

Lifting the Arms Embargo on Iran:

The Country's Golden Chance to Further Position itself as a Responsible, Transparent International Actor

Starting on **October 18**, following the provisions of the **Resolution 2231 of July 20, 2015** endorsing the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** on the nuclear program, **Iran is no longer subject to the conventional weapons embargo.**

Embargo's lift has been publicly announced on the local state media by the **Iranian President, Hassan Rouhani**, who commented the process represents one of the "*good news*" for the country's future development. The announcement has been received positively by the country's media. As a matter of fact, the 2015 arms embargo was a continuation of the former 2006 partial embargo on the export of nuclear-related technology, followed in 2007 by a total arms embargo, which continued in 2010 and was only amended in 2015. Even before the 2006 United Nations Security Council embargo, the country has been subjected to numerous international sanctions that consequently deterred it from trading arms internationally.

Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesperson of Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasized that Iran will "*operate within the framework of international agreements*", while adding that the country would seek exporting weapons, rather than importing them. **Amir Hatami, Iran's Minister of Defense**, reassured the public that Iran will only export weapons to countries that "*won't misuse them*", stressing that "*we wouldn't do just about everything for money*".

While the **EU ban on arms deals with Iran will stay in place until 2023**, the lift of the UNSC embargo on Iran means the country **could trade conventional weapons ranging from small caliber guns to tanks and fighter jets, helicopters and drones.**

In fact, besides competitive pricing, **the Iranian defense technology might successfully rival other exporters.** According to an Iranian defense official, Amir Ali Haji Zadeh, **the country made great steps in the advancement of drone production**, especially following the reverse-engineering of a crashed RQ-170 drone, which entered the Iranian airspace unauthorized.

An adverse effect of the repeated sanctions and arms embargo on Iran, often overlooked, is the country **attaining not only self-sufficiency in defense technology and equipment**, but also, in certain cases, a **competitive edge in terms of price-performance ratio.** Of course, given Iran's capacity to provide robust

weaponry at competitive prices, the export value could easily increase in the forthcoming period: **the possibility that Middle East, Africa and South America have defense needs that do not match the high prices of other exporters of conventional weapons, thus favouring Iran, should not be excluded.**

The lift of the arms embargo on Iran could witness the country emerge among the biggest players in the arms market worldwide. With a defense budget allegedly smaller than other countries in the area, likely pressured by the long history of sanctions, Iran **may seize this opportunity in order to either increase its defense spending or turn the arms trade revenue into macroeconomic stimulus packages.** Such a choice may have dramatic consequences over **Iran's power projection abroad** and, of course, over its **perception by the international community.**

The end of the embargo is, in fact, Iran's golden opportunity to further position itself as a responsible and transparent international actor, a strong voice in the Middle East and a *bona fide* international partner.

Historically an Empire of colossal proportions, stretching from India to nowadays Libya, **the collective memory of Iran does not rely on military conflicts, but rather on a diverse and inclusive cultural heritage, materialised in scientific, artistic and literary output.** Internationally, the first taxation system was established during the Achaemenid Empire. **Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine*** is one of the foundation books of modern medicine. Iranian cultural reflections are encountered all the way from Central Asia to Northern Caucasus. The Pakistani national anthem, written in classical Urdu, is mutually intelligible to a Persian speaker. In fact, Persian words even constitute the etymological origin of many Chinese and even Indonesian words. In 1997, more than 700 years after his demise, **Rumi** was a best-seller in the United States. The famous verses of **Saadi**, reflecting the international vocation of the Persian culture, adorn the Hall of Nations of the UN building in New York, now perhaps more topical than ever: *"Human beings are members of a whole, In creation of one essence and soul. If one member is afflicted with pain, Other members uneasy will remain. If you've no sympathy for human pain, The name of human you cannot retain!"* (Aryanpour's transl.)

The lifting of the arms restriction according to the resolution 2231 is **nothing but a chance to further consistently showcase that the verses of Saadi have not only a literary value, but, likewise, the power to continue to inspire.** After all, it is hard to find better leadership advice than *Golestan's* first chapter...

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