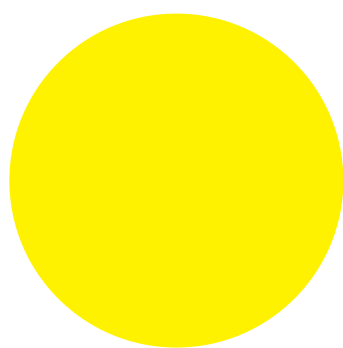


Electricity shortages
whittled down to less
than 10,000 megawatts:
Minister

3 >



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President's message to Iranian diaspora

Pezeshkian: New chapter to begin with solidarity

Iran to pursue diplomacy using 'full political capacity'

8 >



IRCS chief: No crime worse than targeting health centers in conflicts

Israel's assaults 'disproportionately hit civilians'

2 >

Head of Iran's Red Crescent Society, Pirhossein Kolivand, speaks to reporters in Tehran during a weekly press conference at the Foreign Ministry as the ministry's spokesman Esmail Baqaei looks on.
• IRNA

Snapback or return to deviation?

By Kamran Yeganegi
Foreign policy expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The West's recent threats of triggering the so-called "snapback mechanism" against Iran has once again exposed a fissure in the architecture of global legal and diplomatic norms. Designed initially as a safeguard to ensure Iran's compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the snapback clause has increasingly become a tool of coercion rather than a mechanism grounded in legal integrity. As policymakers and observers reevaluate the implications of this instrument, it is essential to revisit its legal foundations, geopolitical ramifications, and the broader consequences for multilateralism and international law.

Legal tool without legal ground?

The snapback provision, enshrined in United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015), was meant to restore sanctions automatically should Iran be found in "significant non-performance" of its nuclear commitments. However, the main sponsor of the clause—the United States—unilaterally walked out from the JCPOA in May 2018 under the Trump administration, relinquishing both its practical and moral standing to invoke its terms. The withdrawal raises a fundamental legal paradox: Can a country that has formally exited an agreement still claim rights and privileges embedded within it? The overwhelming consensus among international legal scholars is negative. Activating a mechanism from outside a framework not only undermines legal consistency but also erodes the legitimacy of multilateral agreements. The very spirit of *pacta sunt servanda*—the principle that agreements must be kept—depends on mutual adherence.

Weaponizing legal mechanisms

What we are witnessing today is not only a dispute over procedural legality but an evolving pattern in which international legal tools are being instrumentalized for unilateral geopolitical goals. Such a development is troubling. The snapback of sanctions was never designed to serve as a punitive shortcut circumventing diplomacy; rather, it was embedded as a last-resort safeguard within a broader framework of negotiated trust.

Page 3 >

Top commander
warns of
'regrettable,
stronger response'
to any aggression

2 >



Iran's doctrine
rules out nuclear
weapons: *MP*

Negotiation marks 'endgame
of any conflict'

INTERVIEW

4 >



German pres. blames
US JCPOA withdrawal
for current tensions
on Iran's nuclear
issue

2 >



AFC Women's Asia Cup
qualifiers:

Iran in pole position
after Bhutan rout

6 >



Soak up beauty of
Chamkhaleh Beach
in Gilan Province

7 >