spoke out against European Union moves to impose an embargo on Iran, even though this action came at a time when Greece was courting EU indulgence in its debt negotiations.
8. **DPRK's Rôle if Iran-US Confrontation Escalates:** Any significant expansion of the US/Western confrontation with Iran will lead to the appearance of a significant outbreak of strategic concern centered around North Korea (DPRK). This has been the pattern since the early 1980s, as a result of a strategic agreement between then-Iranian leader "Ayatollah" Ruhollah Khomeini and then-DPRK leader Kim Il-Song. Each state undertakes to provide a major strategic distraction, to divide US attention, if the other faces a significant threat from the US. *Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis*, in a report entitled "DPRK Upcoming 'Tests' Linked to Iranian Interests and Japanese Changes" on [September 5, 2006](#), noted this pattern — as have other *Defense & Foreign Affairs* reports. This report and an earlier one, on [August 25, 2006](#), noted: "... it should be expected, given past experience, that a rise in DPRK activity, possibly built around a new round of missile tests involving the *TaepoDong-2* missiles now in place on fixed launch systems, should also serve as an indicator of impending major Iranian action. The DPRK and Iran have a mutual pact to provide diversionary operations to each other in times of operational threat." The September 5, 2006, report noted: "the DPRK has on a number of occasions provided "strategic diversion" for Iran's clerical leadership, by undertaking incidents which divert US and world attention away from the Middle East at critical times". We can absolutely expect the new DPRK Government of Kim Jong-Un to fulfill its part of the treaty with Iran in the near future, and create a strategic diversion in North-East Asia. Moreover, the US and EU cannot expect Russia and the PRC to sit idly by while the West pressures a state which Moscow and Beijing consider important to their separate interests and to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) treaty states in general. Expect the issue of the SCO clause which states that "an attack on one is an attack on all" to be raised again soon; Iran is an associate member of the SCO, and is expected to soon be a full member of the organization.

At the bottom of all this is whether the US and Europe, and Israel, can find a way to rebuild ties with Iran. This, indeed, would undercut Russian southward penetration of the Middle East to the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf more dramatically than a Western *rapprochement* with Turkey could ever do. Part of the problem, however, lies not in the clumsily-handled US attempts to send signals to Tehran (while at the same time threatening it), but in the inward-looking and paranoid view of the West held by most of the leading Iranian clerics. In other words, there is a mutual inability to overcome cultural biases and insensitivities on both sides.

Internal political demands in the West and in Iran delay both a normalization of inter-state relations as well as progress toward political evolution in Iran. The isolation of Iran has reinforced both the power and the religious character of post-1978 Iranian governance. Now, however, we are seeing, with the end of the Iraq and Afghan wars, that the Central Asian and Northern Tier regions are moving toward a period of considerable evolution, possibly including the re-drawing of boundaries. It is possible to foresee a break-up of Afghanistan within a decade, with considerable impact on the boundaries of Pakistan and Iran. All states in the region will need to re-think their identities, because there will be significant fissiparous trends toward the break-up, along ethno-linguistic lines, of "modern" nation-state structures in the region.

This is likely to affect Saudi Arabia and India, as well. For its own part, the US and UK have been actively engaged in attempting to bring about just such fissiparous trends in Iran, by sponsoring secessionist movements in Iranian (Arab) Khuzestan and in Iranian Baluchistan. Significantly, however, the one state

in the region which has very deep-seated overarching identity — embracing multiple ethnicities — is Iran. One of the few other such states is Oman.

Footnotes:

1. See, in particular, Possony, Stefan T.: *Strategic Air Power for Dynamic Security*. Washington, DC, 1949: Infantry Press.
2. See, for example, *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy* report of [February 1992](#) by Yossef Bodansky: "Iran Acquires Nuclear Weapons and Moves to Provide Cover to Syria". And the report — among many others published by this Service in *Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis* — by Bodansky on [October 21, 2002](#): "Iran's Ballistic Missile and WMD Programs: The Links to the DPRK".
3. See Copley, Gregory R.: "The Prospect of an Israeli Military Strike Against Iran: Far Lower than Western Analysts Would Like to Think", in *Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis*, [July 6, 2010](#). That report noted: "Iran has a core of externally-acquired nuclear weapons, something which the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) of the US indirectly admitted on March 11, 2009." As did the report in *Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis*, of [March 11, 2009](#): "US Confirms Consistent *Defense & Foreign Affairs* Reporting Since 1992: DNI Noted He 'Cannot Rule Out' That Iran May Have Already Acquired Nuclear Weapons".
4. See, particularly, the report by Yossef Bodansky in *Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily* of [December 2, 2002](#): "Tehran Maneuvers for a Wider War With Israel to Ensure That the US-led War on Iraq Does Not Leave Iran Isolated and Surrounded".
5. Cited by Amb. Ardeshir Zahedi, the last Iranian Imperial Ambassador to the US (and former Iranian Foreign Minister), in an excellent interview in the California-based Farsi publication, *Rahezendegi* ("Way of Life"), January 2012. [See full-text reprint of document, below](#).
6. See, for example, *Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis*, [May 18, 2009](#): "Iran Moves at Highest Level to Support the Newly-Declared 'Republic of Eastern Arabia'".

