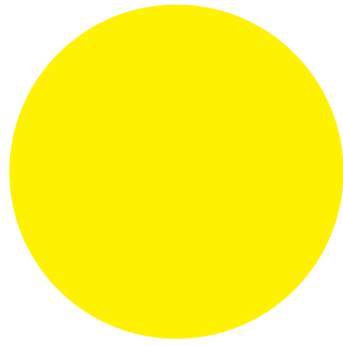
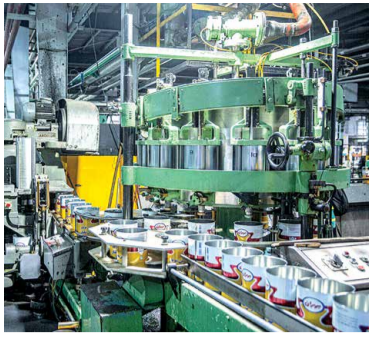


Iran's GDP grows 4% in H1 calendar year: **SCI**



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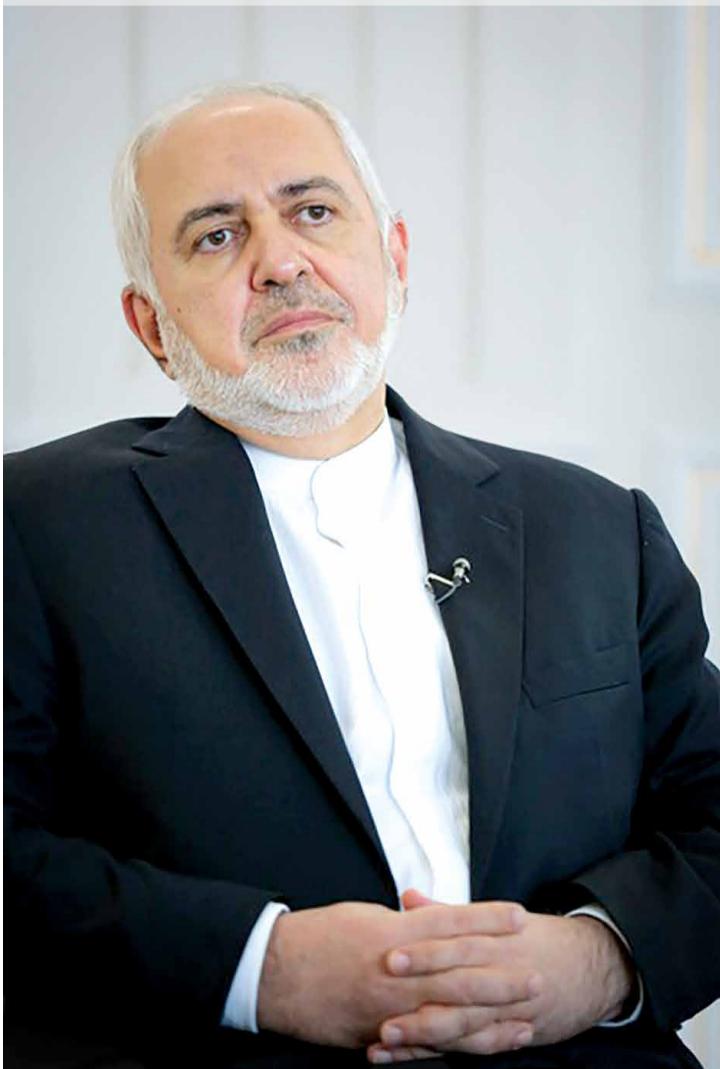
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Islamic Republic 'open' to negotiations, including with US: Zarif

'Pezeshkian wants stability, economic development in Middle East'

Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iran's vice president for strategic affairs, has emphasized the Islamic Republic's willingness to engage in negotiations with the international community, including the United States, to secure peace and stability.



Iran, Turkey Warn About Syria Becoming Terrorists' 'Safe Haven'



Tehran's preemptive measure to shape US foreign policy

By Ebrahim Beheshti
Staff writer

OPINION

The recent article by Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iran's former foreign minister and current vice president for strategic affairs, published in the prestigious American magazine "Foreign Affairs," represents a notable development with positive implications for Iran's broader strategy to engage constructively with the world. As a leading authority on international relations with a century-long legacy, "Foreign Affairs" has played a pivotal role in shaping US foreign policy, with numerous American leaders and high-ranking officials utilizing its platform to share their perspectives. The publication of Zarif's article in this esteemed magazine serves as a testament to its significance and relevance, particularly given the author's candid discussion on Iran's willingness to address tensions with the United States.

In part of the article, Zarif writes, "Pezeshkian wants stability and economic development in the Middle East. He wants to collaborate with neighboring Arab countries and to strengthen relations with Iran's allies. But he also wants to engage constructively with the West. His government is ready to manage tensions with the United States, which has also just elected a new president. Pezeshkian hopes for equal-footed negotiations regarding the nuclear deal—and potentially more."

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Role of philosophers in demystifying political arguments

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To separate or not to separate nat'l and int'l sections of Fajr Film Festival?

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Sanctions, FATF blacklisting hamper foreign investment flow: **Hemmati**

Economy Desk

Over the past two years and eight months, Iran has attracted just \$2.1 billion in foreign investment, said the economy minister, attributing the low figure largely to restrictions caused by sanctions and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) blacklisting, and emphasizing that the ongoing efforts will improve the situation. According to IRNA, Abdolnaser Hemmati said in a televised interview on Sunday night that a joint session between the government and Parliament highlighted a spirit of unity. He stated that the meeting was an opportunity to present key economic indicators to lawmakers, stressing the importance of strategic decisions given the concurrent four-year terms of the incumbent government and Parliament, expressing optimism that cooperation between the two bodies could resolve many national issues.

Hemmati discussed his recent participation in a global investment conference in Riyadh, noting the event's significance. "It provided a platform to present our country's positions to more than 2,500 global investment experts and at least 20 ministers," he said. The minister also highlighted productive meetings with Saudi Arabia's ministers of economy and investment, where they explored ways to strengthen economic and political ties. In addition, Hemmati met with the president of the Islamic Development Bank and the head of the OPEC Fund. He announced that the OPEC Fund agreed to involve Iranian consultants and contractors in investment projects in developing countries. The minister acknowledged that Iran's investment climate remains challenging due to sanctions and FATF restrictions, but he remains hopeful that recent talks with international counterparts, including discussions on technology transfer, will lead to positive developments.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Commerce serves better than politics for promoting diplomacy: **VP**

Economy Desk

Iran's Vice President Mohammadreza Aref said on Monday that commerce, rather than politics, is the key to advancing diplomacy, urging the invitation of influential businesspeople and top economic officials to the country. He made the remarks during a policy council meeting for the 7th Iran Export Capabilities Exhibition (Iran Expo) to be held in May 2025, ISNA reported. The official called for the formation of a strong organizing committee comprising relevant ministries and organizations, ensuring the participation of academics, experts, and private sector stakeholders. Aref stated that the primary goal of the exhibition is to showcase the "Safe Iran" and a "Beautiful Iran" to the world, urging stakeholders to demonstrate the reality of modern Iran through enhanced trade

relations. During the meeting, attended by senior officials from the trade, industry, and tourism sectors, Aref highlighted the administration of President Masoud Pezeshkian's major initiative to boost exports and engage with influential global business figures, stressing that fostering these trade interactions should take precedence over political diplomacy. Aref noted that one of the incumbent government's economic strategies is to achieve a positive balance in non-oil trade. He pointed out that in the early decades after the revolution, exports were not prioritized due to the low quality of domestic products and the focus on meeting internal needs. "Today, however, Iranian goods are competitive in quality and packaging, with Iran's global ranking among the top in packaging standards."

