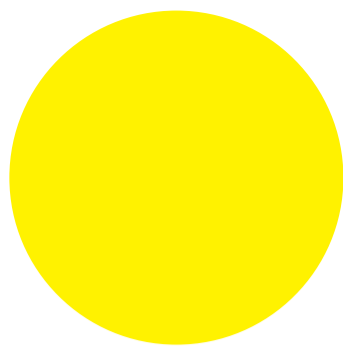




ICT minister touts WTDC-25 as opportunity for digital cooperation
Iran, Azerbaijan plan to ink MoU in digital sector

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FM urges IAEA to maintain neutrality amid West's anti-Iran efforts

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Cooperation in BRICS, SCO gives momentum to Iran-Russia ties: **Veep**

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Iranian First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (6th L) and his delegation meet with Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin (5th R) in Moscow, Russia on November 17, 2025.
● fypresident.ir

Birth of first Iranian library of criminal sciences

A hall that revivifies history, delineates future in University of Tehran

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Riyadh 2025 Islamic Solidarity Games:

Iran claims wushu, taekwondo success; closes gap on Uzbekistan

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New chapter of archaeological excavations begins at Ebrahimabad Hill in Qazvin

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Tehran to host first Nowruz tourism ministers' forum in March 2026

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Membership gains in Shanghai Pact; qualitative, medium-term

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE



Iran has now been a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) for two years, a move it celebrated, alongside joining BRICS, as part of a more balanced foreign-policy approach meant to help the country push back against Western dominance. Since joining, Tehran has signed several memoranda of cooperation during SCO economic meetings, particularly in the areas of trade, joint investment, banking collaboration and infrastructure development. The question, however, is how tangible these outcomes have been. The 24th meeting of SCO prime ministers, currently being hosted by Russia and attended by Iran's Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref, has brought these issues back into the spotlight. In an interview with Iran Daily, international relations expert Mohsen Farkhani

said Iran's gains from SCO membership are more qualitative and medium-term than immediate and measurable, but they nonetheless provide an important tool for diversifying the country's foreign relations.

IRAN DAILY: Over the two years since Iran became a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, what concrete and measurable achievements has the country secured in the political, commercial and security spheres?

FARKHANI: From a realist perspective in international relations, Iran's SCO membership can be seen as a strategy for balancing power and creating a diplomatic shield, one that helps ward off the Western-engineered sanctions regime by tying Iran more closely to multilateral coalitions with China, Russia and other member states. Since accession in July 2023, this membership has delivered measurable results across political, commercial and security domains. Although these gains are primarily qualitative and medium-term rather than immediate or numerical, they still serve as an instrument for broadening

Iran's external partnerships. Politically, SCO membership has enabled Iran to expand its diplomatic reach in Eurasia. For instance, at the SCO summit in Tianjin in September 2025, more than 20 MoUs were signed, highlighting Iran's potential role as a bridge between East and West. This has given Tehran greater diplomatic room to maneuver when dealing with regional crises such as tensions in the Middle East. Through the SCO, Iran has also strengthened its access to what could be described as a "soft hegemony" platform, gaining international legitimacy during conflicts, such as the condemnation of US and Israeli attacks on Iran in June 2025. Commercially, Iran's trade with SCO members, particularly in transit and energy, rose from \$651 billion in 2021 to more than \$750 billion in 2024. Key achievements include the development of transit corridors, such as the China-Iran-Russia rail link, and a 20% increase in goods transiting through Iran. Built on mutual interests, these ties will expand Iran's access to Central and South Asian markets and support its broader strategy of a resilient, non-dollar-based economy.

In the security domain, SCO membership has enabled Iran to play a more active role in regional stability, including proposing a regional hub for counter-narcotics efforts. In addition, a security cooperation agreement with Russia last year and joint military drills have strengthened Iran's defensive capabilities, acting as a counterweight to Western threats.

To what extent has SCO membership increased Iran's resilience to US and European sanctions?

Iran's resilience can be explained through what might be termed a "hedging strategy," which avoids binding the country to a single bloc and instead emphasizes diversified partnerships. As part of the broader framework of resistance economy and an eastward orientation, SCO membership has contributed, though partially, to Iran's ability to withstand sanctions. Amid escalating secondary US sanctions and nuclear-related tensions, the SCO has helped Iran reduce its reliance on the dollar and open up alternative trade channels, including expanded transactions with Russia.

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