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Return of UN sanctions on Iran is unjust, politically clear blunder

PERSPECTIVE



As the clock ran out on UN Security Council Resolution 2231—the measure that endorsed the 2015 Iran nuclear deal—on October 18, 2025, Iran, China, and Russia jointly declared that all restrictions tied to Iran's nuclear program had officially expired and that previous UN resolutions had been terminated. In a joint letter to the Security Council's president and the UN secretary-general, the three countries stressed that, under paragraph 8 of Resolution 2231, "all provisions" of the resolution had expired as of that date, marking the "full and timely conclusion" of the council's consideration of Iran's nuclear file. Paragraph 8 set a ten-year transitional period from the resolution's adoption, after which all provisions would cease to apply

and the "non-proliferation (Iran)" item would be removed from the council's agenda.

Two additional provisions also play a pivotal role in an ongoing legal debate: paragraph 7(a), which annulled previous Security Council resolutions on Iran from the "implementation day" of the JCPOA, and paragraph 12, which established the so-called "snapback" mechanism—allowing for the automatic reinstatement of prior resolutions should any party claim "significant non-performance" by another. The main dispute now centers on a key legal question: Can the snapback mechanism remain valid after Resolution 2231 has expired?

In August, the European trio—France, Germany, and the United Kingdom—triggered the snapback process by invoking the dispute settlement mechanism, claiming that the previously canceled UN sanctions had been reinstated. Their move has deepened legal confusion and exposed a widening rift

over how the Security Council interprets the status of the JCPOA and Resolution 2231.

Peter Jenkins, a veteran former British diplomat, has examined, from legal and political perspectives, the current divergence in the international community's interpretation of the JCPOA's status and the snapback mechanism, as outlined below in an interview with IRNA published in Persian:

The clauses of Resolution 2231 must be understood as a coherent whole. Paragraph 8 defines a ten-year lifespan for the resolution's full implementation; by the end of that period, all its provisions lapse. Logically, therefore, the snapback clause in paragraph 12 could only have been operative during that ten-year window. Even if any previous resolutions had been reinstated under paragraph 7(a) during that period, the expiration mandated by paragraph 8 would also terminate their effect.

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Iran-Russia-China letters to UN, IAEA proof of shift in global power balance: *Speaker*



Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf addressed a Parliament session on in Tehran on October 26, 2025.
● ICANA

Sunday, Qalibaf said that a letter sent by the foreign ministries of Iran, Russia and China to the UN secretary-general and the Security Council president was as a symbol of the "strategic solidarity" among the three countries, who clearly stated that the European powers' efforts to trigger the so-called snapback mechanism fundamentally lacked any legal validity, IRNA reported.

In their letter, Iran, Russia, and China affirmed that October 18 marked the termination of Resolution 2231, which endorsed the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, and thus the end of the Security Council's consideration of the Iranian nuclear issue.

Nations and its nuclear agency were not only a "legal victory" for Iran but a proof of a shift in the balance of global power.

Addressing a Parliament session on

National Desk

Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said recent joint letters sent by Iran, Russia and China to the United

The allies also denounced as "legally and procedurally flawed" the attempt by the UK, Germany, and France – collectively known as the E3 – aimed at restoring all UN Security Council sanctions against Iran previously lifted under the nuclear deal.

On August 28, the E3 invoked the 30-day snapback process. Tehran rejected the move as illegitimate, citing the US's unilateral withdrawal from the agreement in 2018 and the Europeans' decision to align with unlawful anti-Iran sanctions.

On September 28, the US and the Europeans alleged that the anti-Iran UN resolutions and the associated sanctions were reimposed, urging all UN member states to implement the restrictive measures.

Under Paragraph 8 of Resolution 2231, all the provisions and restrictions stipulated in the resolution have come to an end and with the formal recognition of Iran's right to uranium enrichment,

the Iranian nuclear case has been taken off the Security Council's agenda, the Iranian speaker said.

He also referred to a separate letter sent by the representatives of China, Iran, and Russia to the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Mariano Grossi, on Saturday.

Stressing the illegality of the snapback activation, the three allies in their letter stated that with the expiration of Resolution 2231, the IAEA head's mandate to report on the verification and monitoring of Iran's nuclear activities has come to an end.

Qalibaf said the IAEA is now obligated to adhere to the Board of Governors' December 2015 decision, which authorized verification for up to 10 years or until the agency issued a broader conclusion on Iran's nuclear program, whichever came first, rather than following the unilateral interpretations of Western countries.

US preventing efforts toward multipolarity: *Deputy FM*



Saeed Khatibzadeh
● jamaran.ir

International Desk

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Saeed Khatibzadeh said the United States is a "hegemonic power" that "bullies" other nations or uses "naked force" to block the global shift toward multipolarity. Speaking to RT during an official visit to Moscow, he said many nations are striving for a multipolar system of equal participation, while the US and its allies and

pursuing the opposite and are hindering that goal.

"There are contradictory trends happening in the world right now. There are those trying to establish a multipolar order, but unfortunately... the Americans are not sharing this idea. They want to be the sole hegemonic power over other countries," he said.

Khatibzadeh cited decades of "illegal" US sanctions on Iran as a proof Washington believes it "can impose its will over other countries."

"After the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979, the United States imposed the first sanctions against us, freezing assets and restricting trade with Iran, and later expanded these measures under the pretext of links to terrorism and Iran's nuclear program. This

is while we emphasize that Iran's nuclear program is entirely peaceful," he said.

Khatibzadeh said that many restrictions were lifted under the 2015 nuclear deal but the US reimposed the sanctions in 2018 after it unilaterally withdrew from the agreement.

He accused the US of undermining sovereignty and reshaping the global order through force, and denounced the US President Donald Trump's campaign promise that "he's coming for peace."

"It is clear for everybody that it is not peace, it is hegemony, and it is not strength, it is use of naked force against others... Force will not bring peace. Radicalism only breeds more radicalism, and war brings more violence and bloodshed," the diplomat said.

Iran signs first UN treaty to fight cybercrime

International Desk

Iran signed a landmark United Nations treaty aimed at tackling cybercrime – a move Secretary-General Antonio Guterres hailed as a historic step toward a safer digital world.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Vahid Jalalzadeh participated in the signing ceremony on behalf of Iran, which was held in Vietnam's capital, Hanoi, on Saturday.

"Hanoi today witnessed the global determination to stand up to unilateralism in combating cybercrime. The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a responsible member of the international community, has played a constructive role over the past four years in the drafting process of this convention," Jalalzadeh said in a post on X. Adopted by the General Assembly in December 2024 after five years of negotiations, the convention against cybercrime establishes the first universal framework for investigating and prosecuting offenses committed online – from ransomware and financial fraud to the non-consensual sharing of intimate images.

"The UN Cybercrime Convention is a powerful, legally binding instrument to strengthen our collective defenses against cybercrime," said Guterres at the signing ceremony.