Reference Document

Full Text Translation from Farsi of an Interview by an Iranian expatriate journal with former Iranian Foreign Minister Ardeshir Zahedi follows:

The Relationship Between Iranian Maneuvers, The Movement of American Naval Vessels In the Persian Gulf, and the Threat to Close the Straits Of Hormuz; The Reaction to the \$30-Billion US Arms Sale to Saudi Arabia; and What Has Been the Result of "The Arab Spring"?

An interview in *Rahezendegi* ("Way of Life") Iranian twice-monthly journal, published in California in January 2012, with former Iranian Ambassador to the US and former Iranian Foreign Minister Ardeshir Zahedi

At the dawn of the year 2012, we had an occasion to renew our visits with Mr Ardeshir Zahedi, Iran's former Foreign Minister and Ambassador to the United States, in Montreux, Switzerland, where in the past three decades, during the times that our country has been deep in turmoil Ardeshir Zahedi has been living in his father's Villa Les Roses. Our visit coincided with the maneuvers of the Iranian Navy in the Persian Gulf, further tightening of economic sanctions by the Western Countries specially the United States against the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iran's threat to close down the Straits of Hormuz, and the sale of \$30-billion worth of military hardware by the United States to Saudi Arabia. Thus we started our conversation with Ambassador Zahedi on these vital issues;

SANCTIONS AND THE STRAITS OF HORMUZ

Mr Zahedi first referred to the 10-day maneuvers of the Iran Navy, and said: "Strategically these maneuvers are very significant."

During the maneuvers an Iranian aircraft started photographing an American aircraft carrier near the straits. This according to the Iranian Naval Commander was the sign that Iran has control over the movements of foreign forces in the region, in that should any naval vessel enter the Iranian waters they

will be warned and if necessary military action will be taken to prevent any possible violation of Iranian borders. To bolster his threat he suggested that the American Aircraft Carrier that left the Gulf through the Straits of Hormuz should not return.

The US Fifth Fleet is now based in Bahrain, and along with the ships of other nations is patrolling the seas in the area in order to curtail the activities of the pirates who operate out of Somalia.

There have been signs and indications of sensitivity and opposition to these maneuvers and the US has rejected the warning of the Iranians to close down the straits should further sanctions be imposed against Iran.

An American military spokesman said: "The naval forces of the United States stand ready to oppose any action that is aimed at the free passage of ships through the straights." An Iranian military spokesman then said in reply: "America is not in a position to oppose the decision of Iran in this matter Iran does not need permission to take whatever steps is necessary to defend itself."

It was said that Iran wanted to show that it is capable of defending itself. Meanwhile, it proposed to open talks with the West, which clearly was the sign of a policy of carrot in one hand and a stick in the other. An Iranian representative in Vienna declared that Teheran is ready to talk.

I am proud of my Iranian heritage. I am not talking about the regime, but I do not want the 75 million Iranians all of whom I consider as my brothers and sisters to be in danger or be killed. Didn't enough people die in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya, Syria and elsewhere? The subject of Persian Gulf and threats to close down the Straits of Hormuz is nothing new. Neither are the maneuvers of Iran Navy in the Persian Gulf. In the time that Iran and America were allies, they used to hold joint maneuvers there, but now Iran is doing it alone or with other nations in the area."

Then our talk with Mr Zahedi turned to the consequences of the closing of the Straits of Hormuz. He said: "My opinion is that naturally such an act which will interrupt the free flow of one fourth of the oil trade of the world has devastating consequences and obviously the people of Iran will bear the brunt of it."

Showing teeth and claws by Iran and the US over the threatened closing of the Straits of Hormuz, once again brings out, in some quarters at least, the Iranian nuclear program and Iran's effort to build a nuclear weapon.

