

Nowruz; A heritage of global peace, solidarity



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OPINION

Nowruz, beyond being a national tradition, is a shared and eternal heritage for humanity. Celebrated in over 16 countries, including Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan, it carries a message of peace, coexistence, and friendship with nature. This celebration is rooted in ancient Iranian culture but offers boundless potential for fostering cultural connections among nations and facilitating dialogue between civilizations. In this context, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can step up to bridge the communication gaps, turning Nowruz into a tool for lasting peace. By holding educational workshops on Nowruz traditions, ancient stories, and the philosophy of loving nature, NGOs can keep this heritage alive in the hearts of communities. Campaigns such as “Green Nowruz,” which invite people to plant trees and manage waste, not only align with the nature-loving spirit of Nowruz but also bring about a global message of solidarity with the Earth and humanity. Moreover, collective events like Nowruz bazaars and handicraft exhibitions strengthen the bond between

urban and rural areas and improve the livelihoods of artisans and villagers. Civil society, through joint Nowruz festivals and artistic projects in countries within the Nowruz cultural sphere, can transform this celebration into a symbol of mutual understanding and friendship among nations. For instance, a collaboration between Iranian NGOs and their counterparts in Tajikistan and Afghanistan to showcase the music, dance, and stories of Nowruz reinforces a shared identity. Nowruz diplomacy is a powerful tool at the disposal of these organizations to promote Nowruz as a model of global peace through campaigns at the United Nations or UNESCO, just as its global registration marked the beginning of this journey. In a world filled with tension and conflict, NGOs, through networking, creativity, and leveraging the soft power of Nowruz, can turn this celebration into a dynamic movement for peace and solidarity. Nowruz is a unique opportunity to demonstrate the power of culture against division. NGOs, by representing local communities, reflect the needs and aspirations of people through this tradition. Undoubtedly, with public participation and civil efforts, Nowruz will evolve into a richer and more meaningful experience, planting the seeds of peace in the heart of the world.

Nowruz diplomacy; A path to economic integration



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OPINION

Nowruz, beyond being an ancient celebration, represents a cultural and civilizational asset that can serve as a foundation for the development of economic diplomacy and regional integration. In a world where regionalism has emerged as one of the most significant political and economic approaches, the countries within the Nowruz civilization can leverage this shared heritage to forge a new path for economic, energy, and financial cooperation. This region, stretching from Central Asia and the Caucasus to the Middle East and parts of South Asia, possesses immense potential in energy, trade, and communications — a potential that remains largely untapped. One of the key opportunities that Nowruz diplomacy could create is collaboration in the energy sector. The countries in this region are among the largest producers of oil and gas globally; however, their reliance on traditional transit infrastructures, geopolitical rivalries, and a lack of coordination in energy policies have hindered the full utilization of this potential. In

such circumstances, integrating the Nowruz-celebrating countries through shared infrastructure development, coordinated export policies, and investments in clean energy projects could enhance their global market position and strengthen regional energy security. Nevertheless, Nowruz diplomacy should not be confined to energy cooperation alone. Due to cultural, historical, and linguistic commonalities, this region has significant capacity for forming an economic bloc. The experience of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) has demonstrated that regional collaborations can only succeed when backed by strong cultural and economic foundations. By establishing trade agreements, developing shared transportation corridors, and facilitating cross-border commerce, these nations could advance economic integration. A civilizational-based economic union might further foster common markets, reduce trade tariffs, and boost productivity. One of the most pressing challenges facing these countries is the disruption of financial and trade flows caused by economic sanctions and banking restrictions. Creating a common financial system — including a regional development

bank, the use of local currencies in trade, and an independent payment mechanism — could reduce dependence on the international financial system and bolster economic autonomy. Successful models from other regions offer actionable insights for countering external pressures and enhancing resilience. Beyond economics, Nowruz diplomacy can strengthen neighborhood ties and mitigate regional tensions. Many Nowruz-celebrating nations grapple with political and territorial disputes that obstruct cooperation and sustainable development. By drawing on their shared heritage, they could establish mechanisms to deepen diplomatic dialogue, resolve conflicts, and expand cultural collaboration. History shows that culture and economy can synergize to drive integration and stability. As the world shifts toward regional blocs and multilateralism, these countries must seize this historical opportunity. Harnessing their shared heritage could lay the groundwork for sustainable collaboration, fostering regional economic progress while elevating their global standing. Nowruz is not just a celebration; it has the potential to become a bridge to a brighter future in the region.

Preserving Iran's final say on Nowruz needs vigilance



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OPINION

With a 7,000-year civilizational history and a 3,000-year written history, Iran is among the countries possessing a rich and unique cultural heritage. The ancient celebration of Nowruz and its associated traditions are among the factors that have sustained the unity of the diverse inhabitants of the Iranian plateau, preserved solidarity among its peoples, and enabled our country to withstand foreign invading forces. Throughout history, these foreign invaders have consistently sought to dominate Iran and plunder its abundant resources, aiming to undermine the foundations of national and religious cohesion in Iran. That is why Shi'ism on one hand, and the traditions respected by all inhabitants of Iran on the other, have been under constant attack by those hostile to Iran. In recent years, some neighboring countries, particularly Turkey and the Republic of Azerbaijan, guided by the Zi-