"It is a testament to the continued power of multilateralism to deliver solutions. And it is a vow that no country, no matter their level of development, will be left defenseless against cybercrime."



Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Vahid Jalalzadeh (r.) shakes hands with an unnamed official after signing a United Nations treaty aimed at tackling cybercrime in Hanoi, Vietnam, on October 25, 2025.
● IRNA

Sixty-five countries signed the treaty in Hanoi.

While creating opportunities, the internet has also brought about challenges and threats that everyone has felt in various sectors, the Iranian official said in a televised interview on Saturday.

"Today, Hanoi was the center of manifestation of this political will against unilateralism, in which Iran also played its constructive role," Jalalzadeh added.

The Iranian official noted that Tehran has made it clear that the treaty must not violate its national sovereignty or domestic laws.

Iran, Afghanistan agree on convicts' extradition, prisoners consular rights

International Desk

Iran and Afghanistan on Sunday reached understandings on extradition of convicts as well as addressing the consular rights of imprisoned Iranian nationals in the neighboring country. The agreements were reached during a meeting between Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi and Taliban's Head of the General Directorate of Supervision and Implementation of Lead-



ership Decrees Shamsuddin Shariati in Kabul, IRNA reported.

The two officials also discussed on legal and judicial cooperation between the two countries.

Upon his arrival in Kabul, Gharibabadi outlined his goals for the trip to Afghanistan, saying that water, border, and legal issues will be the focus of his talks with Afghan officials.

The Iranian official added that there were opportunities for cooperation between the two neighbors in the three areas.

Return of UN sanctions ...

Even if, for the sake of argument, the snapback's instigation was not procedurally illegal, it was still "unjust and, politically, a clear blunder." At the time, the European trio had failed to fully honor their own commitments, while the United States, having withdrawn from the JCPOA, was in a state of total non-compliance. Such actions have inflicted damage on these countries' political credibility and soft power on the world stage.

If Iran and its partners' interpretation of paragraph 8 is correct, then the entire debate over the legality of the snapback is moot. Once Resolution 2231 expired on October 18, 2025, any pre-2015 sanctions that

might have been reinstated via this mechanism lost all legal standing. Not long ago, Iran's Leader said that negotiating with a party seeking to impose its own version of an agreement through coercion is meaningless. I share that sentiment. US President Donald Trump repeatedly demonstrated that he was never an honest broker in search of balance but rather a negotiator intent on forcing submission.

The realistic path forward for Iran, at this juncture, lies in strengthening and deepening ties with non-Western powers such as China, Russia, and its regional neighbors. While this strategy may prolong economic pressure and unilateral sanctions, it remains the most pragmatic option

amid deep mutual distrust.

It is essential that Iran maintain its membership in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and continue its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) under its safeguards agreement. Such a course can help preserve the confidence of non-Western states and bolster Iran's credibility in the international community. From the standpoint of international law, the US and Israeli strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities in June were wholly illegitimate. No authorization was ever granted by the Security Council. Consequently, Israel's military action against Iran constituted an act of aggression and a violation of the UN Charter.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Iran’s saffron exports up 76% in H1 calendar year despite hurdles: *Union chief*

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Iran’s saffron exports climbed to 76% in the first half of the calendar year (began on March 21) compared with the same period last year, reaching 97 tons, a senior industry official said. “Saffron exports in the first six months of last year were approximately 54 tons, a figure that has reached about 97 tons this year,” said Gholamreza Miri, head of the Khorasan Razavi Saffron Exporters Union, in comments to Iran Daily. Referring to the total amount of Iranian saffron exports last year, Miri said, “Based on Iran Customs statistics, over 214 tons of saffron worth approximately 190 million dollars were exported from the country last year, and naturally, if the upward trend of saffron exports continues this year, the total

saffron exports of the country will see significant growth compared to last year.” The union chief stressed that, “There are obstacles to exports, if removed, the amount of saffron exports from the country would exceed current predictions.” Pointing to the obstacles to saffron exports, Miri said one of the obstacles is that Iranian exporters are unable to open LCs or obtain guarantees, and are forced to export saffron with high risk because if the saffron does not reach the buyer, the exporter has no guarantee beyond the borders. The official ascribed the growth in exports to the export of saffron at low prices to secure the foreign currency needed for imports. “Some countries are direct consumers of our exported saffron, while others purchase saffron from us in bulk (e.g., 500-gram packages), perform retail packaging in their own country, and then re-export it to other countries.”

Touching on Iran’s share of the global saffron market, Miri said, “A common mistake is that some statistics are misinterpreted; for example, it is said that saffron is used in cosmetic and pharmaceutical industries, and thus the total sales of those products are registered under saffron. Based on this, the financial turnover of saffron worldwide has been estimated at 8 billion dollars, which is not a logical figure.” The union chief referred to Iran’s competitors in the global market and said, “Currently, 90% of the world’s saffron production is in Iran’s hands; therefore, we do not have serious foreign competitors in this field. Our competition is actually with ourselves and within the country, and we do not have any competitors abroad; if I want to put it more clearly, our competitors within the country are those who create obstacles for exports.” Highlighting the capacity to buy Iranian saffron in the global



IRNA

market, Miri said, “Assuming we produce even a thousand tons of saffron per year, if export barriers are removed, there is global demand for Ira-

nian saffron, and we are able to sell all the saffron produced in the country in the global market. Then, considering the price of each kilogram of saffron be-

tween 1200 and 1500 dollars, a very high figure in terms of foreign exchange earnings, job creation, and added value will be generated for the country.”

Iran picked as intermediary trade route to connect China to Europe: *Minister*



Farzaneh Sadeq Malvajerd
IRNA

Economy Desk

Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq Malvajerd announced on Sunday that Iran has been chosen as an intermediary to connect trade route from China to Europe. Sadeq Malvajerd made the statement as she was referring to the incumbent administration’s active diplomacy with neighboring countries and the key role of transportation in regional interactions. Pointing to Regional Transport Ministers’ Conference 2025 in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad on Thursday, the Iranian minister said, “In this meeting, three main axes were reviewed, the most important topics of which were the selection of Iran as an intermediary between Pakistan and the Eurasian and Caucasus countries, the selection of Pa-

kistan as China’s connection to Iran, and the transfer of Chinese cargo from Pakistan and Iran to Europe.” Sadeq Malvajerd underscored the role of transportation infrastructure in developing regional relations, saying, “The development of highways and railway infrastructure plays an effective role in facilitating Iran’s communication with neighboring countries.” She also referred to the signing of the Rasht-Astara railway contract as part of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) between Iran and Russia by next month, adding, “The results of the Baku trip negotiations, focusing on guaranteeing cargo and goods transportation in the missing link of the North-South corridor, especially on the Rasht-Astara railway route, exceeded initial analyses.” The INSTC is an emerging cargo transit route connecting Indian Ocean countries to Central Asia, Russia, and Europe, which is becoming increasingly popular due to its economic and geopolitical benefits. Iran has introduced major plans to increase activity on the INSTC, including massive development projects in its only ocean port of Chabahar, located on the Sea of Oman coast in the southeast of the country, as well as in roads connecting the port to other trade hubs.

