

## Pezeshkian's first year in office

## Trial of multifaceted crises in battlefield, diplomacy



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## O P I N I O N

The first year of Masoud Pezeshkian's government cannot be judged by the typical yardsticks of an ordinary presidential term. In many countries, the inaugural year serves as a phase of setting up: the slow formation of the cabinet, working out coordination among departments, shaping executive policies, and carrying out efforts to fulfill campaign promises. Yet, for Pezeshkian, that year turned into a multilayered battleground of challenges in national security, regional diplomacy, domestic economy, and public opinion management.

Dr. Pezeshkian, who entered the electoral fray with a platform of national unity and shunning needless tensions in domestic and foreign politics, was immediately thrown into a chain of unforeseen events upon taking office. The severity and diversity of these incidents were such that each alone could have knocked out a government agenda for months or even years. This tight clash of crises left no room for trial-and-error or gradual policy shifts, forcing the government from the outset to step up with strategic and immediate decisions to secure its course. In those early months, the stark and unvarnished reality of regional and global politics sent a clear message to the administration: If Iran's standing in the geopolitical equation is to be maintained or raised, decisions must be weighed carefully, with long-term vision, and avoiding knee-jerk reactions. These conditions put to the test Pezeshkian's announced programs and, beyond that, the government's capacity to juggle multiple crises simultaneously, under the gaze of both domestic and international observers. In other words, the first year came across as a crisis trial where the government's survival and credibility hinged on smart and timely reactions.

## Assassination of Haniyeh: first security shock

Before the ink on Pezeshkian's presidential decree had dried, news of the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, the political bureau chief of Hamas, in Tehran launched into headlines across domestic and international media. This was not merely a security incident but a strategic shock that shook up the psychological order of regional power dynamics.

The assassination's dimensions were layered and complex. On the one hand, such a precisely coordinated operation in Iran's capital rang alarm bells at various governance levels, signaling that hostile entities, leveraging advanced intelligence networks and insider support, could pull off actions whose impact was not just physical but could also be felt in the minds and media outlets around the globe. The chosen location, timing, and execution method all pointed to a calculated design aimed not just at eliminating a political figure but at sending a message of infiltration, undermining stability, and demonstrating power on enemy turf. This event went beyond security to influence the perception of power — the realm where politics via assassination morphs into unofficial diplomacy. In short, assassination here was not mere violence but an alternative language of politics.

Iran's response was played out within a measured and staged deterrence doctrine. Contrary to the expectations of some quarters awaiting immediate retaliation, Tehran stuck to its known



strategy: holding back on emotional reactions and instead planning out its response in terms of timing, location, and scope based on strategic considerations. This approach aimed to keep the Sword of Damocles hanging, avoid falling into manufactured conflicts, and maintain psychological cohesion among the public. Simultaneously, the diplomatic apparatus of the country kept the channels open, not through formal talks but through crisis management and keeping at bay misunderstandings or miscalculations in the tense regional atmosphere. International analysts described this strategy as a double-edged message: Iran has the will and capability to respond but is unwilling to get caught up in an enemy's trap to drag the region into endless war.

## Assassination of Nasrallah: political-security tremor

Before Iran and the Arab world had fully shaken off the shock from the Tehran incident, news broke out of the assassination of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, secretary-general of Lebanon's Hezbollah. He had led one of the Middle East's most ef-

fective non-state actors for over three decades and represented, in the Resistance Axis, not only a military commander but a symbol of ideological link, charisma, and strategic coherence. His removal sent shockwaves through Lebanon and the region, severely impacting the power balance.

This event could drive home a strategic message to Iran: the urgency of strengthening crisis diplomacy alongside military support and pulling together political, social, and media backup in allied countries to shore up resilience against such shocks.

## Operation True Promise II

Against this backdrop, Iran rolled out Operation True Promise II about two months after Haniyeh's assassination and four days after Nasrallah's killing and that of some associates, including Iranian General Abbas Nilfroushan in Lebanon. The timing and target selection carried a multi-layered message. It wasn't just a reactive strike but part of an active deterrence strategy.

The clear message was that Iran could

keep up the initiative on the field without getting bogged down in an exhausting reaction cycle. Some regional political and military analysts noted this operation caught Tel Aviv's attention, demonstrating that Iran can hit back while keeping the diplomatic door open. It also put to the test coordination among military forces, the diplomatic apparatus, and domestic media — a coordination that would prove crucial in the months ahead, especially during the imposed 12-day war.

## Changes in Damascus: end of Assad chapter

In December 2024, Syria's political landscape shifted gears with Bashar al-Assad's departure. Iran's ties with Syria had been a linchpin in Tehran's regional policy for two decades, aligning with counter-Daesh (ISIS) efforts and bolstering deterrence by deepening strategic depth and empowering the Resistance Axis. Assad's departure meant redefining the equation.

Following Assad's fall, Iran's influence in Damascus and the Resistance Axis noticeably took a hit. Meanwhile, Turkey's



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) addresses the Parliament before a vote is taken on his proposed cabinet members in Tehran, Iran, on August 21, 2025.  
● ERFAN KOUCHARI/TASNIM



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Image of Ismail Haniyeh, a Hamas leader who was assassinated in Iran on President Masoud Pezeshkian's inaugural day, is held by a woman at a square in Tehran, Iran.  
● ARASH KHAMOUSHI/  
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