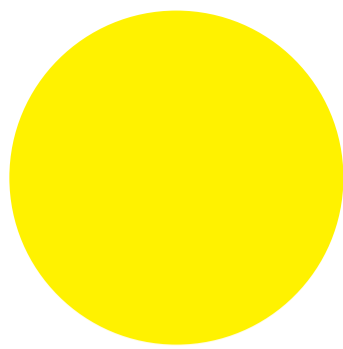


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President Masoud Pezeshekian (c), flanked by CBI Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati (3rd R) and Industry Minister Mohammad Atabak, speaks at a meeting in Iran's Chamber of Commerce in Tehran on May 25, 2026. president.ir

China leans toward facilitating rather than guaranteeing Iran-US deal

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE

Asim Munir, Pakistan's army chief who is leading the mediation track between Iran and the United States, has traveled to Beijing alongside Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for talks with Chinese officials. The visit comes shortly after his trip to Tehran regarding negotiations with Washington. Islamabad is said to be pressing Beijing to take on the role of guarantor in any agreement between the US and Iran. What has driven Pakistan to turn to China, and what capacities Beijing brings to the table, were discussed by Iran Daily with Afijeh Abedi, an international affairs expert. She argues that Beijing is likely to accept a facilitating role but will shy away from acting as the ultimate guarantor, where responsibility for any breach of the deal would fall on its shoulders.



IRAN DAILY: If this claim holds, why has Pakistan turned to China? Is this choice primarily rooted in Islamabad's close strategic ties with Beijing, or in China's own distinct features and capacities?

ABEDI: Both factors can be cited to explain this push. A successful mediation effort between Iran and the United States, given Pakistan's own capacities, would

elevate Islamabad's geopolitical standing, and tapping into China's capabilities could further reinforce that goal.

At the same time, Iran, after the failed experience of the JCPOA, is seeking a "stronger and more durable" guarantee and has repeatedly signaled that it sees China as better suited to provide it.

Alongside Tehran's need, two additional factors come into play: first, the strategic relationship between Iran and China. Ties between Tehran and Beijing run deeper than ordinary cooperation. Iran recognizes that for any international diplomatic initiative to gain traction, China and Russia must be brought on board and aligned.

Second, and more importantly, China's unique capacity to engage with the United States. China is the only country that commands Washington's respect. Despite ongoing competition in the global order, major powers are compelled to work together in certain areas, and ending the war in West Asia could be one of them—though it would certainly not dial down broader rivalries.

Does China fundamentally have an appetite for stepping into such a role? What variables could push Beijing toward accepting or avoiding the role of guarantor?

Shifts in the international landscape have prompted China, unlike in previous decades, to step up its diplomatic role in global crises. Acting as a "guarantor of peace" in the Middle East's largest conflict would elevate China's image from an "economic actor" to a "global leader."

Other drivers include the need for energy security and global economic stability. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has disrupted China's energy supply chain and dealt a blow to its economy. Beijing is keen to see the strait reopened swiftly and has the capacity to help ensure that outcome. Meanwhile, the end of the war would open up reconstruction opportunities that could benefit China's economy. Still, China's strategic pattern suggests it is unlikely to replace the United States in the Middle East or become militarily entangled. History shows that China tends to avoid "committing itself" to other actors. Moreover, a US war with Iran has diverted American attention and military resources away from East Asia. From the perspective of some analysts, the continuation of this situation works against Washington—not Beijing. Why would China give up such leverage prematurely?

Overall, Beijing is likely to accept the role of "facilitator," but will avoid acting as the "ultimate guarantor" where responsibility for any breach of the agreement would fall on its shoulders.

If China were to accept such a role, what tools and levers—economic, political, or security-related—would it actually have to ensure the implementation of a potential Iran-US agreement?

In line with its strategic model, China's tools are primarily economic and political, not military. From Washington's perspective, China is the largest buyer of Iranian oil.

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Municipality of Mashhad
Planning & Human Resources Department
City Diplomacy Center

Mayor of Mashhad

The future trajectory of humanity will be evaluated by our response

The Mayor of Mashhad, Mohammad Reza Ghalandar Sharif, has issued an open letter appeal condemning attacks on civilian populations in Gaza, Lebanon, and Iran, warning that continued global silence risks legitimizing what he described as systematic violations of humanitarian law.

Speaking in connection with international city diplomacy efforts, the mayor framed the recent incident in city of Minab as a defining test for the global community's commitment to human rights and civilian protection. His statement called on cities and governments worldwide to move beyond rhetoric and adopt concrete measures against entities allegedly linked to attacks on residential infrastructure and civilian areas.

"The future trajectory of humanity will be evaluated by our response," the statement declared, emphasizing that indifference in the face of civilian suffering would amount to complicity. The mayor asserted that "silence fosters impunity," arguing that only coordinated international action can establish lasting security and accountability.

Among the most significant proposals outlined in the statement was the creation of an International Urban Solidarity Fund under the framework of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). According to the proposal, the fund would support the reconstruction of schools, housing, and essential civilian infrastructure damaged during conflicts in Gaza, Lebanon, and Iran.

The statement also called on national governments participating in international municipal forums to support arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) against individuals accused of ordering attacks on civilian populations. The mayor described legal accountability as an indispensable requirement for preventing future violence and restoring international credibility to humanitarian law.

In one of the strongest sections of the declaration, Mashhad's municipal leadership



urged cities across the world to reassess procurement contracts and sever commercial ties with defense manufacturers whose products have reportedly been used in attacks affecting civilian infrastructure. Companies specifically referenced included Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and Rafael Advanced Defense Systems.

The mayor characterized such measures not as political positioning, but as an "ethical municipal practice" rooted in humanitarian responsibility and international conscience. He argued that municipalities, as the closest governing institutions to ordinary citizens, cannot remain passive while homes, schools, and children become casualties of geopolitical conflict.

Mashhad's statement further called for a global coalition of cities committed to justice, humanitarianism, and civilian protection, urging international municipal leaders to transform diplomatic platforms into mechanisms for real-world action.

"May Baku be recognized not merely as a venue for discussing housing solutions," the statement concluded, "but as the turning point where the protection of children within their homes became paramount."

The declaration marks one of the most direct and uncompromising interventions by an Iranian metropolitan authority in ongoing regional tensions, signaling an effort by municipal leadership to elevate humanitarian accountability to the center of international city diplomacy.