The vice president emphasized the importance of strengthening trade ties with neighboring countries and regional alliances such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, noting that regional markets offer significant potential for Iranian products, and the government must capitalize on Iran's civilizational advantages to expand its export footprint. Aref criticized the decline in Iran's carpet exports, which once generated over \$1 billion per annum. He attributed the downturn to poor strategic planning and called for a reassessment of export policies. The official also emphasized the need for private sector leadership in export initiatives, highlighting its historical success dating back to the Silk Road era. The vice president stressed the importance of activating embassies to en-

Iran's Vice President Mohammadreza Aref (R) speaks at a policy council meeting for the 7th Iran Export Capabilities Exhibition (Iran Expo) in Tehran on December 2, 2024.
fjpresident.ir



gage key global economic players and of promoting the participation of technology-based enterprises and tech industries. Aref also highlighted the need for educational and scientific discussions alongside the exhibition, terming the event as a practical learning opportunity for those involved

in exports. Aref underscored the importance of engaging with Central Asia, the Caucasus, BRICS, and Arab nations, particularly Saudi Arabia, where diplomatic ties have recently strengthened. He called on the general governors of border provinces to develop regional cooperation plans and pro-

posed provincial pavilions at the exhibition to foster local economic engagement. In conclusion, Aref reiterated that the Pezeshkian government's primary mission is to leverage the private sector, enhance trade diplomacy, and present the true capabilities of Iran on the global stage.

Iran's honey production hits nearly 128,000 tons



Economy Desk

Iran has produced approximately 127,700 tons of honey across 92,000 apiaries since the start of the current Iranian year (March 20), according to Mohammad-Ebrahim Hassan-Nejad, the deputy minister for livestock production at the Ministry of Agriculture. The figure represents a 4.7% increase over the projected 122,000 tons for the current year as honey production this year increased 5.63% compared to previous year, when 121,000 tons were produced, IRNA re-

ported. The official explained that the nationwide apiary census, conducted from September 28 to November 10, is essential for production planning and policy development, noting that the census helps formulate both long-term and short-term strategies for Iran's beekeeping industry. The census was carried out through the agricultural sector's data management platform, with participation from agricultural experts, provincial agriculture departments, and national beekeeping associations.

The systematic oversight was provided by the ministry's livestock production department, along with provincial statistics offices, ensuring accuracy and verification through site visits in over 10 provinces.

According to the 2024 census, 92,122 bee yards house 10.8 million bee colonies—10.5 million in modern hives and 300,000 in traditional hives. Hassan-Nejad attributed the rise in honey production to enhanced management practices, increased technical knowledge, and widespread educational programs for beekeepers. He noted that the average honey yield per modern hive rose from 10.7 kilograms in last year to 12.04 kilograms in the current year, a 12.49% increase. In addition to honey, Iran produced 11 tons of royal jelly, 862 tons of pollen, 211 tons of propolis, 2,600 tons of beeswax, and 9.6 kilograms of bee

venom. The deputy minister highlighted that efforts to diversify production, spurred by educational initiatives and financial support, have bolstered output of high-demand products such as royal jelly and propolis. The census revealed that 151,352 individuals are directly employed in beekeeping, with 43,496 beekeepers covered by insurance, including 2,664 under beekeeping-specific insurance plans, representing 6.12% of the total insured. Hassan-Nejad emphasized that the census results enable strategic planning for achieving the goals outlined in Iran's beekeeping development roadmap, particularly during the Seventh Development Plan. The data will help identify regional strong points and weaknesses, guiding investment decisions to enhance the industry's growth.

Iran's GDP grows 4% in H1 calendar year: **SCI**



Economy Desk

Iran's economy grew by 4% in the first half of the current Iranian year (March 20 to September 21) compared to the same period last year, according to a report by the Iranian Statistics Center. Gross domestic product (GDP), including oil, increased by 4%, while non-oil GDP grew by 2.6% at constant prices, IRNA reported on Monday. The GDP, measured at 2021 constant prices, reached 50,691 trillion rials (approximately \$74.54 billion) with oil and 38,374 trillion rials (approximately \$56.43 billion) without oil

in the first half of the current Iranian. This is up from 48,727 (\$71.65 billion) trillion rials with oil and 37,405 trillion rials (\$55 billion) without oil during the same period last year, highlighting the respective growth rates. The report also showed that agriculture sector grew by 2.9%, industries and mining by 5.3%, and services by 2.5%. Within industries and mining, crude oil and natural gas extraction expanded by 8.8%, other mining by 1.5%, manufacturing by 1.3%, natural gas distribution by 15.2%, water and electricity by 2.3%, and construction by 0.3%.

ECO chief says new membership requests under review

Economy Desk

The secretary-general of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) said that requests for new membership are being reviewed based on the organization's developing capacity. Asad Majeed Khan, speaking to reporters on Monday during the 28th ECO Council of Foreign Ministers' expert meeting in Mashhad, said ECO was founded in 1964 by Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran, with additional countries joining later,

IRNA reported. He emphasized that ECO member states share historical, economic, and cultural commonalities, enhancing the organization's potential. "The transit sector is a key focus for ECO," Khan said. "Regional countries must prioritize it. Iran is strategically positioned with its energy resources and transportation infrastructure." Khan noted that the expert-level meeting begun in Mashhad, where experts are finalizing issues and



approaches to present to ECO Council of Foreign Ministers began Monday morning in the northeastern city. The council's formal meeting will take place today.

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The story of Zanjan Bazaar

From ancient monument to economic hub

Iranica Desk

Cultural heritage is considered the national identity and cultural symbol of every country, reflecting human advancement and growth throughout history. Protecting ancient artifacts and introducing this rich heritage to the world not only attracts tourists but also invigorates the country's economy, transforming various sectors. The cultural and historical artifacts of a nation serve as its identity, encapsulating the age, history, and civilization of each region. Therefore, preserving and protecting these artifacts is essential, and it is the responsibility of successive generations to safeguard this ancestral heritage just as their predecessors did.

Iran, recognized as one of the greatest civilizations in human history, is home to numerous historical sites that are regarded as a vast treasure of the past and a comprehensive reflection of Iranian civilization. Zanjan Province, with its unmatched potential in cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts, hosts remarkable and significant sites such as the Zanjan Bazaar, the UNESCO World Heritage site of Soltaniyeh.

