

Iran launches
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Head of the Atomic Energy Agency of Iran, Mohammad Eslami, speaks to reporters after a cabinet meeting in Tehran, Iran on May 28, 2025.
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Saddam enjoyed support from 36 countries

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• IRAN DAILY

One-sided, overreaching approach in nuclear talks will backfire on US



By Ahmad Bigdeli
Iranian MP

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

The fifth round of indirect talks between Iran and the United States over the Islamic Republic's nuclear program was held in Rome on Friday. While both sides once again talked up the meeting as "constructive" and "moving forward," reports suggest there are still sticking points over uranium enrichment on Iranian soil. Judging by recent interviews given by US officials to the media, it appears that Washington refuses to budge on its opposition to enrichment in Iran and keeps pushing for the dismantling of Iran's enrichment capabilities. This is despite repeated statements by Iranian officials and negotiators that "Iran reserves the right to enrich uranium on its own territory," a right

enshrined in international treaties that spell out Iran's entitlement to peaceful nuclear activities and enrichment. Iran, for its part, has consistently made clear it can guarantee the other side that do not veer toward weaponization. As officials have stated time and again, "nuclear weapons have no place in Iran's security and defense doctrine." Furthermore, the Leader has, in both fatwas and public statements, branded the production and use of weapons of mass destruction as a threat to humanity and "forbidden," declaring unequivocally that the Islamic Republic does not believe in, nor seek, nuclear arms. At the heart of the matter lies this principle: uranium enrichment—up to a certain level—is a right that every nation is entitled to. The world today is a far cry from the fossil-fuel-driven era of the past.

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Iran-Russia Eurasian alliance: Mapping out post-Western world



By Dimitri Simes
Asia affairs analyst

PERSPECTIVE
EXCLUSIVE

The burgeoning strategic partnership between Iran and Russia has moved well beyond a mere tactical alliance between two sanctioned states. What is now taking shape between Tehran and Moscow is much more than a knee-jerk reaction to Western pressure; it's morphing into the nucleus of a new geoeconomic hub at the heart of Eurasia — a pivot that could well tip the balance of power globally in the decades to come. In a world where the post-Cold War unipolar order has run its course, this deepening cooperation — spanning economics, technology, and infrastructure — is charting a new course for global power. From goods transit and financial engineering to multinational transport and energy blocs, the Tehran-Moscow axis is rolling out a new architecture for the global order—one that aims not for reckless confrontation, but for the steady expansion of both hard and soft power on the fringes of Western dominance.

INSTC: Silk Road of 21st century

At the heart of these changes lies the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which links up Russia to Iran and then to India and the Persian Gulf, not only shaving off intercontinental transit times but also dealing a blow to the traditional dominance of the Suez Canal. Data shows this route can slash transit times by up to 40% and cut costs by 30% — no small feat in a world where speed, price, and security are the pillars of global trade. But INSTC is more than just an economic boon; it's a blueprint for weathering sanctions, offering up alternative routes that ease off reliance on Western-controlled infrastructure and allow countries like Iran and Russia to build up

a resilient, independent trade network. As investment in ports, rails, roads, and digital logistics ramps up, this corridor is not just moving goods—it's shifting the very center of economic gravity. INSTC is, in truth, the backbone of an alternative Eurasian economic geography.

Energy realignment: Dawn of new gas bloc

In 2024, an unprecedented deal was hammered out between Tehran and Moscow: Russia will pipe in 110 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually to Iran, matching the combined capacity of Nord Stream 1 and 2 before Western sabotage.

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From sketch to canvas;
Bozorgmehr Hosseinpour
blends satire, fine art

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Iran may allow US inspectors of IAEA if deal reached: *Eslami*

UN nuclear chief lauds continuation of talks as 'good sign'

International Desk

Iran's nuclear chief Mohammad Eslami said Wednesday that Tehran may reconsider allowing American inspectors through the United Nations nuclear watchdog if a deal is reached with the United States.

"Countries that were hostile to us and behaved unprincipledly over the years – we have always tried not to accept inspectors from those countries," Eslami told reporters, adding that Iran "will reconsider accepting American inspectors through the agency" if an agreement is reached and Tehran's demands are taken into account.

According to the terms of an existing agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Iran can approve a list of monitors to receive visas and inspect the country's nuclear sites.

Iran's caution increased after a series of sabotage attacks on its nuclear facilities, most of which is blamed on Israel. Iranian and US negotiators said Friday they made modest progress in the latest round of indirect talks aimed at

ending a standoff over Tehran's nuclear program and Washington's economic sanctions on the oil-rich Persian Gulf state.

Tehran and Washington are expected to hold a sixth round of talks, with US President Donald Trump predicting "good news."

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said Wednesday that "consultations are ongoing regarding the time and location of the next round of talks, and once finalized, they will be announced by Oman."

Uranium enrichment

In recent weeks, the two countries have clashed over the issue of uranium enrichment in Iran, which Washington says must be brought to zero. Tehran maintains its nuclear program is exclusively for civilian purposes and views its enrichment industry as a red line. "Enrichment is the foundation and pillar of the country's nuclear industry. Suppose someone is allowed to have an electricity substation and network, but not allowed to establish a power plant," Eslami said.



Members of the media and officials tour the Arak nuclear facility in Markazi Province, Iran, on December 23, 2019.

● AP

"The enrichment percentage depends on the type of use. When highly enriched uranium is produced, it does not necessarily mean military use," he told reporters.

Meanwhile, Baqaei said, "The continuation of enrichment in Iran is an inseparable part of the country's nuclear industry and a fundamental principle for the Islamic Republic of Iran."

"Any proposal or initiative that contradicts this principle or undermines this right is unacceptable."

Negotiations in right direction

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that there is hope that Iran and the US will make progress in nuclear negotiations and the process is moving in the right direction.

"There is hope that progress will be achieved and that everything is moving in the right direction," Lavrov told



an international security conference in Moscow on Wednesday.

"The right to enrichment in the framework of peaceful use of nuclear energy programs is key [in the negotiations between Iran and the United States]," he said.

The head of the United Nations' atomic

watchdog Rafael Mariano Grossi said Wednesday that "the jury is still out" on the negotiations, but described the continuing negotiations as a good sign. He made the comment to journalists attending a weeklong seminar at the agency in Vienna.

Iran's top security official says unilateralism effectuating global disasters

International Desk

Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), Ali Akbar Ahmadian, on Wednesday criticized unilateralism in international politics, saying that it has led to widespread disasters, particularly in the West Asia region.

Ahmadian made the remarks at the 13th International Meeting of High Representatives for Security Issues in Russian capital, Moscow.

"Unilateralism in international politics and imposing the will of arrogant powers on nations have created many disasters in the world, and today the West Asian region is an exhibition of these crimes," he said.

Referring to the situation of regional countries such as Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, the Iranian official said, "The foundation of the West's unilateralist policy is built on the oppression and exploitation of nations, and the whole world is witnessing an unprecedented crime taking place in Gaza, where, in addition to inhumane killings, women and children are facing a gradual death from starvation."

