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Redefining Persian Gulf security architecture after Hormuz crisis

End of old order or beginning of new balance?



By Sharareh Abdolhosseinzadeh
Political Science Researcher expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

In the Persian Gulf, crises often expose the weaknesses of the existing order before paving the way for a new one. The recent crisis surrounding Iran is not merely a confrontation between Tehran and its regional and international opponents; it is also a sign of a deeper shift in the region's security architecture, which for decades has rested on one fundamental assumption: that the military presence of an outside power can guarantee stability in the Persian Gulf. Recent developments, however, have shown that security in the Persian Gulf can no longer be explained through the logic of the post-Cold War era. A region where great-power rivalry was once largely managed through military bases, naval fleets and formal alliances now faces a more complex set of threats, ranging from long-range missiles and low-cost drones to cyberattacks, information warfare, vulnerabilities in energy infrastructure, and

growing competition among regional and global powers. From this perspective, the most important consequence of the Iran crisis may not be an immediate shift in the balance of power, but rather the exposure of the limitations of the traditional security model in the Persian Gulf.

End of one power's monopoly

Since the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the United States has been the main pillar of the region's security architecture. The US military presence in the Persian Gulf, defense cooperation with the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council countries, and Washington's role in providing deterrence have shaped the main framework of the regional order. Recent crises, however, have highlighted an important reality: military power, even at the highest level, cannot by itself produce lasting security. The experience of missile and drone attacks on critical infrastruc-

ture across the region has shown that new threats can be posed by actors at a much lower cost while still causing significant damage. This does not mean the end of the US role in the Persian Gulf. Contrary to some interpretations, China and Russia do not have the capacity to replace the US security role in the short term. Washington still has intelligence superiority, global military capabilities, a network of allies and operational capacities that no other actor in or outside the region can fully replace. What has changed, however, is the nature of the US role. An era in which regional countries relied entirely on a single external power to define and provide security is gradually giving way to an era of multilayered partnerships, in which the United States remains a major player but is no longer the sole decisive actor. One of the most complex issues in the Persian Gulf is a cycle in which one actor's efforts to enhance its own security increase the sense of insecurity among others. From Iran's perspective, the US military presence near its borders, exten-

sive arms sales to Arab countries, and efforts to establish security alliances against Tehran are viewed as threats to Iran's national security. Accordingly, Tehran believes that security in the Persian Gulf should be managed by the littoral states without the presence of outside powers. By contrast, many Arab Gulf countries view Iran's missile capabilities, regional influence and asymmetric capabilities as the main sources of their security concerns and believe that maintaining the balance of power would be difficult without external backing. These conflicting perceptions are the biggest obstacle to creating an inclusive security order in the region. The main problem in the Persian Gulf is not simply a lack of military power; it is the absence of strategic trust among its actors. The Persian Gulf Cooperation Council countries have pursued a complex, multifaceted policy in recent years. On the one hand, they still need security cooperation with the United States, but on the other, they are seeking to reduce their complete dependence on a single external power.

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مزایده صادراتی بیلت آلیاژی ریخته‌گری مداوم

شرکت فولاد آلیاژی ایران

شماره مرجع مزایده: IASCO-EXPT1405-06 مورخ: ۱۴۰۵/۰۶/۰۲



شرکت فولاد آلیاژی ایران (سایه)

شرکت فولاد آلیاژی ایران (IASCO) در نظر دارد نسبت به فروش بیلت آلیاژی صادراتی در گرید منتخب و مطابق مشخصات ذیل از طریق برگزاری مزایده عمومی اقدام نماید. از علاقمندان به شرکت در مزایده مزبور دعوت به عمل می‌آید که از تاریخ ۱۴۰۵/۰۶/۰۲ لغایت ۱۴۰۵/۰۶/۱۰ برای دریافت اسناد مزایده و اطلاعات تکمیلی با واحد صادرات به شماره تماس‌های ۰۲۱-۸۸۳۲۲۶۲۱ و ۰۲۱-۸۸۳۲۲۶۲۱ و نشانی ایمیل Salesexp@iasco.net تماس حاصل فرمایند. مهلت ارائه پیشنهاد قیمت مزایده یادشده حداکثر ساعت ۱۴:۰۰ به وقت جمهوری اسلامی ایران، روز سه‌شنبه مورخ ۱۴۰۵/۰۶/۱۰ می‌باشد.