Among these, the historical Zanjan Bazaar stands out as a valuable site that has been the beating heart of the city for cen-

turies. This marketplace has transitioned through various eras while successfully preserving its significance from the past to the present. The unique structure from the Qajar period captures the attention of every visitor with its diverse sections. Although this site has remained resilient through numerous transformations, it requires necessary measures to protect it from various hazards. The Zanjan Bazaar has always been renowned among both locals and visitors alike, but its ongoing preservation and survival demand the attention of officials and custodians. Any neglect could potentially lead to irreparable damage, and even significant financial investments may no longer yield beneficial results.

The deputy head of Zanjan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization stated that the historical Zanjan Bazaar is regarded as the economic hub of the city. He highlighted that each year, despite limited funding allocated from provincial and national sources, continuous restoration and risk mitigation efforts are carried out by the Cultural Heritage Department. Mohammad-Reza Mohammadipour noted that the Zanjan Bazaar covers an area of approximately 15 hectares, considering

its associated activities. He emphasized that the restoration and organization of this massive historical structure necessitate comprehensive cooperation from the merchants, the esteemed board of trustees of the bazaar, and relevant organizations and entities. Fortunately, he mentioned that there is currently maximum interaction and collaboration with the municipality and the bazaar's board of trustees, which has resulted in the ongoing paving of Zanjan Bazaar. Additionally, Mohammadipour pointed out that this year, with funds allocated for emergency restoration of historical and religious buildings, various parts of the bazaar will be prioritized for restoration and organization following assessments by the technical council members and the preparation of service descriptions. He also raised concerns about another issue threatening the entire Zanjan Bazaar: the presence of groundwater. He stated that, like other historical structures in the country, the Zanjan Bazaar operates under the supervision of the Cultural Heritage Organization, governed by specific regulations. These regulations include prohibitions against increasing height, building balconies inside shops, altering the walls and foundations of



the bazaar, and installing tempered glass and unconventional signage. He noted that in some shops, certain regulations are being overlooked by the merchants. This oversight has resulted in structural and visual damage, which must be restored to its original state promptly. Furthermore, he reiterated the need for effective measures to be taken by relevant agencies to address the groundwater issue threatening the bazaar. This official expressed hope that through inter-agency cooperation among the Zanjan munic-

ipality, the bazaar board of trustees, and especially the merchants, this invaluable treasure can be properly maintained, ensuring it can be handed down to future generations as a valuable legacy. Seyyed Mohammad Alavioon, the chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Zanjan Bazaar, stated that the bazaar is considered a lasting and unparalleled asset for the people of this province and at the national level. He mentioned that when issues arise that necessitate restoration and renovation, cultural heritage experts typically step in to ad-

dress these concerns. Alavioon explained that when problems such as cracks are observed, cultural heritage experts pay close attention to these matters. Generally, potential issues are identified by the merchants, compiled, and then communicated to the relevant cultural heritage experts for action. He added that the restoration and renovation of the Zanjan Bazaar are carried out by the responsible cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts authority. However, such work requires significant funding, which can be

challenging to secure. This official identified one of the important actions for revitalizing the Zanjan Bazaar as its stone paving, noting that this project is nearing completion by the Zanjan municipality. He pointed out that despite some existing issues, the paving of the Ironworkers' Square in the Zanjan Bazaar will commence soon. He concluded by stating that excellent work has been accomplished in the area leading to the bazaar, with 80% of the paving completed and the remaining 20% still to be done.



Art of wood carving in Golpayegan



Golpayegan, a city nestled in Isfahan Province, is renowned for its vibrant handicrafts, including rug weaving, felt making,

kilim weaving, wood carving, calligraphy, and painting. The city also boasts a rich tradition in poetry, music, and litera-

ture, reflecting its deep cultural roots. Among these crafts, wood carving stands out, having produced many celebrated masters

throughout history.

The art of wood carving in Golpayegan has a long and storied past, evolving significantly over time. Its origins can be traced back to when our ancestors first recognized the diverse uses of wood. In fact, the history of wood carving in this region is intricately linked to the broader history of wood usage in Iran, which dates back approximately 4,200 years to the Stone Age. This period predates the mass migration of the Aryans and marks a time when locals began to incorporate wood into their building practices, visitiran.ir

wrote. Wood carvers in Golpayegan skillfully depict a wide array

of motifs on walnut and pear wood using specialized tools. They create various decorative items by blending the natural textures of tree bark, such as Russian olive and other forest trees, which are then meticulously applied to the surfaces of their carved artworks. Among the products crafted by these talented artisans are photo frames, containers, and intricately designed wood carving boxes, all of which can be found in local art shops and decorative object displays.

The significance of wood carving as an art form is deeply rooted in Golpayegan's history. Notable ancient examples include the upper parts of the

entrance to Imamzadeh Hefdah Tan, the pulpit and door of the mosque in Saravar village, and the door of the mosque in Imamzadeh Abolfotuh Vanshan. The city has produced many esteemed wood carving masters, including Heydar Qashoqtarash, Habibollah Yadegari, Abdolhossein Moazemmi, the Mokhtari brother's (Ali and Mohammad), Mohammad Reza Tavassoli, Ahmad Mohseni, Mohammad Ali Fakhari, Hossein Fakhari, and Heidar Niknam, who has works displayed in the Imam Reza (PBUH) Museum. Notably, Heydar Niknam Golpayegani is also recognized for restoring the Saheb al-Zamman pulpit in Goharshad Mosque.

Žižek's appeal, use to Iranians



By Gholamreza Mansouri
Political science researcher

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

Slavoj Žižek (born March 21, 1949), the famous Slovenian political philosopher, has written numerous treatises on a variety of topics, including the Iraq War, fundamentalism, capitalism, tolerance, political truth, globalization, subjectivity, humanity, gender, truth, and philosophy. He has also written on law, Lenin, myth, cyberspace, postmodernism, multiculturalism, post-Marxism, Alfred Hitchcock, and David Lynch, among others. He has a good grasp of various cultural, political, and social issues of our time. As such, he is a famous philosopher in the world of thought.

His fame in Iran, a country with a long tradition of thought, is undeniable. He recently said in an interview that all of his books have been translated in Iran, and many Iranian writers and translators are from the younger generation who think that Žižek's words are their own. Therefore, the young Iranian generation is right that, thanks to the vast social media and the Internet, they are getting acquainted with the times and their developments earlier and are thinking about them. However, for researchers, the question about Žižek is very serious and important. For example, why does everyone read Žižek? Why has he become so popular in Iran today?



In this article, we will try to express our findings about the readers of this Slovenian leftist philosopher in Iran. Here are seven reasons why Žižek is important to us Iranians:

First reason: Žižek is a leftist thinker in the neoliberal and postmodern periods, and it seems that he will always be so. In Iran and places that are not sufficiently developed, in the scientific arena and, of course, in the public arena, leftism is the mainstream among the intellectuals of that society. In the contemporary history of Iran from the Qajar era to the present day, this trend has always been influential. We must also pay attention to the unequal structure of society (such as unequal opportunities in the field of employment, education, etc.) and, more importantly, the unequal position of these countries in global positions. For these two reasons as well, the leftist perspective is very popular and formidable in

the intellectual circles of such societies.

