

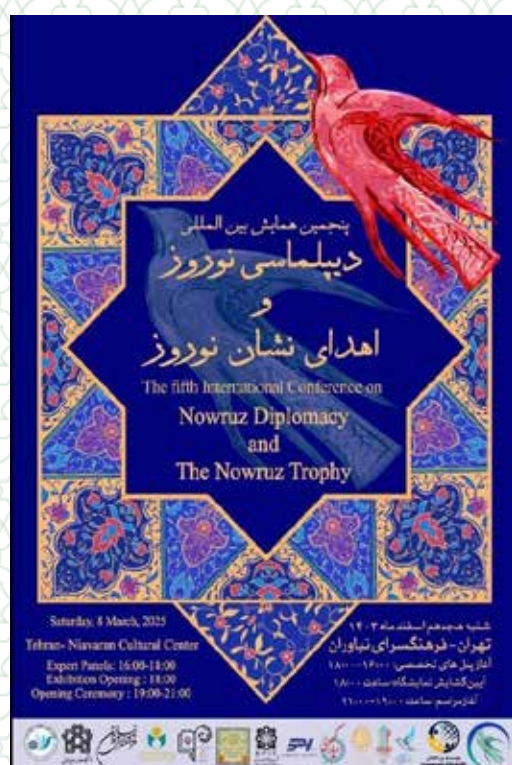


Cultural, diplomatic mystique of Nowruz



EXCLUSIVE Nowruz, celebrated by millions across continents, stands as a vibrant symbol of humanity's shared heritage and enduring spirit. This ancient festival, deeply tied to the rhythms of nature and the cycles of life, has become a cornerstone for fostering understanding and unity among diverse cultures. Beyond its cultural richness, Nowruz opens doors to innovative partnerships between governments, nations, and non-governmental organizations in areas like energy, trade, and environmental sustainability, offering a pathway to address shared challenges. As the world grows more interconnected, Nowruz serves as a reminder of the power of tradition to inspire dialogue, strengthen bonds, and create opportunities for collective progress. In this collection, scholars and experts offer unique perspectives on how Nowruz can shape a future defined by connection and shared purpose.

Surrounded by people celebrating the start of the calendar New Year (Nowruz), musicians play wind instruments at Hafezieh, the burial site of the great Persian poet Hafez, in the historical city of Shiraz, southern Iran, in March 2024.
● IRNA



The photo shows the poster of the fifth International Conference on Nowruz Diplomacy and the Nowruz Trophy, which is scheduled to be held on March 8, 2025, at the Niavaran Cultural-Historical Center in Tehran, Iran.
● BORNA

Why rereading Nowruz's narrative matters



By **Abed Akbari**
Secretary of Nowruz
Trophy Conference

OPINION

The foundational philosophy of International Relations as a discipline lies in studying the causes of war and the means to achieve peace. From its inception, this field has been built on the normative approach of "viewing war as evil and peace as good," and its evolution over the past century has adhered to this same principle. However, the dominance of Western authors in shaping the discipline's literature has led to a reproduction of Western thought on war and peace, leaving little room for non-Western societies to propose indigenous ideas for "preventing war and promoting peace." While the second decade of the 21st century has seen nascent efforts to advocate for non-Western theorization in International Relations, these remain marginal. Undoubtedly, one source of inspiration for indigenous theorization lies in drawing theoretical templates from the ideas of intellectual and cultural luminaries within each society. Just as Western International Relations theories rely on the intellectual

frameworks of figures like Immanuel Kant, Thomas Hobbes, and John Locke, non-Western societies must also return to their own cultural and intellectual giants to articulate alternative or complementary perspectives on "preventing war and promoting peace." The Nowruz civilizational sphere, as an intellectual domain spanning Central Asia, the Iranian Plateau, the Caucasus, and Anatolia, is rich with historical figures, and a return to and a rereading of their works and ideas could serve as resources for indigenous theorization. Yet, modern inheritors of this sphere have adopted a reductionist approach to these figures in recent decades. On one hand, influenced by the "territory-centric ontology" dominating mainstream International Relations theory, they have attempted to recast historical intellectuals as "modern citizens" labeled with national adjectives like "Iranian," "Turk," "Afghan," "Tajik," or "Azerbaijani." On the other hand, shaped by the "dualist ontology" of mainstream International Relations — which rigidly separates "the domestic" from "the foreign," idealizing the former while viewing the latter with suspicion as

a tool of external enemies — they have restricted the dissemination of certain historical thinkers' ideas. For example, when Nizami Ganjavi is portrayed as "Azerbaijani," the modern Azerbaijani state censors his Persian-language writings, reproducing only his works in Azerbaijani Turkic. Such reductionism, politicizing historical figures, has obscured the "ideas and philosophies of inspirational luminaries" in this sphere. In practice, due to this politicization, rare attempts to introduce these figures focus solely on their cultural aspects, seldom exploring the theoretical implications of their foundational ideas. Today, the countries of the Nowruz civilizational sphere are arguably trapped in their own historical narratives of shared traditions and culture — particularly Nowruz. This entrapment stems from political rivalries, national ambitions, and at times, extraterritorial interference. In an era of global regionalism, this captivity has inflicted significant harm, especially through missed opportunities for cooperation and convergence. Crafting a strategic narrative of Nowruz is now an urgent imperative

