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US President Donald J. Trump greets British Prime Minister Theresa May as she arrives at the White House in Washington, DC, USA, 27 January 2017. EPA/SHAWN THEW

US President **Donald Trump** and British Prime Minister **Theresa May** were expected to discuss establishing stronger economic and strategic ties during their White House meeting on January 27 as the United Kingdom seeks to seal a post-Brexit deal.

But not all Brits are excited about Trump's policies and Brexit. British Archeologist **Guy Sanders**,

director of the American School of Archeological Studies in Greece, told New Europe on January 25 that he sees a connection between the election of Trump and Brexit.

"It's little Americanism, little Englandism, it's just ridiculous. Our England is scrutible to certain extent because it is separated by the channel and the British are not famed for their grasp of foreign

languages," he said, laughing. "But America is a big country. It's the United States, like United Europe should be."

May and her allies know closer economic ties with the US could be crucial for when the UK leaves the EU. Trump has said he wants to agree a trade deal with the United Kingdom "very quickly".

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Right Time for West to Correct Policy on Iran



by Alejo Vidal-Quadras

President of the ISJ International Committee and was Vicepresident of the European Parliament (1999-2014)

On Tuesday, January 17, I joined former US Assistant Secretary of State **Lincoln Bloomfield** and a number of French Members of Parliament in addressing a conference at the French National Assembly's Victor Hugo Hall. The purpose of the event was to discuss the direction in the near future for French and broader European policies toward the Middle East, and particularly toward the Islamic Republic of Iran.

That conference has stood as one symbol of the widespread support among Western policymakers for a different approach to Middle Eastern issues and political or economic relations with the Iranian regime.

Dramatic missteps and miscalculations have defined Iran policy in Europe and the Americas over these past several years. Indeed, many mistakes that are ongoing to this day date back to the immediate aftermath of the Iranian Revolution in 1979. It seems that almost as soon as the repressive theocratic government came to power, its Western interlocutors were looking for opportunities to foster cooperation with that regime and to pursue friendships with supposed moderate factions within it.

Time and again, it has been revealed that those moderate factions do not actually exist, and yet the overall approach to Iran policy has rarely deviated. Tuesday's conference was part of a larger effort to see that that changes.

In reality, the entirety of the Middle East will remain mired in violence, instability and backward thinking unless a genuinely free Iranian nation takes its place at the center of that region, where it can provide a positive example for its neighbors, as well as bringing an end to the regional interventions and support for terrorism that Iran, under the mullahs' rule, has been carrying on through nearly 40 years.

The people of Iran are highly educated and are among the most progressive in all the Middle East. And yet their sentiments are violently suppressed by the world's only full-fledged modern theocracy. Since 2013, even as Western nations have put forward Iranian President **Hassan Rouhani** as a new face for moderation, the situation for those people has only grown more difficult. The supposedly moderate president has overseen more than 3,000 executions in less than four years, as well as an ongoing crackdown on activism, the independent press and any social activities that are regarded as signs of Western "infiltration."

It is not as though leading Western policymakers are unaware of any of this. As recently as December 2016, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution specifically highlighting the abuses of human rights in Iran. It urged Iran



Iranians hold photographs of the late former Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani during his funeral ceremony in Tehran, Iran, 10 January 2017.

EPA/ABEDIN TAHERKENAREH

“ It is long past time for Western governments to change their Middle East policy. It is long past time for them to cease pursuing the illusion of Iran's internal moderation, and to start investing their political capital in the existing alternative to the clerical regime ”

to abolish its dramatically overused death penalty, expressing particular concern about its application to cases involving apparently forced confessions, and also to cases involving juvenile "offenders".

On the very day that the French National Assembly held this conference, UN rights experts specifically called for a halt to the planned execution of **Sajad Sanjari**, who was only 15 years old when he killed a man in an incident that he described as self-defense against attempted rape. Unfortunately, we can guess at what the response from the Islamic Republic will be. There have been numerous such incidents of international outcry against Iran's dubious death sentences, and the most that they have accomplished is to compel delays and reviews of the legal cases. But in virtually every instance, the Iranian judiciary upholds its original rulings and the barbarous legal principles underlying them.

The situation is made much worse by the fact that the Constitution of the Iranian theocracy specifically calls for the export of the Islamic Revolution, something the regime is clearly pursuing through its involvement in regional conflicts including the Syrian and Yemeni civil wars. These intrusions were the main focus of the speech delivered at the conference by **Maryam Rajavi**, the president-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, which has opposed the theocracy since its inception but has been marginalized by mainstream Western politics. Mrs Rajavi's speech described Iranian contributions to rampant human rights abuses in Syria, as well as pointing out that the Iranian regime remains the greatest obstacle to a political resolution for that conflict. It is shameful that leading policymakers have turned their back on human rights abuses affecting the 80 million people of Iran, especially when so many of them are willing to risk arrest

and torture by protesting their Government and rallying behind the resistance movement.

It is long past time for Western governments to change their Middle East policy. It is long past time for them to cease pursuing the illusion of Iran's internal moderation, and to start investing their political capital in the existing alternative to the clerical regime. Earlier this month, former Iranian President **Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani** died after spending nearly four decades playing his role as the focal point of conciliatory Western policies. In his absence, Western governments now have a clear choice. On one hand, to continue to invest in a regime that is likely to go even more hardline now that the leading "pragmatist" is gone. Or, on the other hand, they can break with a decades-long tradition of ignoring human rights abuses and marginalizing Iran's democratic opposition to finally begin to pursue a better future both for true Western interests and for the Iranian people.