Second reason: Žižek is strongly influenced by Hegel, the 19th-century German philosopher, and in particular his theory of dialectics. The aim of Žižek's philosophy is to show that not only is our perception dialectical, but also reality: every field of reality (every "world") is always unfixed in advance and is seen within an invisible framework.

This dialectical position allows the Slovenian thinker to demand change through ideological inversion. That is, he shows that in order to overcome capitalism, it is first necessary to abandon "all forms of resistance which help the system reproduce itself by ensuring our participation in it". Here we see Žižek's leftist views, which were in fact based on Hegel's thoughts.

Let us not forget that Iranian thinkers, mainly in the last 60 or 70 years (whether they be philosophers, sociologists, or other left-wing

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Žižek's fundamental Lacanian claim, in terms of his "critique of ideology," is that people do not always identify with political causes on rational grounds. The element of rationality in the critique of ideology is sometimes abandoned even by Iranian thinkers. They explore emotional and sometimes unconditional identities based on their first attachments to the personalities of individuals, both dead and living.

thinkers), have interpreted Hegel's philosophy through the lens of Marxist ideas, and therefore the acceptance of Žižek, himself a Hegelian philosopher, by Iranian thinkers today is not unexpected.

Third reason: Žižek's different views of identity and ideology is what has endeared him to Iranians in his writings. In this case, Žižek was influenced by the psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan.

Lacan invented a new way of looking at Hegel. Lacan argued that much of human behavior is driven by irrational motivations and desires that we do not consciously understand. One of the reasons for Žižek's success is his great ability to help make sense of Lacan for us today by using examples from pop culture, jokes, and politics. Žižek's fundamental Lacanian claim, in terms of his "critique of ideology," is that people do not always identify with political causes on rational grounds. The element of rationality in the critique of ideology is sometimes abandoned even by Iranian thinkers. They explore emotional and sometimes unconditional identities based on their first attachments to the personalities of individuals, both dead and living. Therefore, they identify with what Žižek calls the "transcendental objects" of ideologies: whether this is a "charismatic" leader or a transcendental idea such as "revolution" or "human freedom".

Fourth reason: The fourth reason is Žižek's attention to the issue of "love". The currently common view is that love is the devil. Žižek, however, has an unusual idea about the creation of our planet, and he loves it when he says that an imbalance occurred in the world, a kind of error, which led to the creation of our planet. It was such a huge mistake that they invented a remedy to fix it, love. This view is rare among philosophers. Žižek states that love happens on the assumption that a mistake was made, and continuing to the end happens to cover up the mistake as a kind of consolation. This kind of consolation, when you think about it, necessarily makes it devilish. Among Iranians, whether ordinary people or intellectuals, whenever love is brought up, they mostly passively surrender to love, and even leftist Iranian intellectuals also resort to poets like Hafez, Rumi, Saadi, and others in expressing their thoughts.

Fifth reason: The fifth reason is that Žižek's field of activity encompasses all global crises and problems, from workers' struggles and demonstrations for equality to wars in Syria, Yemen, Africa, and Gaza. As Edward Said once said, an intellectual must be "an outsider, living in self-im-

posed exile, and on the margins of society", that is, free from academic, religious and political institutions. Otherwise, he simply resigns himself to the inevitability of events. Žižek prefers to be honest and expose himself to criticism in order to express his philosophical and political thinking clearly and dogmatically, according to Santiago Zabala. It is natural that an Iranian is as aware of environmental crises, economic crises, and regional wars as a Japanese or an American, and therefore Žižek's interpretation of these crises is a point of connection between the desires of different people around the world.

Sixth reason: The Palestinian issue has been raised in political, cultural, and economic circles around the world for more than 70 years and is now of great concern to the world. The title of one of Žižek's articles published in January 2024 was "Time to tell the truth about Gaza." There, he wrote:

"A month or so ago, I wrote about how the formula 'from the river to the sea' is now been de-facto appropriated by Israel. I said that this is what Israel is actually planning and doing — expanding Israel's control from 'The River to the Sea' — but would never admit that in public. Now, the slogan is being used by the Israeli PM himself, a clear case of the public obscenity of our political discourse."

The main concern of many Muslims is that the Palestinian issue be resolved, and this concern is not limited to Iran but to all countries.

Seventh reason: The issue of freedom is very important to him. Žižek recently published a book called 'Freedom: A Disease Without a Cure' (2023). In this book, he tries to show that the freedom that exists in today's neoliberal society is not enough freedom, and perhaps better said, is a cover for true freedom. In this book, he argues that the concept of freedom is deceptively simple. We think we understand it, but the moment we try to define it, we encounter contradictions. In this new philosophical exploration, Slavoj Žižek argues that the experience of true, radical freedom is transient and fragile. To counter the idea of libertarian individualism, Žižek draws on the philosophers Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Heidegger, as well as the works of Kandinsky and Agatha Christie, to examine the many facets of freedom and what we can learn from each of them.

The issue of freedom in Iranian society has always been a fundamental concern among thinkers, and the talk of freedom from every voice is pleasant and pleasing to freedom enthusiasts.

The photos show the two philosophers that inspired Slavoj Žižek greatly, namely Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (R) and Jacques Lacan.



On shame and dignity in and around Gaza

'We don't want aid; We want dignity'



By Slavoj Žižek
Political philosopher

OPINION

Psychoanalysis is often misunderstood in two ways: a pseudo-leftist view that advocates for abolishing all forms of repression to fully liberate sexuality, and a conservative view that suggests a certain level of repression is necessary to prevent social disintegration and maintain public morality. Jacques Lacan presents a surprising perspective by defining the goal of psychoanalytic treatment in our permissive era as the restoration of a minimum of shame. The true opposition, according to Lacan, is not between free sexuality and repression but between shamelessness and dignity. Lacan's stance holds significant political relevance: protesters often attack the shamelessness of their opponents and demand to be treated with dignity.

This discourse extends beyond shameless populists like Donald Trump. A poignant example occurred when a photograph captured IDF bombs, made by the US, destroying Gaza buildings while US parachutes delivered food and medicine. The tension in this image — where the same country produces bombs and aid — culminated in a tragic event: when a parachuted food package killed a boy. On October 20, 2024, a 3-year-old Palestinian boy was killed by air-dropped aid in Khan Younis, as reported by his relatives amidst the humanitarian crisis caused by the Israeli offensive, which exacerbated severe hunger across Gaza. "We don't want aid. We want dignity," said Ayyad, the boy's grandfather. "Enough with the humiliation and insult that we are receiving from the Arabs, not just the Israelis. Those who have no mercy on us — look at our children, our women, our elderly."