for these countries. -If their shared history and geography, through dialogue among their elites, are transformed into a strategic narrative, it could pave the way for this ancient culture to exert global influence. Nowruz's narrative should be seen as a powerful tool to shape a favorable image of these nations regionally and internationally. This necessity will help expand their effective influence, construct a shared understanding of the past, present, and future among all Nowruz-celebrating nations. These countries possess unparalleled potential in terms of human resources, economic opportunities, and socio-political prospects. One pathway to consolidating these strengths into effective regional agency is initiating dialogues among elites rooted in shared historical and cultural foundations. However, this opportunity is not indefinite. The elites of Nowruz nations must act with greater resolve to lay the groundwork for such collaboration in an increasingly Westernized world — a fleeting chance, like spring itself, as Nizami reminds us: "Cherish this spring today, for Not every dawn brings Nowruz anew."

Nowruz; A global symbol of solidarity



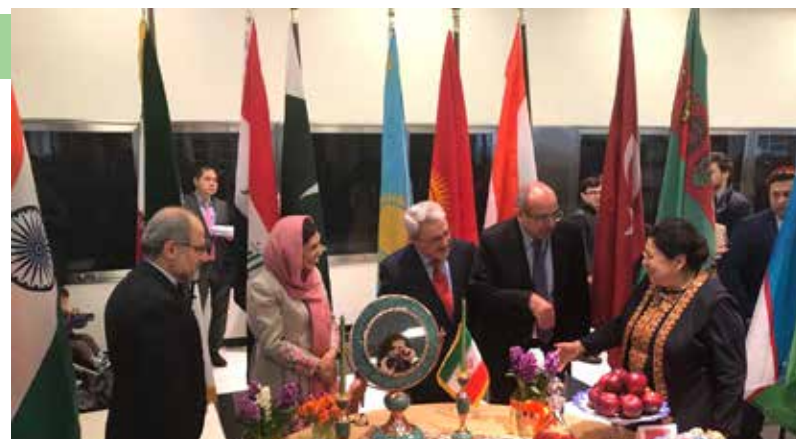
By **Mohammad Reza Pakravan**
Former diplomat

OPINION

Nowruz, undeniably one of the world's oldest and most enduring traditions, not only commemorates the arrival of spring and the rejuvenation of nature but also embodies a shared cultural heritage. Beyond its symbolic resonance, it creates opportunities for nations to cultivate and reinforce ties across cultural, artistic, political, and economic spheres. Originating in the ancient history of Iran and the civilizations of Central Asia, Nowruz has expanded its reach over millennia. Today, its observance spans vast regions — from its heartlands in Central Asia and the Middle East to communities in Eastern Europe and North Africa. At its core, Nowruz symbolizes renewal, peace, and solidarity — both national and international. These universal values serve as a bridge for fostering global connections and enhancing relations in the modern era, a time when cultural

diplomacy holds unprecedented significance in international affairs. As a shared cultural heritage, Nowruz unites diverse nations and regions, including Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, Turkmenistan, and communities in Iraq and Syria. This vast cultural sphere mirrors the historical and identity-based commonalities among these societies. Such a common heritage lays the groundwork for collaborative cultural initiatives and the strengthening of goodwill between nations. In 2010, the United Nations designated Nowruz as "International Nowruz Day," elevating it to a global event and affirming its status as a shared human heritage. This acknowledgment underscores Nowruz's potential to foster solidarity and serve as a platform for cross-cultural dialogue. In today's world — marked by political tensions, economic disparities, and climate crises — Nowruz offers a unique opportunity for cultural diplomacy. Joint celebrations, artistic collaborations, and international events centered on Nowruz could strengthen solidarity

and expand cultural exchanges. Nowruz also holds significant economic promise. Its vibrant festivals and exhibitions attract international tourists, showcasing regional cultures and transforming Nowruz into a compelling cultural brand. Additionally, promoting handicrafts and traditional arts linked to the celebration could boost local economies while enhancing the global image of host nations. To fully harness Nowruz's diplomatic and cultural potential, closer coordination among celebrating countries is essential. Establishing a "Permanent Secretariat or International Organization for Nowruz" could streamline program management, position the festival as a forum for international cooperation, and promote it worldwide. This body could leverage digital tools — social media, virtual events, and immersive technologies — to engage younger generations and preserve the tradition's relevance. Youth engagement is critical: innovative approaches like virtual reality experiences, narrative films, and interactive social media content could revitalize Nowruz for future eras. However, chal-



The countries celebrating Nowruz hold a food festival in the United Nations at the suggestion and coordination of Iran's mission in March 2019.
● IRNA

lenges persist, including political and cultural differences among nations, funding gaps for international programs, and divergent interpretations of the festival. Addressing these requires collaborative efforts — financial and advisory support from international institutions, cultural exchanges, and dialogues to align visions of Nowruz. As a final point, Nowruz transcends a seasonal ritual; it reflects timeless human values — reverence for nature,

unity, and peace. In an era of instability, it offers a universal language to bridge divides and foster mutual understanding. By embracing coordinated strategies, nations that celebrate Nowruz can amplify its message of friendship and sustainability, ensuring it benefits not only their societies but the world at large. Nowruz is an invitation to reimagine global cooperation, rooted in shared heritage, to build a more harmonious and resilient future for all.