He said that a comprehensive security in the world requires multilateralism, and fair and equal opportunities must



be provided to nations in the new security order.

Ahmadian said that international political and security structures have been currently taken hostage by the West while Iran believes that security should serve the people and for the independence and freedom of nations.

Ahmadian further warned that hegemonic powers are using sanctions and advanced technologies to deprive



Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Akbar Ahmadian (on screen) speaks at the 13th International Meeting of High Representatives for Security Issues in Moscow, Russia, on May 28, 2025.

● IRNA

nations of their legitimate rights, including Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy.

Nationwide truck drivers' strike: Gov't spokeswoman affirms voices of entire citizens will be heard



National Desk

Iran's government spokeswoman Fateh-meh Mohajerani reacted to days of strike by the country's truck drivers, saying that the administration has a duty to respond to the needs of all citizens.

Mohajerani said a report was presented at the Wednesday cabinet meeting on the status of the drivers' strike and the measures taken by the minister of roads and urban development. She underlined that "the voices of all citizens will be heard."

Truck drivers across Iran were on Wednesday pressing the seventh day of a strike, seeking better conditions in a sector crucial for the economy in the coun-

try. They are protesting a rise in high fuel prices, low freight rates and insurance premiums.

After starting last week in the southwestern port city of Bandar Abbas, the industrial action has spread across Iran even as road transport is critical to food supply in the country.

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf was quoted as saying that the truckers were a "key link in the production and supply chain" and urging the government to act swiftly.

The drivers' strike has caused a shortage and price increase in the market for agricultural products, iron, cement and many other construction items.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

One-sided, overreaching approach ...

With booming populations and rising energy demands, fossil fuels are no longer up to the task. Nations around the globe are turning to modern and renewable energy sources.

Moreover, uranium enrichment goes well beyond energy production. It plays a crucial role in medical and scientific fields, from manufacturing radiopharmaceuticals and fueling research reactors to producing radioactive materials used in disease diagnosis and cancer treatment.

The nature of today's world dictates that any leap in technology should be accessible to all nations. The Islamic Republic seeks nothing beyond this right, yet will stand its ground and

never back down from its right to enrichment.

The demand to dismantle Iran's enrichment capability is reportedly being floated by US officials, and it is almost certain that other pretexts may crop up from the other side as talks move forward. However, Iran has drawn red lines for its policies and framework, and will not strike a deal with anyone over these. In my view, Iran's right to enrichment and other legitimate rights must be written into any agreement.

As the Leader, President Masoud Pezeshkian, and the negotiating team have all hammered home, the other side must come to the table recognizing Iran's legitimate and rational

rights.

If they try to ride roughshod over Iran's red lines, refuse to acknowledge Iran's core demands, and instead push for a lopsided deal, then talks will no longer hold any real meaning and turn into a one-way street, where Washington tries to strong-arm Iran into caving in to its every demand—an approach that flies in the face of what genuine negotiations are all about. Should the Americans press ahead with a one-sided approach, peppering talks with threats, overreach, and unreasonable demands, it is certain that the negotiations will go nowhere and neither side will benefit. But if there is to be any fallout, it will surely be the Americans who lose out most.



Pezeshkian: Iran-Oman trade could reach \$30b

Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized Iran and Oman's pivotal role in connecting regional markets, stating, "With adequate infrastructure, economic exchanges between Iran and Oman could reach \$20 to \$30 billion." Speaking during the second day of his visit to Oman on Wednesday, Pezeshkian highlighted opportunities for strategic partnerships with Africa, Russia, Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, and Europe, leveraging the two nations' geopolitical advantages to expand trans-regional trade. Addressing the Iran-Oman joint economic forum, he added, "Achieving the goal requires shared resolve and vision," stressing that such cooperation could transform regional dynamics. According to Iran's Chamber of Commerce, the bilateral trade with Muscat has surpassed \$2 billion in recent years. The Iranian president underscored the urgency of strengthening commercial, banking, and transit ties. Reflecting on his talks with Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, he remarked, "Today's priority is developing infrastructure to enhance land, sea, and air connectivity. Only through this foundation can we deepen economic, industrial,

scientific, and trade collaboration." Pezeshkian stated, "Without proper linkage of banking systems, broad economic engagement remains unattainable."

Establishment of joint bank

The president confirmed that Iran's Central Bank Governor Mohammad Reza Farzin is part of the delegation and has held constructive meetings with Omani counterparts to facilitate financial exchanges. Farzin has noted that the CBI is exploring the establishment of a joint bank and expanded monetary cooperation with Oman to enable direct transactions. "Trade between Iran and Oman hinges on resolving banking and monetary mechanisms, which requires parallel evaluation of commercial frameworks," Farzin said. Addressing the financial integration on Wednesday, Pezeshkian further proposed leveraging private sector capacities to transform bilateral collaborations in science, medicine, culture, security, and economics into a stable regional network. An 85-member Iranian trade delegation — representing sectors like technical engineering, food industries, mining, AI, petrochemicals, medical equipment, and tourism — is

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks at the Iran-Oman joint economic forum in the Omani capital of Muscat, on May 28, 2025.
● [president.ir](#)

currently in Oman to advance these goals.

Iran Chamber's seven proposals

At a forum on Iran-Oman trade opportunities, Samad Hassanzadeh, head of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, outlined seven proposals to deepen economic ties, advocating for joint investment projects as a key strategy. Hassanzadeh, speaking at the conference held with the participation of Iran's trade delegation in Muscat, stated that in recent years, bilateral trade volume between the two countries has surpassed \$2 billion, and there are bright prospects for significantly increasing this figure, as reported by IRNA. Inviting investors to sectors such as oil, gas, petrochemicals, renewable energy, water supply projects, power plant industries, transportation, mining, agriculture, automotive manufacturing, information technology, tourism, and hospitality, Hassanzadeh said, "Full investment opportunities



exist either independently or through partnerships with Iranian investors in the mentioned sectors." In another part of his remarks, the head of Iran's Chamber of Commerce highlighted tourism — particularly medical tourism — as a key area of cooperation between Iran and Oman. "Iran's private sector is prepared to collaborate and provide services to Omani medical tourists. According to estimates, around 4 million Arab tourists enter Iran annually, of whom

approximately 1 million visits for medical and healthcare services," he added. Hassanzadeh noted, "Energy sectors, construction of wind and solar power plants, and water and wastewater facilities represent another emerging area of collaboration, where Iranian companies' expertise and capabilities can be utilized." Hassanzadeh concluded, "Our private sector stands ready to contribute meaningfully to Oman's development and shared regional progress."