onist regime, the United Kingdom, and the United States, have made every effort to diminish the strength of these unifying bonds within Iranian society. Consequently, we are witnessing the formation of rival civilizational and identity alliances around Iran, especially by Turkey. While Turkey has little linguistic, civilizational, or cultural connection with Central Asia and the Caucasus, the Erdogan government, driven by economic, political, and security goals — which are implanted by Israel and NATO — is striving to strengthen so-called Turkic nations, create a Turkic NATO and a Turkic Silk Road, and take other similar initiatives to establish a cultural and civilizational authority in its name and then compete with Iran. Iran's cultural and political influence extends to the heart of these regions naturally due to its civilizational, identity-based, and historical ties with the inhabitants of the Caucasus and Central Asia, without needing to resort to such measures. Neglecting Iran's civilizational,

identity-based, and historical capacities and leaving defenders of the Persian language and Iranian traditions like Nowruz undefended in the Caucasus and Central Asia is a grave and irreparable mistake. This has confined Iran within its current borders and will force us in the future to defend Nowruz, the Persian language, and other rich cultural treasures not in cities like Samarkand, Bukhara, Baku, Dushanbe, and the Fergana Valley, but in Tabriz, Ardabil, Urmia, Zanjan, Qazvin, and elsewhere. While a significant portion of the historical and ancient books in these regions are written in Persian script and language, the rulers of Baku and Turkey, by presenting Latin books containing historical forgeries to universities and cultural centers in their countries, are attempting to fabricate a false identity. They are trying to make Turkish the standard and reference language for all Azeri-inhabited regions of Iran, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia. They are trying to forge cultural, identity-based, civiliza-

tional, historical, and religious solidarity between the inhabitants of these regions and Turkey. Meanwhile, this solidarity naturally exists with Iran. Turkey, which until a few years ago prevented Kurds from celebrating Nowruz, now, alongside Baku, claims Nowruz as its own celebration and even fabricates non-Persian roots for the word “Nowruz”. Meanwhile, leaders of some Western countries, particularly the United States, send Nowruz greetings to the president of Baku and overlook Iran, attempting to strip Iran of its civilizational final say over Nowruz and attribute the festival to countries that have been politically independent for no more than four decades. The Islamic Republic of Iran must recognize this significant threat and step up its efforts to foster convergence among Nowruz-celebrating countries. This will prevent nations with no history or civilization to boast about from seizing the opportunity to forge and steal Iran's identity-based and civilizational achievements. There are strategies that will help



Uzbeks gather in front of their Nowruz table arrangement and local foods to celebrate the New Year.
● MEHR

revive and strengthen cultural Iran and prevent Central Asia and the Caucasus from becoming the backyard of Iran's enemies and rivals; Among such strategies are strengthening cultural ties with countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia, teaching Persian to the younger generation in these countries, enhancing media activities in the region using the internet to counter anti-Iranian narratives by rival and hostile nations, promoting the discourse of the Islamic Rev-

olution with an emphasis on Shia-Sunni unity and respect for local beliefs, employing soft political language through cultural initiatives (such as poetry nights, literary gatherings, art workshops, and screening Iranian films and series) to avoid provoking political and security sensitivities in these countries, positively portraying Iran's scientific and technological advancements in recent decades, and expanding healthy and purposeful economic presence and activities in these countries.

Common Nowruz rituals of Iran, Armenia



By **Isak Unanesian**
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OPINION

The cultural relations between Iranians and Armenians date back 28 centuries, with deep cultural roots tying the two peoples together: The land of Armenia is an extension of the Iranian plateau. Both peoples set out from the original homeland of the Aryan tribes and settled in their current territories. The Armenian lan-

guage shares an inseparable bond with Persian; Ancient Armenian names are derived from Achaemenid and Parthian names. Iranians and Armenians shared a common religion during the Achaemenid and Parthian eras. Both peoples celebrate shared festivals with a history of 2,700 years, and today, Armenians observe these festivals within the framework of Christianity. No nation or people are as close to Iranians as the Armenians, and in fact, they form a single family.

Since ancient times, Iranians and Armenians have celebrated many shared festivals, inspired by antiquity. Among these are Barqandan for Iranians (Barekendan for Armenians), Tigran (Vardavar), Sadeh (Trndez), and Nowruz (Navasard). The Barqandan (Barekendan) festival is one of the shared celebrations of Iranians and Armenians, respectively, which, in addition to having similar names, also share similar customs and traditions. This festival was held before the arrival of the Great Lent (the Great Fast),

and both peoples celebrated it. In the Armenian language, Barekendan signifies a good life, joy, happiness, and abundance. This festival dates back to pre-Christian Armenia and was celebrated simultaneously with the Navasard festival. Armenians still celebrate Barekendan on the day before the start of the Great Lent. Those who intend to fast prepare a more elaborate and colorful dinner table than usual and gather with relatives and friends to celebrate.

In ancient Armenia, the first month of the year was called Navasard (meaning New Year), which coincides with the Iranian Nowruz (meaning New Year) festival, both signifying the arrival of the New Year. This is one of the most important festivals of the Aryan peoples. Although the fire-lighting festival now commonly brings to mind the Iranian Chaharshanbe Suri festival (celebrated on the eve of the last Wednesday of the calendar year), it also refers to the Iranian Sadeh and the Armenian Trndez

festivals. While Armenians celebrate Trndez on February 13 in the courtyards of churches or their homes, roughly around the same time, Iranians celebrate Sadeh in late January and Chaharshanbe Suri in mid-March. The Iranian Tigran and the Armenian Vardavar festivals are among the oldest shared festivals of the two nations and it is also known as the water-splashing festival. Vardavar is celebrated in the summer, during which Armenians splash water on each other.