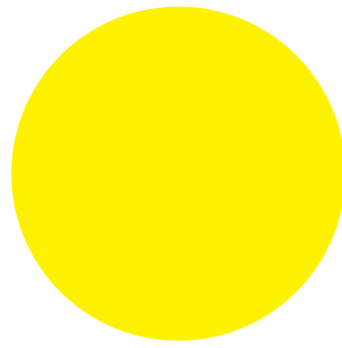


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Border tourism, security, and social resilience in Iran's frontier regions



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**O P I N I O N
E X C L U S I V E**

In geopolitical literature, border regions are often described as "sensitive security zones." Yet in countries such as Iran, border provinces are far more than military frontiers. They are spaces where security, identity, economy, ethnicity, and regional politics intersect simultaneously.

Recent regional tensions once again demonstrated that crises in the Middle East are no longer confined to military dimensions alone. Economic stability, tourism flows, local livelihoods, and social cohesion in border provinces have increasingly become part of broader national security calculations.

This issue is particularly important for Iran because many border provinces are not only strategically located but also ethnically and culturally diverse. Provinces such as West Azarbaijan, Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Khuzestan, Sistan and Baluchestan, and Hormozgan occupy a dual position: they function simultaneously as security frontiers and as cultural-economic gateways connecting Iran to neighboring regions.

For this reason, tourism in border areas should not be understood merely as a leisure industry. In many cases, tourism infrastructure forms part of the country's broader resilience architecture.

Hotels, eco-lodges, transportation corridors, local markets, and cultural tourism networks do more than generate income. They help sustain employment, strengthen local attachment to place, reduce economic marginalization, and preserve social stability during periods of uncertainty.

From a theoretical perspective, this issue can be understood through the concept of "societal resilience." Contemporary security studies increasingly emphasize that national security is not maintained solely through military deterrence. States also require resilient local economies, functioning social networks, and stable border communities capable of absorbing political and economic shocks.

Recent crises in the region demonstrated that local economies in frontier provinces are highly vulnerable to disruptions in tourism and transportation. Declining travel demand, rising uncertainty, interruptions in trade routes, and media-driven security fears can rapidly weaken fragile local economies.

However, the strategic danger extends beyond economics alone.

When border economies experience prolonged instability, broader social and security consequences may emerge, including unemployment, migration pressures, declining trust in local governance, and increased vulnerability to external influence campaigns.

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