ICT underscores boost in Tehran-Tokyo sci-tech cooperation



Iranian ICT Minister Sattar Hashemi (R) shakes hands with Tsukada Tamaki, Japan's ambassador to Iran on May 28, 2025.
● [IRNA](#)

Economy Desk

Iranian Minister of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Sattar Hashemi emphasized enhancing cooperation with Japan in cutting-edge technologies, particularly Artificial Intelligence, knowledge transfer, and specialized human resource development. During a meeting with Tsukada Tamaki, Japan's ambassador to Iran, Hashemi highlighted Iran's vast scientific and technological capacities and stressed the need to advance collaboration in advanced technologies, as reported by IRNA. Referencing the historical record of scientific and research cooperation

between Iran and Japan, including the establishment of Iran's Telecommunications Research Center (now the ICT Research Institute), Hashemi called for expanded engagement in knowledge-based fields. Emphasizing the importance of advancing educational and research cooperation, the minister told the ambassador, "Knowledge transfer in communications and information technology, along with training specialized human resources, could serve as a key pillar of collaboration between Iran and Japan. We are prepared to share Iran's scientific capacities in this path by leveraging Japan's successful experiences." Highlighting Iran's academic capabilities, especially in Artificial Intelligence, he added, "Your precise understanding of Iran's scientific

potential and acknowledgment of the highly cited nature of Iranian research papers in academic circles could deepen scientific and technological ties between our two countries." Japan's ambassador expressed satisfaction with Iran's scientific and technological advancements during the meeting, noting the long-standing bilateral relations, stating that, "Iran possesses significant capacities in such fields." The ambassador also announced that he would relay the discussed topics to the Japanese government and expressed hope for strengthening bilateral relations during his mission in Iran. Key areas of mutual emphasis during the meeting included the development of communication infrastructure, expanding emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and the Internet of Things (IoT), exchanging experiences in digital policymaking, and fostering joint research collaborations.

Iran, China join hands in water management, agriculture, environment

Economy Desk

Iran and China signed a cooperation agreement on Wednesday in the fields of water resource management, agriculture, and environmental protection. A trilateral memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between Iran's Plan and Budget Organization (PBO), the University of Tehran, and the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The tripartite MoU, involving Iran's Plan and Budget Organization, the Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Tehran, and the Northwest Institute of Resources and Environment (affiliated with the Chinese Academy of Sciences), was formally signed during a ceremony hosted by the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS). The agreement focuses on collaboration in water resource management, agriculture, and environmental protection, encompassing joint project implementation, experience exchange, new technologies, and pilot initiatives in Iran, with the primary goal being to accelerate actionable steps and leverage the scientific and practical capacities of both parties. During the signing ceremony, Mohammad Ebrahimnia, the head of water, agriculture, and environmental affairs

at Iran's Plan and Budget Organization, referenced past experiences and urged the swift definition of pilot criteria and the joint implementation of an "action plan" in Iran. Ebrahimnia noted that while numerous MoUs have been signed between Iran and China across various fields, only a small fraction have reached implementation. "The involvement of Iran's Plan and Budget Organization — which is equivalent to China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) — could now provide a valuable opportunity to operationalize this agreement," he said. "Based on lessons from previous MoUs, we have conducted preliminary damage assessments to ensure rapid operationalization of knowledge, experience, and existing achievements through one or two specific pilot projects," Ebrahimnia added. He further proposed, "After signing the MoU, a short timeframe — no more than one to two months — should be allocated to define criteria and indicators for selecting pilot projects. Once the pilot locations in Iran are finalized, Chinese experts should be invited to Tehran to formally launch the agreement's implementation under a joint action plan."

Iran-Russia Eurasian alliance ...

The goal is not just gas transfer, but to recast Iran as a regional energy hub, swapping out European markets for those in the Global South. Russian gas, fed through Iran's domestic infrastructure, will then be shipped out to destinations like Turkey, Pakistan, and African partners. This arrangement sets out to:

- Let Russia make up for lost European sales by tapping new buyers in the Global South, while sidestepping Western sanctions.
- Enable Iran to shore up its standing as a regional energy broker, raising its profile in Eurasian and West Asian energy

equations.

- Lay the groundwork for broader swaps—oil, wheat, metals — skirting around Western financial systems and markets. Such moves point to the possible birth of a new energy bloc, one robust enough to call the shots for importers. As the North-South geopolitical divide widens, this bloc could reshape the global energy order.

Breaking free from dollar

One of the standout features of the Tehran-Moscow alliance is their success in weaning themselves off the dollar and SWIFT. Today, over 96% of bilateral trade gets settled in nation-

al currencies, with the Shetab and Mir payment systems now hooked up — a watershed in building a non-Western financial ecosystem. Sanctions have pushed both countries to lean on their rich and diverse commodities, from energy to agriculture, bypassing Western financial circuits. Thus, projects like INSTC or gas deals are not just infrastructure — they're laying down the foundations for a parallel financial system with staying power. What's unfolding is not a tactical dodge of sanctions, but a strategic leap away from Western financial dominance and towards a resilient, diversified economic order.

Tech alliance

On the technology front, Iran and Russia have carved out a niche as independent innovators despite external pressure. From Iranian drones to Russian satellites, from cyber security to AI, the two are building up an ecosystem that not only meets domestic needs but could soon roll out strategic tech exports. In aerospace and defense, joint efforts could beef up both countries' military clout. In cyber security, sharing expertise could shore up defenses against hybrid warfare. In AI, the fusion of Russian mathematical prowess and Iran's growing research capacity could

drive forward machine learning, robotics, and data analytics. In biotech, joint ventures in pharmaceuticals and vaccines could bolster both nations' medical independence. This tech alliance is not a stop-gap but a long-term structure for self-reliance — a way to break free from Western monopolies and cook up homegrown solutions for 21st-century challenges.

Rethinking global order

The true weight of the Iran-Russia partnership lies in its structural impact, not in simplistic readings as a mere escape from sanctions. Increasingly, this alli-

ance serves as a model for other sanctioned states (Venezuela, North Korea), setting up alternative institutions to Western dominance. The West's strategic blunder was to think economic pressure would bring about compliance. Sanctions have midwived a new alternative order. Today, Russia and Iran are not merely surviving but laying the groundwork for a new global platform — one built on independence, technology, energy, and non-Western finance. The question now is not whether a new world order is in the making, but when Western policymakers will wake up from the dream of unchallenged hegemony.

Senior Army commander: Iran stood alone in Iraqi-imposed war

Saddam enjoyed support from 36 countries



By Sadeq
Dehqan
Staff writer

Iranians have all heard the tales of the bravery and sacrifice of their soldiers during the Iraqi-imposed war on Iran countless times. However, the voluminous book of the Holy Defense era still holds many unread and unheard pages — a book whose every line is filled with numerous major and minor events, carrying invaluable experiences and lessons.

The eight-year imposed war, with all its hardships, bitterness, and destruction, came to an end — thanks to the sacrifices of thousands of martyred, wounded, captured, and missing soldiers — without even an inch of our country's soil falling into the hands of the Ba'athist enemy. The events of that era were recorded as a proud and memorable document in the long history of this land.

Nearly 36 years have passed since the end of the imposed war, yet we can still hear narratives and untold stories from the warriors who were at the heart of those events. By analyzing these accounts, we can uncover new and educative points that have remained sealed until now.

