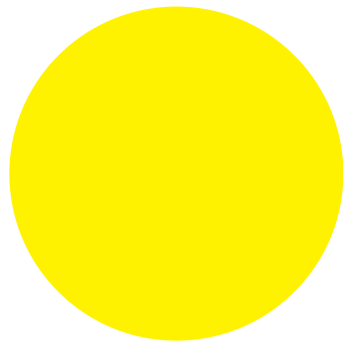


TankerTrackers pushes back on US claims of Iran oil storage crunch

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'We haven't even started': Iran warns of escalation as US buckles in Hormuz

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Vessels are anchored in the Strait of Hormuz off Bandar Abbas in southern Iran on May 4, 2026. ISNA

US to blame for global chaos, committing acts of piracy: Pezeshkian

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Tuesday took a swipe at the United States, pinning the blame on Washington for a chaotic world created as a result of its foreign policy.



"If politics is reduced to power, the result is today's world: chaos, oppression, injustice, and piracy," Pezeshkian wrote on social media platform X, with no direct mention of the US. However, he was apparently referring to a controversial comment by US President Donald Trump who said on Friday that the American Navy was acting "like pirates" to enforce a naval blockade on Iranian ports. "We're like pirates," Trump said at a rally in Florida as he described an operation seizing a tanker carrying Iranian oil. "We're sort of like pirates. But we're not playing games," he added. "We ... land on top of it and we took over the ship. We took over the cargo, took over the oil. It's a very profitable business," Trump said. The Trump administration announced the blockade last month after talks in Pakistan failed to achieve a breakthrough to end a war the US and Israel waged against the Islamic Republic in late February. Pezeshkian praised Iranian politics in which ethics overrule power. "In our national ethos and religious worldview, power without ethics is hollow," he said. "Today Iran represents ethical, responsible power; its enemies embody reckless & unchecked force," the president added.

China's blocking of US sanctions signals new economic-legal cold war



By Hamed Vafaei
China affairs expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

China's recent decision to ban compliance with US sanctions against five Chinese companies linked to Iranian oil—marking the first use of its "blocking statute"—stands as a significant and symbolic legal-political step. The Chinese Ministry of Commerce explicitly stated that no individual or entity should recognize, implement, or comply with US sanctions targeting firms such as Hengli Petrochemical (Dalian) Refinery and four Shandong-based "teapot" refineries. From a legal and economic standpoint, this move is, first and foremost, an effort to safeguard Beijing's economic sovereignty against unilateral US pressure. By

issuing this extraterritorial ruling and rejecting American sanctions, China has effectively drawn on the same model previously employed by the European Union in response to US secondary sanctions on Iran following Donald Trump's withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA) in 2018. The measure aims to shield Chinese companies from US penalties or secondary pressure, while also sending a clear signal that Beijing is unwilling to sacrifice its vital interests—particularly in energy security—under pressure from Washington. Economically, the move is equally significant given that China purchases more than 80% to 90% of Iran's exported oil, particularly through smaller, more flexible "teapot" refineries. Under current conditions—especially with the Strait of Hormuz effectively closed and global oil flows disrupted—these purchases have become even more critical for China. Ira-

nian oil, offered at favorable prices, effectively helps Beijing contain its energy costs while preserving profit margins for domestic refineries. As such, this step can be seen as a key effort to protect China's energy supply chain. From a geopolitical perspective, particularly in light of a likely upcoming meeting between heads of the US and China, Donald Trump and Xi Jinping, Beijing's stance appears to be a calculated move carrying a direct message for Washington. Through this action, China is signaling to the US—its principal strategic rival—that it will not back down on issues tied to its national interests, especially energy security and supply chains. In such areas, Beijing is unlikely to be pressured into retreat. At the same time, amid the complex dynamics unfolding in West Asia, including the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, it should be noted that disruptions trig-

gered by US-Iran tensions have delivered a major shock to global energy markets, driving up oil prices. China, as the world's largest oil importer, has not been immune to these pressures. However, it also has an opportunity to navigate its dependence on alternative energy routes, including supplies from Russia or the Persian Gulf, in a more calibrated manner. In this context, China's legal backing for continued purchases of Iranian oil sends a signal across West Asia that Beijing still recognizes Iran as a key energy supplier—even in times of crisis—and is committed to maintaining that relationship. At the same time, the move helps Tehran preserve its limited foreign currency revenues and sustain its resistance to unlawful Western sanctions. A key point for policymakers in the Islamic Republic lies in distinguishing between an "ideological ally" and a "calculative

strategic partner." Based on current realities in the international system, China appears to be seeking a careful balance—providing operational support to Iran without incurring direct military or security costs. On another level, this move also reinforces China's narrative of "multilateralism-based international law" while undermining the legitimacy of unilateral US sanctions. From this perspective, Beijing's action should be seen as part of a broader effort to build a parallel financial architecture and sustain policies such as de-dollarization and the promotion of the petro-yuan. Given the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and China's track record in "transactional diplomacy," Tehran would be well advised to present its proposals for Beijing's role in West Asia and the Persian Gulf before the anticipated Trump-Xi meeting.

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