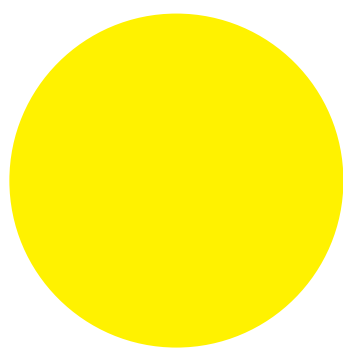


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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) remotely launches a major project to carry desalinated water from the Persian Gulf to the central city of Isfahan in Tehran on December 6, 2025.
● president.ir

Impact of US national security strategy on Mideast foreign policy



By Saleh al-Khathlan

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OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The Trump administration's newly released National Security Strategy reveals a blatant contradiction in tone when it comes to the Middle East. On the one hand, Washington speaks as if it intends to pull back from the region, insisting that the Middle East no longer enjoys the same priority in US foreign policy that it once did for decades and implying that "the days when the Middle East dominated US foreign policy... are over." A closer reading of the very same paragraph, however, points to a clear US commitment to its traditional, fundamental interests in the region. The strategy explicitly underscores continued US commitment to preventing Persian Gulf energy resources from falling into the hands of a direct rival; ensuring freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea; stopping the emergence of

terrorist hubs capable of targeting US interests or territory—an imperative reinforced after the 11 September attacks; and, finally, safeguarding Israel's security, which remains a central pillar of Washington's regional posture. These priorities, in effect, represent the foundations of US policy in the Middle East since the end of World War II. Despite variations in administrations, agendas, and global conditions, they have undergone no fundamental shift. The new strategy, therefore, reflects a change not in overarching objectives but in the tools and methods chosen to pursue them. The current administration aims to reduce direct military entanglement and shed some of the burdens traditionally shouldered by the United States, yet it shows no willingness to abandon the enduring interests that have shaped Washington's approach to the region for decades.

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America's endless cycle of broken promises

A hard lesson Iran must never forget

By Ali Karimi Magham

International relations expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Decades of deceit, from JCPOA betrayal to ongoing economic warfare, prove that US-Iran talks serve only Washington's coercive agenda. Iran must finally learn from failed experiences and confront American duplicity with strength, not naïveté. For more than four decades, the Islamic Republic has faced a consistent pattern from the United States, one that has never changed despite political transitions, smiling diplomats, or rhetorical gestures of "goodwill." It is the pattern of deception, coercion, and calculated dishonesty. Yet periodically, certain political currents inside Iran resurrect the illusion that Washington can somehow be persuaded to behave like a so-called normal negotiation partner! Today, as discussions about the possibility of re-igniting a new round of talks re-emerge, Iran must recall with absolute clarity that the United States has not simply failed to honor its commitments; it has structurally proven incapable of doing so.

The central question is simple: how many times must Iran be burned by the same flame before acknowledging that the fire itself will never change?

The clearest example, of course, is the JCPOA. This agreement was not a small diplomatic exercise; it was a carefully calibrated test of whether the United States possessed the maturity and political discipline to respect an international commitment. Iran fulfilled every obligation with exceptional meticulousness. It halted enrichment at agreed levels and permitted unprecedented inspections under the world's most intrusive verification regime. No country under pressure had ever demonstrated such transparency.

What did Iran receive in return? Not the promised sanctions relief. Not the economic normalization envisioned in the deal. Not even minimal respect for the agreement's legal obligations. Tehran, instead, received a stream of covert and overt violations, even before Washington formally abandoned the deal in 2018. American officials pressured banks not to engage with Iran, threatened corporations that considered entering the Iranian market, and quietly undermined every potential avenue of economic recovery. And then, with the swagger of colonial arrogance, the United States withdrew unilaterally, proudly violating UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

Washington's withdrawal was not a mistake. It was not a result of one administration's hostility. It was the natural outcome of an American political culture that does not recognize legal continuity when dealing with Iran. In the US worldview, agreements with Iran are expendable. Commitments expire with elections. Treaties can be discarded with a signature. This is not diplomacy; it is weaponized unpredictability.

Even today, as American officials whisper about "dialogue," their actions reveal a darker truth. Sanctions continue to rattle Iran's economy. Iranian assets remain frozen or stolen. Pressure campaigns intensify across every economic, technological, and military domain. Meanwhile, Washington pretends to extend a hand of diplomacy while holding a knife behind its back.

This is not a new tactic. It is the American modus operandi. And it is astonishing that anyone inside Iran still imagines these tactics can be neutralized by polite conversation or Western smiles.

The United States carries a deep, foundational hostility toward independent nations that refuse to bend to its geopolitical architecture. For more than forty years, Washington has supported every act of aggression against Iran: backing Saddam Hussein's chemical warfare, orchestrating coups and sabotage networks, downing a civilian airliner, and constructing one of the most comprehensive sanctions regimes in history, all under the guise of "pressure," "containment," or "defense of international order." The truth is more straightforward: the United States despises the Islamic Republic because it simply refuses to submit.

Given this record, any Iranian policymaker advocating fresh negotiations must confront a complex reality: what exactly will be different this time? What evidence suggests that the United States is prepared to respect commitments it has violated for decades? The burden of proof lies on those who promote engagement, not on the Iranian people, who have seen the consequences of misplaced trust time and time again. It is not a matter of Iran changing its expectations, but of finally bringing them into alignment with reality.

Every negotiation with Washington has created vulnerabilities, not opportunities. Every concession Iran made produced new demands rather than goodwill. Every gesture of flexibility—far from softening American hostility—emboldened Washington to escalate pressure. For the United States, compromise is a one-way street that ends only when Iran surrenders its sovereignty.

Iran's strength has never come from negotiations with America. It has come from steadfast resistance, strategic deterrence, regional partnerships, and the ability to withstand and outmaneuver decades of economic warfare. The Islamic Republic is respected not because it capitulates, but because it refuses to be coerced. If anything has forced Washington to acknowledge Iran as an unavoidable regional power, it is not dialogue; it is Iran's resilience.

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UK Supreme Court accepts Iran's appeal over London building confiscation

The British Supreme Court has officially docketed the National Iranian Oil Company's (NIOC) appeal in the Crescent legal, a major legal development that could prevent the confiscation of a valuable property belonging to Iran's Oil Industry Employees Pension Fund in London.

According to information published on the court's official website, the UK Supreme Court registered NIOC's appeal under case ID UKSC/2025/0190, placing the dispute on its docket for review. The appeal has been admitted "as of right," meaning it did not require special permission and was filed in line with legal procedures and deadlines. This comes at a time when the British Court of Appeal had previously ruled in favor of the Emirati company Crescent, which increased the likelihood of enforcing the confiscation order for the building known as "Oil House" on London's Victoria Street.

Crescent claims that the National Iranian Oil Company transferred the proper-

ty to the Oil Industry Employees Pension and Welfare Fund to remove its assets from the reach of creditors after an international arbitration ruling was issued in the company's favor.

Last year, the London High Court ruled that the transfer was made "for less than true value" and with the intention of blocking debt recovery.

Although the Court of Appeal confirmed that ruling in October 2024, disagreement among its three judges created grounds for escalation to the Supreme Court.

On October 11, Iranian legal representatives submitted their appeal, which the Supreme Court has now formally accepted, injecting new hope into Iran's efforts to overturn the confiscation order. With the case now before the UK's highest judicial authority, any action involving the disputed building will depend on the forthcoming Supreme Court judgment.

Meanwhile, more than 15,000 Iranian oil industry employees and retirees



The photo shows a building belonging to Iran's Oil Industry Employees' Pension Fund in Victoria Street in London, Britain.

● IRNA

have signed a petition demanding recognition of the pension fund's ownership of the London property. They argue the building was purchased using pension fund assets and that its income supports pensions, insurance, and healthcare for over 200,000 workers.

Reports published in the Iranian media have estimated that the NIOC House in London is worth £100 million (\$125 million).