As I have previously said Of course Iran is entitled to its rights in developing nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, and in a region where Pakistan, India and Israel even possess nuclear weapons, and who are not signatories to the Test Ban Treaty, Iran should be prevented from utilizing nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

I will repeat what I have told you many times before: Iran is a country with a history that spans three thousand years, and history is witness to the fact that it has been subjected to invasion many times during that time, and even many parts of it have been annexed, but their nature has never changed.

There have been many times in our history that Iran and the Iranian people have been squarely on the side of peace and worked to maintain it. We went to the aid of our brother nation — Pakistan — during its conflict with India. When there was trouble between East Pakistan and West Pakistan, Iran tried very hard to settle the matter peacefully. Many times Iran has tried the same thing in conflicts between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Similarly during the conflict between Pakistan and Malaysia Iran tried to mediate between prime ministers Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and *Tungku* Abdul Rahman.

When the Arab countries placed an embargo on the sale of oil, with one phone call from Nixon, the American President, Iran went to its aid and provided the fuel for the seventh fleet without even asking for or receiving any compensation.

When Southern Yemen was cooperating with the Soviet Union and was receiving arms from it, Saudi Arabia was under constant threat of communism, and invasion by the South Yemen, for two days and two nights Iran sent all types of military hardware by C-130 transport aircraft to Saudi Arabia to prevent its fall.

But, because Iran had good relations with the US and in order to observe protocol, it sought the opinion of President Nixon beforehand because the arms were American built and their transfer to others required their approval.

Iran and Iranians have never been in favor of “getting even”. Wasn't it France, which claimed to be a friend of Iran, which hosted Khomeini and gave him sanctuary in France? At the time of the Tsars, France, which flirted with Iran as a friend ended up betraying it by abandoning Fath-Ali Shah after the Tilsit meeting in 1807 between Napoleon and Tsar Alexander I. This ended the 10-year war between Iran and Russia, and Iran ended up losing Georgia and Caucasia. Do not forget that until Nader Shah the borders of Iran extended to Tajikistan and little by little a vast Iranian territory was separated from Iran due to the weakness of Iran. Even after Second War with Russia, a Muslim clergy by the name of *Seyyed* Mohammad Mojtahed who was an agent of Russia created some disturbances which resulted in the loss of Armenia and Azerbaijan and the border of Iran was finally set at the Arras River.

Iran's misfortune was not over yet. After the Iranian attack on Herat in order to establish some semblance of law and order, it was the intervention of the British navy in our Southern borders and the intervention of France that forced Nassereldin Shah to abandon any Iranian claim to parts of Afghanistan in the treaty of March 1857 signed in Paris. Similar events took place many times over.

During the time of Tsarist Russia France which claimed to be a friend of Iran ignored the Iranian ambassador until Fath-Ali Shah was defeated and the imposition of the treaty of Turkamman Chai was the result of such treacheries. In 1881 in a different treaty Iran gave up more of its territories in Central Asia. In the same year Britain gained sovereignty on some important Baluchistan territory and gain it must be said that the 1907 treaty which took place with the intervention of the French and its then Foreign Minister Théophile Delcassé (March 1, 1852 – February 22, 1923).

Mr Zahedi said: "I say these things so that our new generation will be aware of what foreign intervention has done to Iran and what effects it has had on us. These are not related to the times of Darius, Anoushiravan, Shah Abbas and Nader, These events took place in the 19th Century, which is less than 150 years ago. Iranians should maintain their patriotism because what the regime is Iran will always be Iran. Iranians must determine their fate themselves without any foreign intervention and put an end to their present problem.

The same way that today the West helps the opposition in countries such as Syria, The British navy played a similar role in these past events.

In some quarters there is talk of preventing Iran from developing nuclear technology. In a region where nuclear weapons are part of the arsenal of some countries such as Israel which is not even signatory to the nonproliferation treaty, and India whose Prime Minister was welcomed by the president of the United States with kind words such as “Welcome to the club”, the prime objective is to either have the countries that possess nuclear weapons sign the Nuclear Non-proliferation treaty or to declare the Middle East a nuclear free zone."

Mr. Zahedi points out that: “Whatever I say with regards to this subject is not just my own personal view. Other prominent writers and high ranking personalities also express such ideas by men such as [former US] Pres. [Jimmy] Carter, winner of Nobel Peace Prize, Fareed Zakaria, Geoffrey Wheatcroft, Mark Landier, David Goodman, H.D.S. Greenway, Han Berman, Roger Cohen, Rick Gladstone, and Stephen Kinzer.”

