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Nothing new in Iran's aggressive rhetoric and actions

ANALYSIS

• By ARIEL BEN SOLOMON

Iran's aggressive rhetoric and actions in recent days is nothing new – fitting nicely into the regime's ideology and negotiating tactics.

The latest rancor included Iranian state TV airing on Friday a computer-simulated attack on Israel in response to an Israeli or American attack as well as an announcement by a senior navy commander on Saturday that it had sent warships towards US waters.

And on Sunday, Iran's navy commander, Adm. Ali Fadavi, kept the juices flowing, saying that the US is afraid of attacking Iran because it knows its aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf will be sunk.

"The Americans can sense by all means how their warships will be sunk with 5,000 crews and forces in combat against Iran and how they should find its hulk in the depths of the sea," he said according to Iran's Fars News Agency.

On the ideological front, the regime, since its inception, has worked to counter Western influence and Islamize society at home and abroad with its Pan-Islamic Shi'ite ideology.

The founder of the regime, Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, "had depicted a 'new Iran' modeled on early Islam," writes Prof. David Menashri, an Iran expert and the president of the College of Law and Business in Ramat Gan, in *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World*.

"But, once in power, he [Khomeini] knew he could not rule by means of revolutionary slogans," and he soon "compromised with realities, not from any new-found moderation, but from a pragmatism responsive to the exigencies of their situation," explained Menashri.

This helps explain the other side of Iranian behavior – its maneuvering in negotiations - to blunt sanctions or any planned attack. All the while it incites and spreads terror.

Nonetheless, the regime is savvy enough to hold back when necessary, giving just enough for many in the world to ease up and praise Iran for its "moderation."

Prof. Meir Litvak, a senior research fellow at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies and the director for the Alliance Center of Iranian Studies at Tel Aviv University, told *The Jerusalem Post* that two possible reasons come to mind for the latest outburst from Iran.

First, he says, these steps could be designed to soothe the anger of the conservatives in Iran in order to show that the country is not going soft – to show that "Iran has not abandoned its ideological position."

Second, it could be intended "to show the West that Iran is going to play tough in the negotiations for the final agreement on the nuclear issue," said Litvak. Again, it demonstrates that Iran has not given up "its revolutionary ideological core beliefs, and if you don't want us to misbehave, you must make concessions," he explained.

Meir Javedanfar, a lecturer on Iranian politics at the IDC in Herzliya, told the *Post*, "One of the major reasons behind these recent steps could be the upcoming anniversary of the 1979 revolution in Iran," set to be celebrated on Tuesday.

Due to the compromises that Iran made in the nuclear talks, it has meant that for this year's anniversary, "Iran's leadership had to show muscle so that its domestic audience and the West would not mistake its recent compromises as a sign of weakness," added Javedanfar.