The Crescent case dates back to the 2001 gas contract between the National Iranian Oil Company and the Crescent Group, which was not implemented, and the dispute between the parties was referred to international arbitration, and ultimately a verdict was issued in favor of the Emirati company.



IRGC Navy chief: Range of newly tested missile goes beyond Persian Gulf



A rocket is fired during a military drill carried out by naval forces of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) in the Sea of Oman on December 4, 2025.

● sepahnews.ir

National Desk

The commander of naval forces of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said his forces tested a new missile during the latest military exercises, which has a range exceeding the length of the Persian Gulf.

"The Persian Gulf is 1,375 kilometers long – this missile's range is beyond that," Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri said in an interview with state television. He added that the missile, built by the IRGC Navy, is fully indigenous and "can be guided after launch."

His remarks came as the IRGC carried out a two-day naval drill in the Sea of Oman.

Tangsiri said all weapons used in the drill were domestically made, including a new ballistic missile with "very high precision," adding, "Our

enemies have seen its accuracy," he said.

"We achieved all the objectives we had set for the exercise," he said. Stressing that IRGC's Navy demonstrated a portion of its capabilities during the drills, Tangsiri said if the enemies seek to violate Iran's interests, they will certainly be dealt a harsh blow.

On Friday, the IRGC naval forces launched ballistic and cruise missiles from inland sites during the second phase of the military drill, striking predetermined targets in the Sea of Oman with high precision.

Various cruise missiles — Qadr 110, Qadr 380, Qadir — as well as the ballistic missile 303 were launched simultaneously from multiple points deep inside the country during the new phase of the IRGC Navy's "Eghtedar" (authority)

exercise.

All designated targets in the Sea of Oman were struck with high precision.

At the same time, participating drone systems carried out successful attacks against simulated enemy bases, destroying the intended targets.

On the first day of the event, naval units conveyed their firm message by issuing warnings to American ships present in the region.

The exercise, code-named Shahid Mohammad Nazeri, took place across the Persian Gulf, the Nazeat maritime zone — Abu Musa, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Siri islands, the Strait of Hormuz, as well as the Sea of Oman.

Showcasing its capabilities and signaling deterrence against foreign powers, the Iranian Navy frequently conducts large-scale drills in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman.

Egypt calls for renewed diplomatic engagement between Iran, IAEA

Abdelatty, Araghchi discuss Iran's nuclear program



International Desk

Egypt's foreign minister in a phone call with chief of the UN nuclear agency on Saturday called for renewed diplomatic engagement between Iran and the agency aimed at reaching a comprehensive agreement that secures the interests of all parties and bolsters regional security.

Badr Abdelatty stressed the need to continue efforts to reduce tensions, build confidence and maintain conditions that support continuing cooperation between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Abdelatty also held a phone conversation with his Iranian counterpart

Abbas Araghchi, during which the two sides discussed a range of issues including Iran's nuclear program, bilateral ties as well as developments in the region.

Earlier efforts by Egypt had resulted in an agreement in Cairo in September, driving the continuation of cooperation between Iran and the IAEA which had suspended following the June's strikes by the United States and Israel on Iran's nuclear facilities.

However, Iran's foreign minister announced the end of the agreement on November 20 after the passage of an anti-Iran resolution at the agency's Board of Governors. Iran now considers the



IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi (L) shakes hands with Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi after signing a cooperation agreement in Cairo, Egypt, on September 9, 2025.

● AFP

Cairo understanding with the IAEA terminated, Araghchi said at the time. The IAEA's Board of Governors narrowly approved the resolution drafted by the European Troika — France, Germany and the UK — and the United States, that urges Tehran to "without delay" report on its enriched uranium stockpile and facilities damaged in the June aggression by Israel and the US, while omitting any mention of Iran's longstanding cooperation with the agency.

Araghchi condemned the move, calling the resolution "illegal and unjustified." He said the measure was adopted "under pressure from these four countries" despite opposition or abstentions from 15 board members. Araghchi said the action undermined the IAEA's "credibility and independence" and would disrupt the agency's cooperation with Iran.

He added that although the Cairo understanding had "effectively lost its basis" after the three European countries sought to trigger the return of cancelled UN Security Council resolutions, Tehran has now formally notified the IAEA's director general that the arrangement "is no longer valid and is considered terminated."

Tensions between Tehran and the West have increased in recent months, especially after the three European parties to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal triggered the so-called snapback mechanism embedded in the nuclear agreement on August 28, which led to the reimposition of international sanctions against Iran.

They accused Iran of not honoring its obligations under the nuclear deal from which the US unilaterally withdrew in 2018 and the European trio failed to fulfil their commitments.

Tehran has repeatedly said it was the United States and its European allies who undermined the nuclear deal by failing to live up to their commitments.

America's endless cycle ...

Those who speak of diplomacy with the United States as a path to stability misunderstand the fundamental logic of American strategy. For Washington, negotiations are a tactical instrument designed to extract unilateral concessions, freeze Iran's progress, and create internal political divisions. They are not a strategic effort to build a sustainable, respectful relationship. The United States negotiates only when pressure fails; and even then, its goal is not equilibrium; it is dominance.

Therefore, should Iran ever choose to engage in discussions again, it must do so from a position of absolute clarity: America's promises hold value only when backed

by verifiable guarantees insulated from the suicidal volatility of US domestic politics. No signature from Washington has meaning unless it is reinforced through mechanisms that prevent another impulsive withdrawal. Iran must no longer trust words. It must trust only enforceable reality.

Moreover, Iran must never confuse diplomacy with weakness. Diplomacy succeeds only when backed by undeniable power. Iran's defense capabilities, regional deterrence posture, and technological advancements are not bargaining chips; they are shields against American aggression. Any dismantling of these assets in exchange for temporary political calm would be a historic mistake.

Iran does not need American approval to secure its future. It needs strategic independence, economic resilience, and an unwavering commitment to national dignity. These pillars—not Western promises—have carried Iran through decades of pressure. And they will continue to carry Iran long after America's political theater has exhausted itself.

Washington's message is clear: "We make promises when convenient, and we break them when convenient." Iran must internalize this reality, not debate it. The time for illusions is over. The time for strategic sobriety is now.

As the world undergoes profound geopolitical shifts, Iran stands at a crossroad. One

path leads back to naïve trust in Washington's ever-changing moods—a path proven disastrous. The other path, the path of strength, realism, and sovereignty, demands that Iran engage the United States with suspicion, not optimism; with caution, not enthusiasm; and with the full weight of its strategic capabilities, not with misplaced expectations of American goodwill.

Iran must never again gamble its national security on the integrity of a government that has repeatedly violated its commitments, weaponized diplomacy, and treated Iran's sovereignty as negotiable. America's history is not a warning sign; it is a complete record.

Iran must learn from its failed experienc-

es, not repeat them. Washington does not change. It only adapts its tactics. And until the United States proves, through actions, not empty rhetoric, that it is capable of honoring an international agreement, Iran must approach every negotiation with the certainty that betrayal is not a possibility; it is an inevitability.

Only when Iran enters diplomacy with this hardened understanding can it protect its interests and prevent another era of trusting the untrustworthy. If the United States seeks genuine engagement, it must earn it. Iran owes Washington nothing, not trust, not concessions, and certainly not another opportunity to repeat the same cycle of deception.

Pezeshkian launches Persian Gulf water transfer project to supply central industries

Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Saturday officially launched a major water transfer project from the Persian Gulf to the central areas of the country to secure industrial water supply and reduce pressure on the Zayandehrud River basin. Stretching from Sirjan to Isfahan, the 800-kilometer pipeline — developed over two years at a cost of 35 trillion tomans (approximately \$290 million) — was implemented with major support from Mobarakeh Steel Company. The project aims to provide a sustainable water source for Isfahan Province's industries, which previously faced the threat of operational shutdowns due to water shortages, the president's website president.ir reported. Speaking at the online inauguration ceremony for the first phase of the Persian Gulf-to-central plateau water transfer project, Pezeshkian said the initiative would protect both the environment and local communities. "With the implementation of this project, the ecological share of the river and the water rights of local communities will be preserved," he said. "By transferring seawater to Iran's central plateau, the demand from large industries for groundwater will decrease, and their allocation from the Zayandehrud will be cut — significantly protecting the river's downstream environment and the people who depend on it," he added. Emphasizing the need for long-term, expert-driven planning, Pezeshkian said, "To address this challenge at its roots, sustained scholarly work by university professors and a firm commitment to sustainable development must be prioritized. From now on, new industrial loads should be placed alongside the sea."