Iran Alloy Steel Company

Tender Announcement for Export of CC-Alloy Steel Billet

Tender Ref. No.: IASCO-EXPT1405-06

Date: 08/24/2026

Please be informed that **Iran Alloy Steel Company (IASCO)** intends to conduct a public Tender for the export of **CC-Alloy Steel Billet** under the following terms and conditions:

1. Product Specifications and Commercial terms:

Grade	Size & Dimensions (mm)	Quantity(MT)	Delivery Term	Acc. to attached specification No.
9403I	150*150 * 12,000	25,000(±10%)	FOB Bandar Abbas	C01KU9403I40502A038
	130*130 * 12,000	10,000(±10%)	FOB Chabahar	C07KU9403I40411A042

* Other Grades may also be considered By Customer Request with related premium price. (Please clearly specify the desired grade, analysis and etc.)

● **Delivery Time:** At most 1 (one) week from the date of receipt of advance payment and bank confirmation thereof.

2. Tender General Conditions:

- The offer must remain valid for at least **seven (7) working days in Iran** from the submission deadline.
- Vague, conditional or incomplete offers will not be considered.
- The buyer's company must be legally registered outside the Islamic Republic of IRAN.
- IASCO reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to accept, reject, negotiate, or cancel any or all offers without assigning any reason or incurring any liability.
- All payments shall be deemed valid only upon the Seller's receipt of official bank confirmation.
- Submission of offer implies full acceptance of all tender terms and conditions.

3. Offer Submission:

For instructions and further information, kindly contact the Export Department using the following details:

Tel: +9835-31222675 & +9821-88322621.

Email: Salesexp@iasco.net (For registration only, not to send any offer).

4. Closing Date:

Deadline for Offer Submission: Tuesday, Sep 1, 2026 - by 2:00 p.m. (Tehran Local Time)

Iran will not allow war to end on 'aggressor's conditions'



International Desk

Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said on Monday that Iran did not initiate the war but "We will not allow the war to end on the aggressor's terms" as tensions running high between Tehran and Washington following imposition of new

sanctions by the United States against Iran. "Iranian officials have spoken very clearly about the seriousness and determination in defending Iran's territory. We will not show no leniency toward the aggressors; because the Islamic Republic of Iran did not initiate the war and has

defended its rights, territorial integrity and national sovereignty. Naturally, the aggressor must be held accountable. We certainly did not initiate the war, but we will not allow the end of the war to be based on the conditions set by the aggressor", Baqaei said during his weekly presser. He made the comments in response to a question about recent remarks by President Masoud Pezeshkian, who had said it would be better to end the war now while Iran is "in a position of strength and dignity". However, the president warned on Friday that Tehran would respond forcefully to any renewed attack.

The spokesman cited Pezeshkian as repeatedly making clear that Iranians would not surrender to force or domination, and stressed that Iran would not accept the aggressor's excessive demands.

Economic pressure

On Wednesday, US President Donald Trump announced new economic measures against Iran and warned that countries that maintain economic engagement with Tehran would face consequences.

Trump said on his Truth Social platform that he was announcing "the most crushing economic operation ever taken against any country!"

He added that any country that allows its financial institutions, businesses, airports, or government entities to provide any type of lifeline to Iran will itself face tremendous economic consequences.

Baqaei said US measures variously described as "crippling sanctions," "maximum pressure," and "economic warfare" pursued the same objective of trying to force Iran to surrender its rights.

He, however, said these efforts

had failed and attributed current menacing US rhetoric to "desperation" and Washington's miscalculation concerning the effects of military aggression.

Aiding aggressors

He also said countries should have no concerns about Iran unless they make their bases, facilities, or equipment available to parties carrying out acts of aggression against the country. Baqaei was responding to questions about reports in Western media outlets that US bases on European territory could be targeted if European states resumed their participation in acts of aggression against Iran. "We also heard that a number of KC-135 tanker aircraft have left Bulgaria," the official stated, reacting to a report that the aircraft had left the European country amid local protests and strong warnings by the Islamic Republic against third countries

abetting aggression against the Iranian nation.