Ayyad's plea highlights the humiliation of receiving aid from the air when pressure could be applied on Israel to allow more provisions to reach Gaza on the ground. Typically, provisions are delivered by parachute when an enemy surrounds your units or allies, as seen in 1942 when German forces were surrounded in Stalingrad; however, here the US acts on both sides. Ayyad's plea also underscores another critical aspect: despite massive hunger and medical crises in Gaza, he asks for dignity rather than more aid. This appeal to dignity is global; despite poverty, hunger, and violence, protests from Chile to Turkey and Belarus to France have consistently evoked dignity. Conversations with friends in Istanbul revealed that their main slogan was dignity: they found it intolerable how the Erdogan regime humiliated them by treating them as idiots. "Dignity" emerges as a popular response to the open cynicism of those in power, specifically their shamelessness. As Peter Sloterdijk noted nearly half a century ago, today's ideological formula is not "they don't know what they are doing, but they are nonetheless doing it," but rather "they know what they are doing, and they are nonetheless doing it."

A recent example of utter shamelessness occurred in July 2024 when several ministers and Members of the Knesset criticized an IDF military police raid on the Sde Teiman base for arresting reserv-

ists accused of abusing imprisoned Palestinians. These arrests followed public revelations by horrified Israeli reservists about security personnel torturing Palestinian prisoners with metal sticks. Peter Osborne highlighted this issue in a Knesset debate clip:

"This is insanity; someone thinks it's possible to arrest soldiers for things they do to Nukhba (Hamas Elite Unit) terrorists." An interjection questioned if inserting a stick into a person's rectum was legitimate. The response was chilling: "Yes, if he is Nukhba, everything is legitimate." Osborne also showcased an Israeli TV debate where suspicions of soldiers raping a shackled prisoner were dismissed with indifference: "I don't give a rat's arse what they do to that Hamas man. The only problem I see is that it's not state policy to abuse detainees. First, they deserve it, and it's a great form of revenge. Secondly, maybe it will act as a deterrent."

This is the lowest point of shamelessness one can envisage — although maybe things will go even further, and we will get a live TV transmission of such torture. (Public tortures were a common practice until the 18th century!) However, just imagine the outcry if Hamas or Hezbollah were publicly boasting of doing the same to some of the remaining captives in Gaza. Would they not be accused of being less than animals? This, then, is what we get from "the only democracy in the Middle East"! Can one even imagine what our reac-

tion would have been if the same thing were to happen in Russia?

Another example: we learned that Eliran Mizrahi, a 40-year-old father of four and an Israeli military reservist, returned from Gaza deeply traumatized by what he had witnessed and what he did in the war. He was struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder at home, and before he was due to redeploy, he took his own life. During his deployment in Gaza, Mizrahi was tasked with driving a D-9 bulldozer, a 62-ton armored vehicle that can withstand bullets and explosives. Guy Zaken, Mizrahi's friend and co-driver of the bulldozer, said:

"We saw very, very difficult things. Things that are difficult to accept." In testimony to the Knesset, Zaken said that on many occasions, soldiers had to "run over terrorists, dead and alive, in the hundreds." This is the true cause of Mizrahi's post-traumatic disorder: massive brutal killings that he not only witnessed but also committed. An IDF psychologist said that "one of the ways the military helps traumatized troops resume their lives is to try to 'normalize' what they went through, partly by reminding them of the horrors committed on October 7." The aim of such "therapy" is thus to normalize profoundly abnormal criminal brutality, to make Mizrahi's massive crimes into normal justifiable experiences — in short, to obliterate the last remainders of shame and unbearable guilt in his subjectivity and make him a



Israeli protesters gather in support of nine Israeli military reservists, who were detained following the suspicion of sexually abusing a Palestinian detainee at the Sde Teiman detention camp, the Occupied Territories, on July 29, 2024.
● AMIR COHEN/REUTERS



Just imagine the outcry if Hamas or Hezbollah were publicly boasting of doing the same [sexual torture] to some of the remaining captives in Gaza. Would they not be accused of being less than animals? This, then, is what we get from "the only democracy in the Middle East"!



Destroyed buildings in the Gaza Strip are seen through the window of an airplane from the US Air Force that was to drop humanitarian aid, on March 14, 2024.
● AP

person who will be able to run over hundreds of dead and alive persons in cold blood.

The mystification here is double: not only is Mizrahi's criminal activity ethically neutralized into a "traumatic experience," the focus on his inner suffering also ignores the painful death of hundreds overrun by his bulldozer. We are here only one step from helping the perpetrators of the Holocaust to "normalize" what they went through (pushing bodies into gas chambers, etc.) Shamelessness reigns fully here.

One can recognize a pattern in how we again face the fact that the IDF is doing itself what it accuses Hamas of doing. For a year, we listened to the mantra that Hamas is using Palestinian civilians as a human shield on the battlefield (which is why so many civilians were killed in Gaza). However, Israeli media reported on October 23, 2024, that the IDF has forced Palestinians to enter potentially booby-trapped houses and tunnels in Gaza to avoid putting its troops in harm's way — a soldier reported: "We told them to enter the building before us. If there are any booby traps, they will explode and not us." It was so common in the Israeli military that it had a name: "mosquito protocol." When the same soldier questioned the practice, one of his commanders told him, "It's better that the Palestinian will explode and not our soldiers."

Where does shame enter here? In his seminar "The Reverse of Psychoanalysis" (1969-1970), Lacan's reaction to the May '68 events makes a much more important point than the decried provocative statement: "What you aspire to as revolutionaries is a master. You will get one." In his critique of protesting students, he surprisingly says, "All you are lacking precisely is a bit of shame." Lacan repeatedly varies this motif, like saying that students "fear they might be carried away by buffoonery. Let us start rather from the fact that buffoonery is already there. Perhaps by mixing in a little shame, who knows, we may be able to hold it back." And he even concludes the Seminar with: "What I put forward for the majority of you is just that: I manage to make you ashamed — not too much but precisely enough."

Jacques-Alain Miller provides the background for this statement by pointing out that we have to read contemporary shamelessness from the perspective of a certain mutation in capitalism — no longer a capitalism that relies on 'repression of enjoyment,' as in Max Weber's famous analysis — but rather one marked by permissiveness where what can sometimes be difficult is prohibiting prohibitions. Lacan doesn't advocate here for a minimum level of morality or repression necessary to prevent social disintegration; on the contrary, he draws attention to what members of the Frankfurt School referred to as "repressive de-sublimation": Today, we witness generalized perversion (openly doing what hysterics only dream about), and as Freud knew well, nowhere is the Unconscious more inaccessible or repressed than in perversion. The catch is that desire is inherently inconsistent and self-contradictory — traversed by what Freud called "primordial repression," which is why permissiveness ends up in self-destructive deadlock giving birth to calls for new Masters. As ongoing waves of new populism demonstrate aptly enough, this new Master's shamelessness far exceeds those old Leftist protesters' shamelessness.

The article first appeared on Žižek Goads And Prods.



Iran's Kazemi calls for patience on new coach Manolopoulos

Sports Desk

As Iran's basketball team has embarked on a new era under Giannis Manolopoulos, captain Arsalan Kazemi says the Greek head coach will need some time to implement his tactical ideas. Manolopoulos, who was appointed to the role in August, got off to a disappointing start to his reign last week as Iran fell to a 78-77 defeat against Qatar in a FIBA Asia Cup qualifier in Doha – a first victory for the home side over the three-time Asian champion in 19 years.