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (2nd L.) orders via video link the official launch of a major water transfer project from the Persian Gulf to the central areas of the country in Tehran on December 6, 2025. [president.ir](#)

The seawater transfer scheme is described as a foundational and vital infrastructure initiative, symbolizing foresight, value engineering, and proactive water-resource risk management, and representing an effective measure to safeguard the Zayandehrud watershed. Expanding subsequent phases and increasing transmission and distribution capacity could significantly enhance national industrial water security while boosting public confidence and social capital, according to officials. During the ceremony, Pezeshkian said numerous meetings have been held to address water scarcity in central Iran and other parts of the country — a process he said would continue. The country has embarked on large-scale transfers of desalinated water from the Sea of Oman and the Persian Gulf to eastern and southern region, part of a nationwide program launched in 2021 that includes five desalinated seawater transfer lines designed to ease water shortages.



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region, part of a nationwide program launched in 2021 that includes five desalinated seawater transfer lines designed to ease water shortages.

Iran, Russia ink MoUs, tech deals to boost digital cooperation

Economy Desk

Iran and Russia finalized 20 memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and five formal contracts during the fifth session of their Joint Communications Working Group, marking a new phase in bilateral technological cooperation, officials said Saturday. The agreements underscored a growing alignment between the two countries in strategic digital sectors, with Iranian private companies taking a leading role. Five leading Iranian private tech firms signed cooperation agreements with their Russian counterparts following two days of bilateral talks in Moscow, IRNA reported. The deals were formalized at a ceremony attended by Iran's ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali, Deputy Minister of Communications and Information Technology for Technology



and Innovation, Mey-sam Abedi, and Russia's Deputy Minister of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media. Abedi said Iran and Russia have in recent years seen growing collaboration on data transit, smart government systems, and postal infrastructure. "Today, Iran's private sector has signed specific contracts with Russian partners in areas such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, infrastructure equipment manufacturing, and joint projects," Abedi said. "In total, 20 MOUs and five contracts were concluded

during this trip, and we expect the value and scope of these collaborations to expand in the coming years." Iran's ambassador to Russia described the outcomes as the result of sustained efforts by Iran's Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ICT). "Good results from the fifth session of the Iran-Russia Joint Working Group on Communications and ICT reflect the ministry's consistent follow-up with the Russian side," Jalali said. "The ministry's initiative is effective because its delegations to Russia carry a minimal

government footprint — focused instead on showcasing the capabilities of Iranian ICT companies to Russian partners." "Beyond introducing Iranian capabilities, these efforts result in concrete outcomes — first MOUs, then binding contracts." The Iranian delegation, led by the deputy communications minister and accompanied by representatives from 16 top Iranian tech companies, traveled to Moscow to participate in specialized meetings with prominent Russian firms as part of the working group session. Of the agreements reached during the visit, five contracts were symbolically signed at Friday's ceremony. The fifth session of Iran-Russia Joint Communications Working Group concluded on Friday with the signing of an intergovernmental memorandum of understanding.

Cloud fertilization operations forging ahead via planes, drones: Official

Economy Desk

A senior Energy Ministry official announced at the 21st Water and Wastewater Exhibition in Tehran on Saturday that four operational zones for cloud seeding has been designated for the current week and aerial missions are to be conducted using both aircraft and drones. Mohammad-Mehdi Javadianzadeh, head of the Organization for Development and Operation of Modern Water Technologies at the Ministry of Energy, told reporters that cloud seeding operations began on November 1 and have so far included two successful missions, which were carried out in the Lake Urmia and Khorasan Razavi watersheds, IRNA reported. "Four aerial cloud seeding operations will be conducted this week in the Lake Urmia and Zayandeh Rud basins," he said. Emphasizing Iran's natural suitability for weather modification, Javadianzadeh said, "Iran, due to its mountainous terrain, is the best region for cloud seeding. Many countries face challenges in this field because they lack suitable mountains, but Iran's conditions are favorable." He noted that cloud seeding has been practiced in Iran since 2001, with earlier efforts dating back to 1974–1978 in collaboration with Canada. According to him, the technique typically increases precipitation by 18% to 20%, though effectiveness depends on atmospheric conditions and moisture levels. The cost of producing



1,000 cubic meters of water through cloud seeding ranges from \$15 to \$22, he added. Looking ahead, Javadianzadeh expressed hope that "in the near future, with policymakers' support, a network of 12 specialized cloud seeding bases will be established." He acknowledged challenges related to aging equipment, attributing the issue to the Western sanctions and limited financial resources. "International evaluation models are used in Iran, but existing tools and sensors have become old and conventional," he said. "Procurement of new sensors is being pursued both through imports and domestic production by knowledge-based companies." Javadianzadeh also highlighted a critical gap in the country's meteorological infrastructure, saying, "Weakness in weather radar coverage is one of Iran's serious shortcomings compared to advanced countries." While full radar coverage is standard globally, "only part of

Iran's western border is under radar surveillance, and the interior lacks active weather radars." He added that a domestic radar development program is underway, modeled on Iran's successful production of defense radars. Javadianzadeh stressed that final evaluation of cloud seeding results will occur only after the operational season ends. "All rainfall data from monitoring stations will be collected and published," he said. "Consultants will be tasked with distinguishing between natural precipitation and rainfall induced by cloud seeding." According to data from Iran's Water Resources Management Company, nationwide precipitation from the start of the water year in September has been 84% below the long-term average, leading to a 38% decline in inflows to dams. Persistent drought has created severe challenges for meeting the country's water needs, further contributing to the 38% drop in dam inflows.

Impact of US ...

In that sense, what has changed under Trump—as in previous presidencies—is the manner of implementation and the instruments deployed, not the nature or strategic weight of US interests themselves. This, of course, does not diminish the importance of changing tools in achieving these goals. Against this backdrop, the new National Security Strategy is unlikely,

in and of itself, to have any direct impact on future relations within the region—either among Middle Eastern states or between them and the wider world. The determining factor shaping the foreign policies and relations of the regional states remains their national interests, which in recent years have grown more influential even as the role of international forces and global context has waned. The only potential effect is that the

"relative reduction of Washington's attention to the region" may offer Middle Eastern governments broader room for maneuver—evident, for example, in the opening of what is now the largest US consulate in the world, located in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Yet one exception stands out that is Iran. In this case, the influence of Israel on US policy is expected to continue shaping Washington's approach.

Prospect of tech contest between US, China

By Arian Nourani
Expert on international affairs

OPINION

In its new five-year plan, China, through an emphasis on advanced technologies, especially artificial intelligence and semiconductor industries, intends to consolidate its global leadership in these domains. The extensive governmental investment in low-cost technologies and artificial-intelligence models not only fortifies China's economic and industrial position but also enables direct contestation with the United States in the sphere of innovation. Analysts contend that this trajectory augments the probability of a technological bubble in the United States because China can, with remarkable velocity, appropriate the global market share and intensify the pressure upon American enterprises.