"We have no problem with the people of Bulgaria," the spokesman said. However, participation in atrocities targeting the Islamic Republic "constitutes an act of aggression," he stated. "We hope that other countries that have, in one way or another, made their bases and facilities available to the United States and the Zionist regime to commit an act of aggression against a United Nations member state will also take the necessary action," Baqaei said.

"There is no reason for any country to have concerns about Iran, unless it has made its bases, facilities, and equipment available to the aggressors for the purpose of carrying out [such] an unlawful and illegal act," he said, asserting the Islamic Republic's right to retaliate against the origin of an attack on its soil.

Pakistani army chief in Tehran to 'promote regional stability'

International Desk

Pakistan's Field Marshal Asim Munir, chief of the country's armed forces, arrived in Tehran on Monday, his fourth visit to the Iranian capital in less than six months, as Islamabad seeks to promote regional stability and a peaceful resolution to conflicts in the Middle East.

The Pakistan army's public relations office said the visit was part of Pakistan's efforts "to promote peace and stability in the region and peacefully resolve disputes".

"Field Marshal Asim Munir during his visit to Iran will meet key Iranian leaders to advance ongoing efforts to achieve a peaceful, sustainable and comprehensive solution to the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East," the statement said.

Munir's repeated visits to Tehran come as diplomatic efforts involving Iran and the United States continue amid tensions in the region. Pakistan has sought to play a role in facilitating diplomatic contacts between the two sides. Iran's official IRNA news agency said: "The sequence of Asim Munir's four visits to Tehran clearly shows that the diplomatic path between Iran and the United States, despite repeated ups and downs, still passes through Pakistan."

US President Donald Trump spoke with Munir last week ahead of Munir's trip to Tehran, according to three Pakistani sources, with one saying the main US request was to use Pakistan's influence to bring Iran back to negotiations.



Pakistan's army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir (L) holds talks with Iran's Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni (R) upon his arrival in Tehran on August 24, 2026.
● IRNA

Trump last week warned of economic consequences against any country that provided "any type of lifeline to Iran". Iran has in turn vowed to shut down all oil exports from the Persian Gulf.

Last week's call, which has not been previously reported, was initiated by Trump, according to two Pakistani sources.

Munir arrived in Tehran accompanied by Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, Pakistan's military confirmed, saying it was "part of Pakistan's efforts to promote regional peace and stability."

Pakistan, which has played a key mediating role between the US and Iran this year, has remained a trading partner of Iran throughout the recent fighting. Pakistan's earlier mediation efforts between the US and Iran resulted in an interim peace agreement signed in June. But the Islamabad Memorandum quickly faltered, amid new fighting between Iran and the US that has threatened to spiral into a wider regional conflict in recent weeks.

Meanwhile, Oman's foreign minister will travel to Iran on Tuesday, Iran's foreign ministry said, as Tehran and

Muscat seek a way to regulate the passage of ships through the Strait of Hormuz.

Badr al-Busaidi will hold the "ongoing political consultations between the two sides, as two littoral states of the Strait of Hormuz, to help strengthen peace and security in the region," Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said in a statement on Monday.

"The visit is aimed at strengthening Iran-Oman bilateral cooperation and Al-Busaidi will meet with Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi to discuss bilateral and regional issues," Baqaei added.

Iran has exerted control over Hormuz, a key waterway for oil and gas shipping, since the outbreak of the war in the Middle East on February 28.

Iran and Oman have been in talks to establish a new route through the strait, the only entrance to the Persian Gulf and which separates their two countries, but a deal has not yet been finalized.

Tehran, however, says even if the talks bear fruit, that would not on its own open the waterway unless the US meets Iran's broader demands including the lifting of its blockade on Iranian ports.

Iran warns it will seize violating vessels in Strait of Hormuz



The Persian Gulf Strait Authority (PGSA), Iran's regulatory body for the Strait of Hormuz, announced that vessels violating Iranian protocols for the strategic waterway will face restrictions on future passages, including fines, detention, or confiscation.