In his first press conference after taking the job, Manolopoulos had pinpointed "the high number of turnovers" as Iran's Achilles' heel in recent major tournaments, and the vulnerability was on full display again in Al Gharafa Sports Club Hall. "We had 21 turnovers [against Qatar's 15] and that is what eventually cost us the defeat," Kazemi said of his team's latest setback, adding: "You can't expect to win a basketball game with such a disappointing figure. The Qatari players capitalized on all of our turnovers, taking the ball and scoring with ease. We will have to work on the weakness."

The Iranian skipper still showed faith with the new head coach to turn things around.

"He is a decent coach and knows all about the game. He

has some finer details in mind, which he's been drilling into the players during training sessions. I believe we need to be patient with him to fully implement his ideas and get to know our national team inside and out, which will take some time," Kazemi said.

Kazemi also believes the Iranian team "needs to revise its preparation methods and plans to move towards the modern-day basketball."

"Unfortunately, we often think that two or three weeks of training would be enough for the team. But in reality, long camps could be exhausting and frustrating for the players. I'm not talking about the European teams, which have completely different conditions, but most of the Asian sides have changed their approach.

"All teams in Asia, from Syria and Palestine to China and Japan, prioritize friendlies over training camps. They play in multiple friendly matches before every qualification window, which leads to more team cohesion. We were the only team in continent to play in the recent qualification window without any friendly games and that clearly impacted our performance against Qatar. I hope that will change for the future games," added the Iranian captain.

Iran's first game in the second window of the Asia Cup qualifiers was called off after Kazakh-



stan refused to travel to Iran over "safety concerns" and was punished with a forfeit loss (20-0) by the international governing body of the sport.

"I'm sure we would have won the game with the support of the Iranian fans anyway,

while it would have been a great opportunity for us to gel as a team and for the new coach to get to know his players better," said Kazemi.

Despite the defeat to Qatar, Iran retained the top spot in Group E of the qualifiers with seven

points – one clear of Qatar, with India and Kazakhstan level on five points.

With the top two progressing to the finals in Jeddah next August, Iran is in pole position to advance ahead of the home game against India and the visit



Iran captain Arsalan Kazemi (1) goes up for a basket during a loss to Qatar in the FIBA Asia Cup qualifiers in Doha, Qatar, on Nov. 25, 2024.
● FIBA

to Kazakhstan in February's final qualification window.

Scores killed in clashes between fans at football match in Guinea



FRANCE 24 – Scores of football fans, including children, were killed in a stampede and as security forces tried to quell clashes during a football match at a crowded stadium in southern Guinea's largest city, according to local media and a coalition of political parties.

The stampede broke out on Sunday afternoon at the Nzerekore city during the final of a local tournament between the Labe and Nzerekore teams in honor of Guinea's military leader, Mamadi Doumbouya, Guinea's Prime Minister Amadou Oury Bah said on the X platform.

The Guinean government said on Monday that around 56 people were

killed and more were wounded in a crush after violence broke out over a contested goal.

"The government condemns the incidents that marred the match between Labe Nzerekore," Bah posted on Facebook, reiterating a "call for calm so as not to impede hospital services from aiding the injured."

Local media reported that security forces tried to use tear gas to restore calm after the chaos that followed a disputed penalty.

"This (the disputed penalty) angered supporters who threw stones. This is how the security services used tear gas," the local Media Guinea reported. It said several of those killed were children while some

of the injured being treated at a regional hospital are in critical condition.

Videos that appeared to be from the scene showed a section of the stadium shouting and protesting the refereeing before the clashes broke out as fans poured onto the field.

People were running as they tried to escape from the stadium, many of them jumping the high fence.

Videos also showed many people lying on the floor in what looked like a hospital as a crowd gathered nearby, some assisting the wounded.

The National Alliance for Alternation and Democracy coalition called for an investigation. It said the tournament was organ-

ised to drum support for the "illegal and inappropriate" political ambition of the military leader.

Guinea has been led by the military since soldiers ousted President Alpha Conde in 2021. It is one of a growing number of West African countries, including Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, where the military has taken power and delayed a return to civilian rule.

Doumbouya overran the president three years ago, saying he was preventing the country from slipping into chaos and chastised the previous government for broken promises. He has, however, been criticized for not meeting the expectations that he raised.

Liverpool 'close to perfection' in Man City win, says Slot

REUTERS – Liverpool had to put in a near-flawless performance to defeat old rivals Manchester City who have so often thwarted their league title ambitions, manager Arne Slot said.

The Reds thoroughly deserved to beat Pep Guardiola's side 2-0 to take a nine-point lead in the Premier League in what was Slot's 18th win of 20 games in charge of Liverpool.

"If you want to win against City you have to be perfect in every part of the game. We came close to perfection," he said, as jubilant fans chanted his name around Anfield as they did midweek after beating Real Madrid in the Champions League.

"Playing against Real Madrid, against Manchester City, teams that are so good and have won so many trophies, coming out and winning against them. We're really happy with these two wins but we also understand we want to achieve more than this."

Emphasizing his injury worries in defence, with only five senior players available, Slot said there was still a long way to go before Liverpool had a trophy in their hands.

"If you want to win any-



thing, it's all about consistency. These teams, like Real Madrid, like City, are all capable of getting the same winning streak that we have, so let's not get carried away by a few wins," he said.

Defenders out

Ahead of a busy December and New Year's fixture list, Slot said defenders Ibrahima Konate and Conor Bradley would remain out for a few weeks, while Kostas Tsimikas was unlikely to be available for another week. Having taken over from the enormously popular Jurgen Klopp, Liverpool's new manager was feted by the crowd throughout Sunday's game and thanked them for giving energy to his team. He lamented that Liverpool did not seal the game earlier, with chance-after-chance going begging, but

said that at least made it a great game for neutrals.

"The amount of chances we miss made it tight at the end. But maybe that's nice for matches like this," he said, adding that he had enjoyed watching past Liverpool-City encounters for that same reason.

"I don't think anyone, including me would have predicted this," he said, referring to his amazing start at Anfield and praising the excellent state Klopp left the club in.

"It has been a good week, but let's not get carried away too much ... I saw Arsenal yesterday (beating West Ham 5-2) and City, they will come back ... Arsenal and City are able to win every game from now till the end. Chelsea are able to win every game. It makes the Premier League so interesting."

Iran, Turkey warn about Syria becoming terrorists' 'safe haven'

International Desk

Iran and Turkey on Monday called for efforts aimed at preventing Syria from becoming "a safe haven" for terrorists following a surprise offensive by militants sweeping across the northwest of the Arab country. "Iran and Turkey agree that Syria should not be allowed to turn into a safe haven for terrorist groups again," Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told a joint press conference attended by his Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan in Ankara. Araghchi also expressed concern about the reactivation of terrorist groups in Syria, which he said has seriously endangered stability and territorial integrity of the Arab country. "The reactivation of Takfiri terrorist groups in northern Syria and their attacks on different areas, including the city of Aleppo, is worrying. The resurgence of terrorism in Syria has seriously

endangered the security, stability, and territorial integrity of Syria, and the consequences of such a dangerous situation will certainly affect all countries, especially Syria's neighbors," Araghchi said during the joint presser. The meeting followed a surprise attack by foreign-backed militants in Syria at the weekend. Araghchi said that destabilizing Syria is an Israeli plot, and no one should ignore the regime's role in this regard. Iran's top diplomat warned that destabilization in Syria could lead to a civil war, killing of civilians, and would be a blow to the economy and people of the country and region.

