

Will Trump's New Sanctions Slow-down Iran's Scientific Growth?

On May 9, 2018, Trump, contrary to Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and one-sided, issued new sanctions against Iran without consideration of how much this decision would have any legal or international justification. The question is; will this decision slow-down Iran's scientific growth?

In fact, it should be said that Iran's scientific growth, which has been noticeable in the past twenty years, has been achieved under the shadow of the all-inclusive sanctions within the past forty years especially by the U.S. against Iran. For example, in 1979, the year before Saddam Hossein's attack on Iran, in which 300,000 Iranians died and one million were wounded, for the eight-year duration of the war, all western countries, the former Soviet Union (now called Russia), and Arab countries in the Persian Gulf region supported Saddam Hussein. With this massive supports, Saddam Hossein conducted numerous attacks with chemical weapons on Iraq's Kurdish population and Iranians. Scientific records show that Iran possessed two times the number of ISI articles compared to Turkey just before that war. Iran's scientific production was less than one fifth of Turkey, which has similar geopolitical and demographic profile at the end of the war (based on Web of Science: Iran: 165 documents and Turkey: 894 documents). However in 2017, Iran's scientific output according to ISI was much higher than Turkey (based on Web of Science: 51035 documents by Iran vs. 46020 documents by Turkey). Now, with the numerous research plans held by different administrations in Iran, in 2017, the number of ISI and Scopus articles from Iran has exceeded that from Turkey¹. All these achievements in the past forty years have occurred under the shadow of United States' comprehensive sanctions. In other words, even the JCPOA did not achieve tranquility for Iranian researchers in the past five years. For example, international credit cards belonging to Iranian researchers, like before, were blocked by banks in western countries. In other words, Iranian researchers were not able to use credit cards to purchase books, journals, articles, pay membership dues, publication costs, pay fees to attend meetings/congresses, or even to make hotel reservations. In economic terms, Iranian researchers have been still under sanctions after JCPOA. Unfortunately alongside these limitations, there have been bizarre stringencies for issuing visas to Iranian researchers. Finally, the U.S. treasury ordered American publishers to stop publishing Iranian articles, and this in fact gave a new meaning to the slogan of "science without borders" and to the American concept of "international village" from the United States' perspective²! Taking all into consideration, Iranian researchers now believe that nothing novel has happened by Trump's brand new sanctions and they hope supportive measures by the Iranian government will let their international growth to continue.

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