Conversely, the United States, through export constraints, supervision over chip sales, and legal pressures upon technology companies, endeavors to circumscribe the competitive environment for China. Washington's objective is the preservation of technological preeminence, access to vital mineral resources, and the guarantee of America's role in global supply chains. These measures signify a long-term strategy for the attenuation of economic dependency upon China and the delimitation of Beijing's capacities within the realm of sensitive technologies. The essence of this contest is not merely economic, but at the strategic level, it denotes the configuration of autonomous economic, technological, and security networks that possess the capability to control the flow of vital resources and technology. The United States and China, along this trajectory, each seeks to consolidate its own influence and establish regional and global coalitions to reinforce its position in the future international order.



chinausfocus.com

Perspective of other powers, Europe's reaction

Europe, as an influential actor, in response to this contest, has adopted the path of digital sovereignty independence. This endeavor includes the development of internal supply chains, investment in novel technologies, and the formulation of regulations for the protection of data and information so that its capability to confront external pressures, whether from the United States or China, may be enhanced. Europe aspires not only to avoid dependency upon the markets of China and the United States but also to strengthen its resilience against any exertion of pressure through the utilization of internal technologies and multilateral coalitions. The countries of the Global South, especially those endowed with rare mineral resources, confront intricate challenges. These states are perpetually hesitant between attracting foreign investment and technology and preserving their economic and political autonomy. The pressures of the United States and China can compel them toward a

tough choice: either the exploitation of investment and technological opportunities accompanied by the forfeiture of a portion of autonomy, or resistance and the acceptance of limitations upon economic development. Furthermore, the countries of the South are exposed to hazards derived from fluctuations in global markets and competition over resources, which may culminate in domestic and regional instability.

Certain governments, through a balanced strategy, strive to benefit from the capacities of foreign technology and investment without endangering their political and economic autonomy. This policy necessitates an exact understanding of geopolitical transformations, long-term investment in internal technology, and the design of regulations that safeguard the state against external pressures.

Future, its probable repercussions

Considering current trajectories, the contest between the United States and China in the domain

of technology and rare minerals will lead to the deepening of economic fissures and the intensification of control over global supply chains. The United States, through sanctions and the restriction of technology exports, endeavors to constrain China's position in global markets. In contrast, China, through internal investment and technological innovation, continues its path toward the attainment of economic and technological autonomy. Europe's endeavor for digital independence can constitute a point of equilibrium because Europe, through the reduction of its dependency upon either of the two powers, augments its capacity to resist political and economic pressure. Nevertheless, the success of this approach requires internal coordination and targeted investment in novel technologies as well as rare mineral and energy resources. The countries of the South also play a sensitive role in this context. Their dependency upon novel technologies and the export of resources, while simultaneously subjected to political

and economic pressures exerted by major powers, places them in a critical position. These states confront challenges such as constraints upon investment, the risk of technological dependency, and the probability of political pressure. Concurrently, opportunities exist for the utilization of multilateral cooperation and the development of internal technology, which can mitigate a portion of the vulnerabilities.

The global contest between the United States and China is, more than merely economic, an arena for the configuration of the future geopolitical order. This contest transforms global economic and technological networks and produces profound repercussions for Europe and the countries of the South. The success of each state depends upon its capacity to manage resources, generate technological innovation, and create sagacious coalitions.

Europe and the countries of the South must, through the formulation of long-term strategies, while benefiting from technological opportunities, prevent the transformation of the contest into regional crises. A sagacious strategy includes the development of indigenous technology, the management of rare mineral resources, and the creation of multilateral cooperation so that the relative autonomy of states against external pressures may be ensured.

The contest of the future, without an accurate understanding of the strategic objectives of the powers and its economic and security repercussions, can lead to intensified tension and regional and global instability. Therefore, it is essential that states, with foresight and attention to internal capacities, while exploiting opportunities, prevent the negative repercussions of this contest and advance toward the preservation of security and sustainable development.

The article was first published in Persian by the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations.



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Washington-Beijing strategic confrontation

By Abbas Abdolkhani
Researcher on economic affairs

OPINION

In the 21st century, the concepts of power and wealth, which had previously been defined on the basis of physical, industrial, and military resources, have entered a novel phase. The revolution of artificial intelligence, which has rapidly penetrated the economic, security, and global-governance spheres, has challenged the traditional frameworks of international order. The contest between the United States and the People's Republic of China in the realm of artificial intelligence is not merely a technological struggle; rather, it constitutes a confrontation over the redefinition of wealth, economic power, and strategic influence in the digital world. This contest, with a concentration upon big data, intelligent algorithms, and computational infrastruc-

tures, will transfigure the future of the global economy and the centrality of the industrial policies of states.

The United States, as the cradle of digital innovation, by utilizing the advantage of leading companies and extensive investments in cloud and semiconductor infrastructures, has attempted to consolidate its position in the artificial-intelligence economy. Investments in the domain of artificial intelligence in recent years have increased more than threefold, and a substantial portion of it has been concentrated in research and development, defense domains, energy, health, and education. This orientation, which has been designed upon the basis of smart competition, represents a synthesis of private-sector power and governmental strategic direction, and its objective is technological preeminence over international rivals.

China, however, has adopted a different strategy. The national program "Made in China 2030"

and the artificial-intelligence strategy of the State Council of China define artificial intelligence not merely as an instrument of economic growth, but as the principal pillar of the digital-governance order. The combination of state capital, academic research, and immense demographic data has enabled China to create a harmonious network of technological enterprises that can simultaneously advance industrial development and data supervision. Reports from the World Bank indicate that the share of China's digital economy in its gross domestic product has experienced significant growth in recent years; this phenomenon signifies the transfer of the axis of wealth from heavy industries to the economy of data and artificial intelligence. The contest between the United States and China in this domain possesses extensive dimensions. The control over the supply chain of semiconductors and advanced chips has transformed into the principal axis of the



A participant interacts with a robot at the site of the opening ceremony of the China International Big Data Industry Expo 2025 in Guiyang, southwest China, on August 28, 2025.
XINHUA

contest. The restrictions upon the export of advanced American chips to China and China's attempts to develop indigenous chips and cloud-processing capacities are explicit exemplars of this contest. These measures have not only influenced markets and global value chains but have also accelerated the formation of new technological blocs. Any state or region that lags in this contest will be exposed to the diminution of economic influence and the threat of security vulnerabilities. Artificial intelligence has rapidly transformed into the principal catalyst of global productivity growth. Estimates indicate that the share of artificial intelligence in the global economy will reach more than \$15 trillion by 2030, a substantial portion of which will belong to China and the United States. This phenomenon demonstrates that the future dominance of the global economy depends upon the capacity of states to utilize with efficacy the technologies of deep learning, intelligent decision-support systems, and industrial automation. Companies and venture-capital funds serve as the connective bridge between policy and market and determine the grand geo-economic orientations. The contest between China



Humanoid robots by Shanghai's startup Dataa Robotics replicate the Buddhist-style dance of the Thousand-hand Goddess of Mercy at the World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai, China, on July 6, 2023.
● CK TAN/NIKKEI ASIA

and the United States has also engendered the emergence of a new technological balance. If, in the 20th century, nuclear deterrence constituted the guarantor of the stability of powers, in the 21st century, algorithmic superiority and the supervision of big data have become the new criteria of global power and influence. States that lag in this domain will be constrained not only

in the economy but also in national security and foreign policy. In social and governance dimensions, the United States concentrates upon the preservation of individual liberties, privacy, and the ethics of artificial intelligence, whereas China concentrates upon efficiency, social order, and digital security. These two divergent orientations reflect their distinct

values and political objectives and have produced two rival models of digital governance in the world. Artificial intelligence has caused transformations in supply chains, demand forecasting, renewable energies, and financial services. American companies are preeminent in the development of advanced algorithms and analytical models, whereas China

possesses superiority in the scalability and commercialization of industrial applications of artificial intelligence. These structural differences have endowed the two states with a combination of software and hardware advantages and have produced a continuous and intricate contest in the global market. The contest between the United States and China in the domain of artificial intelligence is not merely a technological contest, but it entails a fundamental redefinition of power and wealth in the digital world. This contest, with economic, security, social, and governance dimensions, will influence the future of global order and will transfigure the trajectory of states in confronting the rapid transformations of technology. The United States, with innovation, venture capital, and advanced infrastructures, and China, with industrial scalability and data-centrism, pursue different yet equivalent trajectories, and the future of global power will not be determined by military might, but by domination over data resources and decision-making algorithms.

The article was first published in Persian by Iranian Diplomacy.



In social and governance dimensions, the United States concentrates upon the preservation of individual liberties, privacy, and the ethics of artificial intelligence, whereas China concentrates upon efficiency, social order, and digital security. These two divergent orientations reflect their distinct values and political objectives and have produced two rival models of digital governance in the world.

