Saudi Arabia is in Dire Straits

Iran’s government spokesman, Ali Rabiei announced Iranian President Hassan Rouhani had sent a series of letters to the King of Saudi Arabia, Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud in an effort to promote peace and stability in the region. Ali Rabiei emphasized all the Gulf states have their interests in the region. “Transregional countries, even a superpower like the US, act only on the basis of their interests in the region, and they will abandon the region if their interests are not respected,” he said.

Iran has repeatedly underlined its willingness to negotiate with Saudi Arabia in order to eliminate any misunderstandings between both countries. “The Islamic Republic has announced that it is always open to negotiations with its neighbors, including Saudi Arabia, with or without an intermediary. So if there are any misunderstandings, they can be removed,” the Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Seyyed Abbas Mousavi said last month. He added that regional countries should not allow for any events which would enable “third parties and transregional states to profit of this situation.”

Of course, the Western media, which are well-known for their bias, immediately declared that all these proposals were untrue and that Riyadh, despite its deep and bitter disappointment with Western policies, stands firmly alongside the West. However, the ongoing secret negotiations were confirmed by none other than the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, Khaled Al-Jarallah. In particular, he stated his country had transferred certain messages from Iran to Saudi Arabia and Bahrain regarding the situation in the Persian Gulf region. It is also noteworthy that the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who recently turned 90 but still firmly rules his Emirate, has always supported and still stands for a peaceful solution to all points of frictions, especially between his neighbor states. Regarding any contentious and difficult issues, the Emir still acts as the initiator of peace talks between Saudi Arabia and Iran, especially considering the fact that there is a large Shia population in Kuwait.

So far, according to Saudi media sources, Riyadh has been carefully studying Tehran’s proposals, which are aimed at normalizing relations between the two countries. And that could serve to improve the situation in the region in general. But even this vague prospect of mending relations between the two neighbors caused hysteria and fear in Western and pro-Western countries, especially the United States and Israel. On the one hand, upgraded air defense equipment was immediately flown to Saudi Arabia with US personnel, and on the other, countless negotiations were held at various levels, including between Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Rather demagogically, the US Secretary of State reminded his Saudi counterpart of the far-reaching history of the development of strategic relations between the Kingdom and the USA, and that the latter plays an important role in protecting Saudi interests in their relations with all its neighbors in the Gulf.

And finally, CIA Director Gina Haspel arrived in Riyadh; her ‘hints’, however, were instantly understood by the Crown Prince, who had evaded such a high-level meeting. The King had to be lectured by Mrs. Haspel instead—one is ready to go to any lengths for one’s beloved son. It is true that for all his endurance, the King felt great discomfort. After all, he is a descendant of the Bedu, who are used to seeing a woman busy cooking in her part of the tent, but now he had to listen to a female lecture him with an overbearing overseas undertone. According to the state-run Saudi Press Agency, the parties discussed ‘a number of topics of mutual interest.’ And what about the details? What did all knowledgeable journalists write about?

Gina Haspel, with her vast experience as director of US correctional institutions, clearly explained the consequences
of 9/11 to the proud Bedouin descendant. It is alleged that Saudi subjects played the main part in the terrorist attacks, and then their fellow countryman Osama bin Laden took the blame. And what if the current administration grants the opportunity to the relatives of the victims of these events to take legal action? In that case, it won’t just be the royal family who will go broke, but all of Saudi Arabia will be bankrupt, and all the trillions dollars of Saudi investments into the US will have to be forgotten.

Gina Haspel hinted to the King, rather straightforwardly, that the recent successful drone and missile attack had been still carried out from the country’s western border, making obvious the reason why at that moment, the entire radar system of numerous American bases in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and, indeed, Saudi Arabia itself had been disabled. Another hint followed—that without American help, such a raid could happen again, causing considerable damage not only to the oil industry, but also to the Crown Prince’s ambitious plans to arrange a profitable IPO for the gigantic ARAMCO, whose shares have went down. After all, the poor Yemenites, who took the blame for the successful raid, are certainly not going to buy a part of the shares of the very profitable Saudi company. It will be very interesting to find out, who will end up becoming the main buyer of Saudi shares. And now, applying the tried and tested Cui bono method of the ancients, we can draw the correct conclusion about the initiators of the recent raid on Saudi oil enterprises.

Indeed, President Trump didn’t send Haspel so far to Riyadh on a whim; the CIA Director is used to speaking bluntly with her ‘clients.’ Gina Haspel also intimidated the elderly King by insinuating that the International Court was just waiting for the US’ go-ahead to deal with his son’s presumed role in the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi. It is interesting that the Saudi media limited their coverage of this meeting to catch phrases such as ‘talks about the mutual interests of the two countries.’ Apparently, they were denied any further information.

But a sharp turn in the foreign policy of Riyadh occurred at once. Foreign Minister Adele Al-Jubair promptly and firmly stated that the appeasement policy won’t work with Iran and that the only way to force Tehran to enter negotiations is to exert maximum pressure on it. Then again, the Saudi Minister should be reminded that the messages from the leadership of Iran to the Saudi King are aimed precisely at active steps and negotiations. As the facts show, however, the King is not free to make independent decisions without consulting Washington.

Israel, as always, added fuel to the Middle Eastern fire. The country’s foreign intelligence agency Mossad and the Israeli Military Intelligence (Aman) believe that Iran is capable of creating nuclear weapons not in a few months, as was previously thought, but in a few weeks or even days. As for an atomic bomb, the Islamic Republic may produce one ‘in no less than in a year.’ This information was provided by an ‘informed source’ in an interview with the Israeli radio station KAN Reshet Bet, the Ynet news website reports. The signal from the Israeli intelligence community came as a reaction to the words of US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who expressed concerns about the ‘Iran’s escalation in the nuclear field’ and the risk of Tehran’s ‘rapid nuclear breakthrough,’ calling for increased international pressure on Iranian authorities. Washington reacted most seriously to the information that during the night of November 7, Iran had resumed the enrichment of uranium to a level necessary for weapon production. Works are being conducted at the facility in Fordo, where 1,044 centrifuges are located.

Such statements caused confusion and fear in Riyadh, where it is believed that this turn of events, regardless of Western allies, will bring the Kingdom onto the verge of defeat and collapse. Moreover, Iran seems to be on the winning side in its battle against Saudi Arabia for regional leadership, the BBC writes with reference to an analysis conducted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

Although Tehran’s opponents have spent a lot of money on the purchase of Western weapons (which turned out to be fake and unable to protect the Kingdom), the Islamic Republic only strengthened. The network of Iranian influence covers Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and other countries. To maintain it, Iran uses a system of alliances—the ‘proxy militia.’ According to the report, the Quds Force—an elite unit of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps—played a prominent role in expanding the country’s influence.

The trigger for Iran’s rapid growth in power was, ironically, the overturning of Saddam Hussein’s regime in the neighboring Republic of Iraq in 2003, which had been carried out by a US-led coalition. There is no contradiction here: Iraqi statehood, previously ruled by Sunni Arabs, served as a reliable barrier against Iran. The American army, under the leadership of its ‘wise’ Presidents, crushed this buffer, uncaring about the harmful consequences they themselves would suffer.

Saudi Arabia is now headed for difficult times. Given the King is very old, a change of power may occur at any time. The big question is whether his son, the Crown Prince, will be able to ascend the throne and escape the snares of the complex issues plaguing the state both domestically and in matters of foreign policy.
Viktor Mikhin, corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, exclusively for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook.”