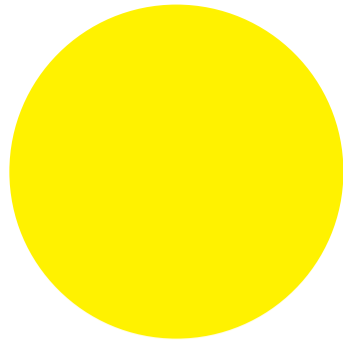


Incurring losses over continued presence on FATF blacklist 'undeniable': Deputy minister



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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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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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Direct Iran-Oman shipping line soon to be launched

Economy Desk

The head of the Iran-Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce said some obstacles that hindered opening bank accounts for Iranians in Oman has been resolved and businesspeople are allowed to open accounts for themselves and their companies in the Persian Gulf country, adding that a direct Iran-Oman shipping line will soon be launched.

Jamal Razeqi-Jahromi said that while Iran and Oman have maintained strong political relations over the past 70 years, trade between the two countries has not kept pace with their diplomatic ties.

Although trade volume has grown by 42% to 60% annually over the past three years, the initial trade value is so low that the goal of reaching \$5 billion in trade by 2024, as envisioned by the joint chamber, remains unmet.

Razeqi-Jahromi projected that, at best, trade between the two countries could reach \$3 billion to \$3.5 billion by the end of the year (March 20).

He emphasized that Iran-Oman trade should reach at least \$20 billion annually, warning that without achieving this target, the close political ties between the two nations would yield little economic benefit.

During the recent meeting of

Iranian and Omani ministers, a joint committee was proposed to address obstacles hindering the growth of bilateral trade.

Razeqi-Jahromi noted that trade tariffs had been a significant barrier, but this issue was resolved during the recent visit, with both sides agreeing to implement a preferential trade agreement that would reduce tariffs to zero.

He also highlighted progress in facilitating cargo transportation between the two countries.

A major challenge has been the lack of a direct and regular shipping line between Iran and Oman. The Omani side has agreed to cooperate, offering to cover 50% of the required subsidy for establishing the shipping line for six months to a year, with the remaining 50% to be covered by Iran's Trade Promotion Organization.

Razeqi-Jahromi explained that while daily shipping between the two countries is not currently economically viable due to insufficient cargo volume, the subsidy would help offset the costs of operating the line.

He added that for the past two years, Iranian producers have been advised to transfer the final 30% of their production chain to Oman, enabling them to export finished products through Oman and benefit from its zero-tariff trade agreements



with 16 countries, including the United States.

Razeqi-Jahromi acknowledged that one of the main challenges for Iranian investors in Oman has been the difficulty of opening bank accounts. While some of these issues have been re-

solved, others are still under review. Economic figures investing in Oman can now open accounts for themselves and their companies.

"The implementation of the preferential trade agreement, alongside these achievements,

could boost Iran's exports through Oman."

He also noted that last year, Oman, with a population of 5 million, attracted over 40 billion Omani rials (approximately \$140 billion) in foreign investment.

Razeqi-Jahromi concluded that

Iran and Oman have the potential for cooperation across all industries, but realizing this potential requires overcoming sanctions and addressing challenges stemming from Iran's non-membership in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

CIT minister stresses need to expand Tehran-Riyadh relations



Economy Desk

Iran's Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Sattar Hashemi, met with Abdullah bin Saud Al-Anzi, the Saudi ambassador to Tehran, to discuss opportunities for bilateral cooperation, particularly in the fields of communications

and information technology. During the meeting, Hashemi emphasized the importance of expanding relations between the two countries at various levels.

Hashemi highlighted key areas for collaboration, including data transit from Iran to Saudi Arabia and from Saudi Arabia to the Mediterranean Sea and Africa, as well as data transit from Saudi Arabia to Iran and onward to Afghanistan, Central Asia, China, and the Caucasus region.

He described these initiatives as among the most significant topics that could be prioritized. The minister also pointed to the development of communication infrastructure, cybersecurity,

platform security, and e-governance as additional areas where the two nations could work together.

Hashemi expressed Iran's readiness to share technical and scientific expertise and to facilitate the exchange of delegations and specialists in communications and information technology. For his part, Ambassador Al-Anzi affirmed the importance of strengthening bilateral relations and expressed Saudi Arabia's willingness to expand cooperation with Iran across various sectors.

The meeting underscored both countries' commitment to enhancing ties and exploring new avenues for collaboration.

Iran's free zones council:

Khoy eyed for joint free trade zone with Turkey

Economy Desk

The capacities and challenges related to developing infrastructure for the establishment of a first joint free trade zone between Iran and Turkey in the Khoy region of West Azerbaijan Province were reviewed, said Reza Masrou, the secretary of the Supreme Council of Free Trade-Industrial and Special Economic Zones of Iran. The announcement was made during a visit to the industrial zone, production units, the Razi border terminal and Khoy Airport in the north-western province.

Masrou stated that Khoy's



valuable infrastructure, including its airport, industrial zone, and border terminal, makes it a viable candidate for the creation of a joint free trade and industrial zone with Van, eastern Turkey. He added that the zone, if

established, would mark the first joint cooperation experience between Iran and Turkey and could lead to a significant transformation in the regional economy and an increase in trade exchanges between the two countries.

Misreading Iran: How ...

As you examine the history of these groups since their inception, they have always operated as the exigencies of Palestine and Lebanon required and not when the strategic requirements of Iran necessitated. While Iran provided these groups with assistance and paid a heavy price for its principled position of support of the oppressed, not even a single instance can be found when these groups acted on behalf of Iran, or as its "proxy", according to a dictionary definition.

Iran is now capable of defending itself without a need for proxies. It has spent decades building a formidable defense infrastructure. While Iran continues to rely on its people as the most import-

ant barrier against foreign aggression and external coercion, the country's military innovations – from advanced missile technology to cutting-edge drones – have allowed it to maintain its security independently of external support. These achievements demonstrate a long-term strategy designed to ensure stability and sovereignty, irrespective of regional dynamics.

While setbacks to its allies, such as to Hezbollah, might temporarily impact Iran's influence, they do not compromise its core deterrence. This autonomy has always been central to Tehran's military posture and underscores its resilience amid external pressures.