National steel production capacity soars to 33m tons

Economy Desk

The head of the Mining and Mineral Industries Commission of the Iran Chamber of Commerce on Sunday said the country’s steel production capacity had increased from 10 to 33 million tons, and that iron ore exports had been halted to meet domestic needs. Bahram Shakouri was cited by Mehr News Agency as saying that Iran’s annual steel production is more than 32 to 33 million tons, stressing, “Currently, the established capacity for steel production in the country is over 40 million tons per year.” Referring to the growing trend of steel production, Shakouri added, “In the past, between 45 and 50 million tons of iron ore were exported from the country, but now the export has stopped, and all extracted iron ore is absorbed and processed domestically.”

Shakouri underlined that Iran was once an importer of steel, but it has now become one of the exporters of this material. The head of the Mining and Mineral Industries Commission of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, stating that the country’s steel production has increased from about 10 to 12 million tons to over 32 to 33 million tons, said, “This figure indicates successful investments in the steel and iron ore chain.” Shakouri stressed that the steel and iron ore industry is considered as one of the important pillars of the national economy, and due to its effective role in generating foreign exchange, industrial development, and job creation, it has always received special attention from countries. Placing a premium on the necessity of a long-term focus on the mining sector, Shakouri said



IRNA

mines, as the initial link in the chain of many industrial productions, have a close connection with industries such as steel, transportation, machinery manufacturing, petrochemicals, and construction projects. “In addition to the extraction and export of mineral raw materials, the development of the value-added chain within the country should be seriously considered to make the best use of rich mineral capacities for economic growth and job creation,” he added. Shakouri touted production and creation of added value as the keys

to sustainable economic development and increasing job opportunities in the country. In the 2000s, Iran was one of the main importers of steel and exported millions of tons of raw iron ore annually. However, with continuous investment in the steel value chain and the development of reduction and rolling units, it has transformed from an importer to an exporter over the past decade. The current goal of the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade is to achieve a crude steel production capacity of 55 million tons by 2031.

South Pars pressure-boosting plan to raise Iran’s gas recovery by 20%

Economy Desk

Iran’s project to boost pressure at the South Pars gas field is expected to push up the field’s gas recovery rate by around 20%, an energy official said in remarks carried by IRNA on Monday. Mohammad-Mehdi Tavassolipour, project manager for South Pars pressure-boosting development, said the plan would make an additional 2.38 trillion cubic meters (tcm) of gas and 2 billion barrels of gas condensate recoverable from the field. In March, the National Iranian Oil Co. (NIOC) signed a \$17-billion contract with four local firms —

Petropars, OIEC Group, MAPNA, and the Khatam al-Anbia Construction Headquarters — to carry out the pressure-boosting project at South Pars, the world’s largest gas field that Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf. Under the agreement, the field was divided into seven operational hubs, each equipped with six offshore platforms — two for power generation, two for accommodation, and two compressor platforms for gas pressurization. The hubs were assigned to the companies for pressure enhancement in their designated sections.

Tavassolipour, who represents the state-owned Pars Oil and Gas Co., responsible for coordinating the four contractors involved, said the scheme was designed to maintain production at the field, prevent gas migration towards Qatar, balance domestic supply, and ensure Iran’s energy security. He said a total of 2,820 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas, worth \$520 billion, had been extracted from South Pars by March 2025, which began pumping in 2002. “This is while the total development cost has been estimated at \$84 billion.” The official noted that the field had now entered a natural pres-

sure decline phase, which, without intervention, would lead to a gradual drop in output. Iran’s current daily gas extraction — 1.1 bcm — from South Pars exceeds that of Qatar, according to Tavassolipour. However, the Oil Ministry estimates that South Pars could see a daily production drop of 28 million cubic meters in two years, which would surge to 42 mcm per day in five years without the pressure-boosting project. The South Pars field is estimated to contain 51 tcm of natural gas and over 50 billion barrels of condensate. Iran’s share covers about 37%