In a statement posted on its official X account on Sunday, the authority warned cargo owners shipping to and from the Persian Gulf to review the Non-Compliant Vessels (NCV) list prior to chartering in order to avoid potential issues.

Effective immediately, the authority said, any vessel cooperating with listed vessels, including through ship-to-ship (STS) transfers or transshipment, will also be added to the list, Press TV reported.

To request removal from the list, vessels must submit a formal application with justifications to info@pgsa.ir, it said.

The announcement comes amid heightened tensions in the Strait of Hormuz, a critical chokepoint for global energy shipments, through which about one-fifth of the world's oil supply passes.

Iran has warned that it will not tolerate any disruption to its sovereignty over the strategic passage, saying traffic in the waterway will not return to normal unless the United States ends the war and blockade against the country.

In mid-June, Washington and Tehran signed a Pakistan-mediated memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at halting hostilities and paving the way for a final diplomatic agreement to end the war.

However, the memorandum proved fragile, with Washington violating its core terms from the beginning and disagreements quickly emerging over its implementation, particularly regarding the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

The US also launched a series of airstrikes on Iran's southern shores, prompting the country to resume its retaliatory operations against US interests in the region.

The MoU expired on August 17 without renewal or negotiations toward a permanent deal.

Iraq proposes joint security council with Iran, Saudi Arabia

International Desk

Iraq has proposed establishing a unified security coordination council with Iran and Saudi Arabia to rebuild trust between the regional rivals.

National Security Adviser Qasim al-Araji told state TV on Sunday that the initiative aims to address what he called a "crisis of confidence" between Tehran and Riyadh.

The move follows a July 27 Saudi claim that it destroyed drones launched from Iraq targeting oil facilities, which Riyadh blamed on Iraqi resistance groups. Iraq's prime minister ordered an investigation.

There was no immediate comment



from Saudi Arabia or Iran regarding the security proposal.

The proposal comes after Saudi Arabia signed a security pact with Turkey and Pakistan on August 7 amid growing security concerns in the region following the US-Israeli aggression against Iran

in February.

In a joint statement, the signatories said the pact stipulates that an armed attack against any one of the three countries will be regarded as an attack on all.

It aims to strengthen collective security and promote peace, security and stability in the region and beyond, the statement added.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei at the time dismissed concerns over the defense agreement, emphasizing that Tehran has "deeply rooted bonds" with the three countries. He also said on Monday that Iran has not received any official invitation to join the agreement.



Iranian oil prices surge to \$4 premium as US restrictions hit shipments



Economy Desk

Prices for Iranian oil cargoes in Asia have risen to a premium of around \$4 a barrel over global benchmarks, as the Middle Eastern producer's shipments to the region have reportedly diminished due to US restrictions, Bloomberg said on Monday. The cargoes are sold at "the highest levels in years" even before the US administration announces fresh moves aimed at isolating Tehran and its trading partners, according to the report. Iran's oil and energy sectors have already been under

Western sanctions for decades over its nuclear activities. As a result, Iran has for years sold its crude at a discount to international benchmark prices, due to the risks and costs associated with purchasing and transporting sanctioned Iranian oil. With little supply available in the region in recent weeks, prices on offer have flipped from a discount to global benchmarks to a premium of around \$4 a barrel, according to traders involved in negotiations, the Bloomberg report said. The supply has gone down as Iran's southern ports remain

under a US naval blockade imposed by President Donald Trump in mid-April, aimed at pressuring Tehran into an agreement after a 40-day US-Israeli war that began in late February. After a pause of several weeks, the naval blockade was reinstated to restrict Iran's trade routes. At current levels, the price for Iranian oil is close to the highest since the end of the last Trump administration, said Emma Li, lead China market analyst at analytics firm Vortexa. "This may prompt teapots to switch back to conventional grades like they did in July or