Today, misreading and misunderstanding Iran is result of pundits grappling

with the chaos of today's world, especially in West Asia. At the heart of this chaos lies Israel's unchecked impunity, which has shattered international norms and created a dangerous precedent for states' behavior. Israel's actions in Gaza have become emblematic of this impunity. The indiscriminate bombing of hospitals, residential areas, and critical infrastructure has resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians. The blockade of humanitarian aid has left millions without food, water, medicine or even heat to keep their babies alive in the winter. Beyond Gaza, Israel's conduct continues to erode stability across the region. Routine airstrikes in Syria and Lebanon have targeted civilians, jour-

nalists, and humanitarian workers, while its use of advanced technology to weaponize communication devices exemplifies its disregard for ethical and legal norms.

This pattern of behavior, met with silence or tacit approval from powerful actors, has distorted analysts' interpretations of state behavior. In such a lawless environment, even defensive actions by nations like Iran can be misread as aggressive or desperate.

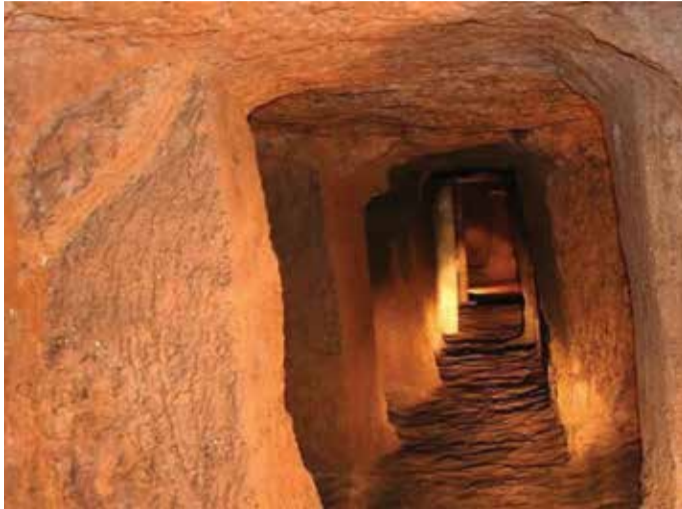
Iran's actions, far from signaling a shift toward nuclear weapons, reflect a long-standing strategy of maintaining sovereignty and stability through self-reliance. Tehran's deterrence framework remains consistent with its approach to security for its sovereign-

ty. Rather than reacting to perceived desperation as some suggest, Iran continues to act in line with its established strategic objectives.

The fixation on Iran as a potential nuclear threat also diverts attention from the broader issue of Israel's role in destabilizing the region. Its unchecked actions not only exacerbate humanitarian crises but also undermine global norms, creating an environment conducive to nuclear proliferation.

The claims of a nuclear pivot are a reflection not of Tehran's strategy but of a global order in disarray. Reframing the narrative requires confronting the real drivers of instability and reaffirming the principles of accountability and justice.

Abarkuh; a historical gem with secrets beneath its surface



Iranica Desk

The governor of Abarkuh, a city in Yazd Province, recently announced the discovery of an underground city located beneath five houses in the city's historical area. He explained that, based on old aerial photographs and the investigations conducted, it appears that people in the past built their homes and important structures on rocky substrates. In an interview with IRNA, Hosseini Hatami elaborated that the spaces between these rocky formations were transformed into gardens by earlier inhabitants. They also created pathways beneath these sections to facilitate easier access, enhance security, manage water transfer, and support their daily activities. Hatami further noted that the presence of small stone chambers in the historical houses of Abarkuh, which are situated beneath the rocky substrate, suggests that these chambers had specific utilities in the past. Consequently, studies and research on this topic have commenced, leading to the discovery of a sub-

terranean settlement. He highlighted that there is significant potential for discovering more examples of this underground complex in other neighborhoods and possibly throughout the entire historic area of Abarkuh. Ongoing research has already uncovered a beautiful waterway made of carved stones. Hatami mentioned that the stones used in the construction of this waterway are similar to those found in the Qajar-era buildings in the region. He emphasized that, due to the importance of this discovery, the archaeological project is still in progress. Additionally, Hatami explained that the ancient inhabitants of Abarkuh constructed steps in the houses along these tunnels while excavating water transfer pathways, which facilitated access. This arrangement allowed them to manage and control the water flow while also utilizing the qanat water for their own needs. He noted that the flow of water through these hallways, located beneath the rocky substrate of

the city, created a cool and serene environment during the hot seasons. This characteristic likely contributed to the gradual addition of large halls with alcoves around them to the underground complex, providing the desert inhabitants of Abarkuh with rest areas and possibly even residences during the scorching summer days. Hatami added, "It is said that another purpose of this subterranean complex was as a hideout or refuge during times of war or foreign invasions." According to Hatami, investigations indicate that approximately 60 hectares of the total 170 hectares of the historic fabric of Abarkuh are dedicated to these channels. He emphasized that following the drying up of some qanats, numerous constructions were made throughout the city, with their sewage systems routed through these hidden pathways. Unfortunately, this has made it impossible to reopen the entire system, and currently, only a portion has been excavated. To date, 400 historical sites have

been identified in Abarkuh, with 147 of these registered on Iran's National Heritage List. This includes 129 immovable properties and 12 intangible assets. Abarkuh is divided into two districts and includes the towns of Abarkuh and Mehrdasht. It consists of four rural districts and 35 villages, with a population of approximately 60,000 people. The county is located 140 kilometers southwest of Yazd.

About Abarkuh

Abarkuh is known for its rich cultural heritage and historical significance, reflecting a blend of ancient Persian architecture and desert landscapes. The city features several notable landmarks, including the ancient Abarkuh Cypress, which is estimated to be over 4,000 years old, making it one of the oldest living trees in the world. This cypress is not only a symbol of resilience but also a testament to the region's long-standing connection to nature. The city is characterized by its traditional adobe houses, nar-



row alleys, and vibrant bazaars, which offer visitors a glimpse into the daily lives of its residents. Abarkuh's strategic location along ancient trade routes has historically made it a hub for commerce and cultural exchange. In addition to its historical sites, Abarkuh is surrounded by stunning natural landscapes, including the nearby mountains and desert areas, which attract tour-

ists and nature enthusiasts. The region's climate, marked by hot summers and mild winters, contributes to its agricultural activities, particularly the cultivation of date palms and various fruits. Overall, Abarkuh stands as a remarkable example of Iran's rich history and cultural diversity, making it a fascinating destination for those interested in exploring the heritage of this ancient land.

