

forces, Persian Gulf countries, and the Zionist regime stepped up as key players in Syria. These changes marked a major test for Iran’s foreign policy flexibility in facing structural shifts in regional power balances.

**Return of diplomacy amid crisis**  
Pezeshkian’s government came into power on a platform of national unity domestically and rationality in foreign diplomacy. Right from the start, the incumbent administration made moves to pull Iran out of foreign policy deadlocks from the previous administration.

A key element of Pezeshkian’s foreign policy was bolstering neighborly diplomacy — a stance that the administration sought to redefine with a more constructive and fresh outlook. Presidential visits to Iraq, Qatar, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan underscore the prioritization of regional foreign policy.

At the same time, the nuclear negotiations file made a comeback as a primary foreign policy priority. Amid the security and regional crises, a quieter diplomatic layer was taking shape: the start of a new round of indirect talks between Iran and the United States. These discussions began in April 2025, after Donald Trump’s second presidential term in the US kicked off and Washington sought to revive dialogue channels with Tehran.

Earlier, in March 2025, Trump had sent a letter to the Leader of Iran’s Islamic Revolution as an initial signal for talks. Iran’s response was a green light for the indirect negotiations held on Omani soil and in Rome, mediated by Omanis and some European channels. Although these talks were happening against the backdrop of regional and field crises, their strategic significance was undeniable. Iran aimed to stick to its principles while avoiding being cornered diplomatically. Up until the imposed 12-day war, five rounds of these talks had taken place. However, with the onset of Israel’s military aggression, the sixth round was cancelled, putting talks on ice.

**Imposed 12-day war: multifront confrontation**

The peak of Pezeshkian’s government security challenges came about in June 2025 — just as the sixth round of nuclear talks with the US was looming — when Israel opened up a military front against Iran. Tel Aviv pursued multiple objectives in this aggression: dismantling Iran’s nuclear program and defensive missile capabilities and exploiting psychological warfare, internal rifts, and social discontent to shake up Iran’s political structure and governance. This military assault was accompanied by a targeted media war against Iran.

On one hand, the Zionist regime tried to pass off its aggression as self-defense in Western media and public opinion. On the other hand, it sought to steer internal Iranian public opinion through Persian-language anti-Iran media like Iran International. Moreover, fears of the conflict spilling over into a regional war ran high and were compounded by America’s direct involvement, turning up the stakes. Iran kicked off Operation True Promise III in response to the attacks by the Zionist regime, marking a new level of military capability compared to the previous two operations. This new wave stepped up in volume of strikes, accuracy of targeting, technical complexity, and number of operations.

By hitting military, security, and strategic targets of the Zionist regime, Iran demonstrated not only its capacity for firing back, but also its ability to consistently show off its tactical and strategic power. Unlike earlier conflict patterns, which typically wrapped up with a focused Iranian response, this time Iran turned up the heat by emphasizing the sustainability of its countermeasures and unveiling a new dimension of military strength and calculations.

Close coordination and tight cooperation between the government and military, security, and diplomatic institutions played a key role here. This institutional synergy helped the Pezeshkian government pull off quick and precise decisions to keep a lid on the critical domestic situation while aligning the message of Operation True Promise III internationally with

the political and diplomatic discourse of the government. This made the battlefield and diplomacy two complementary arms working within a common strategic framework. The proactive and targeted efforts by the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the war, along with combating the Zionist regime’s media narrative and cementing the notion on the international stage that Israel’s attacks were clear aggression rather than legitimate self-defense, filled in the blanks of the synergy between battlefield actions and diplomacy.

**Cease-fire, post-war atmosphere**

After 12 days of clashes and with the direct involvement of the United States, relentless diplomatic efforts brought about a cease-fire mediated by Qatar. The importance of this cease-fire lay in the fact that Iran was not the proposer, and Israel, for the first time, came around to accept a cease-fire without preconditions. International observers regarded this as unprecedented in the history of Israeli military conflicts, signaling the failure of Israel to fully carry out its objectives in the war, especially given that the final, highly destructive and costly attack came from Iran.

From the government’s viewpoint, this outcome was a dual achievement: On one hand, it headed off a protracted war and rising human and economic costs, and on the other, it painted Iran as a wise and calculating actor that, even amid battle, did not lose sight of diplomacy while fiercely defending itself against external aggression.

However, experience demonstrated that post-war moments can be tougher than the war itself as a fresh field of political, media, and economic competition sets in, equally sensitive. In the post-war atmosphere, the national unity forged during the crisis stands as the Pezeshkian government’s greatest political asset. Increased public trust in the government and armed forces, alongside a temporary easing of factional tensions, opened up a space that could serve as fertile ground for launching structural reforms.

Yet, as Iran’s modern history and experiences elsewhere show, such capital quickly evaporates unless it converts into tangible economic and social achievements in the short term. Pezeshkian’s government now faces a strategic crossroads: Either build on this national solidarity as a springboard for economic and political reforms or let it fizzle out, allowing political rifts and mistrust to creep back in. Meanwhile, resolving the nuclear crisis and continuing negotiations in the post-war environment are considerably more complicated than before, especially with Europe turning up the pressure by threatening to activate the snapback mechanism, which means reinstating UN Security Council sanctions, potentially dealing a heavy blow to Iran’s economy. In the post-war setting, part of the Iranian society sees any negotiation as a sign of retreat, while another segment blames the lack of talks for worsening economic woes and political isolation. Overall, domestic public opinion has turned more skeptical about any agreement. Internal political fissures have also thrown a wrench into coordination efforts. Iran’s diplomatic apparatus is thus forced to both uphold the country’s nuclear red lines and keep diplomacy doors from slamming shut.

