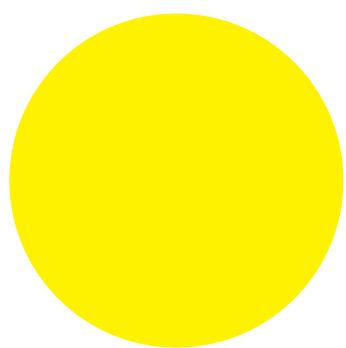


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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) poses for a family photo with the 2025 International Science Olympiads medalists in Tehran, Iran on September 20, 2025.
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Iran should change playing field, rules of game with West

By Mahmoud Abbaszadeh Meshkini
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OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Western actors, by designing an arbitration-like tool in the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA), apparently sought to ensure that sanctions would never be fully lifted from Iran and, through the "snapback" mechanism, to keep up the pressure on the country indefinitely. On Friday they voted in the UN Security Council in favor of returning sanction on Iran using this mechanism. Diplomatic channels alone seem to be unable to resolve Iran's standoff with the West. It is not to say diplomatic measures are without effect, but in the current circumstances they will not change the situation. Iran should now both change the playing field and alter the rules. In other words, Iran is currently playing in the Western actors' field. Even if one performs well on the opponent's turf, one cannot win the game because the field belongs to the adversary — especially when the rival also calls the shots on the rules. No matter how skilled the player, they could fall into the opponent's

trap. The least costly, most productive and most reliable course is to employ domestic capacities and shift the field of play in the country's favor.

However, for more varied diplomacy, there is not just a narrow opening but a wide avenue. If Iran properly brings along and engages neighboring states, Muslim countries and independent powerful nations with appropriate interaction, it will have no need to make concessions to Western powers. There are many countries in the world keen to work with Iran; diplomatic doors can be opened to them.

The current reality is such that Iran is a member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), pays subscriptions and is a shareholder, and for many years, despite all of the Islamic Republic's concessions in normalizing the country's nuclear dossier, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) did nothing but hand over the country's information to the enemies, paving the way for the assassination of nuclear scientists or the recent attacks by the United States and Israel in June. After these developments, Iran's continued membership in the NPT seems to be an overall cost with minimum benefits. In light of the imminent return of UN resolu-

tions against Iran, the activation of Chapter VII of the UN Charter cannot be ruled out, as Western countries are likely to pursue their agenda to the end. But whatever occurs, it is unlikely that measures taken against Iran will be wider, deeper or more extensive than what has already happened. Iran has already borne the consequences and harms of the snapback mechanism.

A renewed military action would also carry costs. War causes harm, but that harm is mutual. Many threats are bluff and not realistic, and at the same time Iran is certainly more prepared than before. It is true that the war in June imposed costs and damage on Iran, but it was also a valuable experience. Iran tested its military hardware and now can inflict damage on any aggressor more precisely and on a broader scale. Now, a single strike will be met with a stronger response than before. Naturally, following the war and the reproduction of reparative power, Iran has remedied many flaws and shortcomings. Moreover, Israel and the United States made extensive use of espionage and infiltration networks, but 80% of those networks inside Iran have been smashed; rebuilding such a network would take them a decade.