Preserving nature and heritage in Jamshidiyeh Park of Tehran

Jamshidiyeh Park, also known as the Stone Garden, is located in Tehran at the end of Shahid Bahonar Street (Niavaran) and spans approximately 10 hectares. The park features four entrances, with the first at an elevation of 1,820 meters above sea level and the highest at 2,100 meters. Construc-

tion of the park began in 1977. Jamshidiyeh Park is bordered by Kolakchal Mountain to the north, Dolat Garden to the south, Jamshidiyeh Street to the east, and Kolakchal Road to the west. Nestled in the foothills of the Alborz Mountains, it lies in the northern outskirts of Tehran, within

the western corner of Jamshidiyeh's water channel, surrounded by a hidden mountain. The park was built on the site of an old private garden which was later handed over to the government for public use and transformed into a mountainous park while retaining its original name.

Jamshidiyeh Park features a unique landscape with rocky formations, cascading waterfalls, and lush greenery, making it a popular recreational area for locals and visitors seeking a peaceful escape from the city's hustle and bustle. The park was designed to preserve the structure of the old garden, aligning

with the area's geology and the surrounding natural rocky landscape, while maintaining the essence of traditional Iranian gardens. Notable features include a lake, an adjacent waterfall, and stone fountains that create a special ambiance. The park's design adheres to the principles of garden aesthetics, reflecting the

spirit of Iranian gardens in a contemporary manner. Upon entering, visitors can appreciate the inscriptions on the black metal gates, which blend elements of Persian calligraphy with modern graphic art. A significant draw of Jamshidiyeh Park is its proximity to the main route leading to Kalakchal Shel-

ter, a popular starting point for mountaineers aiming to conquer the peak. The park also offers amenities such as an amphitheater, a restaurant, and parking facilities. While spring and summer are ideal for exploring the park due to favorable weather, its accessibility ensures enjoyment throughout the year.



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

By Amir Mollae Mozaffari
Staff writer

OPINION

On his first day in office, Donald Trump once again signed a flurry of executive orders. This time, he was even more unapologetic in rolling back a larger number of key policies of his predecessor on issues including immigration, the environment, and diversity initiatives. In a speech on January 20, Trump said he was revoking almost 80 "disruptive, radical executive actions of the previous administration."

Obviously, implementing the president's executive orders would take considerable time as is, not to mention that many of these orders will be challenged in court and may never see the light of day in the end. However, what's done is done. Already, US troops are surging to the country's border with Mexico, refugee flights have been canceled, some scientists are barred from finishing their work and shaping them into policies, and some federal workers are told to stay home from the office while their jobs are being evaluated.

Granted, some of those policies were definitely lacking in vision or efficiency and some others were expected to be reversed by Trump since he explicitly cited them as campaign promises. So, if one goes looking for a wave of outraged Americans, one would find them almost exclusively among Democrats and independents. The Republicans who voted for Trump were expectedly jubilant, but that can hardly be enough criteria for judging a president's attempt at overhauling the system.

To be sure, this isn't an unprecedented practice, but the fact that it was done on a president's first day in office is rather unique to the United States. Most other countries in the world currently lack an equivalent of executive presidential orders, especially one with such extensive powers and implications. So, reversals have to go through their respective parliaments and may very well die there. However, since elections usually end up handing both the keys to the executive branch and the legislative branch to a single party or coalition, the road to achieving such reversals is not so bumpy. So, it bodes well to discuss the likely consequences of such sharp, blanket reversals in policies, wherever they may happen.



Lost time, effort, progress

Abolishing ongoing policies and initiatives in many cases would amount to reinventing the wheel. I would, again, happily contend that the incoming leader of a country has (almost) every right to govern his people as he sees fit; after all, they hopefully voted for such changes. However, there has to be a happy medium where such U-turns don't seem to be out of pure hatred for whatever the predecessor stood for, right or wrong. It's not like most parties stand on the extremes of political spectrums. For example, the Democratic Party of the United States generally sits on the center-left of the American political spectrum, while the Republican Party is moving more and more toward the far-right under Donald Trump but still has a long way to go as evidenced by the fact that Trump has his quarrels with ultra-right parties. Time is precious, especially in these extremely competitive

times, and the energy of the fresh administration can arguably be better spent elsewhere if it's inevitably going to re-introduce some of those policies with little to no changes.

Reason or loyalty?

Next, we have to consider how government employees and contractors must feel about adopting reasonable and scientifically sound policies. Watching all this unfold, there has to be a moment when they would question whether the leadership wants reason or loyalty out of them. It doesn't help that in his inaugural address, Trump said, "We will immediately restore the integrity, competency, and loyalty of America's government." Rumors were already circulating for months following the release of Project 2025 that under Trump, the criteria for evaluating federal workers would be how much they are willing to go against their own common sense to fulfill what the president will ask



US President Donald Trump signs a stack of executive orders in the Oval Office of the White House on his first day in office on January 20, 2025.

● EVAN VUCCI/AP

of them.

Confronted by this dilemma, three scenarios can be imagined: Either, one, the government workers will simply resign, just to be replaced by fresh, possibly inexperienced blood. Or, two, they would continue working but do that unmotivated and without the least amount of creativity as they won't wholeheartedly agree with the general direction. Or finally, three, they will work against the government whenever they can; old and new workers who care more about the end result of policies will find loopholes to work around restrictions and make their preferred policies irreversible, creating a vicious circle that would haunt the system onward.

At cost of people's trust

Most states around the world have already been losing the trust of their people at an alarming rate. Even though the *raison d'être* of the executive branch is to implement the will of the people — whether it is implied in their vote or explicitly declared by their representatives in the parliament — people are feeling more and more like the government wants what is best for its leaders, not for their subjects. Doing an instant 180 on almost every key policy only exacerbates this prevailing feeling. It indicates a new norm, where the world is to be seen in black and white, not shades of grey; correcting course is to be a thing of the past, and petty rivalry is to be the downfall of the nation.

Handicapped in int'l arenas

Finally, one has to consider international partners when the incoming president so sharply revokes his predecessor's orders



Doing an instant 180 on almost every key policy only exacerbates this prevailing feeling of distrust in the government. It indicates a new norm, where the world is to be seen in black and white, not shades of grey; correcting course is to be a thing of the past, and petty rivalry is to be the downfall of the nation.

and achievements. A decline in trust is bound to rear its ugly head again, this time in much more tangible ways. When allies, enemies, and neutral partners see this, they will be well within the realm of reasons to ask for guarantees that you would not renege on your commitments and policies just because you lost an election — especially to an electoral college, of all. Alternatively, they may, again, reasonably ask for more concessions, just so that they would have reaped some reward just before the inevitable volte-face. None of these scenarios would be pleasant or even convenient for either side; both would have very much preferred to not live under the fear of a change of heart in voters, but this is the reality we are all living now.