**National unity: from slogan to mechanism**

Pezeshkian has sought to move beyond the slogan of national unity he championed during his campaign to the realm of designing operational mechanisms. This goal was pursued through various means, including holding a national dialogue conference attended by leading theorists and representatives from diverse political factions. The cabinet also became more diverse than before, although there remains a need for stronger representation of women and minorities.

To realize national unity, the current government has not only focused on fostering political dialogue but also paid special attention to the integrative role of media and narrative management in crisis times. The experience of the imposed 12-day war and its surrounding incidents proved



that internal cohesion cannot be complete without synchronization in the media arena. Moreover, regional and global public opinion is shaped not by military and diplomatic decisions but through the media. Active media diplomacy and initiatives such as Pezeshkian’s interview with Tucker Carlson reflected the government’s growing sensitivity to the media’s role in foreign policy and leveraging regional and international media capacities.

**Political sincerity: return to realism in governance**

A closer look at Iran’s past governments and governance trends in recent years reveals that the main problem was not sincerity but secrecy, exaggeration, delusion, and unreal narratives — approaches that not only failed to improve the country’s situation but also widened the gap between the government and the public and eroded the foundations of social capital. It seems Pezeshkian, fully aware of the costs, has deliberately taken a different road. He has repeatedly emphasized that the people are the genuine owners of the country and deserve to hear the truth — however bitter — from officials rather than from foreign media or enemy leaders. Although this governing style might open him up to political attacks in the short term, within the legitimacy-building theories of governance, it is precisely at the point where social capital reconstruction takes off — between bitter reality and responsible honesty. Pezeshkian believes authority doesn’t come from hiding the country’s problems and crises but from stepping up with courage to accept those crises and a transparent will to face them.

Within international relations theory, the approach of the incumbent government toward candidly stating facts and avoiding exaggerated narratives can be analyzed as legitimacy-building through transparency and soft power. According to Constructivism and Liberal Institutionalism perspectives, transparency and sincere dialogue with the domestic society not only strengthen social capital but send a clear signal to external actors: The government has genuine popular backing and acts based on data and realities. Furthermore, transparency can crack down on rivals’ psychological warfare and curb foreign propaganda effectiveness, making it harder for hostile narratives to take root.

However, Realism theorists caution that exposing too many limitations might be seen by competitors as a weakness. In international political economy, emphasizing domestic problems could negatively impact investors’ and trade partners’ risk assessments, pushing up the costs of attracting foreign capital — which, given sanctions and hurdles, may be less relevant currently.

Therefore, this strategy works best when honesty is paired with smart message management — so alongside highlighting problems, practical solutions and tangible signs of overcoming challenges are also presented. This combination can

turn sincerity into soft capital and a tool to advance Iran’s foreign policy aims in a competitive, multipolar environment.

**Crisis-experienced gov’t with forward-looking face**

The first year of Masoud Pezeshkian’s government painted a clear picture of a crisis-tested administration that weathered serious multi-layered challenges in its early months. A standout feature of this period was the conscious effort to strike a balance between field and diplomacy. While previously one area often overshadowed the other, Pezeshkian aimed to prove that it is possible to be firm on the ground and active in diplomacy simultaneously.

Entering the second year is a more sensitive and decisive phase. Widening rifts between the United States and Europe over handling Middle East crises, especially the Gaza war, have opened up a fresh opportunity to redefine and energize balanced diplomacy with the European continent. Meanwhile, leaving Persian Gulf countries to take the lead in mediating Iran-US talks and turning these into mostly bilateral talks has pushed Europe to the sidelines and heightened feelings of neglect in European capitals. These concerns, paired with nuclear issues, have contributed to Europe seriously ramping up talk of activating the snapback mechanism.

Conversely, Iran’s simultaneous engagement with Eastern cooperation frameworks like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the possibility of linking these memberships to China’s Belt and Road Initiative, and expanding ties with neighbors have set a new stage for leaps in trade, transit, and technology. The possible return of regional investors if diplomatic tensions somewhat ease could fuel economic infrastructure improvements. Channeling some of this capital into innovation, especially AI development and application, could raise Iran’s share in the growing regional economy. Achieving AI roadmap goals will impact not only the economy but also culture, education, media, healthcare, security, and politics, helping redefine national power and Iran’s place in the international system.

Still, in its second year, the incumbent government faces looming threats of harsher sanctions, worsening economic troubles, energy and water crises, and shifting geopolitical balances. Smartly seizing existing opportunities and timely spotting new ones while maintaining active diplomacy will be key to navigating through these challenges successfully. Given that snapback activation and UN sanctions return could choke off a significant portion of these opportunities, foreign policy and diplomacy will play an even more critical role in this second year. If the government sticks to this approach rightly, there is hope Iran will gradually weather its current crises and sustainably boost its standing in the international arena.

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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (C) hands flowers to female journalists during his visit to the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) on the National Journalist Day in Tehran, Iran, on August 9, 2025.  
● [president.ir](https://www.president.ir)



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