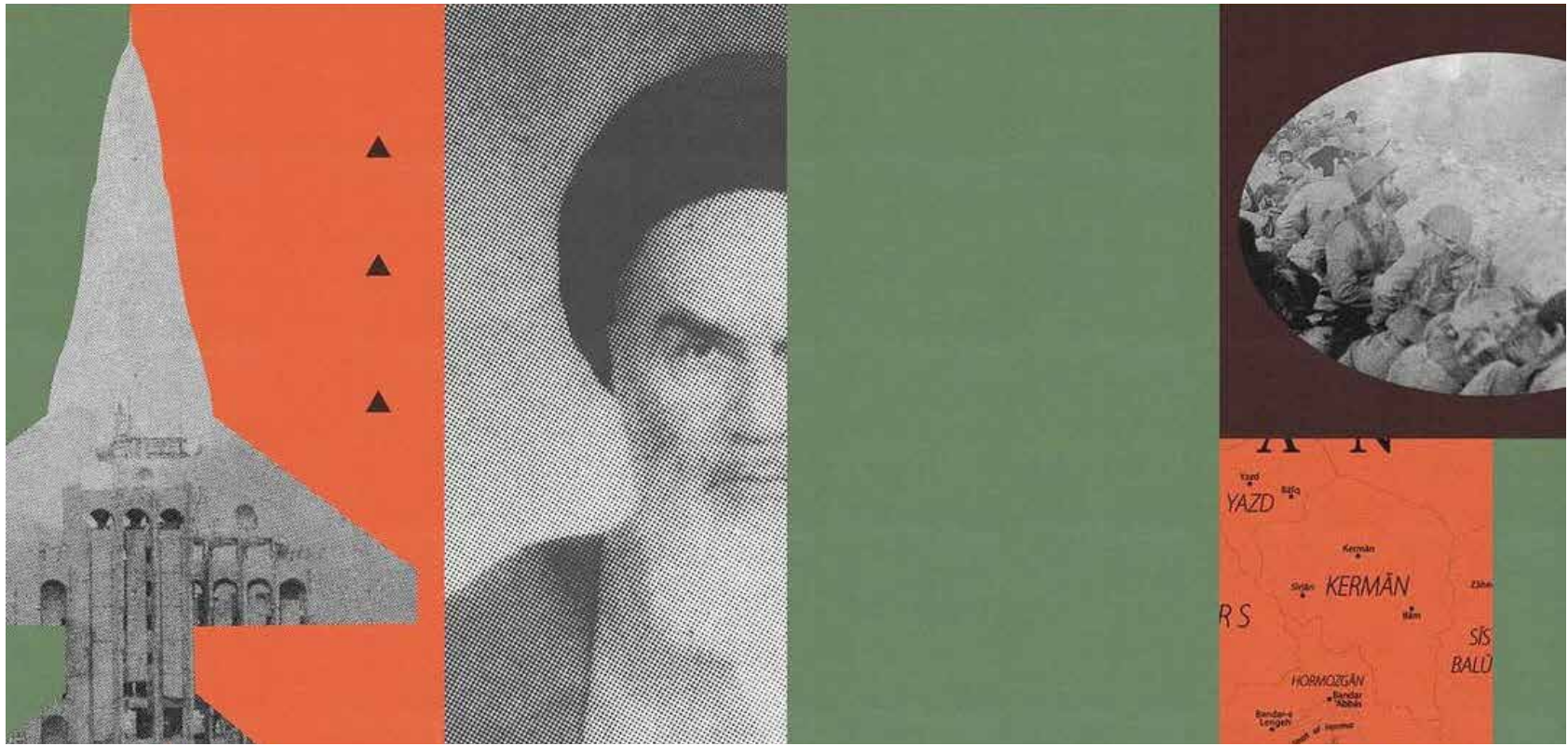


Phase 13 platform of the South Pars gas field in the Persian Gulf

of the total reservoir, containing 14 tcm of gas in place, of

which 10 tcm are considered recoverable.

US strategic missteps toward Islamic Republic of Iran



The illustration shows the late founder of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (C), along with snippets of Iran's history.
● THE ATLANTIC



The first strategic blunder in this project is the assumption that Iran can be turned into a Western client state and thereby serve American and European interests while cutting down on their security costs in the region. This presumption is utterly flawed and shows that the project's architects have little understanding of Iranian history — a key source of the nation's strategic culture — and have failed to learn from the lessons of time.

ANALYSIS

After the change in leadership in the United States and the coming to power of Donald Trump, several think tanks and policy foundations that weigh in on foreign policy and advise the White House sprang into action concurrently with the rise of neoconservatives and "Neo-Reaganites" in Washington. They have sought to reshape and redirect US foreign policy, particularly regarding Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea. One of these think tanks is the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), based in Washington, which has had a particularly active and influential record in pushing back against the JCPOA and driving forward the US withdrawal from it. This foundation — where some radical members of the Iranian opposition abroad, such as Saeed Ghasseminejad, also operate — was among the main architects behind the economic war and the bringing back of the so-called "crippling sanctions" against Iran. The FDD's website content and its members' analyses about Iran show that, while their initial and minimal objective in the political, economic, and psychological war against the Islamic Republic is "behavioral change" (read: "regime change"), their ultimate goal is the breaking down of the Islamic Republic as a political entity and state — if necessary, even through its territorial disintegration. In other words, the ultimate aim of the neocons and Neo-Reaganites, if they cannot bring about regime change to install a puppet government, is to weaken the Iranian state and eventually tear it apart through the country's multi-ethnic composition. This plan, which got off the ground after Trump's announcement of the US withdrawal from the JCPOA, nonetheless lays bare several contradictions and strategic errors in Washington's policy toward Iran, some of which are discussed below.

First mistake: Trying to revive a puppet regime in Iran

The first strategic blunder in this project is the assumption that Iran can be turned into a Western client state and thereby serve American and European interests while cutting down on their security costs in the region. This presumption is utterly flawed and shows that the project's architects have little understanding of Iranian history — a key source of the nation's strategic culture — and have failed to learn from the lessons of time. Throughout their long history, Iranians — except during brief intervals — have never been anyone's vassals. They have always been willing to ride out hardship to preserve their dignity and sovereignty. That is precisely why the short-lived subservience of the Pahlavi era, which began after the coup of August 19, 1953, ultimately gave rise to the Islamic Revolution and the Pahlavi regime's

collapse in pursuit of restoring Iran's independence and honor. Any attempt to bring back that subordination is doomed to fail — and even if it succeeds briefly, it will not last. Iranians have always set their sights high and insisted on being their own masters — one of the core tenets of their strategic culture.

Second mistake: Overlooking Iran's natural regional influence

The second major misstep by the project's architects and the new White House team is their failure to recognize that Iran's regional influence is natural. This influence is not limited to Shia communities; Rather, it is a supra-sectarian, historical, civilizational, and cultural presence. Often, even non-Shia groups in the region have called on the Islamic Republic to step in and mediate their disputes — a pattern that long predates the Republic itself. Hence, Iran's regional reach is

fundamentally different from that of regimes like Saudi Arabia or Israel. That is why Barack Obama repeatedly pointed out to Riyadh the need to come to terms with Iran's regional influence. The natural character of this influence means that, contrary to neocon comparisons with the Soviet Union's domination over its satellite states in the Eastern bloc during the Cold War, Iran's regional presence is not a material burden but a strategic asset. Even if Tehran scales back its regional spending, its influence will remain strong and effective.

Third mistake: Failing to grasp Iran's deep-rooted national character

A third major error in this design lies in failing to get a handle on the fabric of Iran's national identity, which sharply differs from the more artificially constructed post-Westphalian nation-states of the Middle East, such as Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, or Jordan, and even from

the former Soviet Union. Civilizations like Iran, Egypt, and China belong to the pre-Westphalian world — their nations were not patched together from disparate tribes and ethnicities but rather forged through centuries of deep integration. Therefore, comparing Iran's immaterialized collapse to that of the Soviet Union is sheer folly, just as assuming Iraq's fragmentation could be replicated in Iran misses the mark entirely. Iran's social groups are so intertwined that no combination of political, economic, or even military pressure can pull them apart.

Fourth mistake: Ignoring Iran's security-building role

The fourth grave strategic mistake by Washington in this new phase is that, in its drive to undermine and chip away at the Iranian state, it turns a blind eye to the country's role as a regional security provider — especially in keeping in check terrorism and religious



Civilians and armed forces members carry the flag-draped coffins of IRGC forces that were killed fighting the Daesh (ISIS) in Syria during their funeral in Tehran, Iran, on February 6, 2016.
● VAHID SALEMI/AP

extremism. Recent years have shown that no government in the region has had the political will, strategic capability, or geographical capacity to stand up to or balance out extremist threats as effectively as Iran. Should Iran's state become fragile, Takfiri terrorism would find its main obstacle out of the way, sending regional and even global security costs through the roof — with the United States ending up as the biggest loser in this new equation. A close look at America's strategic misjudgments in its latest confrontation project against Iran reveals that, due to simplistic assumptions and glaring miscalculations, Washington will fall short even of its minimal goals. At best, it may weaken the Iranian state temporarily — but the weaker that state becomes, the higher the West's own security costs will shoot up. In the end, America's aggressive policies toward Iran will, like a boomerang, come back to haunt it. In other words, the most crucial strategic failure of the White House policymakers lies in their inability to factor in the unintended consequences of their own maneuvers in the region, especially in dealing with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The article first appeared on the Research Institute for Strategic Studies website.