The US politics, in particular, in recent days was full of such slippery slopes; from the outgoing president Joe Biden pardoning those related to him and anyone who probably had mumbled something against Trump in advance to Trump himself going after 51 former intelligence officials who "falsely suggest[ed]" that an initial news story about Hunter Biden's "improper disclosure of sensitive government information" was a Russian disinformation campaign. Those who would argue that we're blowing stuff out of proportion we would kindly remind that the US president has already slipped down one of those slopes, with a pardoning order of his own that fully exonerated more than 1,500 people for their role in the siege of the US Capitol. Due process be damned; all hail partisanship, I guess.



US President Donald Trump (C) takes in the applause during the January 20, 2025, inauguration ceremonies as his predecessor Joe Biden (R) looks on with discontent in the Rotunda of the US Capitol.

● CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES



Trump's second administration: Opportunity or threat?

By Mohammad
Mohajeri
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By Fayaz Zahed
Political analyst

PERSPECTIVE

With Donald Trump's administration in power, Iran has found itself facing a range of events and choices. Analyzing the upcoming conditions will assist decision-makers and stakeholders determining suitable approaches. Several key issues regarding this matter are addressed below:

1 It seems that Trump, while aiming to continue some strategies from his first term, has fundamentally changed tactics in pursuit of his objectives. The sidelining of the Pompeo-Bolton-Hook triangle and the selection of figures like JD Vance, alongside the involvement of figures like Elon Musk, indicates a more pragmatic strategy. By opting for more conciliatory methods rather than focusing solely on aggressive tactics, his recent tweet about not promoting hawkish personalities symbolizes that Trump is keen on conflict, but not in a military sense. He is an expert in trade wars and tariffs.

2 The dissolution of the Middle East team and the appointment of Steve Witkoff and Morgan Ortagus as Middle Eastern affairs officials, according to Western media analysis, is a chance to revive diplomacy. Ortagus, whose main expertise lies in real estate transactions, is leveraging his successful experiences from the Gaza conflict to secure a lucrative deal for America. Yet, we all know that real estate brokers are more focused on maximizing their gains, often at any cost, rather than prioritizing fairness.

3 The biggest blunder in strategy stems from a misjudgment of one's own situation and that of the other parties involved. Excessive self-importance is dangerous, while self-deprecation is equally misguided and meaningless.

As Iran, even though our playing cards have diminished over the past years, we still remain the most significant country in West Asia. Due to wrong approaches and pressure from our adversaries, we have lost some of our advantages, but thanks to our history, geography, and rich cultural heritage, we still possess enough leverage to compel both ourselves and the United States to arrive at a correct assessment of each other.

4 Both Imam Khomeini and the Leader [Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei] have repeatedly emphasized that the severance of relations between Iran and the US cannot last forever. Now, after establishing strategic agreements with China and Russia, it's time to make the next move. If we are ever to enter into comprehensive negotiations with the United States, today is one of those critical choices.

A new government has taken office on both sides. The moderate government of Pezeshkian, backed by popular support and the Leader, is in play. The experience of the JCPOA (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) negotiations and the ongoing behind-the-scenes talks is in the mix. If both sides are genuinely committed to dialogue, they can focus on the matter of lifting sanctions (which is currently in our best interest) with dignity and wisdom.

5 In several recent speeches, the Leader has wisely avoided any remarks that would indicate opposition to new innovations. The wisdom of the Leader suggests that perhaps he has requested trusted individuals and institutions to prepare reports on this topic. We must acknowledge that Pezeshkian's government is one of the limited opportunities before us. Should Pezeshkian fail to resolve the sanctions issue, he will neither gain the trust of his domestic audi-



ence nor will he be able to tackle crises and shortages.

6 We recognize Masoud Pezeshkian for his honesty and integrity. He has a good rapport with the Leader. If his evaluation pertains to resolving international issues, he must speak candidly and straightforwardly with the Leader. The Leader spoke of an 8% growth rate. This is achievable, but securing his approval without lifting sanctions and unlocking the national economy is impossible. If Iran fails to reach a reasonable agreement, we should not doubt that trade pressures on China will drastically reduce Iran's oil sales. We must, for once, take decisive action under non-crisis conditions, driven by win-win assessments.

7 All studies conducted in the global community following World War II indicate one thing: no country—let us repeat, no country—has been able to enter the development orbit without foreign investment. In conditions of sanctions, no suitable or unsuitable investment can materialize. Agreements with European countries are unattainable without resolving issues with the US. We must not pursue impossible paths; even if we are concerned about the Resistance Axis [against Israel], we need to be an independent, prosperous, and powerful nation.

8 Iran is a paradise for investment. The sovereign funds of Arab countries are brimming with cash. China's economic growth has significantly slowed. The economic growth of the three major European giants—England, France, and Germany—is in the negative. Iran is ready to attract a thousand billion dollars into its economy. In the aviation sector alone, it needs five hundred passenger planes. In oil, gas, and petrochemicals, it is thirsty for three hundred billion dollars. In transportation, railways, port expansion, and tourism, tens of billions of dollars can be drawn in. Iran needs the world, and the world needs Iran for prosperity. We must intelligently leverage this advantage.

9 Every decision in the realm of foreign policy and lifting sanctions, of course, faces serious opposition domestically. These opponents can be divided into two prominent groups: sanction profiteers and ideological adversaries.

10 The term "sanction profiteer"

is neither an insult nor an accusation. Specifically, since the Ahmadinejad presidency, in response to sanctions, the leaders of various factions might have, with seemingly good intentions, concluded that to keep the country's economy afloat, they needed to devise a strategy to prevent sanctions from harming the macroeconomy from above and the people's livelihoods from below. The solution they found was to coin the phrase "circumventing sanctions." While we know little about the individuals present in think tanks or the discussions held to justify this action, it appears that the outcome of those meetings led to securing the nation's basic needs through unconventional oil sales and even more unconventional import methods.