THE SALE OF ARMS

The subject now turned to the sale of \$30-billion [in fact, \$29.4-billion, but part of a \$60.5-billion total package — *Ed.*] worth of arms including F-15 fighters to Saudi Arabia at the same time as the Iranian threat to close the Straights of Hormuz.

Mr Zahedi said: “There has been an old animosity between Iran and Saudi Arabia, due to either excellent relations between Saudi Arabia and the US, or the religious differences between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Iranians being mostly Shiite and Saudi Arabia being Sunni.”

“I recommend that your readers study the book, *The Oil Kings*, by Andrew Scott Cooper because the answer to many of their questions could be found there (an article about this book was published in both English and Farsi in *Rah-e Zendegy* a few weeks ago) and ever since Iran was accused of plotting against the life of Saudi Ambassador in Washington this animosity has escalated.

The agreement between Saudi Arabia and the US calls for the sale of 84 F-15SA *Eagle* and the upgrade of 70 existing F-15 jet fighters along with spare parts and ammunition. Reports indicate that the arms sale agreement will result in lesser conflict between Saudi Arabia and the US arisen from the help of the US in recent political turmoil in Arab countries. This also will be an indication of the fact that even though the US has withdrawn its armed forces from Iraq it still plans to maintain a presence in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East. We still must see what the aim of the US in selling arms to Saudi Arabia is? Are these arms to be used in the defense of Saudi Arabia or for use against other nations in the region.

According to an important American source it is highly probable that the arms sale is to somewhat alleviate the high unemployment rate in the US. It can also be said that Obama's aim is to attract the attention of the voters in the US. Many times America has intervened in the internal affairs of other nations to do exactly the same thing - attract the attention of the voters. In the past we have seen examples of this in Pakistan and Iraq. The US attacked Iraq and occupied it for 10 years on the pretense that Saddam [Hussein] was building nuclear and chemical weapons even though no nuclear weapons were even found in Iraq.

The interventions of the US in Afghanistan's and Pakistan's internal affairs have also been made under one pretext or another.

Mr Zahedi stated: "I am emphatically opposed to have my country suffer similar fates as Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, or have the ambassador or the Foreign Minister of another country dictate to my country what it should or should not do. During the occupation of Iran by the American, British and Russian forces during World War II the Ambassador of one of them wanted to meet with Iran's Foreign Minister (Mr Sepahbodi) The Foreign Minister says he must go to the parliament, so the Ambassador says: "I am more important than your Parliament" you must see me before going to the Parliament. In the past the British Empire routinely intervened in the affairs of many other countries, now is the time for the American Empire to do the same. I have said many times that such intervention result only in grief and disturbance in Iran.

Wars have no winners. Both the victor and the vanquished are losers. Fortunately as I have pointed out in recent history Iran has never thought of invading other countries. The 8 years war between Iran and Iraq took place after Iraq received permission from America to invade Iran. My friend Henry Kissinger is reported to have said that Iran and Iraq must fight each other until one or both of them is totally destroyed. If Iraq had not unleashed the dogs of war against Iran, neither millions would have died, nor Khomeini lasted another year. In that war our patriotic countrymen showed their patriotism and their love for their country. According to the book of General Azarbarzin, the Commander of Iranian Air Force, many Iranian pilots who had been jailed by Khomeini fought in that war to defend their country against the Iraqi invaders.

Who brought Khomeini to power? If you recall during the formal visit of the Shahanshah to the US during the Carter Administration, before the Shah arrived at the White House, against good manners and protocol, the Administration allowed the opponent of the Shah to gather at a park within a few feet of the welcoming ceremonies. The riots that ensued resulted in the use of tear gas in front of the White House. Before the Shah arrived, *The Washington Post* front page published a picture of the opposition holding a picture of Khomeini in front of the US Congress. At the end because the Shah did not consent to reducing the price of oil, the West decided on a regime change in Iran, brought Khomeini back and the rest is history (that is to say all of us — Americans and Iranians — have been paying for it ever since).

THE ARAB SPRING

We inquired about Mr Zahedi's views about what has come to be known as "The Arab Spring". He said: "Whatever has taken place in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen, Syria, and elsewhere, the Arab Spring has resulted in bloodshed which continues in exchange for only a promise and hope of democracy. In Libya, bargaining over the price of oil has superseded the

installation of democracy. From the point of view of installing democracy, the Arab Spring has been a failure and instead of democracy it has established chaos and worse condition than before. The policy of divide and rule has increased sectarian differences. This policy is the continuation of the colonization policies of the West. At one time "divide and rule" was the operative policy. Now the same policy is operative except that this time religious differences, namely Sunni *versus* Shi'ite is in operation.