Washington's deadly lack of foreign policy empathy toward Russia

By Ted Galen Carpenter
Author, columnist
OPINION

It is hard to believe that US and other Western officials actually are surprised at the consequences of their habitually tone-deaf policies toward Russia. Are they truly shocked that a major power, already humiliated by its defeat in the Cold War, resented having the most powerful military alliance in history steadily expand toward its borders? One need only look at a current map and compare it to a map of Eastern Europe in 1990 at the time of Germany's reunification to see the geographic extent of NATO's expanded military power. The encroachment on Russia's core security zone is blatant. Yet, US leaders in five administrations ignored repeated, escalating admonitions and warnings from Moscow as those provocations took place. The culmination — so far — of such policy arrogance and ineptitude is a dangerous proxy war between NATO and Russia, with NATO using Ukraine as its principal weapon. Most worrisome of all, the proxy war is a conflict that could, given the slightest miscalculation by either side, escalate to the nuclear level. Members of America's foreign policy elite fail to exhibit even a modicum of strategic empathy, and that deficiency urgently needs to be corrected. The principal global nightmare in the coming decades is likely to be a possible military collision between the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC). If the new generation of US policymakers cannot do a far better job than the current crop has done with respect to policy toward Russia, a catastrophe becomes much more likely. Aspiring and current US policymakers should be compelled to conduct mental exercises in which they genuinely attempt to view a geostrategic issue from the perspective of an opponent or competitor of the United States. As an important corollary, there needs to be a more serious effort to comprehend how the other party seems to view specific US actions and initiatives. Such an approach requires sincere, in-depth intellectual role reversals. An attempt to achieve something at least resembling strategic empathy would, for example, try to determine how a defeated and humiliated United States would react to a victorious Russia expanding a powerful military alliance it controls ever closer to the American homeland. Let's say that the encroaching Russian



great power started by adding small nations in the Caribbean and Central America as new alliance members and then moved on to admit larger countries possessing more significant military assets, such as Colombia and Venezuela. Not content with implementing those provocations, Moscow then seeks to make Canada or Mexico a front-line alliance member against the United States. Substitute the Baltic republics for the small Caribbean or Central American countries, and substitute Poland, the Czech Republic, and Romania for Colombia and Venezuela, and one has the mirror image of what the US and NATO did in Eastern Europe between 1998 and 2004 with the initial stages of NATO's expansion.

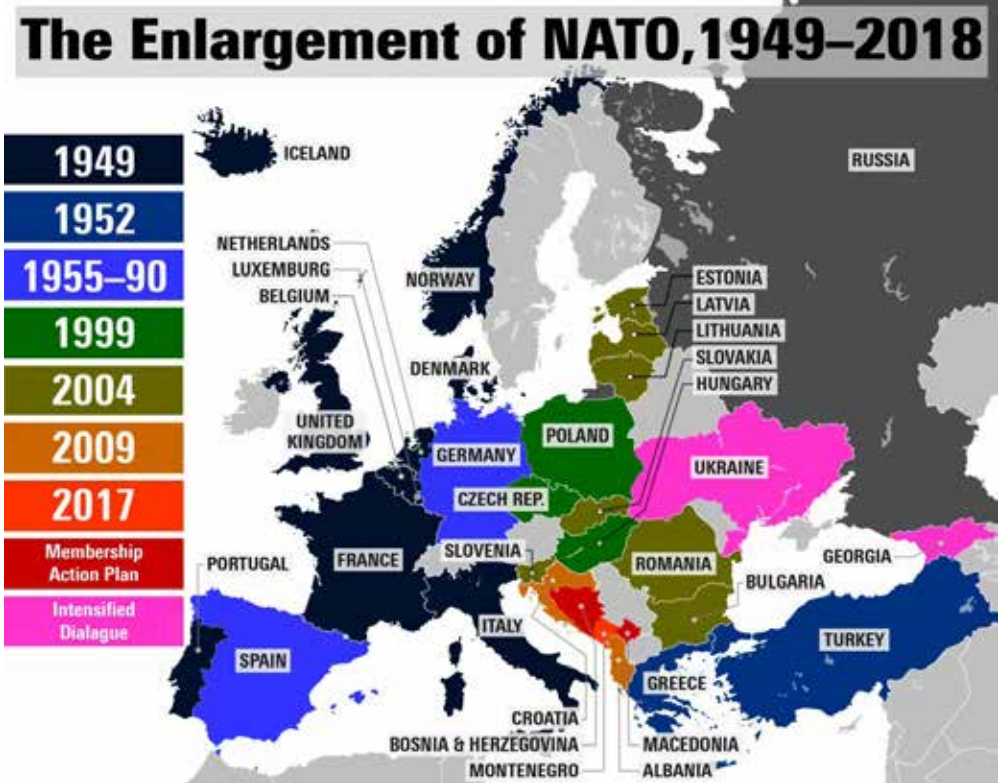
Throughout that period, Washington and other leading NATO powers kept insisting that the moves were not hostile measures directed against Russia — an assertion that had little credibility even during the early phases of expansion and, ultimately, had no credibility with Russian leaders. When anti-Russia hawks began to do their utmost to admit Ukraine to NATO during George W. Bush's administration, the provocations reached an intolerable level. Adding Ukraine as a NATO military asset, whether or not Kiev was granted formal membership, was the functional strategic equivalent of a victorious Russia trying to add Mexico or Canada to the looming military power already arrayed against

Washington. In this alternate universe, would anyone be surprised if the increasingly beleaguered United States took decisive steps to prevent Mexico or Canada from becoming a crucial Russian geostrategic asset? Would we be surprised if US leaders and the American people concluded that they faced an existential security threat and decided that decisive action to neutralize that threat must be taken, whatever the risk? It is nearly certain that both the public and the government would reach such a conclusion. Why, then, do US leaders and their NATO allies profess to be surprised and outraged that Russian officials and the Russian people seem to view matters in a similar fashion about

the threat their country faces? The total lack of strategic empathy on the part of Western — especially US — policymakers has produced a predictable, disastrous outcome. A healthy dose of realism and prudence about the ongoing quarrel with Moscow is badly needed. NATO's dangerous proxy war must end immediately. There are mounting signs that the conflict may be spiraling out of control, and the consequences, if that development occurs, could be horrific. Beyond ending the proxy war, US and NATO officials must accept that Ukraine is not only in Russia's sphere of influence but also is in Russia's core security zone. Prudent realism means terminating Western political, economic — and especially military — support for Kyiv. It is almost always uncomfortable for a small or medium-sized country that resides in the same neighborhood as a much larger, stronger power. (One might well ask Latin American populations how comfortable they have been when they must deal with the United States). The best hope for the weaker party is to avoid needlessly antagonizing its neighbor and, when necessary, to make concessions, however painful they might sometimes be. US leaders must learn at least the basics of strategic empathy. That process is needed to bring the increasingly dangerous quarrel with Russia to an end. It may be even more important to absorb the broader lessons of strategic empathy to avoid a looming, potentially catastrophic collision with an even more capable rising great power: the PRC.