Given that such economic activities naturally thrive in opacity, the emergence of corruption within this framework is hardly surprising. Over time, these unregulated windfall profits become increasingly attractive to those involved, and they become unwilling to part with them at any cost. Consequently, the "sanction profiteer" becomes wealthier and more powerful each day, and due to their privileges and monopolistic position, they continue their unchecked activities. Worse still, they resist any oversight and are determined to protect their interests at all costs. Since any negotiations aimed at lifting sanctions would essentially mean the end of their lucrative dealings, they vehemently oppose such initiatives.

11 A sanction profiteer cannot openly promote their profession because it is disreputable and lacks public legitimacy. Thus, they have no choice but to create an appealing facade. They fill this facade with slogans that evoke Revolutionary ideals and values. The rest of the path is quite clear: to sustain their existence, they need to spread the word, and they easily delegate this task to proxy groups and individuals. The more naive and passionate these loudspeakers are, the closer they bring the profiteer to their goal.

They need to portray their opponents as infiltrators, liberals, and Westernized individuals. For this, they require those who can passionately shout and swell their neck veins while turning red in the face to label these tags. Only in

such an environment can the ships of the sanction profiteer dock safely in calm waters. In other words, they stir up dust to ensure society doesn't see their shady dealings. A review of supposedly Revolutionary positions in Parliament, discussions, round tables, delegations, speeches, and media appearances by relatively reputable individuals in recent years can validate this claim.

12 It is certainly unfair to label all hardliners, who associate any pragmatic approach to foreign policy with Western-leaning and capitulation, as lackeys and agents of sanction profiteers. Some of them have an apparently ideological viewpoint and a tendency towards dogmatism. Their writings and speeches are filled with verses and narratives from the country's leading figures.

While they can be counted among those who are genuinely concerned and value-driven, they nonetheless contribute to the pot of sanction profiteers. Perhaps they believe they are accumulating merit and passionately defending national interests. The challenge lies in justifying this segment of individuals, who don the cloak of Revolutionary fervor, as their adherence to their beliefs is not easily swayed. They have shown that even when the leaders of the country and Revolution vote in favor of something contrary to their ideas, they refuse to comply. Over time, some may gravitate towards realism, while others become dis-

illusioned and withdraw into isolation, and a few remain steadfast in their positions.

13. In our view, both domestic and foreign policy is rooted in our religious and Revolutionary beliefs as supporters of the Islamic Republic. With this perspective, any external or anti-revolutionary view on politics can lead to dangerous consequences that could even push us towards the brink of a revolution's dissolution. However, it must not be forgotten that within this religious and Revolutionary framework, we have resolved numerous issues facing the country without abandoning the Revolution, the Establishment, or our values. The conclusion of the eight-year Iraqi imposed war (1980s), non-intervention in the US-Iraq war, navigating through the Afghan conflict, re-establishing relations with Saudi Arabia, and the recent prudent decision regarding Syria are clear examples of decisions made with a revolutionary outlook while preserving the Establishment, which do not signify a retreat from values and also take national interests into account. In the current circumstances and in the face of the Trump administration, repeating the wise strategies of the past and steering clear of any extremist approach will lead Iran and its people towards tranquility.

The article was first published in the Persian-language newspaper Etemad.

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Iran is a paradise for investment... Iran is ready to attract a thousand billion dollars into its economy. In the aviation sector alone, it needs five hundred passenger planes. In oil, gas, and petrochemicals, it is thirsty for three hundred billion dollars. In transportation, railways, port expansion, and tourism, tens of billions of dollars can be drawn in. Iran needs the world, and the world needs Iran for prosperity.



Salimi in charge as Iranian weightlifting enters new era

Sports Desk

Former Olympic champion Behdad Salimi will be looking to restore the good old days for Iranian weightlifting after taking charge of the men's national team.

A superheavyweight gold medalist at London 2012 and a winner of four world titles, Salimi was appointed to the job last week, replacing Navvab Nasir-Shalal, who stepped down from his role after two years at the helm.

Nasir-Shalal led his team to a second place in the team table behind China in December's World Championships in Manama, Bahrain, though his squad settled for a single gold across 10 weight classes through Alireza Yousefi in the +109kg clean & jerk event.

Meanwhile, Sohrab Moradi – also an ex-Olympic gold medalist – was named the head coach of the Iranian men's junior squad.

"It will definitely be a tough job as the federation's success will be judged by the senior team's results," Salimi said after being appointed to the role, adding: "My contract will run until the end of the 2026 Asian Games in Nagoya and then the new head of the federation by that time will decide on further cooperation with me."

"For now, my top priority will be to deliver decent



results in the upcoming world and Asian championships later this year, as well as the Islamic Solidarity Games in August," added the three-time Asian Games gold winner.

"We have a young squad and many of the team members also represent

the country in the lower age groups, so I will be looking to work in full co-ordination with the technical staff of the Iranian junior team to make sure a formidable squad will head to the Asian Games in two years' time. Sohrab Moradi enjoyed an

illustrious career and I'm confident he will build on years of experience as a decorated weightlifter and coach to succeed in the new role."

Salimi is the third coach of the men's national team – following Ali Hosseini and Nassir-Shalal – during

Sajjad Anoushiravani's two-year reign at the Iranian Weightlifting Federation, but his appointment has already raised doubts among weightlifting experts and pundits in the country, as he has never worked as a coach since retiring after a gold-win-

ning campaign at the 2018 Asian Games.

"There are major tournaments ahead of Salimi and his team, while he will have to set sights on Iran's success in the 2028 Olympic Games. Behdad has no coaching experience but has been privileged to

work with some high-profile coaches throughout his career. I guess it's a bit too soon to assess his prowess for the job. We can only wait and see how he delivers in the near future," said Saied Mohammadpour, who won an Olympic gold alongside Salimi in 2012.

Weightlifting has been the second-most prolific sporting event for the country – after wrestling – in the history of the Olympics, yielding 20 medals – including nine golds – since Jafar Salmasi became a maiden Iranian Olympic medalist by winning a bronze in 1948.

However, Iranian weightlifting has been yearning for an Olympic gold since Rio 2016, when Moradi and Kianoush Rostami walked away with the ultimate prize of their respective events.

Ali Davoudi is the last Iranian weightlifter to stand on the podium in the Games, finishing runner-up to Georgian great Lasha Talakhadze in the superheavyweight contest in Tokyo four years ago.

The future still remains bright for the sport in Iran, after the country collected an impressive 50 medals across the men's and women's competitions at the Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships in Doha last December.

