Iran shrugs off Trump's threat to Rouhani as war of words escalates

23/07/2018 09:36 by admin

Prominent Iranian analyst Seed Leilaz downplayed the war of words, saying he thinks it was â€œthe storm before the calm.â€•

Iran shrugs off Trump's threat to Rouhani as war of words escalate

Tehran: Iranians on Monday shrugged off the possibility that a bellicose exchange of words between President Donald Trump and his Iranian counterpart could escalate into military conflict, but expressed growing concern Americaâ€™s stepped-up sanctions could damage their fragile economy.

In his latest salvo, Trump tweeted late on Sunday that hostile threats from Iran could bring dire consequences.

This was after Iranian President Hassan Rouhani remarked earlier in the day that â€œAmerica must understand well that peace with Iran is the mother of all peace and war with Iran is the mother of all wars.â€•

Trump tweeted: â€œNEVER EVER THREATEN THE UNITED STATES AGAIN OR YOU WILL SUFFER CONSEQUENCES THE LIKE OF WHICH FEW THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAVE EVER SUFFERED BEFORE.â€•

Within hours, Iranâ€™s state-owned news agency IRNA dismissed the tweet, describing it as a â€œpassive reactionâ€• to Rouhaniâ€™s remarks.

On Tehran streets, residents took the exchange in stride.

â€œBoth America and Iran have threatened one another in different ways for several years,â€• shrugged Mohsen Taheri, a 58-year-old publisher.

A headline on a local newspaper quoted Rouhani as saying: â€œMr Trump, do not play with the lionâ€™s tail.â€•

On Monday, the White House said Trumpâ€™s tweet shows he is not going to tolerate critical rhetoric from Iran and insisted the US leader isnâ€™t escalating tensions between the two countries.

â€œIf anybodyâ€™s inciting anything, look no further than to Iran,â€• press secretary Sarah Sanders said and added that Trump has been â€œvery clear about what heâ€™s not going to allow to take place.â€•

Prominent Iranian analyst Seed Leilaz downplayed the war of words, saying he thinks it was â€œthe storm before the calm.â€•

Leilaz told The Associated Press he was not â€œworried about the remarks and tweets,â€• and that â€œneither Iran, nor any other country is interested in escalating tensions in the region.â€•

Citing harsh words the United States and North Korea had exchanged before the high-profile summit between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, Leilaz said Trump and Kim got â€œcloserâ€• despite the warring words.

Trumpâ€™s eruption on Twitter came after a week of heavy controversy about Russian meddling in the US 2016 election, following the Helsinki summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The tweet was reverberating across the Mideast. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised the US presidentâ€™s â€œstrong stanceâ€• after years in which the Iranian â€œregime was pampered by world powers.â€•

Trump earlier this year pulled the US out of the international deal meant to prevent Tehran from developing a nuclear weapon and ordered increased American sanctions, as well as threatening penalties for companies from other countries that continue to do business with Iran.

With the economic pressure, Trump said earlier this month that â€œat a certain point theyâ€™re going to call me and say â€˜letâ€™s make a deal,â€™ and weâ€™ll make a deal.â€•

Iran has rejected talks with the U.S., and Rouhani has accused the US of stoking an â€œeconomic war.â€•

Rouhani also suggested Iran could immediately ramp up its production of uranium in response to US pressure. Potentially that would escalate the very situation the nuclear deal sought to avoid â€" an Iran with a stockpile of enriched uranium that could lead to making atomic bombs.

Trumpâ€™s tweet suggested he has little patience with the trading of hostile messages with Iran, using exceptionally strong language and writing the all-capitalized tweet.

â€œWE ARE NO LONGER A COUNTRY THAT WILL STAND FOR YOUR DEMENTED WORDS OF VIOLENCE & DEATH. BE CAUTIOUS!,â€• he wrote.

Another Tehran resident, Mehdi Naderi, fretted that the US measures and his own governmentâ€™s policies are damaging the lives of the average Iranian.

â€œAmerica is threatening the Iranian people with its sanctions and our government is doing the same with its incompetence and mismanagement,â€• said the self-employed 35-year-old.

Trump has a history of firing off heated tweets that seem to quickly escalate long-standing disputes with leaders of nations at odds with the US.

In the case of North Korea, the public war of words cooled quickly and gradually led to the high profile summit and denuclearization talks. There has been little tangible progress in a global push to rid North Korea of its nuclear weapons program since the historic Trump-Kim summit on June 12.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo flew to Pyongyang for follow-up talks earlier this month, but the two sides showed conflicting accounts of the talks. Northâ€™s Foreign Ministry accused the United States of making â€œgangster-likeâ€• demands for its unilateral disarmament.

Some experts say Kim is using diplomacy as a way to win outside concessions and weaken US-led international sanctions.

Many in Iran have expressed frustration that Trump has seemed willing to engage with North Korea, which has openly boasted of producing nuclear weapons, but not Iran, which signed the landmark 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

Since Trump pulled out of the deal, other nations involved â€" Germany, Britain, France, Russia and China as well as the European Union â€" have reaffirmed their support for the deal and have been working to try and keep Iran on board.

â€œIran is angry since Trump responded to Tehranâ€™s engagement diplomacy by pulling the U.S. out of the nuclear deal,â€• Iranian lawmaker Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh told the AP.

He added, however, the war of words between the two presidents was to be expected, since official diplomatic relations between the two countries have been frozen for decades.

â€œThey express themselves through speeches since diplomatic channels are closed,â€• said Falahatpisheh who heads the influential parliamentary committee on national security and foreign policy.

On Sunday in California, Pompeo was strongly critical of Iran, calling its religious leaders â€œhypocritical holy menâ€• who amassed vast sums of wealth while allowing their people to suffer.

In the speech at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, Pompeo castigated Iranâ€™s political, judicial and military leaders, accusing several by name of participating in widespread corruption. He also said the government has â€œheartlessly repressed its own peopleâ€™s human rights, dignity and fundamental freedoms.â€•

He said despite poor treatment by their leaders, â€œthe proud Iranian people are not staying silent about their governmentâ€™s many abuses,â€• Pompeo said.

â€œAnd the United States under President Trump will not stay silent either.â€•

- AP