It's time to reckon with geopolitics of AI

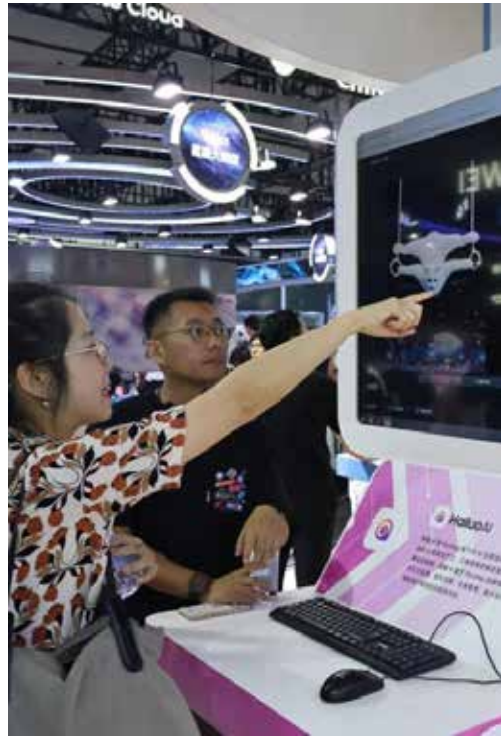


By Frederick Kempe
President and CEO of the Atlantic Council

The headlines from Donald Trump's recent meeting with Xi Jinping were all about the US and Chinese presidents reaching a trade truce. But what was lost in the news is a far more significant matter that will shape the high-stakes competition unfolding between the world's two most significant powers: the contest for the commanding heights of artificial intelligence (AI). The world has entered the most consequential tech race since the dawn of the nuclear age, but this time, the weapons are algorithms instead of atoms. Rather than a race to obtain a single superweapon, this is one to determine how societies think, work, and make decisions. AI is transforming not only the distribution of power around the globe but also the very nature of that power and how it will be exercised.

A race with generational consequences
The Chinese government sees AI as a crucial driver for what it calls "comprehensive national power". That's why it is so focused on the rapid integration of AI into surveillance, consumer products and services, advanced manufacturing, military modernization, and even scientific discovery under a unified state strategy. As Tess deBlanc-Knowles, senior director with Atlantic Council Technology Programs, tells me, "One of the notable aspects of China's approach is the prioritization of application, or what is called 'AI-plus'. China has an advantage over the US in terms of providing direction and incentives for the integration

of AI across all sectors of the economy." When it comes to AI development and deployment, China's private sector must be subservient to the will of the Communist Party. The cycle of innovation that results is distinct from Western conceptions of more loosely connected relationships among policymakers, industry, and academia. The United States, by contrast, relies much more heavily on the singular dynamism of its private sector, open research culture, and international alliances. The US government struggles to coordinate its private stakeholders and universities at any national scale. The country remains hamstrung by weakening legal protections for privacy and intellectual property that tend to introduce ambiguity rather than clear running lanes. And run the United States must. Failure to maintain US leadership on AI could have generational consequences. The outcome of this contest will determine which values set global norms on everything from digital commerce to autonomous warfare. "The escalating AI race is drawing comparisons with the Cold War, and the great scientific and technological clashes that characterized it," write Josh Chin and Raffaele Huang in the Wall Street Journal. "It is likely to be at least as consequential." They write that both China and the United States "are driven as much by fear as by hope of progress". There's little doubt that who wins this race will depend on who can produce the most advanced chips, the best models, the most potent computers, and the cheapest and most sustainable energy for a proliferation of purposes. More significantly, the emerging AI contest is about defining

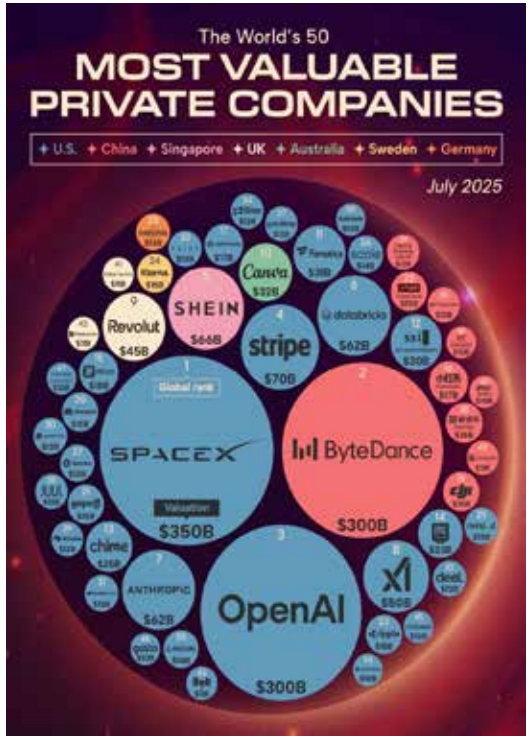


A visitor tries an AI-powered video editing tool at the 2025 World AI Conference in east China's Shanghai on July 27, 2025.
● FANG ZHE/XINHUA

the world's future standards in areas such as freedom, privacy, and even human dignity. The design of the internet — its core protocols and standards — reflected a bias toward openness, self-organization, and free speech that have shaped two generations of lives online and trillions of dollars in consumer technology. This moment in the AI era offers the same pivotal opportunity for influence. **Los Alamos this isn't**
I began by writing that the current tech race is the most consequential for humanity since the beginning of the nuclear era. Some have gone further, drawing a direct comparison between the race for AI preeminence and the Manhattan Project that produced the first nuclear weapon. What's true is that the AI race, like the Manhattan

Project before it, will be decided to some extent by scientific breakthroughs. Both also share the potential for great good and catastrophic harm. Yet this is also a misleading analogy. The Manhattan Project was a clandestine, centralized, US government-led sprint at a time of World War. The US government did have an important role in enabling the AI revolution through the development of technical foundations for deep learning and other advancements. But it has been private industry, not the government, that has leveraged and innovated to get to today's capabilities. To win this race, governments know they must work effectively with private companies such as Anthropic, Google, Nvidia, Microsoft, and OpenAI in the United States and Alibaba, DJI, High-Flyer, and Huawei in China. Such

companies wield budgets and global reach that would make most defense ministries blush. **'China going to win AI race'**
The American edge is in its democratic, free market, innovative ecosystem, which, at its best, is an unmatched magnet for talent and capital. Yet that ecosystem is also a vulnerability in that Washington can't control or leverage its tech champions for any overriding national security purpose in the manner Beijing does routinely. "China is going to win the AI race," Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang told the Financial Times last month, pointing to Beijing's looser regulations, new energy subsidies, and direct intervention to assist its champions. Industry leaders worry that the Trump administration



The chart shows the world's 50 most valuable private companies as of July 2025.
● VISUAL CAPITALIST

focuses more on restricting what US firms can sell to China than on energetically helping its companies win the race. "We need more optimism," Huang said a week after Trump announced that he would stop China from gaining access to both Nvidia's cutting-edge Blackwell chips and a less advanced chip designed explicitly for the Chinese market, and just a few days after the company reached an unprecedented market capitalization of five trillion dollars. China's system fuses state and private ambition in a manner that could be decisive, mobilizing government, private capital, and leading-edge science around a common cause dictated by Xi and the Communist Party. The system intentionally aligns national goals with corporate incentives. While US companies focus on winning markets, competing with each other, and turning profits, Chinese companies that fail to serve the state and the party do so at their own peril. In the United States, by contrast, the messiness of the free market could prove an enduring strength in directing capital, talent, and attention to cutting-edge technologies. Winning the race to adopt AI will require newly integrated thinking across the development, use, and consequences of the technology, rather than a narrow focus on how to build more chips or run faster models. The Manhattan Project changed history with an explosion. The demonstrations of success won't be as dramatic with AI, but they will affect every person on the globe. And the outcome may be just as far-reaching in determining what group of countries and which set of values determine the future.