Brigadier General Masoud Bakhtiari is a retired military officer, university lecturer, and historian of the war who was one of the senior commanders of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army during the Iran-Iraq War. Due to his close association with Major General Ali Sayyad Shirazi, then-commander of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army's Ground Forces, he was called upon to collaborate in his headquarters from the early months of the war. Thus, he played a role in planning and commanding major victorious operations such as Beit al-Moqaddas and Tariq al-Quds.

Given his effective and prolonged presence on the frontlines and in operations, General Bakhtiari is the black box of many operations and events of the imposed war. Today, he teaches his experiences from the eight-year war in the form of military lessons to future commanders of the Army in this exclusive interview with Iran Daily.

IRAN DAILY: First, could you kindly provide a brief biography and combat history in your own words?

GENERAL BAKHTIARI: I am a retired brigadier general of Iran's Ground Forces with about 42 years of service in various branches of the Army. I was born in Tehran in 1941. I entered the Officers' Academy at 18, graduating three years later in 1962. I then progressed through various scientific and combat ranks in different units of the Army in Iran and completed my advanced studies and military courses, like many pre-Revolution military personnel, in the US. Since retirement, I have served as a professor and faculty member at the AJA University of Command and Staff of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army.

Could you elaborate on the AJA University, its level, and the courses taught there?

This university is the oldest command and staff college in the region. AJA University was established in 1933 and began admitting students a year after the University of Tehran, in 1935. In this regard, we were pioneers in the region. In 1933, many countries in the region did not even exist on the map.

As the name suggests, AJA University operates in the field of command issues during war and peace, as well as staff matters, which essentially involve high-level military management. In this university, where students hold the rank of major (battalion commander) and above, they learn how to interact with personnel and advisory groups and utilize their consultations. Essentially, the commander presents an issue to the staff, then members and advisors offer their opinions, and decision-making takes shape, with the commander making the final call. The responsibility for decision-making ultimately lies with the commander.

Command in war and staff management involves specific techniques and globally recognized scientific principles. One of the requirements for attaining the rank of general in the Army is completing this university course.

As far as I know, "The Art of War" is one of the courses you have taught for years to commanders of various ranks. If



Brigadier General Masoud Bakhtiari, retired military officer and one of the senior commanders of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army during the Iraqi-imposed war on Iran in the 1980s
● IRAN DAILY

you were to define it in a few sentences, what is the art of war in your view?

Generally, we consider any task performed with creativity, beauty, and skill to be an art. If you give a pen to anyone literate, they can write, but a calligrapher writes so beautifully and skillfully that their work is displayed in art galleries. Now, if you conduct war — an inherently brutal act — with art, meaning you achieve military objectives with minimal casualties and damage, you have mastered the art of war.

Moreover, the art of war lies in surprising the enemy and, even if the enemy has superior equipment and resources, compensating for your shortcomings creatively.

Based on your definition of the art of war, how well did the eight-year war align with it?

Answering this requires understanding the unique characteristics and conditions of the imposed war. No war is without casualties and destruction because war is fundamentally a violent and hostile clash between two states, countries, or factions. Such a confrontation cannot occur without losses.

We say the art of war lies in achieving military objectives

with minimal casualties — meaning, as I mentioned, the commander consults with staff members and military advisors to select and execute an operational plan that aligns closer with this definition. However, no war is possible without casualties, especially in our era, where technology has advanced to the point that military equipment is highly destructive and precise, often resulting in high casualties.

I tell you honestly: the art of war was fully observed by our forces throughout the Holy Defense era. When Iraq invaded our country, the Army was not in full readiness due to post-revolutionary issues. When a revolution occurs in a country, everything undergoes change — norms, behaviors, organizations, etc. The Army was no exception. After the Revolution, a new way of thinking took hold in the country, and expectations from the Army changed. The Army had to align itself with these new ways of thinking. At that time, our Army followed an American-style structure, which was unacceptable to the domestic and regional political climate.

Could you elaborate on what factors led to this situation for the Army?

When the Revolution and the war occurred, the world was under a bipolar system — one pole being the former Soviet Union and the other the US and Western countries. The Eastern and Western blocs were in constant political, economic, and military competition, seeking to expand their spheres of influence. Under the Pahlavi regime, Iran had been influenced by Western lifestyles for years. However, the reality was that we shared nearly 2,000 kilometers of borders with the Soviet Union, the leader of the Eastern Bloc. Naturally, the Soviets could not tolerate Western influence in Iran. Moreover, the USSR sought access to the Persian Gulf and Iran's oil resources, aiming to promote Marxist and communist tendencies in Iran. This led to the establishment of the Tudeh Party in Iran.

Furthermore, the dominant philosophical mindset among global intellectuals, particularly youth and academics in the 1960s and early 1970s, was to liberate societies from dictatorial regimes and steer them toward communist and Marxist economic systems.

The Soviet Union outright rejected the presence of an American-style Army along its borders. Meanwhile, some left-

ist and communist groups inside Iran believed that military spending was against the country's interests and that funds should instead be allocated to infrastructure like schools. They overlooked the fact that the most precious asset armies provide is security. Strengthening the military does not increase the likelihood of war; rather, a strong Army can prevent war.

So, all these factors led the Army to experience unique conditions during the Revolution and the start of the war?

There was an almost two-year gap between the Islamic Revolution (early 1979) and the war's start (late 1980). During this period, the Army had to adapt its ideas, structure, and form to the new system's demands, naturally undergoing organizational changes.

The Army was transitioning from the imperial era to the Islamic Republic. Though the war had not yet begun, the country faced insecurity in various regions. Opposition groups — from the Tudeh Party to the People's Mojahedin — began destabilizing cities in western Iran. Unrest emerged in Kurdistan. In Khuzestan, a group tried to incite ethnic tensions among Arab communities. In the northeast (Turkmen Sahra region) and southeast (Baluchestan Province), separatist movements also emerged. However, the most significant unrest was in western Iran. In the first week after the Revolution (late February 1979), the Mahabad garrison was seized and looted by conspirators.

At this point, military force had to be used to restore security. The only military power in the country at the time was the Army — an army undergoing organizational purges and restructuring. Yet, the Army successfully handled the situation: Kurdistan was not seceded, and cities like Paveh and Mahabad did not fall to groups like Komala. The Army also quelled unrest in Turkmen Sahra, Khuzestan, and cities like Khorramshahr and Abadan. The Army's casualties in this two-year period before the war reached 2,000.

Let's turn to the Iraqi-imposed war. What led Saddam to consider a military invasion of Iran?

In the two years following the Revolution, Iran championed



Influenced by the Ba'ath Party's Arab nationalist ideology, Saddam's Iraq positioned itself against Iran. Amid this, the US embassy hostage crisis in Iran occurred, souring Iran-US relations. The USSR expected Iran to align with it, but the Tudeh Party (linked to the Soviets) was banned. Thus, neither the Eastern nor Western Bloc favored Iran. Saddam was seeking a pretext to invade Iran. Seeing the situation as opportune, he used border disputes to justify starting the war.