Between 1998 and 2004, Washington and other leading NATO powers kept insisting that the expansions of NATO were not hostile measures directed against Russia — an assertion that had little credibility even during the early phases of expansion and, ultimately, had no credibility with Russian leaders. Adding Ukraine as a NATO military asset was the functional strategic equivalent of a victorious Russia trying to add Mexico or Canada to the looming military power already arrayed against Washington.



The map shows various phases of NATO expansion eastward toward Russia between 1949 and 2018.

The article first appeared on Antiwar.com.

U23 Wrestling World Championships: Iran's Azimi strikes gold in freestyle 92kg

Sports Desk

Mohammad-Mobin Azimi claimed the first freestyle gold medal for Iran at the U23 Wrestling World Championships in Novi Sad, Serbia, on Saturday. The young Iranian scored three stepout points to defeat Russian Takhir Khaniev – competing as a neutral athlete – 5-3 in the 92kg final, adding the under-23 crown to his 2023 world junior gold medal.

"It was a tough battle against a very strong opponent. Fortunately, the gameplan from my coaching staff worked perfectly and help me win the final," Azimi said after his final victory.

"I really wanted this medal. I had already won a world under-20 gold and I'm glad to have added this one to my achievements," added the Iranian, who also won a 97kg bronze medal at the Asian Senior Championships in March.

Azimi said he would now set his sights on capturing the ultimate prize at the Senior Worlds, adding: "I think my junior and under-23 titles have laid the groundwork to achieve that goal."

Azimi enjoyed an emphatic run toward the final showpiece, starting his campaign with a 7-1 victory over Uzbekistan's Sherzod Poyonov, before outmus-



cling Sadig Mustafazadeh 8-0 in the last 16. The Iranian then cruised to superiority wins against American Joshua Joseph Bar (13-3) and Ivan

Chornohuz (12-1) of Ukraine to set a final clash with Khaniev. Mohammad Bakhshi was the other Iranian in action across the two freestyle events on Sat-

urday, but finished empty-handed in the 74kg category. Bakhshi came out on top against France's Seyfulla Itaev (5-0) and Uzbek wrestler Jafar Chuliboyev

(11-4), before suffering a 11-0 loss to reigning world senior champion Yoshinosuke Aoyagi in the quarterfinals. The Iranian was denied a second chance for



Iranian wrestler Mohammad-Mobin Azimi (L) has his hand raised as the winner after his victory in the freestyle 92kg final at the U23 World Championships in Novi Sad, Serbia, on October 25, 2025.

● IAWFIR

a medal in repechage after the Japanese was stunned 7-4 by American Mitchell Mesenbrink, who went on to claim the gold medal.

Having already claimed five world team titles across different age groups in 2025 – including the senior double last month – is aiming to cap a glittering international season by completing a clean sweep of the men's under-23 trophies for the second year in a row.

The Iranian 10-man squad bagged six medals, including triple golds, in the Greco-Roman event in Novi Sad last week, finishing atop the standings in with 143 points – 47 clear of second-placed Ukraine.

Iman Mohammadi (72kg), Gholamreza Farrokhi (87kg), and Fardin Hedayati (130kg) were the Iranian Greco-Roman gold medalists, while Sajjad Abbaspour settled for silver in 60kg.

Ahmadreza Mohsennejad (67kg) and Abolfazl Mohmadi (82kg), meanwhile, finished with consolation bronzes in their respective divisions.

World Taekwondo Championships: Injured Hajimousaei settles for silver after unfinished final

Sports Desk

Iran's Mahdi Hajimousaei had to settle for silver at the World Taekwondo Championships in Wuxi, China, after an injury forced him to withdraw midway through the men's -63kg final against Tunisia's Mohamed Khalil Jendoubi on Saturday.

The Iranian was leading 1-0 with just 30 seconds remaining in the first period when a punch to the neck from the Tunisian sent him to the canvas. He was unable to recover and continue the bout. Despite the final disappointment, 20-year-old Hajimousaei enjoyed an impressive campaign in Wuxi, overcoming third-seed Norwegian Kristian Borgen in straight rounds in the quarterfinals before producing

a sublime performance to beat South Korea's Jun Jang – a former world champion and Tokyo Olympic bronze medalist – for a place in the final. Jendoubi, meanwhile, added the ultimate prize to his 2022 world bronze, as well as his Olympic silver and bronze medals.

Iran, which saw all four of its representatives medal at last year's Paris Olympics, has endured a dire campaign in Wuxi, with six of the country's seven contestants so far coming away empty-handed in their respective divisions.

On Sunday, Mohammad-Hossein Yazdani impressed with a second-round victory over former world champion Park Woo-hyeok of South Korea in the men's -87kg but fell to a last-eight defeat in three rounds against

Italy's Olympic bronze medalist Simone Alessio.

Mahdi Razmian's campaign in the men's -54kg ended in the second round after a defeat against Jordan's Jaafar Al-Daoud, while Melika Mirhosseini also crashed out in the second round, losing to China's Zhou Zeqi in the women's -73kg category.

The first day of the competition had seen Olympic Champion Arian Salimi and Nahid Kiani – a silver winner in Paris – suffer last-16 setbacks in the men's +87kg and women's -57kg classes respectively.

Mahla Momenzadeh, meanwhile, failed to add to her 2019 world silver, falling to Mah Teninba Fofana of France in the second round in the women's -49kg on Saturday.



Iran's Mahdi Hajimousaei (blue) is seen in action against Albania's Ernest Merdanaj at the World Taekwondo Championships in Wuxi, China, on October 25, 2025.

● WORLD TAEKWONDO

Asian Youth Games: Iranian girls rout Hong Kong, head into volleyball last four

Sports Desk

Iran secured a place in the girls' volleyball semifinals at the Asian



● volleyball.ir

Youth Games in Bahrain thanks to a straight-set victory (25-14, 25-13, 25-18) over Hong Kong on Sunday.

This was Iran's fifth consecutive win at the multi-sport event.

The Iranian under-18 side defeated Qatar and the host country, both in straight sets, in the preliminary round before overcoming the Chinese Taipei (3-1) and Indonesia (3-0) in the 1-8 classification group phase.

Elsewhere in the Games on Sunday, Amirreza Azari contributed 10 points the Iranian 3x3 basketball team beat Kazakhstan 21-6 to seal a spot in the boys' quarterfinals.

Meanwhile, Iranians collected three bronze medals in the muaythai contests.

Sevda Aqaei scored 8.16 points to finish third in the girls' wai kru 14-15 final.