The sale of \$30-billion in arms to Saudi Arabia to create jobs in America is one thing. Stirring up animosity between countries is another, neither of which requires peace and democracy in the region. This business of economic sanctions and the closing of the Straits of Hormuz will result in serious trouble. The closing of the Straights will raise the price of oil higher and higher and creates one set of problems, and the problem of where the East Asia nations and Europeans should get their oil is another. How much oil Saudi Arabia which is a member of OPEC can secretly sell is unknown. How long can the people of Syria who for months have faced bullets on a daily basis can continue if their oil is cut off? What happens to the income of a country like Qatar with its more than 200,000 population, which by the way sent aircraft to fight [Mu'ammarr al-] Qadhafi? Are France, Britain, and the US adopting such a policy in the hope that there will not emerge in the region a country stronger than Israel?

Don't forget, Iran is not Libya. Iran is a country with thousands of years of history. Anytime it has been invaded, its brave and peace loving people have defended their borders and held to their identity.

Saudi Arabia came into being in 1932, Israel in 1948, and Pakistan in 1949. When Iraq attacked our country all of us set our political differences aside, united and defended the country for 8 years. Because we are a peaceful nation we granted the people of Bahrain, which for years was a part of Iran, their wish for independence. Of course, I must say what is going on in Bahrain today is not fair. Bahrain has become an American military base and its police force fires on its people because of its reliance on America. The US Fifth Fleet is stationed in the waters of this tiny country in which any kind of movement towards a democracy is crushed. A Sunni family rules the country while its majority is Shiites.

When the Arab Spring started in Bahrain the Shi'ites united with the Sunnis and came into the streets asking for free elections and a parliamentary democracy. But the demonstrators were defeated. In this, the Saudis who sent arms to Bahrain were complicit. Some Arab countries ask why Saudi Arabia did this? The wonder is that during the height of the demonstrations in Yemen the US Suggested that the Yemeni leader go to the US for medical treatment.

IS THIS DEMOCRACY?

On January 9, 2012 the Yemeni Parliament passed a law that not only the leader of Yemen, but anybody who has been associated with its government for the past 33 years be immune from prosecution.

We asked Mr Zahedi by telephone about this. He laughingly said: "Perhaps this is a new type democracy which I have never heard of before."

THE WORLD VIEW

We asked for Mr Zahedi's views about the economic vow of the world in the New Year. He said: "Remember that I am not an economist but I have some knowledge in this field. Unfortunately economists worldwide have dire predictions for the world economy in 2012. The unemployment rate in the US was predicted to be from nine to 10 percent, but it is now hovering around 8.5 percent."

The world these days is quite interdependent. It is like when you throw a stone into a swimming pool, the wave reverberates in all directions.

Therefore when there is unemployment in one country — be it the US, France, or Britain — it affects the rest of the world. For as long as unemployment continues at high rates, the world economy will not improve. Even in Switzerland where unemployment was around 2.1 percent it has now increases to between 2.2 and 2.3 percent, a nearly five to 10 percent increase.

"I remember in 2007 I was having a discussion with a friend. He was trying to force me to accept that until the year 2010 all these problems would go away, but I was of the opinion that it will take at least until 2012. And now here we are 2012, and there is not only much hope that things would get better, but that it might even get worst."

Mr Zahedi is of the opinion that unemployment is the main problem not only in the US but around the world. He is hoping and wishing that this problem would soon go away or at least get better. He is of the opinion that unemployment has inflicted Europe as well as the US and it is not just about one family or even one nation but the whole world. He says: "When people are unemployed how can they cope with the necessities of life such as pay their electric bills, their rent or even food. I hope new jobs will become available and unemployment decreases, but I do not see it happening with 100 percent certainty unless a

miracle takes place. It is possible that I am mistaken about this and the New Year brings prosperity. Security is no less important than economic prosperity. Security is possible when there is economic prosperity.”

“I am truly sorry for what takes place in some areas of the world such as torching a church in Nigeria because of religious strife. In other areas of Africa and especially the Middle East there are signs of insecurity. Obama took the American troops out of Iraq, but this should have taken place two years ago. From the beginning I was not in favor of the Iraq war. Under the present circumstances, with religious strife and outside influences, it is not clear what is going happen in the future. There was a time when all of us in the Middle East lived like brothers and sisters, which in my opinion was a very wise thing.”

“There was religious difference, but it never went as far as it does today. I hope that I am mistaken in my opinion about this and that the New Year will be hopeful.”