Major General Ali Sayyad Shirazi (c), then-commander of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army's Ground Forces, discusses Army matters with Brigadier General Masoud Bakhtiari (R) on a train during the 1980s Iraq-Iran War. ● DEFAPRESS



Iraqi politician and field marshal Izzat al-Douri (front-L) hangs a medal around the neck of then-Iraqi ruler Saddam Hussein. ● REUTERS

the slogan “Neither East nor West.” The country broke away from the US and, despite Soviet efforts, did not align with them either. This period coincided with the bipolar world rivalry. Next to Iran, the Ba’athist regime in Iraq — leaning toward the USSR — ruled. At the time, Iran was the region’s leading power, with a stronger Army than Iraq’s (Iran’s population and territory were four times larger). Saddam Hussein — a fiercely nationalistic and ethnocentric Arab — viewed Iran with envy. Influenced by the Ba’ath Party’s Arab nationalist ideology, Iraq positioned itself against Iran. Amid this, the US embassy hostage crisis in Iran occurred, souring Iran-US relations. The USSR expected Iran to align with it, but the Tudeh Party (linked to the Soviets) was banned. Thus, neither the Eastern nor Western Bloc favored Iran. Meanwhile, Saddam was seeking a pretext to invade Iran. Seeing the situation as opportune, he used border disputes to justify starting the war — despite the 1975 Algiers Agreement, which had resolved all border issues. Although Iran held a position of greater power, we imposed nothing on Iraq in this agreement and resolved the disputes with magnanimity. Under that treaty, the Arvand Rud (Shatt al-Arab) was recognized as a shared border, with both nations having navigation rights. But Saddam claimed exclusive rights for Iraq and even asserted that Khuzestan belonged to Iraq — despite Khuzestan’s millennia-long history as part of Iran. (Iraq was founded in 1920, while Iran’s civilization spans 7,000 years.) These events unfolded while Iran’s Army was grappling with internal issues and reorganization — it was like hosting uninvited guests while in the middle of moving furniture.

Did the Army not sense Iraq’s military buildup? Were there no warning signs? According to documented evidence, the Army did issue warnings at the time. Based on military movements inside Iraq and other indicators, the Army had declared that Iraq intended to attack Iran. Iraq had signed arms deals with the USSR and acquired numerous fighter jets — clear signs of Saddam’s intentions. Yet, some inside Iran refused to believe an attack was possible, and the Army’s warnings were not taken seriously. No one thought Iraq

would dare attack Iran. Moreover, Iran’s intelligence apparatus (named SAVAK before the Revolution) had been dissolved due to its torture of revolutionaries. Parts of SAVAK had been responsible for gathering foreign intelligence, but this function was now absent. Iran’s embassies abroad also lacked significant activity in this regard as diplomats (soldiers of peacetime) were also tasked with monitoring foreign developments.



The Iranians capture some 19,000 soldiers from a demoralized Iraqi Army in the re-taking of the city of Khorramshahr in 1982. ● WIKIMEDIA

Under these conditions — about 14 months before the war began, when no one believed Iraq would attack — Lieutenant General Mohammad-Hossein Shaker (then-chief of staff) summoned the commanders of the Ground, Air, and Naval Forces, warning of a threat from Iraq. Accordingly, the Air Force prepared Operation Alborz, the Navy Operation Zulfiqar, and the Ground Forces Operation Abouzar to counter this threat. Since Army forces are usually dispersed nationwide, such contingency plans are necessary for rapid response. However, armies worldwide require higher authorization to mobilize. At the time, the Army’s warnings were ignored — a consequence of the revolutionary transition period and disbelief in Iraq’s aggression.

Under these circumstances, Iraq attacked Iran. How did Iran’s Army and soldiers react? Iraq invaded Iran on September 22, 1980 — a Monday af-

ternoon. Suddenly, the Iraqi Air Force, with 190 fighter jets, bombed our airbases in Tabriz, Hamedan, Isfahan, Kermanshah, Tehran, Shiraz, Bushehr, Ahvaz, and Omidyeh. Saddam’s first move was to cripple our air force while our Army was unprepared. Conscription had been reduced from two years to one, effectively halving the Ground Forces from 300,000 to 150,000. Yet, hours later, our Air Force executed Operation Kaman 99



(Operation Alborz), launching a massive airstrike on Iraqi military targets, airports, and airbases across Iraq. Imagine: this operation was conducted after two years of minimal flight activity. Due to the aforementioned reasons, Iraq initially made rapid territorial gains. Our border defenses were thin, and mobilizing ground forces took time. The Army’s skill lay in deploying at maximum speed, halting Iraq’s advance within two months. In its final assault on Susangerd (November 17, 1980), Iraq failed to capture the city — marking the point where Saddam realized he could advance no further.

Saddam had boasted, “I’ll conquer Tehran in a week.” What led him to think this? Saddam miscalculated. He underestimated the Iranian Army’s strength. The patriotism and dedication of our soldiers thwarted his ambitions. The people’s involvement was also crucial. Countless civilians

volunteered to fight — many untrained in warfare — but their presence boosted morale, showing our troops they had massive public support. Our Air Force delivered a crushing blow on the first day, crippling Iraq’s air capabilities within two months. Similarly, by December 7 (Navy Day), our Naval Forces had nearly neutralized Iraq’s navy for the rest of the war. These successes stemmed from pre-war plans: Operation



Alborz (Air Force) and Operation Zulfiqar (Navy). In war, when attacked, standard military doctrine dictates first halting the enemy’s advance. This was achieved in the war’s first two months. You asked about the art of war: ours was stopping the enemy despite the Army’s unpreparedness.

General Bakhtiari, let’s discuss your role during the war. Amid the post-revolutionary purges, what was your status in the Army? At the time, I was in uniform and on payroll, but my position was uncertain. When the war began, I volunteered for the frontlines. Many retired pilots — even those discharged — returned voluntarily. Some even flew missions before formal reinstatement and were martyred. Given my expertise, I was deployed to Khuzestan, serving as an artillery commander in Dezful. When Major General Sayyad Shirazi became Ground Forces

commander in 1981, he invited me to join his operational headquarters in Khuzestan. You helped plan major operations like Beit al-Moqaddas and Tariq al-Quds under General Sayyad Shirazi. Could you elaborate? Operations are typically planned by a team, and I was part of it. These were among the war’s successful operations. Earlier successes (like Operation Samen-ol-A’emeh in 1981, which broke the siege of Abadan) occurred before my involvement. After General Sayyad Shirazi’s appointment, Operation Tariq al-Quds freed Bostan and surrounding villages, splitting Iraqi forces. Next, Operation Fath al-Mobin (west of Andimeshk) pushed Iraqi forces out of northern Khuzestan. Finally, Operation Beit al-Moqaddas liberated Khorramshahr. In summary, four operations freed vast stretches of Khuzestan:

- Samen-ol-A’emeh: 150 km²
 - Tariq al-Quds: 600 km²
 - Fath al-Mobin: 2,200 km² (Iraqis were pushed near the border)
 - Beit al-Moqaddas: 6,000 km² (Khorramshahr’s liberation)
- By the end, 8,000 km² of the approximately 15,000 km² occupied land was freed in 8–9 months. After Khorramshahr’s liberation, the war’s tide turned. Iraq had claimed to occupy 15,000 km², but after this, it had no leg to stand on. Politically and militarily, Saddam should have withdrawn. His goal — seceding Khuzestan — had failed. But his ego as the “Arab champion” drove him to continue, though he held no Iranian territory.