Conte calls for calm amid Napoli's title charge



● CIRO DE LUCA/REUTERS

REUTERS – Napoli manager Antonio Conte hailed his side's 2-1 comeback win over Juventus in Serie A on Saturday but stressed the importance of staying grounded despite his side keeping pace with their title-winning season of two years ago.

Conte's side recovered from a goal down at home as Andre Frank Zambo Anguissa and Romelu Lukaku sealed the victory against a Juve side that were unbeaten in the league.

Napoli now have 53 points, the same total that Luciano Spalletti's side had at this stage on their way to winning the Scudetto in 2023, and sit atop Serie A, six points ahead of Inter Milan, who have two games in hand.

"We must never extinguish the enthusiasm because it's our lifeblood. However, we must stay grounded because what we've

done so far is extraordinary," Conte told reporters.

"We have already matched last year's points, and this is without (Victor) Osimhen, Kvara (Khvicha Kvaratskhelia), and Piotr (Zielinski)," he added, referring to three key players who have left the club this season, albeit with Osimhen on loan.

"It's nice to see that, despite the difficulties with the (transfer) market and injuries, nothing changes.

"We need to stay humble and keep working. Today, though, we beat a great team that had left us far behind last year."

Juve finished third last season on 71 points while Napoli languished in 10th with 53.

Conte added that his side performed well above expectations against Juventus.

"The intensity today was like a

European match, with very high rhythms and full-field pressure," he said.

"We took some risks and yet some still say we play with a low defensive line and on the counter-attack. Sometimes it feels like I'm dreaming."

Despite the good run Napoli are on, Conte is still holding his cards close to his chest regarding the transfer window.

"It's not just about bringing someone in ... Everyone is good at saying who is missing and I could easily say what we need too," he added.

"But my role as head of the group forces me to focus on the players I already have and to make a difference with them.

"Let's see what happens but I remain calm because I know I have a group of players ready to fight with me."

Davis, James lead Lakers to 118-108 victory over Warriors

AP – Anthony Davis had 36 points and 13 rebounds, LeBron James added 25 points and 12 assists, and the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Golden State Warriors 118-108 on Saturday night.

Andrew Wiggins led the Warriors with 20 points. The Lakers held Stephen Curry scoreless in the second half as he went 0 for 8 from the field after halftime. Curry finished with 13 points and nine assists.

The game marked the 25th regular-season meeting between James and Curry. James' team has won 13 of the 25.

Elsewhere, Kevin Durant scored 29 points, Nick Richards added 20 points along with a career-high 19 rebounds and the Phoenix Suns held off the Washington Wizards 119-109 on Saturday night.

The Suns have won eight of 11. Bradley Beal scored 20 points and Devin Booker added 18 despite missing all eight of his 3-point attempts.

The Wizards are an NBA-worst 6-38. Their last victory came on Jan. 1. Kyle Kuzma scored a season-high 30 points and grabbed 11 rebounds, and Jordan Poole added 19 points. Phoenix led 111-98 with about four minutes remaining, but Washington cut it to 113-109 when Kuzma banked in a 3-pointer with 1:57 left. Richards responded with two free throws on the next possession to turn back the threat.



Lakers forward Anthony Davis (3) is fouled by Warriors center Quinten Post during an NBA game in San Francisco, CA, US, on Jan. 26, 2025.

● AP

Grayson Allen made a 3-pointer at the buzzer to give the Suns a 68-53 halftime lead. Richards – recently acquired in a trade with Charlotte – had 15 rebounds in the half.

James Harden scored 40 points and the Los Angeles Clippers overcame Giannis Antetokounmpo and Damian Lillard to beat the Milwaukee Bucks 127-117 on Saturday night.

Norman Powell added 33 points and Kawhi Leonard had 18 in three quarters to help the Clippers end the Bucks' five-game winning streak.

Antetokounmpo had 36 points,

making 12 of 15 free throws, and 13 rebounds. Lillard added 29 points, going 16 of 17 from the foul line, 10 rebounds and 10 assists for his second triple-double in two days.

Harden had 12 points in the first half when the Clippers trailed by 11. He took over in the third with 17 points, scoring 15 in a row to end the period with Los Angeles ahead 94-93.

The Bucks were in catch-up mode most of the fourth after leading by three early.

Powell's dunk launched a 14-0 spurt that Harden capped with a 3-pointer for a 112-100 lead.



Araghchi calls Iran-Afghanistan security, stability interconnected

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

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said security and stability in Iran and Afghanistan are interconnected after he met with Taliban officials during a visit to Kabul. Heading a high-ranking delegation on Sunday, Araghchi arrived in the Afghan capital on Sunday for a one-day visit to discuss various issues, including Afghan migrants and Iran's water right. He is the highest-level Iranian official to visit Kabul since the Taliban's takeover in 2021. During a meeting with Taliban government Prime Minister Mullah Hassan Akhund, Araghchi referred to Iran's historical, religious, and economic relations with Afghanistan and said that Iran is glad to see the establishment of security across Afghanistan after four decades. Iran's top diplomat also said the exchange of high-level diplomats between the two countries indicate the strong relations between Tehran and Kabul.

Many countries closed their embassies in Kabul or downgraded diplomatic relations after the Taliban takeover that ousted the US-backed government, but Iran has maintained active diplomatic ties with Afghanistan's new rulers, though it has yet to officially recognize the Taliban government.

Iran's water right

During the meeting, Araghchi referred to Iran's water right in the border river of Hirmand, also known as Helmand, and the issue of illegal Afghan migrants as the two important issues in relations between the two countries. He said Iran has never sought to interfere in Afghanistan and calls for the full implementation of the Hirmand River agreement signed between the two neighboring countries in 1973 to resolve the water issue. Tensions between the countries have intensified in recent years over water resources and Afghanistan's construction of

dams on the Hirmand and Harirud. Araghchi also called for turning the water issue into a matter of cooperation instead of conflict. Mullah Hassan Akhund, for his part, said the Taliban government is not seeking to prevent the flow of water from Hirmand river into Iran, adding that, "We have ordered the ministries of water and agriculture to send water to Iran." "If we have a drop of water, we will share it with our Iranian brothers," he said. He emphasized that there is a specific agreement between Iran and Afghanistan regarding Iran's water right in the Hirmand River.

