

CEO of SpecialEurasia Silvia Boltuc:

# Raisi forge new paths in int'l relations

## Iranians' culture, identity theirs, not others



The late Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi (front row-2nd L) and his fellow BRICS leaders pose for a family photo during the closing day of the BRICS summit at the Sandton Convention Center in Johannesburg, South Africa, on August 24, 2023.  
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### INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

For decades, Iran has been vilified in Western media and political discourse, often portrayed as a hostile, terrorist state. This negative portrayal can be attributed to a variety of factors, including historical tensions, political agendas, and a tendency to exoticize and Orientalize Iranian culture. This narrative has been perpetuated by politicians, news media, and popular culture, shaping a reductive and often inaccurate image of Iran. Despite friendly gestures from Iranians, Western media often

focuses instead on negative stereotypes and fueling xenophobic paranoia. As a result, the complex and diverse nature of Iran and its people is often overlooked, giving way to simplistic and damaging portrayals.

That is why Iran Daily conducted an exclusive interview with Silvia Boltuc to discuss how her views about Iran have changed after her brief visit to the Middle Eastern country that has been the subject of many misrepresentations and vilifications in Western media for a number of years.

Silvia Boltuc is the founder and managing director of SpecialEurasia. She has carved out a

niche as an international affairs specialist, business consultant, and political analyst. Boltuc has helped private and public institutions make informed decisions by providing in-depth reports, risk assessments, and tailored consultancy services. Through her work and reporting trips across Europe, the Middle East, South-east Asia, and the post-Soviet countries, she has built an impressive network of local contacts while assessing their domestic dynamics and situations on the ground.

Boltuc also wears another hat as the director of the Energy & Engineering Department at the Centro Studi Eurasia Medi-

terraneo (CeSEM). She lends her expertise as an editor and analyst to prominent Italian media agencies, including Notizie Geopolitiche, Opinio Juris, and European Affairs Magazine. Prior to her current roles, she held the position of associate director at ASRIE Analytica. With a talent for languages, she is fluent in Italian, English, German, Russian, and Arabic. Boltuc is also the co-author of the book 'Conflitto in Ucraina: rischio geopolitico, propaganda jihadista e minaccia per l'Europa' (2022), offering valuable insights into the complex dynamics of the Ukraine conflict and its implications for Europe.



**IRAN DAILY:** Before you came to Iran, what was your attitude towards the country? Was it more aligned with that of the Western media?

**BOLTUC:** As a political analyst, I have produced analyses of different countries over the years based on verified sources and a balanced perspective that encompasses the various trends and dynamics of those countries. Since Iran is among the primary focus of the consultancy organi-

zation I direct, SpecialEurasia, it was crucial for me to visit the country to gain a deeper understanding of its dynamics and policies. This includes engaging with locals and conducting interviews with various representatives.

As a Western expert, I am often exposed to Western media, which tends to have a one-sided view of Iran and focuses primarily on negative aspects even though there are some scholars and experts who have deeply

investigated the country and described it without falling for such common stereotypes.

My research, in particular, delves into different levels of Iranian society, allowing me to appreciate the beauty and diversity of the Iranian landscape. Approaching Iran with an open mind, I aim to expand my knowledge of its remarkable culture and understand the institutions' strategies for improving the country's condition.

**When you came to Iran and saw it up close, how different did you find the reality you saw here from the image the Western media had created for you? Has your view of this country and its people changed?**

Following Western media, one might get the impression that every Iranian is an extremist with an anti-imperialist attitude. However, what always impresses me is the normali-

ty of the Iranian people. Many Iranians don't even follow politics and lead peaceful lives, focusing on their careers and families. Remarkably, their kindness and warm hospitality stand out, especially when they realize you are a foreign guest. During my trip, I encountered several logistical problems and always found someone willing to help me, even though they didn't know me personally. Another aspect I appreciate

about Iranians is their openness in sharing their views on global dynamics and helping navigate the common misunderstandings about Iran prevalent in my part of the world. Generally, Western media fail to represent every layer of Iranian society, often interviewing people in a biased and instrumental manner. As an analyst, I believe that all perspectives should be relayed honestly and without judgment.

**Specifically, what did you think of Iranian women before visiting Iran and how would you describe them now?**

Undoubtedly, Iranian women

are far more intelligent than they are often portrayed. Many are highly educated, modern, and capable of balancing conservative values like family with successful careers. Their role in

society is growing positively and constructively. They genuinely want to contribute to the country's growth and take pride in being Iranian. Naturally, there is a genera-

tional struggle common to all societies, with some women strongly supporting a conservative lifestyle while younger ones seek to reinterpret their roles in a more modern context.

Although Western media often portray this as a uniquely Iranian issue, I have observed similar dynamics in my own country, Italy. However, I believe that navigating this change while

preserving Iranian culture and identity should be an internal matter for the Iranian people, free from external manipulation that could harm the country.