How did foreign support influence Saddam’s decision to prolong the war? Documents show Saddam had backing from 36 countries. About 95% of Iraq’s equipment was Soviet-supplied. When the war began, Iraq had 333 fighter jets vs. our 435. Throughout the war, for every one of our planes that was shot down, we had no replacement. Yet by the time the cease-fire took hold, we had shot down around 1,000 Iraqi aircraft — but Iraq still had planes left. In truth, Iraq was propped up by major powers like the Soviet Union and America, receiving steady supplies of equipment and intelligence, while Iran stood alone against these global powers and all the nations backing Iraq. That was our art of war.

“

Under these conditions — about 14 months before the war began, when no one believed Iraq would attack — Lieutenant General Mohammad-Hossein Shaker (then-chief of staff of the Army) summoned the commanders of the Ground, Air, and Naval Forces, warning of a threat from Iraq. Accordingly, the Air Force prepared Operation Alborz, the Navy Operation Zulfiqar, and the Ground Forces Operation Abouzar to counter this threat.

Iranians steal the show in Emirati top flight



L-R: Al Wahda skipper Ahmad Nourollahi, Ittihad Kalba winger Mahdi Qayedi, Shabab Al Ahli striker Sardar Azmoun, and Al Bataeh head coach Farhad Majidi had decent UAE Pro League campaigns with their respective clubs.

Sports Desk

The recently-concluded Emirati ADNOC Pro League season was one to remember for Iranian players, who delivered impressive stats, and title-winning contributions for their clubs. While Sardar Azmoun and Saeid Ezzatollahi played pivotal roles in leading Shabab Al Ahli to a second top-flight title in three years, Mahdi Qayedi enjoyed a prolific campaign in Ittihad Kalba's colors.

Glittering debut

When Azmoun left Bayer

Leverkusen for Shabab Al Ahli last summer, his move was deemed by many as the beginning of the end for the 30-year-old striker, who had spent all of his career in the European leagues. However, it proved to be a statement debut in the Asian club football for Azmoun, with 26 goals and 10 assists in 39 appearances in all competitions. The Iranian talisman netted 11 goals in 21 league outings, while another nine strikes in as many games saw him finish as the top scorer at the in-

augural AFC Champions League Two, though his team was knocked out by fellow-Emirati club and ultimate champion Sharjah FC in the quarterfinals. There was further contribution by Azmoun and Ezzatollahi – who finished the season with seven goals and two assists in 36 outings – in the cup competitions, as the Team Melli duo also lifted the UAE President's Cup and Qatar-UAE Challenge Shield trophies with Shabab Al Ahli.

Integral trio

Wizard winger Qayedi will be among the most sought-after

players in the Emirati top-flight in the upcoming summer transfer window following a goal-laden loan season at Kalba. Qayedi found the net on 16 occasions, including six in the final five games of the campaign, in 23 games to stand second in the Emirati league's leading marksmen chart – a massive feat for a minnow club player. The 26-year-old added another two cup goals to his tally to finish the season with 18 goals and eight assists in 26 outings. Meanwhile, International midfielder Saman Qod-

dous – also making his Asian club debut – registered four goals and three assists in 18 league appearances and striker Shahriar Moghanlou had eight goals, plus two assists, as the Iranian trio took credit for 28 of Kalba's 39 league goals this season. Elsewhere, Ahmad Nourollahi – who joined the ADNOC Pro League form Persepolis in the summer of 2021 – relished another successful campaign on the southern coast of the Persian Gulf. Wearing the Al Wahda armband, the Iranian mid-

fielder contributed with six goals and assists apiece in 26 appearances to lead the club to a third-place finish in the 14-team table and direct qualification for the league phase of the AFC Champions League Elite next season. Mohammad Qorbani was the other Iranian to play for Al Wahda this season. Having joined from Russian club Orenburg in February, the defensive midfielder played the full 90 minutes in 11 matches, contributing with one goal and one assist. Meanwhile, former Es-

teghlal head coach Farhad Majidi made an impressive return to a managerial role in the UAE Pro League midway through the campaign. The 48-year-old Iranian, who had been without a job since parting ways with Kalba in March 2024, took charge of the bench at relegation-threatened Al Bataeh in January. Majidi steered the club to five victories – including massive wins against Sharjah and Al Wahda – and four draws in 15 games as Al Bataeh managed to finish 11 points clear of the drop zone.

Asian Athletics Championships:

Iran's Kamran reaches 110m hurdles final

Sports Desk

Iran's Masoud Kamran progressed to the men's 110m hurdles final on the second day of the Asian Athletics Championships in Gumi, South Korea. The Iranian sprinter registered a personal fastest record of 13.62 seconds to finish runner-up to Qatari Oumar Doudai Aba-

kar (13.39) in Wednesday's seminal, joining the Asian under-20 champion in today's final showdown at the Gumi Civic Stadium. Meanwhile, Reihaneh Mobini will vie for a women's long jump medal in today's final after an impressive qualification campaign on Wednesday. The Iranian girl registered

a best attempt of 6.33m to beat China's Guo Sijia (6.17) and Kazakhstan's Anastasiya Rypakova (6.15) to the top spot in the qualification jumps. The second day of the event in Gumi, however, was one to forget for other Iranians in action. Mahdi Haft-Cheshmeh settled for the eighth place in the men's hammer throw

event with 65.30 attempt. China's Wang Qi grabbed the gold with 74.50m, followed by Japanese duo Tatsuto Nakagawa (71.97m) and Shota Fukuda (71.89m). Iran's Ali Amirian and Amir Zamanpour missed out on the podium in the men's 1500m event, finishing fourth and seventh, respectively, in the final race.



● TREVOR RUSZKOWSKI/IMAGN IMAGES

Pacers one win from NBA Finals after beating Knicks

BBC – Tyrese Haliburton produced an electric first-half performance as the Indiana Pacers beat the New York Knicks to move to within one win of reaching the NBA Finals. Haliburton registered 20 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds in the first half of a 130-121 win at Gainbridge Fieldhouse in Indiana. Haliburton finished with 32 points, 15 assists and 12 rebounds without a turnover, making him the first player to record stats of 30-15-10-0 in

an NBA post-season game. The Pacers lead 3-1 in the Eastern Conference play-off finals. Victory in game five at Madison Square Garden in New York at 01:00 BST on Friday will secure their place in the Finals for the first time since 2000. "I felt like I let the team down in game three [a 106-100 home defeat], so it was important for me to just come out here and make plays," Haliburton said. "Guys put me in position to

make plays and play my game. It was a big win for us." Pascal Siakam scored 30 points and Bennedict Mathurin 20 off the bench for fourth-seeded Indiana. Jalen Brunson scored 31 points for New York, while Karl-Anthony Towns, who injured his left knee for the second consecutive game and was hobbling at the finish, scored 24 points and OG Anunoby 22. "We scored 120 points but our defence wasn't good enough," Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau

said. "Haliburton's a great player. You don't guard great players in this league individually. It's your entire team. And if one guy is not doing their job, everyone is going to look bad." The winners of the best-of-seven series will play the Minnesota Timberwolves or the Oklahoma City Thunder in the Finals, which begin on 5 June. The Thunder lead 3-1 in the Western Conference play-off finals.