Illegal Afghan migrants

Both officials also discussed the issue of illegal Afghan migrants in Iran. Araghchi called for the development of a comprehensive plan for the return of Afghan nationals to their homeland. The Taliban official also thanked Iran for hosting Afghan refugees for a long time.

Iran shares more than 900 kilometers of border with Afghanistan, and the Islamic republic hosts one of the largest refugee populations in the world – mostly Afghans fleeing decades of war. The flow of Afghan immigrants has increased since the Taliban took power. Also on Sunday, Araghchi met with his Afghan counterpart, Amir Khan Muttaqi.

Economic relations

Araghchi praised the two countries' economic, trade and political relations in his talks with Muttaqi, expressing hope that, "During this trip we will be able to further expand the ties in line with the national interests of both sides" as he placed a premium on security and economic arenas. Muttaqi "expressed hope that (Araghchi's) visit to Kabul would create further momentum in relations between the two countries and they would enter a new phase of bilateral relations," the Afghan Foreign Ministry said.



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) shakes hands with Afghanistan's acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi at the Afghanistan Foreign Ministry in Kabul on January 26, 2025. **AFGHANISTAN FOREIGN MINISTRY**

Araghchi also said the issues of water and migration demanded expanded cooperation and called for the full implementation of bilateral water treaties. The Taliban official said

the region was suffering from climate change-induced drought and that Taliban authorities were "trying to ensure that water reaches both sides" of the Iran-Afghanistan border.

Several Iranian delegations have visited Afghanistan over the years, including a parliamentary delegation in August 2023 to discuss water rights.

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

National Desk

Iranian Deputy Finance Minister Hadi Khani said the extent of incurred losses over the continuation of Iran's presence on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)'s blacklist is obvious, undeniable and unjustifiable. Khani said that relevant decision-makers in the previous government also were informed about the issue. He said that unfortunately some countries, even those in the region, have begun to target Iranian natural and legal persons in order to prove their commitment to the FATF regulations. Khani emphasized that the continuation of the trend risks

tarnishing the reputation and credibility of the country's economic players. Since January 12, Iran's Expediency Council has started re-examining various clauses of the Palermo and the Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) conventions of the FATF after Iran's Economy Minister Abdolnasser Hemmati said in December that the country's top leadership had allowed renewed discussions on the FATF case in the council. The Expediency Council's spokesman Mohsen Dehnavi said on Sunday that four clauses of the Palermo convention had been reviewed during the council's meeting. Restrictions imposed by the

FATF on Iran's banking system will be removed once the country enacts the Palermo and the CFT conventions. The Iranian Parliament has approved the Palermo and the CFT, but Iran's Guardian Council, which is responsible for vetting parliament legislation, has refused to ratify them, citing the need for some amendments. Iran has approved other conventions and regulations adopted by the FATF. The renewed push to examine Iran's full accession to the FATF comes amid efforts by President Masoud Pezeshkian and his administration to open up to the world and to improve an economy affected by global inflation and foreign sanctions.

Iran at UNHRC outlines efforts to promote free speech, information access

National Desk

Speaking at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on Saturday, the deputy minister for media affairs at Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance delivered a detailed report on the country's efforts at promoting freedom of expression and information access as a fundamental human right. Mohammadreza Norouzpour stressed that the efforts by the Islamic Republic to guarantee freedom of expression and information have been significant and "far exceed some alleged shortcomings."

"These endeavors reflect Iran's commitment to fostering a transparent, just, and inclusive environment where the rights and dignity of all members of society are respected and existing gaps are minimized," he said. Norouzpour specifically cited initiatives aimed at designing 21 educational programs to utilize artificial intelligence in media, granting direct and indirect subsidies to active media organizations promoting people-centric culture, ensuring access to high-speed Internet in under-privileged and rural areas, and establishing a system for publish-



ing and maintaining open access to information. The deputy minister also called attention to the fact that Iran has also recently lifted restrictions on access to commonly-used digital platforms such as WhatsApp and Google Play, while also supporting the development of new communication platforms.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran should reboot ...

Neglecting this reality will lead to graver threats, squandered opportunities and additional challenges. **Page 1 >**

The first step toward reaching an agreement with any neighboring country is achieving internal consensus and setting clear priorities and policies. Consequently, all bodies will implement these policies in a coordinated manner. In the past, under the previous political system in Afghanistan, there were plans to sign a strategic agreement covering five key areas in the bilateral relationship but this opportunity was lost due to delays on both sides and the Republic collapsed in Afghanistan. The next step involves assessing the current situation of the neighboring country. It is evident that a compre-

hensive agreement and stable relations are not feasible with a political system still shrouded in uncertainty and lacks the fulfillment of basic prerequisites in bilateral relations. Currently, the Taliban's position is anything but stable and Iran should adjust its policies accordingly. All neighboring countries are feeling their way through their relations with Afghanistan under a cloud of ambiguity due to prevalent regional and international uncertainties. As a result, there is no consensus among regional countries to form a united front to manage their relations with Kabul. Currently, there are several axes of influence: the India-US axis, the China-Pakistan axis and the emerging Iran-Russia axis. However, the lack of alignment between regional and inter-

national agendas has led to a situation where the efforts of the international community are often counteracted by regional powers due to their interests and considerations and vice versa. In the case of Afghanistan, there might be issue-based collaborations, such as in combating drug trafficking and terrorism, as seen in the early 2000s when Iran and the US indirectly cooperated due to shared concerns, which demonstrated that even rival powers can find common ground. However, these instances are sporadic. Iran should send a clear and unequivocal message to the Taliban government in Afghanistan. The Iranian government can chart a new course in its relationship with Afghanistan, as many of its demands have gone unanswered in the past 40 months.

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Sister cities of Isfahan, Romania's Iasi to revive cultural cooperation

Arts & Culture Desk

Romanian Ambassador to Iran Mirela Carmen Greco engaged with Isfahan Governor General Mehdi Jamalinejad to explore avenues for enhancing cultural and economic collaboration between Romanian city of Iasi and Iranian historical city of Isfahan. The discussions highlighted the importance of nurturing ties with the city of Iasi, a sister city to Isfahan, IRNA reported.

The city of Iasi and Isfahan were announced as sister cities in 1999, to further expand their bilateral cultural and economic cooperations. Jamalinejad expressed optimism about rekindling the robust relationship he established years ago as mayor of Isfahan. "I hope this close connection will continue to flourish," he stated, emphasizing the potential for reviving initiatives outlined in previous agreements between Isfahan and Iasi.