'Iran stands with Syria'

Also on Monday, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian in a phone call with Syrian president Bashar al-Assad said Tehran is ready to improve cooperation with Syria to overcome the ongoing crisis. "We believe that Syria will once

again overcome the Zionist plots. Iran stands with the Syrian government and people to that end." During the phone call, Assad termed the offensive as an attempt to redraw the regional map in line with US interests. However, Turkey rejected any suggestion that "foreign interference" was behind the offensive. Turkish foreign minister said developments in Syria show the need for the Syrian government to reconcile with its people and the opposition. "The reason for the latest developments in (northern) Syria is that problems in the past 13 years were not solved," Fidan said during the press conference with Araghchi.

'Unconditional support'

Iranian president also held a phone call with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, during which both leaders pledged "unconditional support" for Syria. They also "emphasized the im-



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) and his Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan hold a joint press conference after their meeting in Ankara, Turkey, on December 2, 2024.
● ADEM ALTAN/AFP

portance" of coordinating with Turkey, the Russian side said in its readout of the call. Foreign-backed Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) terrorist group and allied factions broke through government defense lines in Syr-

ia's second largest city Aleppo on Friday and entered the city's western neighborhood. The insurgents launched their shock offensive in Aleppo and Idlib countryside on Wednesday and wrested control of dozens of vil-

lages and towns along the way, including a strategic town south of Aleppo. HTS is an alliance led by Al-Qaeda's former Syria branch, and has faced accusations of human rights abuses.

Islamic Republic 'open' to negotiations, including with US: Zarif

'Pezeshkian wants stability, economic development in Middle East'

Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iran's vice president for strategic affairs, has emphasized the Islamic Republic's willingness to engage in negotiations with the international community, including the United States, to secure peace and stability. In a recent article titled "How Iran Sees the Path to Peace" published in Foreign Affairs, Iran's former foreign minister discussed the country's approach to achieving peace, while also addressing the challenges that Iran's new president will face in pursuing his foreign policy agenda, expressing confidence in Masoud Pezeshkian's ability to weather these difficulties. "But Pezeshkian is well prepared to handle all the difficulties that will arise over the coming years," wrote the associate professor of faculty of World Studies at University of Tehran. "Pezeshkian recognizes that the world is transitioning into a post-polar era where global actors can simultaneously cooperate and compete across different areas. He has adopted a flexible foreign policy, prioritizing diplomatic engagement and constructive dialogue rather than relying on outdated paradigms. His

vision for Iran's security is holistic, encompassing both traditional defense capabilities and the enhancement of human security through improvements in the economic, social, and environmental sectors. "Pezeshkian wants stability and economic development in the Middle East. He wants to collaborate with neighboring Arab countries and to strengthen relations with Iran's allies. But he also wants to engage constructively with the West. His government is ready to manage tensions with the United States, which has also just elected a new president. Pezeshkian hopes for equal-footed negotiations regarding the nuclear deal—and potentially more," he stressed. "Yet as Pezeshkian has made clear, Iran will not capitulate to unreasonable demands." Zarif called this opportunity a "historic moment for stability that the world should not let slip. Tehran certainly won't." He said, "Iran, under its new administration, plans to improve relations with neighboring states to help create a regional order that promotes stability, wealth, and security." To tackle the challenges in the re-

gion, Zarif said, "We will work to pursue economic integration, energy security, freedom of navigation, environmental protection, and interfaith dialogue". Eventually, these efforts could lead to a new regional arrangement that reduces the Persian Gulf's reliance on external powers and encourages stakeholders to address conflicts through dispute resolution mechanisms. To do so, the region's countries may pursue treaties, create institutions, enact policies, and pass legislative measures. The former diplomat said that despite the obstacles and differences, "The Persian Gulf must move on. Iran's vision aligns with the interests of Arab countries, all of which also want a more stable and prosperous region for the sake of future generations. Iran and the Arab world should thus be able to work through their differences. Iran's support for Palestinian resistance could help kick-start such cooperation." Zarif concluded that engagement with Iran, coupled with a commitment to multilateral diplomacy, can help build a framework for global security and stability in the Persian Gulf.

Chinese vice-premier due in Iran today

Foreign Ministry's spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei said a visit by a Chinese delegation to Iran today is in line with implementation of the 25-year partnership agreement signed between the two countries. In a weekly press conference on Monday, Baghaei said Iran has extensive relations with China and that diplomatic exchanges between the two countries are common. Chinese Foreign Ministry's spokesperson Lin Jian announced on Monday that Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Guoqing



Zhang Guoqing

will visit Iran from Dec. 3 to 4, at the invitation of Iran's Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref.

Ex-Israeli minister stresses regime's ethnic cleansing in Gaza

A former Israeli defense minister has caused a firestorm by accusing Israel of carrying out ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in northern Gaza. "Conquering, annexing, ethnic cleansing - look at northern Gaza," Moshe Ya'alon, who served for three decades in the Israel Defense Forces, told Israel's Democracy TV. The interviewer expressed surprise at Ya'alon's use of the phrase "ethnic cleansing," asking, "Is that what you think - that we're on the way there?" "Why 'on the way'?" he responded. "What's happening there? There's no



Moshe Ya'alon

Beit Lahia. There's no Beit Hanoun. They're currently operating in Jabalya, and essentially, they're cleaning the area of Arabs," he said.

Tehran's preemptive measure ...

This stance by the vice president is being interpreted by political analysts as a political message indicating Iran's readiness to take a positive approach with the United States to manage or reduce tensions. This is not an isolated instance, as Ali Larijani, an advisor to the Iranian leader, had previously voiced similar sentiments in an interview with a news website, stating that Iran was prepared to discuss a new nuclear deal with the new US administration. Larijani's remarks also generated considerable buzz in both domestic and international political circles, with many analysts interpreting them as a political signal from Iran indicating its willingness to engage positively with the US. Zarif had previously stated in a speech about Iran's approach during Trump's

presidency, "Iran must come to believe that it is a player. Today, all countries are trying to steer Trump's presence in the White House to their advantage, and we must also take action and consider our national interests." It seems that Ali Larijani and Zarif's positions, regardless of whether they lead to a specific outcome or not, and irrespective of the Trump administration's response, indicate a new direction in Tehran's foreign policy—one that is active rather than reactive. In fact, Tehran appears to be preparing for a confrontation with the new US administration and may even have some initiatives in reserve. The alternative approach would be a passive and reactive one, where the Iranian government waits for Donald Trump to settle into the White House and define his foreign policy to-