Nader Shah's tomb in Mashhad; symbol of power, history, tribal heritage



By Leila Imeni
Staff writer

EXCLUSIVE

Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi Province, is a city abundant in religious, natural, recreational, and tourist attractions, providing an ideal environment for visitors to enjoy memorable and pleasant experiences. As one of Iran's major cities, it was once the capital of the Afsharids. Before the martyrdom of Imam Reza (PBUH), there was no sign of Mashhad, and the current city was merely a village called Sanabad. This village was part of Noghan, which at that time was one of the largest towns in Tus. The name Mashhad is derived from the meaning place of witness or martyrdom. During the reign of Shah Teimur Safavid and by his order, the city gradually grew in prosperity and size. People from Tus migrated to Mashhad, and the name Mashhad became permanently etched in Iranian history. Today, this city is a major center of religious tourism for Shi'a Muslims worldwide. With its rich historical legacy, after visiting the holy shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH), exploring Mashhad's numerous historical sites is highly recommended. These sites, distinguished by their unique architecture and compelling stories from the past, are especially appealing to history enthusiasts. One of Mashhad's most icon-

ic landmarks that visitors must not miss is the tomb of Nader Shah. Visiting this site involves exploring a significant historical complex that includes Naderi Garden, the Naderi Museum, and Nader Shah's mausoleum. For history buffs, this complex offers a fascinating glimpse into the past, housing a wide array of artifacts, buildings, and relics such as weapons from before the Qajar period, military equipment from Nader Shah's era, a tall tower with a statue of Nader Shah, and the tomb hall. Kourosh Rahimi, a guide working at this complex, provided a brief overview of Nader Shah's life, along with insights into the architectural features of this cultural and historical site, summarized as follows: Nader Shah was born on November 22, 1688, in Abivard village of Dargaz, in Khorasan. His father was from Azarbaijan, and his mother was Kurdish. Nader's mother was the daughter of an ancient ruler of Mazandaran, making him part Mazandarani. At the age of eighteen, Nader lost his father. During the invasion of Iran by the Uzbeks, he was captured along with his mother and brother. During captivity, he lost his mother but managed to escape. In Abivard, he was highly admired for his bravery. He married the daughter of the ruler of Abivard and had three sons and three daughters. Notably, none of his children suc-

ceeded him as ruler of Iran. Nader Shah is regarded as one of Iran's most illustrious kings in many ways; he is the only monarch who fought in approximately 1,250 battles without a single defeat. Although he sometimes felt weakened during his campaigns and needed to recover his strength, he ultimately achieved victory. In his youth, he was famously called Shir Atak (Lion of Atak), as «Atak» in Turkish means slope, referring to the mountain's steep incline. Professor Hoshang Seyhoun, the father of Iranian architecture, was born in Dolatabad, Tehran. Construction of this mausoleum began in 1956 by him, and it was officially opened in 1963. This historic building is precisely modeled after Nader's life story. If we observe the exterior carefully, it has a sloped form, like a mountain slope, which symbolizes that he was born in the mountainous region. The bars around the entire complex are like the Nader Shah Afshar's Tabrizin (battle ax). If we turn the columns of the complex upside down, they resemble the hats of Nader's soldiers. Nader's tomb is located in one corner; it is not in the middle because he usually stood in a corner of his tent to see everyone around. It is made to be unseen from the outside. The tombstone of Nader is exactly like Kuh-e Noor Diamond which Nader Shah brought from India. The stairs leading up are

about thirteen in number. This roughly indicates that Nader's approximately thirteen years of reign over Iran, and the building's design resembles a nomadic tent. Nader Shah is the only king born in a tent and also died in a tent, maintaining his tribal heritage throughout his life. Nader Shah was a very grand and high-spirited personality. That's why "Salam Stair" (Greetings Stair) was built in front of his mausoleum. These stairs symbolize respect; when entering Nader's tomb, you must step on these stairs and show reverence. You might not realize that the carved edges around the building are actually called "Salam Stair" architecture. Such edges are common in every historic structure; remember that when a person's character is important, they deserve respect. People who go to the Zorkhaneh (traditional Iranian gymnasium) know that upon entering, they should bow slightly as a sign of respect. Likewise, when entering Nader's mausoleum, your knees should bend and your head should bow down. Nader Shah was Shi'a Muslim. He gifted 222 kilograms of gold to the holy shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH), and the dome and minarets of the shrine are decorated with this gold. During the time when Muhammad Gorkani, the king of India, was defeated in a plain, Nader Shah only brought 1,150 camels load-

ed with jewels from India, which was equivalent to about sixty tons. This wealth made Iranian exempt from taxes, symbolizing the country's regional power. However, after Nader's assassination, many of his jewels were looted. The most valuable among these jewels is the Kuh-e Noor Diamond, which Nader's minister stole from Iran. Over a span of 75 years, these jewels traveled through eight cities, and ultimately, they were set into the crown of Queen Victoria, the Queen of Britain. The remaining jewels of Nader are kept in the Treasury of National Jewels in Tehran. But, at the end of his life, Nader Shah suffered from a liver disease. His close associates betrayed him and conspired against him; his commands were no longer pleasing to them. The plot to kill Nader was devised by his nephew, he was attacked in his tent. Nader rose and fought back, striking several opponents, but his foot got caught on a tent pole, and he fell to the ground. Nader's head was cut off by one of his ministers, with a trick played by his nephew, when he was 59 years old. He, who was the most illustrious, lived for fifty-nine years, spent eleven of those years riding a horse, and reigned over Iran for about thirteen years. The tomb of Nader Shah Afshar has been registered as a National Heritage Site of Iran.