The dialogue also touched on the long-standing agreements between University of Isfahan, Isfahan Art University, and various Romanian institutions, IRNA reported.

Jamalinejad pointed out the Romanian request for introducing Persian language and literature courses in Romanian universities, stressing the need for prompt action on this matter. Plus, the governor general mentioned existing collaborations in music and

handicrafts, including a proposed partnership between the Sepahan Football Club of Isfahan and a football club in Iasi.

He noted that the Isfahan Chamber of Commerce had submitted a draft co-operation agreement to its Romanian counterpart, which remains unsigned. Jamalinejad highlighted the historical, economic, and cultural synergies between Isfahan and Iasi, suggesting that the potential for mutual cooperation is substantial.

He expressed a desire for systematic engagement, announcing plans for tourism programs aimed at fostering connections between Isfahan and Romanian tourism professionals.

Ambassador Greco echoed these sentiments, revealing that both the mayor and governor of Iasi are keen to continue their collaboration with Isfahan. Reflecting on her first visit to Isfahan four years ago, she expressed a commitment to fostering genuine partnerships rather than symbolic gestures.

Greco noted the significance of the recent 120th anniversary of cooperation between Iran and Romania, during which numerous agreements were signed. She acknowledged the contributions of artisans from Isfahan who have showcased their talents in Romania and emphasized the urgency of finalizing a memorandum of understanding between universities in Isfahan and Iasi.

"We are fully prepared to activate the



Romanian Ambassador to Iran Mirela Carmen Greco (L) and Isfahan Governor General Mehdi Jamalinejad discuss cultural cooperation between Romania's Iasi and Iranian city of Isfahan in a meeting held in the Iranian city on January 25, 2025.
 ● IRNA

terms of our cooperation agreement," she affirmed, while also addressing the challenges faced by University of Isfahan in facilitating Persian language programs in Romania due to technical issues.

The envoy underscored the importance of cultural diplomacy, mentioning an upcoming international arts festival in Iasi, where Isfahan will be represented by a female artist special-

izing in ceramics. She described the festival as an opportunity to showcase the innovative intersection of traditional craftsmanship and modern technology.

Responding to Jamalinejad's proposal to lift visa requirements for Romanian tourists, Greco assured that many Romanians are eager to visit Iran, regardless of visa restrictions. "Iran is a beautiful and cherished destination

for Romanian travelers," she stated. Jamalinejad instructed his team to address the hurdles faced by University of Isfahan in establishing Persian language programs in Romania.

He also extended an invitation for Romanian cultural and academic groups to visit Isfahan for special sessions organized by the municipality, which would include tours of historic sites in the region.

Iranian animations to compete at Iraq's Babylon festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Four animations produced by the Documentary, Experimental & Animation Film Center (DEFC) will compete in the 5th edition of the Babylon Animation Cinema Festival in Iraq. The festival, organized by the College of Fine Arts at the University of Babylon, will showcase 'Paper Flowers' by Ramak Amin Kazemi, 'Jiroft' by Marjan Keshani, 'Melody' by Ahmad Arabani, and 'Flying Season' by Shahang Kiani in its competition section, IRNA reported.

These animations will be screened on February 26 and 27 at the historic

city of Babylon's Sumer Cinema. Hussein Mohsen Duwaj Al-Sahiyo, an Iraqi filmmaker and director of the Babylon Animation Film Festival, is a prominent figure in the Iraqi film industry. He is a member of the Iraqi Artists Syndicate and heads the Babylon Film Club. Al-Sahiyo's involvement in the international film scene was evident as he served as a jury member at the 18th Iran International Documentary Film Festival, also known as 'Cinema Verite'.

The Babylon Animation Cinema Festival aims to promote and celebrate the art of animation, providing a platform for filmmakers to showcase



their creative talents and contribute to the cultural exchange between Iran and Iraq.

Iran, Philippines celebrate 60 years of diplomatic ties with cultural harmony



Arts & Culture Desk

The 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Iran and the Philippines was commemorated with a cultural program titled 'Harmony Beyond Borders,' showcasing the talents of the Istgah Orchestra.

The event featured an enchanting selection of Iranian and East Asian instrumental pieces, celebrating the rich cultural ties between the two nations. Hosted by the Tehran Municipality and the Asian Mayors Association, the initiative was made possible through the collaboration of the Philippine Embassy in Iran, highlighting a commitment to fostering friendship and cultural exchange, ISNA reported.

As noted in a statement by the Philippine Embassy, "The 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Iran and the Philippines presents an ideal opportunity to enhance cultural and artistic connections between the two countries."

The performance not only showcased artistic talent but also symbolized solidarity and friendship between Iran and the Philippines.

Mehdi Norouzi, the conductor of the orchestra, emphasized their mission, "We have always sought to be messengers of peace and friendship through music and literature for the world." This collaboration with the Philippine Embassy in Iran allowed them to explore the musical depths of this region, which Norouzi described as an exciting challenge.

The orchestra has previously made headlines with performances alongside ambassadors, including a collaboration with South Korean Ambassador to Iran Kim Jun-pyo.

Their joint performance was widely covered by media outlets like CNN, which highlighted the role of music and art in bridging cultural divides during challenging times. The Guardian also praised this effort as a way for Iranian artists to connect with the world.

Notice of tender for export sale No. 28/1403/Z (renewed)

Hereby Golgohar Mining & Industrial Co. announces selling and export 140,000 metric tons of Iron Ore Pellet (%Fe:65) on basis of F.O.B at Barco. Jetty Bandar Abbas - Iran. Interested bidders should find tender documents at Golgohar website: www.geg.ir. All bids on conformity to tender instructions must be submitted no later than 09:00 A.M. on 18. Feb.2025 at Golgohar complex in sirjan (50 km in shiraz road). Bidders are invited to the transactions commission department of the seller with an introduction letter of interested buyer and personal identification of the representative. Tender results shall be announced at 09:00 A.M. on 18.Feb.2025 at the office of the Seller.

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FeO	1.0	Ave
P	0.05	Max
S	0.01	Max
SiO2	3.5	Max
Al2O3	0.7	Max
CaO	0.9	Max
MgO	2.5	Max
CCS (kg/p)	Ave 250	
8-16 mm%	Min 90	
-6 mm%	Ave 5	
A.I%	Max 3.8	
T.I%	Min 95	
Prosity%	19-24	
Reducibility%	Min 90	