wards Iran, responding accordingly. In light of Iran's inaction and inertia, it is clear that opponents and anti-Iranian lobbies will not remain passive; they will strive to influence an anti-Iranian foreign policy. Therefore, it seems that we can take this constructive approach in Iran's diplomatic apparatus - an active and proactive one - as a good omen. In the same vein, we can also mention the start of a new round of talks between Iran and Europe. These talks could have been put on hold until the new administration took office in the US, but they were not, and according to the author's information, the next round of talks will take place before Trump's inauguration. These actions and stances can be interpreted within the framework of Zarif's words, where all countries are

trying to steer Trump's presence in the White House to their advantage. It seems that Iran is also making an effort in this direction to secure its own interests. Apparently, the Europeans have also anticipated in their talks with Iranian officials that Trump's approach towards the Iranian nuclear program will be different from the previous one. Iran's willingness "for equal-footed negotiations regarding the nuclear deal—and potentially more" will naturally stir up the opposition to talks in Iran and may even lead to internal opposition blocking Iran's approach to managing tensions with the US. However, the simultaneous announcement of Zarif's stance as vice president and Ali Larijani's stance as an advisor to the Leader suggests that Iran's approach to the US under Trump's presidency is not

based on a whim or a partisan agenda, but rather on the assessments of higher authorities in the decision-making process. Furthermore, important issues such as nuclear negotiations have always been based on guidelines defined by higher authorities, and diplomats carry out their duties within the framework of those guidelines. Therefore, it does not seem that the obstacles created by the minority opposition to negotiations can undermine Iran's defined approach to constructive engagement with the world within the framework of the governing principles of "dignity, wisdom, and expediency". Now, it remains to be seen how American politicians will react to Iran's forward-looking approach - whether they will seize the opportunity to reduce tensions or continue to choose the costly path of confrontation for both sides.

To separate or not to separate nat'l and int'l sections of Fajr Film Festival?

Which one benefits Iranian cinema more?

The Fajr Film Festival, one of Iran's most celebrated cinematic events in Iran, is set to experience its 43rd edition soon. Over the years, the festival's national and international sections have experienced a tumultuous relationship, oscillating between being held separately and being combined. This has sparked a heated debate regarding whether the festival should continue to operate in tandem or pursue a separate course, and which strategy would ultimately yield greater benefits for Iranian cinema. In his inaugural decree concerning the cinematic landscape, Raed Faridzadeh, the head of the Cinema Organization of Iran (COI), put forth significant changes for the Fajr Film Festival. Notably, he announced the appointment of Manouchehr Shahsavari as the festival's new secretary, replacing Mohammad Khazaei. Plus, Faridzadeh revealed that the international section of the Fajr Film Festival will now operate independently from the national section. This strategic move aims to restore the festival's autonomy and elevate it to the status of premier film festivals worldwide, free from political interference and undue influence.



Some experts argue that the festival's international section should be held separately, as it allows for a more focused and specialized event that can attract more foreign filmmakers and industry professionals.

In October 2021, shortly after Mohammad Khazaei took the helm of the COI, it was revealed that the national and international sections of the Fajr Film Festival would be held together for the first time in five years. This unexpected decision came as a surprise, particularly given that the international section had only recently been registered with the International Federation of Film Producers Associations (FIAPF) in May 2021. While the registration was heralded as a significant milestone for Iranian cinema, it simultaneously raised doubts about the festival's future direction. These concerns proved to be well-founded, as just a month following the new administration's takeover, the festival's format was altered, resulting in the merger of the international section with the national section. The decision to merge the two sections was met with criticism from some experts, who argued that it would undermine the festival's international credibility and make it harder for Iranian films to compete on the global

stage. Others argued that the merger would make the festival more streamlined and efficient. However, it seems that the new management has had a change of heart, and the international section will be held separately once again. This decision has been welcomed by some, who argue that it will allow the festival to maintain its international reputation and attract more foreign filmmakers and industry professionals.

Cultural diplomacy



Speaking in favor of the separation of the national and international sections of the Fajr Film Festival, Mehrzad Danesh, a film critic, said that the event has the potential to play a significant role in the country's cultural diplomacy. He believes that if international film festival standards are met, it can have a constructive im-

act on the country's cultural landscape. The Fajr Film Festival, held annually in Iran, gained a high level of recognition globally in recent years, which has added significant value to Iran's cinematic and international reputation. Danesh hopes that the festival will continue to thrive, especially considering the growing cultural influence of neighboring countries in the region. However, he expresses regret that Iran, with its rich cinematic heritage, is now competing with countries that had no film industry just a few years ago. Despite this, Danesh emphasizes the need to revive Iran's cultural standing with determination. But the question remains, what guarantees are there that the festival will not be merged again in the future? Some experts argue that the festival's registration with FIAPF should be enough to ensure its independence, but others point out that the festival's fate is ultimately tied to the whims of the government. One solution proposed by some experts is to change the name of the festival, which would make it less susceptible to political interference. Others argue that the festival should be given a fixed date on the calendar to prevent it from being moved or merged with other events.

According to reports, the festival's registration with FIAPF was in danger of being revoked due to the change in format and date. However, thanks to the efforts of Mohammad Mehdi Asgarpour, the deputy of FIAPF, the festival was able to maintain

its registration, albeit with a change in date from May to February. Some experts argue that the festival's international section should be held separately, as it allows for a more focused and specialized event that can attract more foreign filmmakers and industry professionals. Others argue that the festival should be held together, as it allows for a more comprehensive and inclusive event that showcases the best of Iranian cinema. Ultimately, the decision to hold the international section of the Fajr Film Festival separately is a positive step for Iranian cinema. It allows the festival to maintain its international reputation and attract more foreign filmmakers and industry professionals. However, it is crucial that the festival's organizers take steps to ensure its independence and stability, to prevent it from being undermined by political interference or bureaucratic inefficiencies.

Resilience amid challenges

In recent years, the festival has faced many changes and challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced the festival to be held online. Despite these challenges, the festival has continued to be a major event in the Iranian film industry, and its international section has attracted many foreign filmmakers and industry professionals. It is also worth noting that the festival's registration with FIAPF is a significant achievement for Iranian cinema, and it is crucial that the festival's organizers take steps to maintain this registration

and ensure the festival's independence and stability. As one expert noted, "The Fajr Film Festival is a unique opportunity for Iranian filmmakers to showcase their work to a global audience. It is crucial that the festival's organizers take steps to ensure its independence and stability, to prevent it from being undermined by political interference or bureaucratic inefficiencies." Another expert added, "The festival's registration with FIAPF is a significant achievement for Iranian cinema, and it is crucial that the festival's organizers take steps to maintain this registration and ensure the festival's independence and stability."

Bright future ahead

In a nutshell, the Fajr Film Festival's decision to hold its international section separately is a positive step for Iranian cinema. However, it is crucial that the festival's organizers take steps to ensure its independence and stability, to prevent it from being undermined by political interference or bureaucratic inefficiencies.

With the right support and resources, the festival can continue to grow and thrive, providing a platform for Iranian filmmakers to showcase their work to a global audience.

