Overview

Negotiations continue between Iran and Russia concerning the settlement of the war in Syria: on April 22, the Iranian and Russian ministers of foreign affairs spoke on the phone and they are expected to meet on May 8 in Moscow; the ministers of defense of the two nations met on the sidelines of the Moscow Conference on International Security.

Iran is keeping up with its efforts to secure its interests in Iraq, particularly in light of the growing tensions between Tehran and Washington and the pressures exerted by the U.S. on Iraq to adhere to the economic sanctions the U.S. placed on Iran. As part of Iran’s effort, the governor of the central bank of Iran visited Baghdad to complete the drafting of agreements concerning expansion of cooperation in the sphere of banking between Iran and Iraq; the Iranian trade attaché in Baghdad met with a senior official in the Iraqi Ministry of Trade, and the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) navy met with the commander of the Iraqi navy to discuss expanding maritime cooperation between the two navies.

A delegation of the Iranian-Palestinian parliamentary friendship caucus visited Lebanon and Syria and met with senior officials in both countries, as well as the deputy secretary general of Hezbollah, the secretary general of Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the deputy head of Hamas’ political bureau, and emphasized Iran’s continued commitment to assisting the “Resistance Front.”

Iranian Involvement in Syria

On April 22, the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohammad Javad Zarif, spoke on the phone with his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, and discussed bilateral relations between the two countries, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA,) and latest developments in the region, particularly in Syria. The two foreign ministers discussed the negotiations process concerning the settlement of the war in Syria as part of the Astana Talks that include
representatives from Iran, Russia and Turkey (IRNA, April 22). The two foreign ministers are set to meet on May 8 in Moscow.

In parallel, the Iranian Minister of Defense, Amir Hatami, met with his Russian counterpart Sergey Shoygu. In the meeting, held on April 22 on the sidelines of the Moscow Conference on International Security, the two ministers discussed military cooperation between the two countries in Syria and the ongoing negotiations to settle the war (Fars, April 25).

A Syrian opposition news website reported, based on local sources in Aleppo, that the IRGC is forcing factory owners in the Sheikh Najjar industrial zone to pay them monthly protection fees. According to the report, a commander with the IRGC named al-Hajj Abdul Mahdi recently gathered all industrialists and told them that the militias loyal to the IRGC are committed to protecting their factories and allowing the safe transfer of their goods, in return for monthly protection fees. Some of the factory owners filed a complaint regarding the matter to the head of the Aleppo Trade Bureau, Fares Shehabi, asking him to reduce the monthly protection fees demanded by the IRGC. According to the report, Shehabi told the industrialists to be patient until the Russian forces are able to remove the pro-Iranian militias from the area (JorfNews.com, April 29).

On April 29, Tehran witnessed a ceremony honoring the mothers and widows of Hezbollah members killed while fighting in the Syrian civil war. The ceremony was attended by Zeynab Solemani, the daughter of Qasem Soleimani, the Commander of the Qods Force of the IRGC (MizanOnline.com, April 29)
On April 21, the Governor of the Iranian Central Bank, Abdol-Nasser Hemmati, arrived for a visit in Baghdad to meet with senior Iraqi officials, chief among them the prime minister, minister of finance and the governor of the central bank of Iraq. The visit was intended to allow the two countries to complete the formalizing of agreements concerning expansion of the banking and monetary cooperation between the two countries, agreements that were set in motion during Rouhani’s visit in Iraq (March 2019) and the visit of Iraq’s Prime Minister, Adel Abdul-Mahdi, to Tehran (April 2019). This is Hemmati’s second visit to Iraq over the past two months (IRNA, April 23).
On April 29, the Iranian Trade Attaché to Baghdad, Naser Behzad, met with the Secretary General on Economic Relations at the Iraqi Ministry of Trade, Adel al-Masoudi, and discussed ways to increase the volume of trade between the two nations from $10 billion annually to $20 billion. Among the issues discussed in the meeting were: ways to expand Iranian export to Iraq and Iranian investments in Iraq, and setting a timeline to complete laying the railway connecting Basra in southern Iraq to Shalamcheh in southwestern Iran (IRNA, April 29).

In late April, the Iranian University of Isfahan and the Iraqi University of Najaf signed a memorandum of understanding concerning increasing scientific cooperation between them, including by promoting joint research projects and courses, as well as exchange of students and lecturers. Hooshang Talebi, the Chancellor of the University of Isfahan, stated that the University of Najaf is one of the best universities in Iraq, and that expanding international scientific cooperation with high-ranked universities around the world is a top priority for the University of Isfahan (Mehr, April 27).

As part of efforts to expand academic cooperation between Iran and Iraq, the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research signed a cooperation agreement with the Azad University, a network of Iranian universities and private colleges. The agreement, signed during the visit of the president of Azad University to Baghdad, is intended to facilitate the expansion of scientific and academic cooperation between the two countries, including by holding joint research and conferences.

On April 30, the commander of the IRGC’s navy met with the commander of the Iraqi navy in Tehran and discussed maritime cooperation between the two countries, including the
possibility to hold a joint naval exercise of the two forces. The Commander of the IRGC’s navy, Alireza Tangsiri, and the Commander of the Iraqi navy, Ahmad Jasim Maaraj, discussed ways to expand maritime cooperation between the two countries, including: establishing a joint commission on maritime cooperation, increasing coordination between the two navies, technical and engineering cooperation between the two navies as well as holding joint training for the forces. Tangsiri stated during the meeting that “the enemies” strive to divide the Muslims, since Muslim unity may undermine the presence of the foreign forces in the region. Maaraj remarked that Iran played an important role in assisting Iraq’s Armed Forces and militias in the fight against ISIS, and expressed hope for bolstering ties between the two countries in the future (Fars, May 1).

The meeting between the commander of the IRGC’s fleet and the commander of the Iraqi fleet (Fars, May 1 2019).

伊朗人参与巴勒斯坦领域

△一个由议会议员阿米尔·科贾斯特什率领的议会代表团于4月18日至21日访问了黎巴嫩和叙利亚。代表团访问期间，与黎巴嫩和叙利亚高级官员、以及纳伊姆·卡塞姆（Hezbollah的副秘书）和泽亚德·纳赫勒（伊斯兰圣战组织的秘书）和拉赫马特·阿拉乌里（哈马斯政治局副司局）等官员会面。

△在与阿拉乌里会面时，伊朗代表团强调了伊朗对巴勒斯坦的坚决支持。阿拉乌里赞扬了伊朗对巴勒斯坦人的支持和“抵抗”。他强调了伊朗及其领导层、国会和整个军事体系，包括伊斯兰革命卫队，为巴勒斯坦人提供了各种支持。
assistance and aid they could. Al-Aroui also remarked that the reason the U.S. is hostile
toward Iran is Tehran’s support for the struggle of the Palestinians.

In his meeting with Naim Qassem, Khojasteh expressed his admiration of Hezbollah’s “important and influential” role in developments in the region, and the role Hassan Nasrallah and Naim Qassem played in establishing the “Resistance Axis” in recent year. The Iranian parliamentarian expressed hope that Hezbollah’s power within the Resistance Axis will serve as a model of resistance for Muslims worldwide, and particularly the Palestinian factions. Naim Qassem referred in the meeting to the IRGC’s support for Hezbollah, stating that this support is what allowed for Hezbollah to be victorious against Israel (IRNA, April 19; JYC.IR, April 20).