

Nowruz,

Nowruz diplomacy in Vietnam



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**EXCLUSIVE
PERSPECTIVE**

At the outset, I offer my most sincere congratulations to all readers, especially my dear compatriots, on the occasion of Nowruz and its blessed coincidence with the Holy Month of Ramadan. Great Saadi has beautifully expressed this double happiness in his verses:

Tell the drummer to beat the drum twice for good news

Last night was Ghaḍr Night, Today is Nowruz

Nowruz means the new day, the beginning of spring and the New Year, not only in the political geography of Iran today, but also in Iran's ancient cultural-civilization domain.

In 2009, Nowruz was inscribed as an element by UNESCO and later extended in 2016, on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly recognized the International Day of Nowruz to "preserve and develop the culture and traditions related to Nowruz, encourage member states to make efforts to raise awareness about Nowruz as well as to organize annual events in commemoration of this festivity".

At present, Nowruz is a widely well-known event in America, Canada, and European countries. Internet and social networks have helped introduce Nowruz in other communities around the world.

Despite the fact that the Vietnamese people had been in contact with Iran (Persia) through the Maritime Silk Road for about a thousand years, they do not know much about the Iranian New Year, Nowruz, and its Haft Sin. They do not know much about the considerable similarities between the Iranian New Year and their traditional New Year celebration "Tet," which usually takes place between January 21 and February 20 according to the lunar calendar. There are many similarities between the two occasions, such as cleaning home, buying new clothes, visiting the elders and relatives, giving Eidi (lucky money) to the juniors, special feasts and receptions for the Eid, visiting graves before New Year, etc. Fortunately, in recent years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has paid special attention to the promotion of Nowruz diplomacy in order to strengthen cultural and people-to-people diplomacy, which lead to economic, commercial,

and tourism promotion. In this regard, the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Vietnam has made a lot of efforts to introduce Nowruz in this country through various articles in newspapers, interviews on television channels and setting up cultural exhibitions.

However, it is believed that Vietnam's 100-million population deserve and requires more facilities and equipment for a proper introduction of different dimensions and aspects of the Iranian culture and civilization, including Nowruz. High-quality professional documents and video clips with attractive contents about Nowruz and its rituals, along with necessary budget for organizing appropriate ceremonies as well as promoting media coverage on television, press, and social networks such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok are among these requirements. Nowadays, advertising and propagating in the aforementioned social networks is very crucial in all countries, especially in Vietnam, because they are the fastest, most popular, and least expensive channels to reach the people of Vietnam and attract their attention. According to the current statistics, Vietnam is at the top list of countries in the world in terms of number of social network users. This country has 66.2 million Facebook users, 63 million YouTube users, 50.6 million TikTok users, and about 10.35 million Instagram users.

In summing up and in line with better realization of Nowruz diplomatic policies in other countries, including Vietnam, with the aim of further introducing the culture and noble peo-

ple of Iran for the sake of promoting cultural, tourism, and economic and commercial exchanges between the two countries, I recommend the following solutions:

- Cultural patrons should give serious support to actions and efforts of the Embassies of the Islamic Republic of Iran abroad in introducing and promoting Nowruz by providing high-quality photos, writings, and short video clips for the purpose of publication in the media and famous social networks in Vietnam.

- Cultural patrons should extend necessary support to send artists and cultural activists in furtherance of showcasing Nowruz rituals and traditions in Vietnam.

- Cultural patrons should support holding seminars for the introduction of Iranian ancient culture and civilization, particularly on the subject of Nowruz, with the participation of Vietnamese and Iranian researchers conducive to increase the knowledge and understanding of Vietnamese people as regards Nowruz.

- Cultural patrons should assist and support the organization of familiarization tours (FAMTRIP) to Iran for Vietnamese travel companies, journalists, filmmakers, influential bloggers, and tourism experts to have their own experience of Nowruz as well as produce news, reports, and short films about Iran, the Iranian culture, and Nowruz, as their reflection and introduction will absolutely attract Vietnamese tourists. It should be noted that in recent years, Vietnam's middle-class population has been increasing thanks to the fast economic growth of this country, which has led to sharp rise in the number of Vietnamese travelling abroad. Statistics quoted by Vietnam General Statistics Office indicate that in 2023, about 5 million Vietnamese have traveled abroad. It is worth mentioning that in 2018 and before the Covid-19 pandemic, this number was close to 10 million people. In five consecutive years from 2013 to 2018, the number of Vietnamese travelers abroad has grown by about 20% per year. Therefore, it can be said that Vietnam is a potential tourism market for Iran, especially considering the unilateral visa abolishment for Vietnamese citizens effective from February this year.

- Finally, cultural patrons should also cooperate with Embassies in Vietnam that share the common culture of Nowruz celebration in organizing cultural events on the occasion of Nowruz, such as food and music festival.

Nowruz Diplomacy and The Nowruz Trophy



Developing a Nowruz narrative a strategic necessity



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**EXCLUSIVE
PERSPECTIVE**

Presenting a strategic narrative of Nowruz by countries that traditionally celebrate it is a necessity. If the shared history and geography of these countries are transformed into a strategic narrative through dialogue among the elites of these countries, it can provide the groundwork for this ancient culture to make significant changes on a global scale.

It seems that countries within the Nowruz cultural sphere are, more than anything, captive to their historical narratives of traditions and shared culture, especially Nowruz. This captivity is the result of certain political relations, nationalistic ambitions, and sometimes trans-regional interventions. This captivity has inflicted considerable damage on these culturally similar countries in the era of global regionalization, particularly by missing out on opportunities for cooperation and convergence.

The narrative of Nowruz can be seen as a powerful tool for shaping the desired image of its observing countries in the region and the world. This necessity will help expand the effective influence and create a joint sense of the past, present, and future for all countries that celebrate Nowruz. These countries have unparalleled capacities in human resources, economic opportunities, and socio-political advantages. Initiating dialogue among the elites of these countries about their common historical and cultural foundations is one way to consolidate these capacities and turn them into a potent regional force.

On a national level, presenting a narrative of Nowruz as a historical and geographical bedrock is an urgent necessity for our country, especially now that powerful global networks are seeking to strip Iran of its Iranian identity and induce Iranophobia.

The Fourth International Conference on Nowruz Diplomacy, which will be held on March 9, with the participation of diplomatic and cultural elites from countries that celebrate Nowruz and the presence of high-ranking officials from 21 countries worldwide, is an effort to achieve this strategic narrative, which must continue with the collaboration of official and non-official institutions in the country's diplomatic sphere. It is hoped that in the continuation of this event, decision-makers, policymakers, and the scientific community in the country will take the lead in achieving this lofty goal in the cultural sphere, which has abundant economic, social, and political implications for the region.



Tehran's Ambassador to Hanoi Ali Akbar Nazari (2nd-L) participates in Vietnam's traditional New Year celebration Tet at the invitation of the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on February 10, 2024.

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