Amirabbas Saghari also finished with the bronze in the boys' wai kru 14-15 category, courtesy of 8.40-point performance in the final, while Taha Sharifi tallied 8.20 points for a joint bronze in the 16-17 category.

On Saturday, Iranian U17 boys hammered Saudi Arabia 14-0 to progress to the futsal semifinals with one game to spare in the group stage.

Hosseinreza Yousefi stole the show with six goals, with Ali Ahmadi and Mohammad Karami contributing with two goals apiece, as Mohammad Sanei's team celebrated a second successive Group B win at the Khalifa Sports City Hall – following Friday's 5-1 victory over Kyrgyzstan.

Iran learns handball draw in Islamic Solidarity Games

Sports Desk

Iran was drawn against Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Maldives in Group A of the men's handball event at the upcoming Islamic Solidarity Games – starting November 7 in Riyadh.

The handball competition at the sixth edition of the multi-

sport event will kick off on November 13, with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Iraq in Group B of the men's event.

In the women's draw, Iran will face Turkey, Guinea, and Maldives in Group A.

Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Qatar, and Azerbaijan complete the lineup in Group B.



● IRIHF

Turkmen women weaving history, culture



● destinationiran.com

Iranica Desk

In a land where diverse ethnic groups and religions have lived side by side, indigenous arts such as Turkmen embroidery are not only expressions of beauty but also an integral part of the local people's cultural heritage. This is a long-standing women's art, passed down from mothers to daughters, weaving within its threads stories of the history and culture of this ancient community. Turkmen embroidery comprises a collection of imaginative and symbolic motifs inspired by nature, myths, and tribal beliefs. Each stitch on the fabric reflects a connection between past and present, resulting in works that today have transcended local boundaries and gained global recognition, chtn. ir wrote.

This authentic art was inscribed on UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2022 as Iran's twentieth global heritage, following the collaborative efforts of Iran and Turkmenistan at the 17th session of the Intergovernmental



Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage — an honor that underscores the significance of Turkmen women's art in preserving cultural identity. Maryam Mansouri, an expert on intangible heritage registration in Golestan Province,

said that Turkmen embroidery is one of Iran's oldest and most beautiful indigenous arts, with its geographical reach covering Turkmen-inhabited areas of Golestan Province, parts of North Khorasan, Turkmenistan, and northwestern Afghanistan. According to her, after the ad-



vent of Islam in Iran, many exquisite textiles were created by Iranian women, and some of these works reflected the talent and artistry of Turkmen women in the field of embroidery. The peak of this art's flourishing occurred during the Afsharid, Zand, and Qajar periods, when women used colorful silk threads on cotton and wool fabrics to create lasting and visually striking patterns. She noted that in the past, this art was used not only for clothing but also for curtains and other household textiles. She added that today it is mostly seen in women's garments among the Turkmen, and although its economic role has diminished compared to the past, it remains recognized as a symbol of the cultural authenticity of the Turkmen people. According to this expert, Turk-

men embroidery is entirely a women's art, and its training begins in childhood. In the past, there was almost no girl among the Turkmen tribes who had not learned this art, as it was considered an essential part of their identity, dowry, and traditional clothing. After marriage, women would pass this skill on to the next generation. She emphasizes that Turkmen embroidery is not merely a decorative art but the wordless language of Turkmen culture, conveying religious and social meanings. However, changes in lifestyle, urbanization, and the influence of foreign cultures have put some of the authenticity and diversity of its motifs at risk of being forgotten. Mansouri added that today, authentic examples of this art can only be seen in Turkmen-inhabited cities and vil-

lages such as Gonbad-e Kavus, Bandar-e Turkmen, Aq Qala, Kalaleh, Gomishan, and Maraveh Tappeh. Turkmen women still patiently and creatively stitch their imagined designs onto fabric, thereby keeping the heritage of their ancestors alive. She emphasized the importance of supporting local artisans and educating the new generation, stating that Turkmen embroidery holds valuable potential in handicrafts, job creation, and tourism, and paying attention to it can help revive cultural identity and promote the economic development of the region. Fereydoun Fa'ali, director general of Golestan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization, also highlighted the global recognition of this art, saying, "With the participation of the people and cooperation of cultural institutions, programs are underway to pass on the knowledge of embroidery to the younger generation and enthusiasts, so that this living heritage continues in society." He added, "Golestan's intangible heritage is a vital part of the province's cultural identity. The rituals, customs, local music, handicrafts, and oral stories of its people constitute a valuable resource for developing cultural tourism." Fa'ali further noted, "Preserving these cultural assets not only ensures the continuity of the identity of ethnic groups and future generations, but also creates a new opportunity to introduce Golestan Province as a cultural and artistic destination at the national and international level." While social and economic changes have put some traditional arts at risk of being forgotten, Turkmen embroidery remains alive in the hands of Turkmen women artisans — hands that stitch culture onto fabric and preserve an ancient identity from generation to generation.

Fars Province launches major heritage restoration initiative

Iranica Desk

Deputy head of Fars Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization for cultural heritage affairs announced the implementation of restoration and revitalization operations for 34 historical buildings across various parts of the province. He stated that these projects aim to protect Fars Province's valuable heritage and create a foundation for sustainable tourism development, according to chtn.ir. Sadeq Zare' said that the Fars Province's Cultural Heritage Department has developed a comprehensive plan this year for the maintenance and restoration of historical monuments, seeking both to safeguard the legacy of the past and to make these sites accessible for tourism purposes. Emphasizing that Fars Province is a treasure trove of Iran's history and civilization, Zare' added that preserving its historical monuments is equivalent to honoring the nation's cultural and national identity.



Sassanid Palace in Sarvestan
● wikimedia.org

Zare' mentioned the restoration of the Sassanid Palace in Sarvestan as one of the key projects, explaining that the construction of restrooms, repair of the base building, and restoration of the main structure are among the undertaken activities in this complex. Referring to restoration projects in Shiraz, he noted that the restoration and organization of

the Hafezieh Mausoleum, the Haft Tanan Garden Museum, New Mosque (Masjed-Now), Fath Mosque, Qods Mosque, and the historical Salehi, Alamdari, and Barekat houses have also begun. The official also noted that attention has been given to religious and public monuments, saying that the restoration of the Jaame (Grand) Mosque of Neyriz, the Jaame Mosque and

grain storage of Darab, the Suryian Jaame Mosque of Bavanat, as well as the Ali Khan and Baqer Khan mosques and the old bathhouse of Deh Kohneh in Lamerd, are currently in progress. He referred to ongoing research activities, adding that registering the intangible heritage of Shiraz and Jahrom and completing the archaeological map of Sarchehan



Haft Tanan Garden Museum, Shiraz
● alibaba.ir

are also on the agenda. Zare' emphasized that the development of research and scientific documentation complements physical and structural restoration efforts in the field of cultural heritage and plays an important role in passing on knowledge and experience to future generations. Fars Province, home to globally recognized heritage sites such

as Persepolis, Pasargadae, and the historic city of Shiraz, is one of Iran's richest regions in terms of cultural and historical assets. Experts believe that these restoration initiatives will not only preserve the province's ancient identity but also strengthen its position as a key destination for cultural tourism, attracting both domestic and international visitors.



