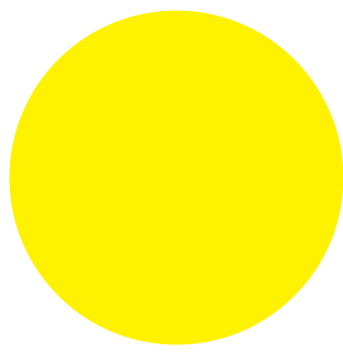


Incurring losses over continued presence on FATF blacklist 'undeniable': Deputy minister



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Misreading Iran: How global chaos fuels false narratives

By Mohammad Javad Zarif
Iran's vice president for strategic affairs

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

There is a growing narrative in certain quarters that suggests that Iran, beset by regional pressures, economic challenges and domestic dissent, is shifting its policy toward building nuclear weapons as a last-ditch survival, or deterrence tactic. This view is gaining traction with those who argue that factors such as the setbacks faced by Hezbollah, the collapse of Assad's government in Syria, and Iran's economic strains are evidence of desperation among the leadership.

Some have even cited this perspective to call for heightened US "maximum pressure" strategies to bring Iran to its knees; including crippling Iran's economy, fomenting internal unrest, and militarily targeting its nuclear facilities. This perspective, however, not only misrepresents Iran's strategic calculus but also reflects a deeper issue: the chaotic state of the world driven largely by Israel's unchecked actions in the last year-and-a-half that distorts analysis and feeds dangerous misperceptions.

Contrary to claims that Iran's regional allies provide it a lifeline, Tehran's strategic deterrence has never depended on these relationships. Liberation movements such as Hezbollah, the Houthis, and others share ideological ties with Iran but operate independently, driven by their own local objectives. Mischaracterizing these allies as "proxies" oversimplifies the complexity of their affiliations and minimizes Iran's self-reliant defense capabilities.

Resistance to Israeli aggression, occupation and savagery started decades before the revolution. Motivated and energized by the ability of Iranians to resist a globally sponsored war on them by Iraq immediately following their victory over the Shah and his forces, who were also supported by global powers East and West, gave the people of Palestine and Lebanon an extra boost to redouble their resistance against Israel at the height of Ariel Sharon's savagery (which earned him infamy as "the butcher of Sabra and Shatila").

Those who are glorifying Netanyahu's savagery and celebrating the death of "resistance" should remember the Islamic Jihad was created in 1981, Hezbollah was established in 1982, and Hamas in 1987. What ties the timing of the establishment of these groups is not the pouring of Iranian weaponry and missiles into their depots, as Iran was then desperately seeking to procure them itself to defend against Saddam's forces armed to the teeth by American AWACS, French Mirage jets and Exocets missiles, British Chieftain tanks, Russian Mig jets and Scud missiles and German chemical weapons. The reason these groups were established was instead Sharon's invasion and occupation of Lebanon and the expulsion of the PLO to Tunisia, creating the illusion that resistance was finished. It was not then; and it is not now. It only grew then, and it will grow now.

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Araghchi calls Iran-Afghanistan security, stability interconnected

Taliban vows to even 'share single drop of water with Iranian brothers'



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) talks with Taliban government Prime Minister Mullah Hassan Akhund during a meeting in Kabul, Afghanistan, on January 26, 2025. IRNA

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Direct Iran-Oman shipping line soon to be launched

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Salimi in charge as Iranian weightlifting enters new era

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On Trump's complete reversal of his predecessor's policies

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

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Iran should reboot relationship with Afghanistan

By Jafar Haghpanah
Afghanistan affairs expert

OPINION

There are numerous regional issues that have consistently impacted relations between Iran and Afghanistan, including drug trafficking, terrorism, extremism, the presence of major powers in the region, transit routes and security arrangements. Prioritizing these issues is crucial and it is important to gauge the level of coordination and consensus among various Iranian organizations involved. Any hasty decisions without clearly defined priorities and a full meeting of minds can lead to half-baked measures. The lack of coordination among entities responsible for Iran-Afghanistan relations remains a persistent concern. Certain military, intelligence and political bodies play a direct role in these relations, while other organizations involved in economic, social, cultural, transit, industrial, and energy sectors operate on the sidelines, which are equally important and should not be overlooked. Over the past 40 months since the Taliban's takeover in Afghanistan, the absence of coordinated efforts among

different sectors has been evident. The crux of the matter lies in establishing a unified approach. However, serious challenges and disputes persist, as exemplified by the Afghan refugee issue. The lack of a shared understanding of fundamental concepts like national interests and security and their relation to Afghanistan is problematic. Moreover, it remains unclear whether Afghanistan, despite its importance, costs, threats and opportunities presented to Iran over the past 20 years, is among top priorities of Iran's foreign policy agenda. Afghanistan has been relegated to the back burner, overshadowed by Middle Eastern affairs. Due to a disconnect between decision-making think tanks and elites and the marginalization of experts, many priorities have not been properly laid out. The absence of a clear neighborhood policy in dealing with certain neighbors is a shortcoming in Iran's foreign policy. Given the principle that national security begins with its neighbors, Afghanistan is far more noteworthy than some regions currently dominating Iran's foreign policy agenda and it has greater implications for Iran's interests and opportunities.

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