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Tehran and US' pullout from Syria

Tehran, Jan 2, IRNA – A leading Iranian analyst believes Iran's strategies in the coming few years can significantly affect the fate of the US President Donald Trump's strategies for West Asia and North Africa (WANA).



In an article published in 'Donya-e Eqtesda' newspaper, Hossein Mousavian wrote that Trump baffled the world by pulling out the US forces from Syria with world countries showing adverse reactions: Moscow had a hard time believing it; Tehran exercised self-restraint; Ankara grasped the opportunity offered by the new conditions to achieve its goals in Syria; NATO members got concerned; the two big parties of the US, namely Democrats and Republicans, opposed the President; and Trump's national security team was astonished by Secretary of Defense James Mattis' resignation.

**** The issue is both simple and complicated at the same time:**

1. It is simple because Trump openly criticized his predecessors George W. Bush and Barack Obama, respectively for invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, and military presence of the US in WANA; he announced that he would pull the US military out from the region.

A few months after taking office, Trump said the pullout process should start from Syria. General Mattis and General Joseph Dunford intended to maintain the US presence in the region to avoid creating a vacuum which Turkey, Russia and Iran would fill.

The US National Security Advisor John Bolton, who has always been more radical than the other two, believed in expanding the US military presence in the region. And Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is somewhere in between. Thus, most of the attendees in the sessions opposed the president.

Meanwhile, the US military commanders asked for a moratorium for the plan to take place gradually; they in fact wanted to linger on the plan till Trump's term in office terminates. Trump agreed with six months and told them he would accept no excuses from then on. Right after the six months period was over, Trump ordered the army to pull out of Syria without asking the commanders' opinions.

General Mattis resigned, US military commanders were shocked and infuriated, Israel and Saudi Arabia got desperate; and that's because Trump's will to pull out won't be limited to Afghanistan.

He has repeatedly criticized the fact that the US has spent \$7,000bn in the region and gained nothing in return except for thousands of US soldiers killed and injured, and also a growing trend of terrorism. He believed that the US money should be spent inside the country. Trump says the US money has to be used to curb growth of rivals, namely China, Russia and Europe.

Trump also insists that wealthy regional countries, like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, should pay a part of the seven trillion dollars to the US and expend from their own pocket.

2. It is complicated because the US has thousands of military forces in the region, which will take years for them to move out. The US allies in the region are weak and cannot bear the heavy burden; and the regional and international rivals of the US, i.e. Iran and Russia, are ready to move forward, etc.

It is obvious that this procedure is vital for the regional and international powers. Two factors can affect the process:

1. Trump needs a unified National Security Team to accompany him. If he is able to replace Mattis with another individual, he will be able to replace other key members of the team, which may include Bolton, as well.
2. Implementing the strategy, Trump faces an opposing majority inside the US. The Majority constantly talks about Russia and Iran's using the situation, and Israel and other US allies' vulnerability.

Democrats and a part of Republicans opposed Trump's withdrawal from the deal the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). But things were different with the pullout of the US military from the region; the majority of the two parties agree with it, so that the US can be focusing on the Eastern Asian powers. However, they disagree with the US president's rash untimely decision to pull the US military out abruptly.

They worry that Russian, Chinese and Iranian leverage may increase, and Tel Aviv, Riyadh, and other US allied may weaken. Thus, they welcome any motto or action that can stop or impede the pullout. Therefore, decisions of influential countries, including the opponents or proponents of the US, can be extremely important.

Key changes in the Saudi management, Emirates' and Bahrain's haste in reopening their embassies in Damascus, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi's smile at Moscow, and Erdoğan's hurry in reassuring Trump about the post-pullout conditions are all pertaining to the same move.

Therefore, the new situation after US pullout of the region is more for than against Iran. Tehran's strategy in the few coming months can play an important role in fate of Trump's strategy.

In order to do rightfully their historic duty well, Tehran's strategist should decide on what can weaken the opponents what can strengthen the proponents of the pullout, and what can abate the controversies between Iran and its Arab neighbors and induce convergence.

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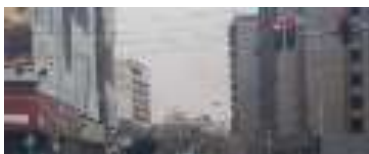
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