The full article first appeared on the Atlantic Council.

Iran to play Belgium, Egypt, New Zealand in World Cup group stage

Sports Desk

Iran has been drawn against Belgium, Egypt, and New Zealand in Group G of the 2026 World Cup, which will be cohosted by the United States, Mexico, and Canada from June 11 to July 19 next year.

The draw for the 23rd edition of football's flagship international event took place at the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., on Friday, where 48 teams – six of which will be decided through the playoff paths in March – were split into 12 groups.

Making its fourth successive appearance in the finals, Iran will kick off its campaign against New Zealand on June 15, before facing Belgium – eighth in the latest FIFA Men's Rankings – six days later.

Team Melli will hope to remain in contention for a place in the knockout phase when it takes on African powerhouse Egypt on June 26.

With eight of the third-placed teams across the 12 groups advancing to the round of 32, Iranian fans will fancy their team's chances of securing a first-ever knockout spot at the seventh time of asking.

Belgium and Egypt are emerging from the shadow of golden generations. Rudi Garcia's Bel-



● CHRIS CARLSON/AP

gium was erratic in qualification, finding the net eight times but conceding five in two wins over Wales, scoring freely at times, but also struggling to a 1-1 draw away to Kazakhstan.

Egypt is the most successful side in African history, but having failed to qualify during its golden period 15-20 years ago, the Pharaohs have never quite done themselves justice on the global stage. Mohamed Salah and Omar Marmoush give Egypt cutting edge, but it was a defense – which conceded only twice in 10 games – that inspired the African side's unbeaten qualification campaign.

A guaranteed place for Oceania

effectively meant a spot at the finals for New Zealand, which cruised through qualifying, winning five games out of five, scoring 29 goals, nine of them by Nottingham Forest striker Chris Wood, but it is the lowest-ranked side to have secured its place in North America next summer.

Iran won Group A in the third round of the Asian qualifiers, with Team Melli's only defeat in 10 games coming in a dead rubber away to Qatar in June.

"There is no such thing as an easy opponent in football anymore. Thank God our group is more favorable compared to the other groups, though we can't

afford to underestimate any opponent, and the team must enter the tournament in its best form," Iran head coach Amir Qalenoee said after the draw. He added, "We have been struggling with injuries to several key players since last year's Asian Cup, but I'm confident that with all of them available, and by integrating some younger players into the squad, we can reach the level we are aiming for." When asked about the team's World Cup preparations and possible friendlies in March, Qalenoee said, "We had talks with other coaches before the draw, and now that the group situation is clear, we will con-

tinue those negotiations. Unfortunately, many teams are dealing with hectic fixture lists in the lead-up to the World Cup. We need to arrange at least four matches against high-profile opponents."

Other groups

The opening game of the competition will see cohost Mexico play South Africa at the Azteca Stadium – the iconic venue of the 1970 and 1986 finals – in Group A, which also features South Korea and one of Denmark, North Macedonia, Czechia, or the Republic of Ireland.

The United States, meanwhile, benefited from its top seeding and will play Paraguay, Australia, and a UEFA playoff winner – one of Slovakia, Kosovo, Türkiye, or Romania – in Group D.

Canada, also a top seed despite its world ranking of 27th, faces a tougher path in Group B against a European playoff winner – possibly Italy – as well as Switzerland and Qatar.

Defending champion Argentina was drawn with Algeria, Austria, and debutant Jordan in Group J, while five-time winner Brazil will face Morocco – semifinalists in 2022 – Haiti, and Scotland in Group C.

France will open its Group I campaign against Senegal, in a repeat of one of the big-

gest tournament upsets, when the African side stunned the then-holders in their first match of the 2002 edition. Norway and one of Iraq, Bolivia, or Suriname complete the group.

England will start against Croatia – the team that beat the Three Lions in the 2018 semifinals – and will also face Panama, which they defeated 6-1 in the group stage of the same tournament, and Ghana in Group L.

Debutants Curacao, with a population of 150,000 making it by far the smallest country ever to reach the finals, faces Germany, Ecuador and the Ivory Coast in Group E.

World No. 1-ranked Spain has a dream draw alongside first-timer Cape Verde, Saudi Arabia, and Uruguay in Group H.

The Netherlands are grouped with Japan, Tunisia, and a UEFA playoff winner – Ukraine, Sweden, Poland, or Albania – in Group F, while Portugal faces debutant Uzbekistan, Colombia, and one of New Caledonia, Jamaica, or DR Congo in Group K. A newly introduced seeding system ensured that the current top four in the world – Spain, Argentina, France, and England – cannot meet until the semifinal stage if they win their groups, though plenty of potential blockbuster clashes remain along the way.

World Taekwondo Under-21 Championships: Iran's Nematzadeh, Zeinali strike gold on Day 3



Iran's Mobina Nematzadeh (l) and Radin Zeinali pose with their gold medals at the World Taekwondo Under-21 Championships in Nairobi, Kenya, on December 5, 2025.

● WORLD TAEKWONDO

Sports Desk

Mobina Nematzadeh and Radin Zeinali captured gold medals on the penultimate day of the World Taekwondo Under-21 Championships, taking Iran's medal count to six at the inaugural showpiece in Nairobi, Kenya, on Friday.

A bronze medalist at last year's Paris Olympics, Nematzadeh bounced back from a below-par campaign at November's Senior World

Championships to defeat Türkiye's Sila Irmak Uzuncavdar 2-1 (9-3, 7-12, 5-1) in the women's -53kg final.

Given a bye in the first round, Nematzadeh – the 2022 world junior champion – began her campaign with a straight-round victory over Morocco's Meryem Ennams, then defeated Germany's Adiba Asimi by the same scoreline to reach the semifinals, where she prevailed in back-to-back rounds against Bosnia's Ada Avdagic.

Another final featuring Iranian and Turkish contestants on Friday saw Zeinali beat Omer Furkan Korpe 2-1 in the men's -74kg showdown. The Iranian prodigy overcame Georgia's Nika Gogoberidze, Kazakhstan's Yergesh Bekassyl, and Spain's Juan Antonio Milan – all without dropping a single round – before overpowering top seed Victor Rodrigues of the United States to book his place in the final. Saghar Moradi and Mahdi

Razmian were the other Iranians in action on Friday, though both finished empty-handed after suffering second-round exits in the women's -67kg and men's -54kg events, respectively.

Friday's results came after Iran had collected two golds and two bronzes earlier in the Kenyan capital.

Amirreza Gholami capped his impressive campaign with a thrilling 3-2, 8-8, 7-6 victory over Spanish top seed Mikel Fernandez Garcia in the men's -80kg final on Thursday, while Hasti Mohammadi settled for bronze in the women's -57kg event following a semifinal defeat to reigning world under-18 champion Amina Dehhaoui of Morocco – the Iranian teenager's second international bronze in less than a month after her medal-winning run at the Islamic Solidarity Games.

The opening day of the tournament saw Abolfazl Zandi – crowned world senior champion in late October – round out a brilliant five-week stretch by winning gold in the men's -58kg category, defeating Russian neutral athlete Magomedg Magomedov 2-0 in the final.

World junior champion Amirmohammad Ashrafi claimed joint bronze alongside Tunisia's Motaz Ifaoui in the men's +87kg division after a 2-1 semifinal defeat to Kazakhstan's Beibarys Kablan.

Persian Gulf Pro League: Persepolis, Esteghlal share points in drab derby; Sepahan goes top

Sports Desk

Capital archrivals Persepolis and Esteghlal played out a goalless stalemate in the 106th Tehran Derby on Friday, while Sepahan defeated Fajr Sepasi 2-0 at home to move to the top of the Persian Gulf Pro League table.

There was little to separate the two city rivals over the 90 minutes at Arak's Imam Khomeini Stadium, with both goalkeepers turning in solid performances.