Iran launches ‘new chapter’ in tourism diplomacy with Egypt, Turkey, Vatican: *Minister*

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran opened a “new chapter” in its tourism diplomacy with Egypt, Turkey and the Vatican, Cultural Heritage Minister Reza Salehi Amiri said on Wednesday, announcing five strategic incentives to draw foreign investment into the sector. In comments made on the sidelines of the cabinet meeting in Tehran on May 28, Salehi Amiri said Iran is stepping up efforts to make tourism a “key pillar” of its foreign policy, citing recent “positive” talks in Cairo and Rome, and growing cooperation with Ankara, IRNA reported. The renewed push signals Tehran’s broader effort to balance cultural exchange and economic gain by leveraging tourism as a soft power tool. The new government-approved investment package—based on the Seventh Development Plan—includes

fast-track permits for mixed-use tourist complexes that combine hotels with commercial and residential units. Speaking of Egypt, Salehi Amiri said a “shared will” exists to deepen cultural and tourism ties. “Soon, we’ll witness reciprocal travel between Iranian and Egyptian tourists,” he noted, citing destinations like Cairo and Alexandria on one side, and Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz and Mashhad on the other. Talks with Turkey have also gained ground. The Iranian minister said two expert-level meetings were held in the past fortnight with Turkey’s tourism minister, resulting in “effective agreements” aimed at boosting two-way tourism. Currently, some 3.5 million Iranians visit Turkey annually, but Turkish tourists account for less than a third of that number. “We’re working to redress the imbalance,”

he said, adding that Turkey’s tourism minister is expected in Tehran soon for a regional tourism summit. Salehi Amiri also spoke of his official trip to Rome, where he attended the Vatican’s recent inauguration ceremony and held meetings with senior Holy See officials. These discussions covered religious, cultural and tourism collaboration. He described Iran’s embassy in Rome as “instrumental” in facilitating the talks. The five new investment regulations aim to “pave the way” for private sector involvement in building tourism infrastructure, according to the minister. One of the most important provisions allows developers to combine hotel construction with retail and housing, enhancing profitability and regional development.



“Tourism is a language that needs no translation,” Salehi Amiri said. “It can deliver Iran’s message of peace and civilization directly to the world.”

From sketch to canvas; Bozorgmehr Hosseinpour blends satire, fine art

By Saeideh Ehsani Rad
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

When cartoonist-turned-painter Bozorgmehr Hosseinpour opens a solo exhibit titled ‘Wandering Cafés’ at Sohrab Gallery, it marks more than a shift in medium—it signals a broader transformation in how satire, fantasy, and fine art collide. Hosseinpour, whose caricatures were once a staple in Iranian print media, now brings his distinct visual language to the canvas. His latest exhibition, ‘Crookedness’, on view at Sohrab Gallery, blends painting with the same playful fantasy that has long defined his work. The exhibition opened on May 16 and will run through June 2. ‘Crookedness’ is the result of five years of sketching in cafés—spaces that inspired a continuation of his earlier series, ‘Crookedness’. In that collection, Hosseinpour explored the idea that every fracture gives birth to a new form. “We live in a time when rules are dissolving,” he says, “and being replaced by more flexible frameworks.” This new series reflects the instability and awkward shapes of today’s world—both literally and metaphorically. Accompanied by fellow cartoonist Jamal Rahmati, reporter of Persian-language newspaper Iran toured the exhibition and conducted an interview about Hosseinpour and his evolving creative journey. The full text of the interview follows:

IRAN DAILY: When did you first become familiar with Bozorgmehr Hosseinpour?

I first saw Bozorgmehr Hosseinpour’s work in Kayhan Caricature magazine when I began my career in the early 1990s. We were both young back then. Even from the start, his work stood out—both in content and technique. He had a distinct personal style influenced by miniature art, which later evolved into a more exaggerated, unique aesthetic that diverged from the trends of the ‘90s. He has a remarkable ability to portray faces and excels even in the most fantastical forms.

RAHMATI: What’s your opinion of Hosseinpour’s painting exhibition? Cartooning used to be split between press work and gallery work, with some in the press dismissing gallery cartoons as inferior. But the truth is, art finds its own place. Though cartoons started in the press, they’ve expanded beyond it. In this exhibition, Bozorgmehr categorizes cartooning into three branches, offering a new and accurate definition of gallery cartoon art—pieces meant for display and sale. It moves beyond the outdated press/gallery divide.

Do you think this exhibition was a success?

Absolutely. Bozorgmehr has opened a new door in this field, and buyers have responded positively. Previously, cartoons weren’t seen as collectible or decorative, partly because they were seen as tied to a specific time and place, unlike timeless paintings. But in this show, he created a cohesive theme centered on cafés, both conceptually and technically.

Can you discuss the form and content of the works in this exhibition?

Form-wise, Bozorgmehr plays with the frame itself—it’s dynamic and interacts with the composition, a first in his work. He customizes the frames to match the shapes inside; there are no static, straight-edged borders here. His use of deformation comes from comic aesthetics but veers into abstraction. Faces may become rods with eyes—exaggerated but expressive. Sometimes it leans toward reality, sometimes pure abstraction, and he blends the two seamlessly. Color-wise, he uses bright, vivid tones and controls them through contrast and harmony. He uses both light/dark lines and related color families to guide the viewer’s eye. You can tell he understands both form and color deeply.

And what about the conceptual side?

Cartoons inherently distort reality. While Bozorgmehr usually handles cartoon themes well, here he doesn’t focus on traditional cartoon topics. Instead, he presents everyday people in

café settings through a humorous lens, not bound by typical cartoon structure. His perspective is exaggerated in some works, pushing both spatial and thematic boundaries. The paintings clearly show the weariness and bittersweet laughter of contemporary life. They carry an absurd, timeless, placeless feel—just like a café, where people come to escape boredom. But Bozorgmehr even questions that escape; the café itself becomes part of the dull routine.

How has his background in journalism influenced his paintings?

Working in journalism trains you to produce consistently, regardless of your mood. In painting, you might go weeks without touching a canvas. But in the press, you learn that output matters more than feeling. This discipline has helped Bozorgmehr create continuously. His persistence is a product of his journalistic roots.

Unlike many contemporary artists who exhibit abstract or obscure work, Hosseinpour seems to respect his audience—especially younger viewers.

That’s also thanks to his press experience. In journalism, the audience is key. You create to connect with them. Bozorgmehr understands this and creates with the viewer in mind. He also chooses relatable subjects, like cafés, where younger people often gather. His time at Chelcheragh magazine, which had a youthful readership, also influenced this connection.

What sets Bozorgmehr Hosseinpour apart in the visual arts world?

His unique style and distinct perspective. He brings humor and satire into everyday life and has played key roles during important phases in the press. He’s technically skilled and has worked in places where his art was widely seen. That exposure, along with his distinctive voice, makes him a major figure.

How do you see the state of caricature in today’s media?

Previously, there was a system where even censored work eventually made



it to print. That structure is gone. Censorship in print media today is more of a joke—it exists but isn’t effective. Print newspapers have almost no audience now, and the remaining caricatures are published in only a few outlets with limited readership. Publishers use them for political leverage, not because they care about readers.

So is caricature in the press dead?

Yes. There’s barely any work in this field anymore. You can’t even call it a profession at this point. Many magazines shut down, and with social media, the entire landscape has changed.

No one waits to be published—they just share their work directly with an audience online.

What’s Bozorgmehr’s role in this changing landscape?

He’s bridged a gap. Traditionally, the “artistic” side of visual work was reserved for tragedy, not comedy. Comedy was seen as entertainment, not art. But Bozorgmehr has challenged that. His cartoon works are funny, exaggerated, and stylistically distinct, yet they fit naturally in a gallery. He’s made it possible for collectors to see cartoons as legitimate art with future value. That’s a major step forward.