



Iran: What's Behind the Government's Secrecy on Handing Over Kish Island to Chinese?

OE Watch Commentary: Historically, Iran has sought alliances to help extricate itself from more dominant countries, which it viewed as threats to its territory or sovereignty. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, for example, Iranian leaders turned in succession to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Belgium, and Germany to help defend the country against pressure from Russia or the United Kingdom. In the mid-20th century, shortly before the outbreak of the Cold War, Iranian leaders embraced the United States for the same reason: It was an increasingly powerful country, which they did not believe would interfere in Iran's internal affairs.



An Aerial View of Kish Island in the Persian Gulf.

Source: Press TV, <https://cdn.presstv.com/photo/20191228/380f0fbf-09bd-4d60-b2f0-549f7e6a2958.jpg>

The excerpted articles discuss rumors of Chinese deals with Iran. The first excerpt from *Alef.ir*—a website affiliated with conservative populist parliamentarian Ahmad Tavakkoli—highlights populist concerns and rumors that previous Sino-Iranian deals would allow China to have a long-term lease

for a military base on Kish Island, a resort island largely operated by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' economic wing. These deals and understandings apparently date back to the Mahmoud Ahmedinejad era (2005-2013) and were confirmed during President Xi Jinping's 2016 visit to Iran. The article notes that the deal has not been debated in parliament and claims that “behind-the-scenes and secret events are taking place.”

Multiple Iranian officials have denied the rumors. In the second excerpt, Iran-China Chamber of Commerce director Majid Reza Hariri downplays the rumors, which have continued for more than a year. He argues that bilateral agreements do not mean forfeiture of sovereignty and points to frustration that many Chinese projects have shown no progress. He does reveal, however, that most Chinese projects focus on the energy and industrial sectors. The unfulfilled Chinese project in Jask—the location of an Iranian submarine base—would give China a presence just outside the Strait of Hormuz.

The persistent rumors about Chinese dealings infringing on Iranian sovereignty show the continued sensitivity Iranians feel toward any great power hosting military forces on Iranian territory. It also underscores the broad distrust Iranians have toward their leadership when it comes to the defense of Iranian sovereignty. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“Negotiations were underway ... to hand over Kish Island to the Chinese for 25 years”



China's cyber policy appears to have three vectors—peace activist, espionage activist, and attack planner—that dominate China's cyber policy. Some are always hidden from view while others are demonstrated daily. Three Faces of the Cyber Dragon is divided into sections that coincide with these vectors.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195610/download>



Continued: Iran: What's Behind the Government's Secrecy on Handing Over Kish Island to Chinese?

Source: “Mokhafi Kari Dawlat dar Vandazi Jazirah Kish beh Chinha? (The government's secrecy in handing over Kish Island to the Chinese?),” *Alef.ir*, 24 March 2019. <https://www.alef.ir/news/3980104002.html>

The government's secrecy in handing over Kish Island to the Chinese?

Meanwhile, a few months have passed since the issue of handing over Kish Island to the Chinese in the form of a long-term contract, in which the senior officials of the Free Zones Organization have remained silent.

According to *Tasnim*, it was on February 20, 2019 that a delegation member of the parliament's chair publicly noted to the president of handing over the island of Kish to the Chinese. A day later, the Kish Free Zone's Deputy Minister of Economy and Investment denied the transfer of Kish Island to the Chinese.

Mohammad Reza Saeedi, stating that some people inside and outside the country are exploiting the sense of patriotism and nationalism, said: “We will never allow the people's calm to be damaged by these actions.”

Emphasizing that according to the laws, no person, legal or otherwise, is allowed to sell land to foreigners, at the same time, he added: “Of course, we welcome any domestic and foreign investment in Kish Island.”

About a month later, on March 20, 2019, the same representative who had warned the president about handing over Kish Island to the Chinese once again emphasized that the government had no right to hand over Kish to the Chinese.

Hojjatul-Islam Hassan Norouzi, a member of parliament for Robat Karim, told *Tasnim* that he had written to the president about handing over Kish Island to the Chinese: “Negotiations were underway by the government to hand over Kish Island to the Chinese for 25 years.”

He stressed that if such negotiations and transfers are to take place, they must also be discussed in parliament, adding that the government does not have the right to conclude such agreements. Treaties relating to the transfer of part of the land must be debated in parliament, and the government cannot directly address such issues.

“The government is secretly doing things, secretly signing the 2030 and the FATF, or secretly handing over fishing privileges in southern waters to the Chinese,” he said, referring to the Caspian Sea, which has not yet been reported. And the country suffered from all this.

Nowruzi emphasized: “If there is any discussion about this, we will definitely stop it, and the Chinese officials should also know that such transfers will not take place.”

For several months now, the issue of handing over Kish Island to the Chinese has been raised, and the interesting point in this regard has been the lack of comments from the CEO of the Kish Free Zone. The secretary of the High Council of Free Zones did not comment on the matter. Although the Kish Free Zone's Deputy Minister of Economy and Investment has denied the transfer, the follow-up inquiries indicate that behind-the-scenes and “secret” events are taking place. The secret of the officials at the Free Zones in relation to the handing over of Kish Island to the Chinese is still unknown.

Source: “Joz'iyat-e Tavafaqnameh-e Jomeh va Estategik-e Iran va China (Details of the Iran-China Comprehensive and Strategic Agreement),” *Tasnim News*, 29 June 2020. <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1399/04/09/2296322>

Details of the Iran-China Comprehensive and Strategic Agreement

Referring to the various agreements between Mr. [Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad's government and China, [Majid Reza Hariri] the head of the Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry stressed that in recent days, the regime's opposition networks have been focusing on the recent remarks of the former president. However, it should be noted that during Mr. Ahmadinejad's time, various agreements were signed with China. Why should bilateral mean the transfer of the country...?

The head of the Iran-China Chamber of Commerce, referring to the important bilateral agreement on the construction of an industrial town in Jask (on the shores of Makran coast) by the Chinese, said: “Six years later, nothing special has happened. The same example shows that these types of contracts are very slow, and in order to achieve them, there must be a firm determination.”