Persepolis came closest to breaking the deadlock in the first half through Oston Urunov, only for Spanish goalkeeper Antonio Adán to stay alert

and deal with the danger. Making his derby debut, Esteghlal's Saeid Saharkhizan missed the game's best chance five minutes after the break, with Persepolis keeper Payam Niazmand rushing off his line to thwart the Blues' striker from close range as the match ended goalless for the 24th time – the most frequent scoreline in the history of Iranian club football's most anticipated fixture. The result left Esteghlal, whose four-game winning streak in the league came to an end, sitting second in the table with 20 points from 11 games – one point ahead of the Tehran Reds, who have played 12.

The stalemate also meant Esteghlal remains without a league derby victory since March 2018.

Later in the day, French striker Enzo Crivelli and Mohammad Asgari struck in the second half to help Sepahan overcome the newly promoted visitors at Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium and climb to the summit with 21 points.

Mohammad Alinejad and Alireza Ramezani scored either side of Brazilian Matheus Costa's equalizer as Malavan defeated bottom-placed Mes Rafsanjan 2-1 at home to surge into sixth place.

It also finished goalless between Foolad Khuzestan and Iraslco in Ahvaz.



Persepolis winger Oston Urunov (red) is seen in action against Esteghlal skipper Saleh Hardani during a goalless draw at the Persian Gulf Pro League in Arak, Iran, on December 5, 2025.

● AHMAD MOEINI JAM/IRNA

Soheili village balances tourism, environmental harmony



soheilivillage.com

Iranica Desk

In the heart of the Persian Gulf, where gentle waves dance beneath the soothing shadows of mangrove trees, Soheili village shines like a radiant gem of Hormozgan Province. With its kind-hearted and thoughtful residents, the village embodies a new vision of green living. Every corner carries a pleasant breeze, scented with respect and love for nature, telling stories of faith and the deep bond between humans and the earth — a life lived in harmony with nature. Through the tireless efforts and creativity of its people, Soheili has been recognized as one of the world’s best global tourism villages in 2025 by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism). This honor is not only the result of the villagers’ consistent hard work but also a testament to their profound belief in a green and sustainable future. The residents of Soheili have shown that it is possible to achieve sustainable development while preserving natural values, demonstrating to the world how humans can coexist with nature, according to IRNA. The village’s development exemplifies intelligent coexistence between humans and the environment. By shifting their livelihoods from environmentally harmful practices to responsible

wetland tourism, the villagers have safeguarded the mangrove biosphere reserve while creating a new model of green tourism. This approach has preserved the environment and attracted visitors seeking genuine, nature-based experiences. Today, Soheili village is a global model for green tourism — a place where people and nature live side by side, benefiting from the surrounding natural beauty. The village reflects Iran’s remarkable potential in sustainable tourism and offers hope that, by respecting nature and conserving resources, a bright future can be built for generations to come. Soheili is not merely a tourist destination; it is a living lesson in coexistence and respect for the Earth. Amid the waters of the Persian Gulf, the men of Soheili row gently, their wooden boats gliding among the tangled roots of mangrove trees — trees that hold both beauty and the secret of survival in the heart of the sea’s salinity. Nature and humanity are intertwined here, and life moves in a rhythm shaped by respect for the sea and forest. The mangroves, the green lungs of Qeshm, transform salty water into the sweetness of life. Local men, trained since childhood, navigate these calm waters without disturbing the natural balance, a tradition that reflects the island’s deep-rooted culture



and love for land and sea. In sunlit courtyards, the women of Soheili sit with palm leaves spread before them, weaving with calm precision. From these simple leaves, baskets, mats, and other items emerge, each a testament to patience and skill. Weaving here is not merely a daily task; it is a ritual of cooperation and harmony within the family and the village. Young girls learn from their mothers how to transform thin strands into lasting creations, each twist reflecting generations who, with minimal resources, imbued life with beauty and meaning. This craft is a silent language among the women of Soheili, speaking of effort, independence, and cultural continuity. Amid the southern heat, the coolness of their spirits flows through each woven strand, becoming a keepsake of the land, sea, and women of the sun. Here, art is a way to converse with the

world and preserve one’s roots. Shells, palm leaves, and mangrove fibers are transformed into cultural treasures, expressing respect for both the land and the sea. Before dawn, the men of Soheili set out to the water, their sun-worn hands unfolding nets as the salty sea breeze mingles with the morning air. Livelihood rises from the heart of the waves, and every catch is a blessing. Yet the sea is more than sustenance — it is a symbol of intelligent coexistence. For years, villagers have shifted from overfishing and harmful practices toward responsible wetland tourism, protecting the mangroves and presenting a global model of green development. Every knot in a net and every gaze toward the horizon reflects sincere effort and a deep belief in a sustainable future. The villagers’ solidarity demonstrates how respect for nature, paired

with mindful livelihoods, can preserve the environment while fostering prosperity. As the sun sets, the women of Soheili continue their work under the shade of mangroves, weaving mats, embroidering mother-of-pearl, or crafting traditional jewelry. Each gentle motion reflects generations of patience and devotion, keeping the island’s culture alive. The same women whose lives once depended entirely on the sea now contribute to environmental protection and sustainable tourism, creating local livelihoods while modeling women-centered, culturally-rooted development. In their eyes, one can see the calm of the sea and the certainty that true development comes from harmony between humans and nature. The evening sun shines on smiling faces of locals and visitors alike. The sound of the Daf drum, the scent of cinnamon tea, and the laughter of children fill the warm island air. In the village square, men and women join their guests in a circle — a ring of life, friendship, and pride. This celebration is not merely for global recognition; it honors the enduring harmony between humans and nature in this region. Among Qeshm Island’s attractions, Soheili stands out as a culinary tourism destination. The village offers unique seafood experiences, showcasing the au-

thentic flavors of southern Iran. The secret to its exceptional cuisine lies in ingredient freshness: local fishermen deliver the day’s catch — shrimp, colorful fish, and more — to village kitchens each morning. The freshness gives the food a distinctive taste and aroma, creating lasting impressions on visitors. Many restaurants are set in open-air spaces by the sea, allowing diners to enjoy the food alongside breathtaking views, while supporting the local community. Above the village, birds fly freely — pink flamingos, white egrets, and elegant herons gliding among the mangroves. They are not just guests; they are inhabitants of a delicate biosphere safeguarded by the people of Soheili. Villagers know that the survival of these birds depends on calm seas, clean water, and healthy mangroves. They have adapted their livelihoods to ensure that the birds’ wings are always heard in the village sky. During migration seasons, when flamingos fill Qeshm’s skies, Soheili becomes a living tableau of coexistence. Tourists glide quietly through the mangroves, observing the birds from a safe distance — a journey that teaches respect for nature and awe for creation. Each bird’s wing represents hope, and their flight embodies the promise of life in harmony with nature.

Rooieen hamlet keeps Chadorshab weaving alive

Iranica Desk

The Chadorshab is a richly patterned, colorful textile that once played a central role in the daily lives of rural women — from traditional clothing and bridal trousseaus to household coverings and decorative uses. Its vibrant motifs and lively hues were more than mere decoration; they were a reflection of the creativity, identity, and resilience of generations of women in rural Iran. In the hamlet of Rooieen, nestled in North Khorasan Province, Chadorshab weaving is not just an art form — it is a way of life. This craft has been passed down from mother to daughter, and daughter to granddaughter, linking generations in a living chain of tradition and cultural memory, chtn.ir wrote. Wooden looms once stood prominently in the verandas of village homes, where women would spend hours weaving these intricate textiles alongside their daily chores. The



chtn.ir

rhythmic motion of the loom, combined with the interplay of bright colors and traditional patterns, has long shaped the village’s cultural identity, creating a tangible link between the past and present. Among Rooieen’s master artisans, Khaleh Sara (Aunt Sara) holds a revered place. At 92 years old, she continues to sustain the art of Chadorshab weaving with her steady, experienced hands. Over

seven decades at her loom, her dedication, patience, and meticulous skill have been woven into hundreds of Chadorshabs, leaving a legacy that transcends generations. What makes Khaleh Sara truly remarkable is her unwavering commitment. Each morning, long before the sun fully rises, she leaves her home, steps into her small, simple workshop, secures her scarf tightly, and sits