Iran assures Persepolis, Pasargadae UNESCO sites remain safe amid rumors



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi-Amiri, proclaimed on Sunday that the status of the UNESCO-listed sites Persepolis and Pasargadae remains "fully stable" and dismissed recent rumors of any danger to them.

Addressing a joint meeting with Abdolkarim Hosseinzadeh, Iran's Vice President for Rural Development and Deprived Areas in Tehran, Salehi-Amiri said there has been "no official report, correspondence or warning" from UNESCO or any international body regarding threats to the ancient monuments, IRNA reported.

He added, "If even the slightest threat existed, the ministry would pursue it and issue public notice." He noted that, having visited the province of Fars himself, he found "no new incidents" at Persepolis and Pasargadae and described the situation as "completely stable". He added that he has held multiple field and headquarters meetings — most recently in Tehran yesterday — with the provincial heritage director. According to his account, no construction or "threatening activity" has taken place inside the protected zones of

either site. Moreover, "when no correspondence or warning exists, it is clear that these claims have no basis and reflect misunderstanding of the field reality." Salehi-Amiri closed by urging that "if there is any real documented threat, the reports should be officially forwarded to the ministry so that legal review and action may follow," reiterating that "to date, no such document has been received." At the same meeting, Farhad Azizi Zalani, Director-General of the Global Heritage Sites Department of the ministry, also weighed in. He denied rumors that Iran's world-heritage properties might be removed from UNESCO's list. He said, "Listing or de-listing of sites is a complex, expert process at international level. If change were triggered by the slightest construction or threat, then many other countries would long ago have lost listings." He added that instead of "alarm-rais-

ing", local authorities, institutions and the public should act together to protect these "heritage places not just for Iran but for the world." Zalani also reported that monitoring of sites such as Persepolis, Dome of Soltaniyeh (Gonbad-e Soltaniyeh) and Fin Garden is underway and any unauthorized activity in their buffer zones will be "pursued with rigor". He said, "We will under no circumstances allow the values of these global heritage places to be compromised." He described how a management-and-protection blueprint for all Iran's world heritage sites is currently being updated, and once finalized, projects such as visitor-access reconfiguration and infrastructure improvements will be carried out. Finally, he cited a construction breach near the site of Gonbad-e Soltaniyeh which was promptly halted and is now under legal follow-up, as demonstration of the ministry's commitment.

18th Marivan Int'l Street Theater Festival opens with vibrant parade

Arts & Culture Desk

The 18th Marivan International Street Theater Festival officially opened on Sunday, October 26 in the Kurdish border city of Marivan, drawing large crowds of local residents, theater enthusiasts, and visiting artists from across Iran and abroad. The festival will continue through October 30, IRNA reported. The opening ceremony featured performances by Marivan's children, who delivered short plays and poetry centered on "environmental protection and care for nature," spreading messages of "friendship, peace and respect for the earth." A colorful parade followed, moving to Mellat Park, with local drummers, ritual performers, and twelve horse-riders performing Kurdish dances, filling the streets with music, joy, and cultural

unity. Over 200 theatrical works were submitted nationwide, with 43 groups selected for participation, including troupes from Tunisia and India. Shows span categories such as open competition, ritual-traditional, experimental, youth and children, international, and retrospectives of award-winning past performances, highlighting both local traditions and contemporary innovations in street theater. In a message read during the ceremony, Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, described street theater as "a living, popular art form" and "a clear symbol of the coexistence of cultures and indigenous arts under national unity." He said the festival fosters "interaction and exchange of new ideas" among artists of different ethnicities and nations, enriching theatrical knowledge and creativity. Salehi added that the festival also contributes to local economic development, "By attracting culture and art enthusiasts, the wheels of the regional economy are set in motion, creating new job opportunities and promoting the creative economy of Kurdistan Province." The Marivan festival has emerged over the years as one of Iran's most prominent outdoor theater events, bringing performances out of traditional stages and into everyday public spaces, allowing citizens to experience theater as part of daily life. This year's edition promises to showcase a rich blend of local culture, innovative artistic expressions, and international exchange. He expressed hope that the event would "generate hope and vitality, strengthen public participation, and continue to convey a message of peace, friendship, and progress for all Iranians."

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SHABESTAN

Iranian filmmaker wins top prize at Japan's Nikon contest



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Hamed Nobari won the Grand Prize at the Nikon Film and Photo Contest 2024-2025 in Japan for his 40-second environmental short "The Small Red, Big Blue". The awards ceremony was held on October 12

at Nikon's headquarters in Tokyo, where Fatemeh Abdi accepted the prize on behalf of the film crew. The contest, launched in 1969, is among the world's oldest and largest global competitions for short films and photography. This year's entries came from more than 180 countries

and regions, IRNA reported. Nobari said the theme of this year's contest was Inspire and that his minimalist single-take film draws attention to "the silent collapse of marine life" caused by pollution. "It's only 40 seconds long, but it carries the weight of an ocean's cry," he told Iranian state media. "The Small Red, Big Blue" has already made a mark on the festival circuit, earning more than 40 international awards and official selections at nearly 300 global events. Its recent accolades include top honors at the 33rd Croatian One-Minute

Film Festival (2025), the Jákotpuszta Shepherd's Day and Nature Film Festival in Budapest (2025), and the Marano Ragazzi Spot Festival in Naples (2024). The Nikon Grand Prize marks the first time an Iranian filmmaker has captured the top award in the competition's history — a milestone that highlights the growing global presence of Iran's short-form cinema and its creative engagement with environmental issues. Nikon said the winning works will be exhibited in Tokyo and other major cities in the coming months.

Italy's Fano festival applauds Iran's 'Comment' with Special Jury Prize

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Ali Sokhangoo's short film 'Comment' clinched the Special Jury Prize at the 37th Fano International Film Festival in Italy on October 25. The festival, held in Bellocchi di Fano from October 21 to 25, recognized the film's poignant exploration of human connection and communication, ILNA reported. Starring Sara Najafi and Masoud Mohammadi, 'Comment' explores the complexities of online interactions and their impact on personal relationships. The film's subtle narrative and compelling performances have garnered international acclaim.



Following its success in Italy, 'Comment' is set to be showcased at the 43rd Torino Film Festival and the 40th Berlin Black International Film Festival. Also, it has been selected for broadcast on Germany's ALEX Berlin network, expanding its reach to a broader European audience. The international distribution of the film 'Comment' is handled by Stock Film Company, managed by Sattar Chamanigol and Vida Salehi.

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