

One year with Pezeshkian

President's three trump cards in foreign policy



ANALYSIS

The Persian calendar year 1403 (March 20, 2024–March 20, 2025) turned out to be a challenging and eventful year. The passing of Iran's previous president in a helicopter accident, alongside the martyrdom of the secretary general of the Lebanese resistance group Hezbollah, left the Iranian nation in mourning. Still, the Islamic Republic of Iran has repeatedly weathered much tougher storms and has managed to pull through crises with determination and authority. Since Ebrahim Raisi was unable to serve out his four-year term in the executive branch, last July, the people elected a new face as Iran's ninth president. From the get-go of his campaign, he set out on a path of honesty, fairness, and justice, and spoke candidly with the true beneficiaries of the Islamic Revolution. Masoud Pezeshkian made no empty promises and shied away from releasing a long list of promises just to win votes. Instead, he spoke about the importance of the Seventh Development Plan and the 20-Year Vision Document, stressing that if we can stick to this roadmap, there's no need for reinventing new slogans or electioneering promises.

'Dignity, wisdom, and expediency'

During a televised debate with his rivals, when asked about his administration's foreign policy game plan, he responded: "We will move forward based on the overarching principles of 'dignity, wisdom, and expediency.' If we keep fueling infighting at home, we'll just end up turning on each other. So, we need to build consensus and unity domestically, set aside differences, and then accept that our nation's best interests lie in

opening channels of dialogue with the world and claiming what's rightfully ours." He mapped out his government's main foreign policy line should he come out on top in the early presidential election, and his political allies, by taking part in campaign programs and rallies, dug into the "doctor-turned-politician's" take on foreign affairs.

Along those lines, Fayyaz Zahed, a representative of Pezeshkian's campaign HQ, appeared on Radio during the election to emphasize that diplomacy and field action must go hand in hand: "The field can be an effective tool, but it has to fall in line with a nationwide policy, and, execution-wise, it must answer to a clearly defined command."

He stressed that foreign policy should never fall victim to domestic squabbles: "If we've got family disputes at home, we have no right to air our dirty laundry in public. Nor should we use international achievements as a stick to beat rivals with, or undercut our own diplomats by tripping them up and making life difficult for them." All in all, one must acknowledge that the world is in a period of transition, and an independent, major player like Iran has the chance to carve out a prominent position on the global stage, provided that:

1. Foreign policy delivers tangible benefits for the nation.
2. False dichotomies are avoided in its approach.
3. A multi-pronged, not a

one-dimensional strategy, is pursued and followed through. July 5, 2024, finally rolled around, and after a tight, hard-fought race, Masoud Pezeshkian emerged victorious in the runoff. He officially took up the mantle of president on July 28, upon receiving his mandate from the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. Now, a year has passed since President Pezeshkian's win. Though his administration has been in office for less than a year, a relative assessment of the government's record can be made against the people's demands and the country's urgent needs so far.

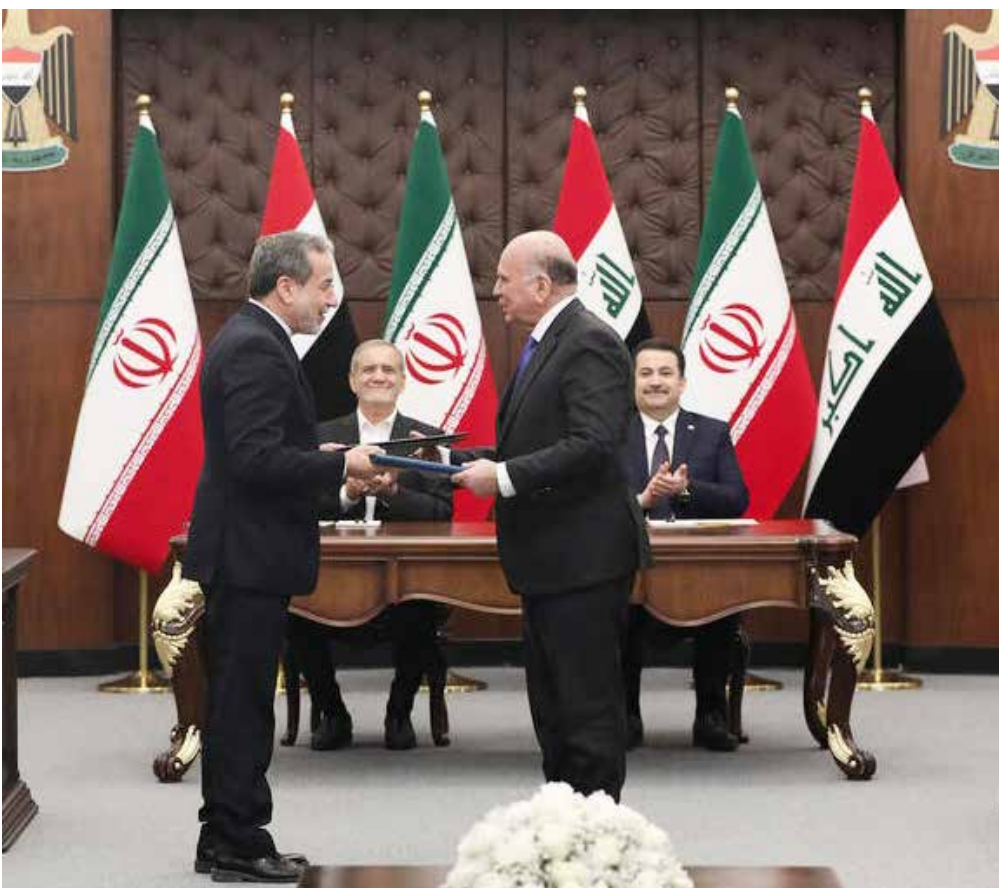
One of the most important moves in the post-election era

was for the people's choice to set out his government's foreign policy in no uncertain terms. In an article titled "My message to the new world", published in English, the messenger of unity laid bare his foreign policy blueprint:

"Under my administration, we will prioritize strengthening relations with our neighbors. We will champion the establishment of a 'strong region' rather than one where a single country pursues hegemony and dominance over the others. I firmly believe that neighboring and brotherly nations should not waste their valuable resources on erosive competitions, arms races, or the unwarranted containment of each other. Instead, we will aim to create an environment where our resources can be devoted to the progress and development of the region for the benefit of all."

In his piece, Pezeshkian stated that Iran was ready to work with Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iraq, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and regional organizations to deepen economic ties, boost trade, ramp up joint investments, tackle common challenges, and move toward a regional framework for dialogue, trust-building, and development:

"Our region has been plagued for too long by war, sectarian conflicts, terrorism and extremism, drug trafficking, water scarcity, refugee crises, environmental degradation, and foreign interference. It is time to tackle these common challenges for the benefit of future generations. Cooperation for regional development and prosperity will be the guiding principle of our foreign policy." Pezeshkian's view was clear: "As nations endowed with abundant resources and shared traditions rooted in peaceful Islamic teachings, we must unite



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian
● PRESS TV



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Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (front-L) and his Iraqi counterpart, Fuad Hussein, exchange cooperation documents that were signed in the presence of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (back-L) and Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani (back-R) in the Iraqi capital on September 11, 2024.
● IRNA