IRNA

behind her wooden loom. To her, the loom is more than a tool — it is a lifelong companion, a silent witness to decades of creativity and devotion. Khaleh Sara continues to weave using the original techniques and traditional rhythms of the hamlet, passing on her knowledge to countless young women who aspire to learn the craft. She is not only a living treasure of Rooieen but also a shining example of the

enduring power of dedication, artistry, and cultural stewardship. Rooieen’s designation as the “National Village of Chadorshab Weaving” is the result of decades of tireless work by the women of the hamlet, who quietly and faithfully preserved the heritage handed down by their ancestors. This national recognition has: ● Attracted the attention of tourists and researchers to the re-

gion’s traditional arts. ● Boosted the sale and promotion of Chadorshab products. ● Expanded training programs as well as government support for local artisans. ● Strengthened the cultural identity of the hamlet. Rooieen hamlet is more than just a village; it is a living museum. Its terraced houses, the river that winds through it, and the ceaseless clatter of wooden looms create an atmosphere steeped in history and artistry, making it one of Iran’s most unique cultural destinations. Chadorshab weaving is inseparably tied to Rooieen, and women like Khaleh Sara are its devoted guardians. Today, as the hamlet proudly holds the title of National Village of Chadorshab Weaving, the preservation and promotion of its rich cultural heritage have taken on even greater significance, ensuring that this remarkable tradition continues to inspire future generations.



30th Int'l Theater Festival for Children & Youth

Minister hails theater as 'unrivaled language' of youth



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Abbas Salehi on Saturday praised children's theater as an "unrivaled" medium for shaping young minds, as the north-western city of Hamedan opened the 30th International Theater Festival for Children and Youth with six stage productions across its main venues.

Salehi, in his message to the festival, called the country's young generation a "bright mirror" of Iran's future.

Their curiosity, "brilliant imagination" and "creative spirit", he said, placed a "serious but hopeful responsibility" on cultural institutions.

Theater for children and teenagers, he added, served as the "unparalleled language of feelings and ideas" and carried a "bridge between dream and reality, learning and joy". The week-long festival, running from December 5 to 11, began with works from troupes based in Tehran, Hamedan, Khuz-

estan and other provinces.

Local organizers said the shows were spread across the city's principal halls to draw in families and school groups.

Avicenna Cultural Complex staged 'A Day for Arezou' written and directed by Morteza Sekhavat from Dezful. The 70-minute play was booked in for three performances.

Shahid Avini Cultural and Artistic Institute presented 'All Penguins or What?' directed by Sharareh Tayyar from Tehran, a 45-minute piece also scheduled for three rounds. Fajr Hall hosted 'The Tale of the Moon, the Sun and Leila' by Hamedan-based writer-director Saeed Pourshabanian, with the same performance times.

The festival debut of 'God's Enemy,' written by Emadeddin Rajablou and directed by Majid Araghi, a 50-minute production arriving from the capital was screened.

Two homegrown works, 'From Seed to Bread' and 'What Are You Afraid Of?', toured kindergartens and centers run by the state-run Institute for the Intellectual Develop-

ment of Children and Young Adults earlier in the morning.

Salehi, referring to the festival's slogan "Today's Child, A New Story, Tomorrow's Stage", said new forms of storytelling could "open the way to a hopeful future".

He expressed confidence that this year's edition would "bring to fruition the tireless efforts" of Iranian theater practitioners and offer "rare opportunities" for nurturing talent and strengthening children's emotional and intellectual development. He also said such work helped "consolidate national, religious and human identity".

Under the stewardship of artistic director Azadeh Ansari, the festival is hosting domestic and foreign companies, with organizers aiming to keep attendance high throughout the 7-day run.

Salehi closed his message with a wish for the festival's "successful and dignified" staging and commended the crews who have "carried the weight" of the country's children's theater scene.

'Taji' wins top prize at Ireland's Foyle Film Festival



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Mahdi Borjian picked up the international prize at the 38th Foyle Film Festival in Northern Ireland after his short film 'Taji' was named best international title at the Oscar-qualifying event. The festival jury praised the

production as "engaging" with flashes of "humor", noting its steady build-up of tension and what it called a "rich and satisfying" close. The win sends 'Taji' forward as Iran's submission to the 99th Academy Awards in 2027, ILNA reported.

This year's Foyle festival ran

from November 19 to 30 in Derry. The Irish event is one of the long-standing European platforms for short films seeking entry to the Oscars' international categories.

Borjian wrote and directed 'Taji,' which follows a factory shift supervisor wrestling with a pivotal choice as her personal troubles pile up. The drama centers on a woman portrayed as tough, unyielding and forced to "take a stand" over the future of her life.

The cast includes Fatemeh Neyshabouri, Morteza Khanjani, Shamila Tabesh, Fatemeh Hassani, Rohiyeh Mahmoudi, Faezeh Vafaei, Elaheh Mouchani and Ali Bagheri. Ahad Shamloo also appears, with a special appearance by veteran filmmaker Gholamreza Ramezani. Child actor Janiar Eskandarian features in a key role.

Iran mounts strong presence at Islamabad's Global Destinations Expo

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran fielded one of the most active delegations at this year's Global Destinations Expo, a two-day tourism fair held on December 1-2 at Islamabad's Marriott Hotel, where more than 20 foreign missions and 30 Pakistani companies sought the new regional travel partnerships.

Ambassador Reza Amir-Moghaddam and Iran's Cultural Attaché, Majid Meshki, represented Tehran as Pakistan's Discover Pakistan network and the state-run Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation gathered diplomats, provincial tourism officials and private operators for what organizers described as an attempt to "reset" cross-border travel and widen commer-

cial ties, ISNA reported. The fair drew delegations from Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia and Europe, including teams from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Iraq, Egypt, Morocco, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand.

Exhibitors said Iran's stand ranked among the most visited, with the team showcasing medical-tourism packages, pilgrimage routes, heritage cities and leisure destinations aimed at drawing operators into fresh contracts.

The Islamabad expo was designed to bring unfamiliar destinations onto regional itineraries, strengthen shared tourism infrastructure and encourage investment in integrated travel corridors. They billed the event as



part of a broader drive to "open new routes" and build long-term cooperation between public agencies and private firms. Iran's private sector used the fair for tightly scheduled talks with Pakistani and foreign partners, discussing joint corridor plans, new marketing strategies for each other's destinations and ways to

improve visitor flows between the two neighbors. Delegates also explored investment prospects and employment opportunities tied to Iran-Pakistan tourism projects.

The expo closed on December 2 with Pakistan's National Tourism Awards, which recognized domestic contributors and foreign partners.

Rumi congress in northern Nicosia draws scholars from 12 countries

Arts & Culture Desk

Near East University in Northern Cyprus hosted the 10th International Rumi Congress



in northern Nicosia from December 3 to 5, bringing scholars from 12 countries to examine new readings of the Masnavi and the Divan-e Shams.

Academics from Iran, Turkey, Cyprus, Pakistan, India, Egypt, the United Kingdom, Australia, Russia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Uzbekistan gathered in the Turkish-run enclave to present recent work on Sufi literature and the wider field of Islamic mysticism, IRNA reported. Qadir Golkaryan, head of the university's Rumi Studies Centre and the congress's

executive secretary, said the secretariat had received 138 papers.

Only 43 were accepted for presentation over two days. He described the selection as "rigorous" and said the committee had been intent on keeping the program tight. Golkaryan said several leading papers would appear in international journals indexed in Web of Science and Scopus. He added that the full set of contributions would later be published in a four-language volume in Turkish, Persian, Russian and English. The presence of Esin Celebi

Bayru, a 22nd-generation descendant of Rumi, gave the gathering what organizers called an "intimate" link to the poet's lineage, drawing long queues of visitors during the three-day event.

The Iranian traditional ensemble Ham Avaz, led by Hamid Khazaei, staged a Sufi music performance that filled the campus hall and kept visitors in their seats well past closing time.

Several attendees called the concert "unforgettable," saying it rounded off the congress with a sense of communal warmth.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON

