

— that Israel does not even stick to agreements it has signed. As we saw in Gaza, Israeli attacks resumed during cease-fires. In Lebanon, despite cease-fire deals, occupation and assaults carry on. In Syria, attacks intensify and new territories are occupied. In Yemen, the violence has escalated. This clearly shows that the Zionist regime keeps up its long-standing expansionist strategy in the region, especially amid the changes of the past two years.

In fact, this issue has turned into a common ground for many regional countries. Naturally, as the Islamic Republic of Iran, while condemning these attacks, we hold talks with regional states to put a stop to the Zionist regime's war machine. This threat targets not only Palestine, Gaza, and Lebanon but also Syria, Iran, Yemen, and other countries across the region. This shared sense of danger from Israel as a threat to regional peace and security has now snowballed into a mutual feeling among regional nations.

How do you think the approach and perspective of Arab countries in the region toward continuing the normalization of political ties with the Zionist regime have shifted after October 7 and the ongoing Zionist aggression against the Gaza Strip? Can we simply say previous efforts have been delayed, or will the Arab states in the region exercise more caution?

The normalization process, or the so-called Abraham Accords, was a US-Zionist plan that some regional countries jumped on board with at the time, signing agreements and opening up relations. What the Islamic Republic of Iran has always spoken out about is that the very essence and nature of this regime is based on occupation, aggression, and the usurpation of rights of the Palestinian people and other nations in the region. Therefore, one cannot put stock in the regime's promises. The regime's presence in the region, whether it's consolidating or expanding, is not a source of security but rather puts regional security at risk.

The events of the past two years have only backed up Iran's view further. The Zionist regime has not followed through on any of its promises. Today, talk revolves around the full occupation of Gaza, annexation of the West Bank or occupied territories — possibly even the entire West Bank or most of it.

A few days ago, an extremist Israeli minister pitched a plan to the security cabinet to exert control over 82 percent of the West Bank, except for tiny cantons supposedly under Palestinian control. This stance, reflected in recent Knesset legislation, fundamentally rules out the formation of a Palestinian state anywhere or in any form. These facts clearly lay out what the Zionist regime is after and its expansionist goals. This existential threat to the entire region and to its security and stability has dramatically ramped up, especially over the past two years — and indeed over decades.

Even countries outside the region, like some European states, have spoken out against these actions of this extremist ruling cabinet in the occupied territories and voiced opposition to the full occupation of Gaza or annexation of the West Bank. Today, loud voices worldwide are calling out these moves.

You pointed to European countries' stance, which can be said to be unprecedented or nearly so since they demanded an independent Palestinian state. Do you think the current situation on the ground is tilting the atmosphere toward collective international support for establishing this state? Or can we still not confidently speak on this, given Western countries' relations with the Zionist regime?

The key factor is the willpower to carry through on the demand or discussion about forming a state.

Do you see that will emerging in Western countries?
Currently, there is still outright opposi-



tion from both the Zionist regime itself, the US, and some Western countries to recognizing a Palestinian state, despite more than 140 countries recognizing such a government today. Of course, they acknowledge a Palestinian government in principle as a political entity in occupied Palestine, but in practice, the Zionist regime wipes out even the smallest steps toward establishing that state.

The expansion of settlements, especially the new ones in occupied Al-Quds and the West Bank officially declared in the past few weeks, destroys any small grounds for creating a Palestinian state with even limited geography. Therefore, the most serious obstacle to Palestine's statehood is the Zionist regime's political and practical opposition, backed by US support — and so the US also stands opposed. This remains the most significant stumbling block to forming a Palestinian state today.

Declarations of recognition or support for Palestine's statehood by some European countries are commendable political positions, but whether they have the ability and determination to force it on the Zionist regime, we have yet to see that in practice.

After October 7, 2023, and the Resistance's developments, Western media circulated the narrative — and this has also been used to justify recent European Troika actions — that Iran's regional position has been affected due to what has occurred in the past nearly two years. How do you assess Iran's regional standing post-October 7?

It is mostly an illusion, a media stunt by the US-Zionist axis and sometimes the West to paint a picture that the Resistance Axis and the Islamic Republic of Iran have been weakened.

I'll just highlight two points as indicators of Iran's status. One is diplomacy: Iran's current relations with regional countries, the mutual visits, consultations, and shared views on many regional issues reflect an active and dynamic diplomacy that means Iran is presently in one of its best periods of relations with regional states.

We are pressing ahead with Saudi Arabia after the Beijing agreement, making progress across bilateral ties. Our relations with Egypt are also moving forward. With other regional countries — in the Persian Gulf, Iraq, the Levant, North Africa, and major Islamic countries like Turkey and Pakistan — our relations continue to gain ground.

The unified stance of regional countries against the aggression of the Zionist regime and the US towards Iran, coupled with support for Iran and condemnation

of the illegal, overt aggression by these forces, shows a growing consensus. These are signs of strong, forward-moving relations between Iran and regional countries.

Where previously we had cut diplomatic ties or had downgraded relations with some regional countries in the past two years, these have been patched up or upgraded; There are many such examples.

Therefore, our diplomatic situation in the region is far better than before. A shared understanding and mutual recognition of key issues is taking root between Iran and regional states. This reflects the strength of Iran's diplomacy and its influential regional standing.

On the defense front, during the 12-day recent aggression, Iran's armed forces, exercising the right of self-defense against clear violations of sovereignty and territorial integrity, gave a powerful response right up to the final moments before attacks ceased. We witnessed this strength in our legitimate defense.

This also shows that the Islamic Republic of Iran has kept up its defensive and legitimate military power, which remains a key element of Iran's strength and must be further bolstered to counter any future aggression or possible attacks.

You referred to some concepts that help with our next question: first, the need to hammer out regional initiatives; second, a shared understanding among countries of the region; and third, common threats felt between Iran and its neighbors. While three years ago, Iran's designation of some actors as threats was not widely accepted regionally, has all this combined created real momentum toward a joint security pact in West Asia and the Persian Gulf? Do you think the cur-

rent situation opens the door wider for such a pact?

In my view, it is still too soon to talk about a joint security pact among regional countries, but the groundwork is certainly better laid than before. Of course, this requires prerequisites. First comes a shared understanding, which must be cultivated across various levels in the region — through initiatives, proposals, and frameworks that build up mutual awareness of common threats to the entire region as well as mechanisms to ensure security, stability, and peace — both among think tanks, elites, and at official state levels.

The first step must be achieving this shared understanding, then moving to a common conceptual framework — one along the lines of what Iran has emphasized over the years regarding collective security arrangements. Iran has submitted various proposals and repeatedly stressed that its view toward regional security and stability is intra-regional.

We need to bring together regional countries toward a common initiative and understanding. I believe the environment for this is more ripe today than ever before and calls for operational initiatives at multiple levels: scholars and elites must sit down and hash out these subjects in joint meetings, and official bilateral and multilateral talks should also be held. First, a shared understanding must be reached, followed by a shared vision of the future and a framework for arrangements. If all these conditions are met, over a reasonable and forward-looking time frame, we can hopefully move toward collective security or a joint security pact, God willing.

The full interview first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (front-R) speaks with his Turkish counterpart, Hakan Fidan, at the council of foreign ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Istanbul, Turkey, on June 21, 2025. In a joint declaration following the meeting, the organization condemned "the aggression of Israel" against Iran.

● YASIN ARGUL/AFP

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Israeli finance minister Bezalel Smotrich gestures toward a map of the West Bank that showcases his proposal for Israel to annex 82 percent of the West Bank during a press conference at the regime's finance ministry in Al-Quds (Jerusalem), occupied territories, on September 3, 2025.

● YONATAN SINDEL/FLASH90