simply reduce runs," she said. To date, US efforts to isolate Iran have focused on lower-profile players in the oil universe, sanctioning smaller private refineries, ports and agents, all while holding off heavy-handed enforcement, wary of the unwanted impact on relations with Beijing and of driving up the oil price, Bloomberg said. But the Trump administration has signaled that it plans to further tighten the restrictions and step up pressure on Iran's oil trade. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent was due to unveil a plan later on Monday for "the greatest coordinated economic isolation in the history of the world." Chinese refiners and the banks funding them are the most obvious targets in his sights. Iran has weathered decades of harsh sanctions, and it is unclear that the threat of economic war can shift the conversation from a months-long military campaign that has yet to prompt Iran to make the concessions that the US desires. Bessent, however, has vowed to sever "every economic lifeline." "Iran's enablers purchase and transport its petroleum. They facilitate the flow of its finances through exchange houses and free trade zones," Bessent wrote in a column published in the Financial Times on Monday. In short, these countries calculate ap-

peasement of Iran to be the safer course, he wrote, while warning that they would do well to consider the consequences of sustaining it. Iran's Oil Ministry's media outlet, Shana, recently reported that the country had sold \$18 billion worth of oil during the war with the United States and the ceasefire that followed. Iran exported \$11.5 billion worth of crude during the war and a further \$6.5 billion during the ceasefire period. The news agency said the figure accounted for more than 60% of the oil revenue forecast in the current fiscal year's budget. During the 40-day war that began in late February, the US issued a temporary sanctions waiver for Iranian oil trade aimed at driving down prices. Also, following an interim peace deal signed by Iran and the US on June 18, which led to the lifting of oil sanctions and the naval blockade, "tens of millions of barrels of oil and gas condensates" were loaded and exported from Iran's export terminals, according to Shana. The media outlet said Iran seized on a "golden opportunity" created by the price rise, releasing about 100 million barrels of stored crude and condensates onto the market that it had previously been unable to sell "favorably." The price increase is estimated to have generated an additional \$3 billion for Iran.

NIOC values new gas field at \$40b



Economy Desk

Iran has estimated the intrinsic value of a newly discovered gas field in Fars province at \$40 billion, the exploration director of the National Iranian Oil Company said, describing the field as one of the country's most significant gas discoveries in the past two decades. Mohieddin Jafari said the field is located 10 km northwest of Khonj and about 35 km from the older Shanul and Homa gas fields, Mehr news agency reported. Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad said on Sunday that Iran had discovered a natural gas field in south of Fars Province with more than 7.5 trillion cubic feet (212 billion cubic meters) of gas in place. He said the field holds approximately 5.7 trillion cubic feet (161 billion cubic meters) of recoverable gas. The minister described the discovery as equivalent to 15 years of production from one phase of South Pars, the world's largest gas field, which Iran shares with Qatar. Jafari said on Monday that the gas at the Takht-e field is sweet and does not require a sweetening process, allowing it to follow a shorter route through development and processing than sour gas fields. Natural gas is not only a hydrocarbon product for Iran's economy, but a continuous flow extending from households and power plants to industries and production units. As a result, increasing raw gas production while

domestic consumption, industrial demand and field development requirements are all rising simultaneously is among the most challenging tasks facing the oil industry.

Gas output sets records

The National Iranian Oil Company has reported a significant increase in raw gas production over the past two years. Average daily production in the winter of 2025 increased by 35 million cubic meters from a year earlier, while a new record was set in February 2026, with production 16 million cubic meters above the previous year's record, according to a report by ISNA. Monthly production also increased by about 41 million cubic meters in 2025 from 2024 and rose again in January 2026. A large share of the increase came from the South Pars joint field, which reached a record 729.6 million cubic meters per day in December 2025. In addition, new wells in the Dey, Varavi, Aghar, Dalan, Tous and Khartang fields were brought online. However, an attack on four South Pars refineries in March 2026 cut production by 250 million cubic meters, although technical measures restored much of the lost capacity. Officials have emphasized that despite sanctions and equipment restrictions, Iran's gas industry has maintained its resilience and increased production capacity.

SATBA sees 2,000 MW renewable export potential

Economy Desk

Iran has the potential to build up to 2,000 megawatts of renewable power generation capacity for energy exports, the deputy head of technical and engineering at the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA), Alireza Parandeh-Motlaq, said. He said Iran was ready to cooperate with private-sector investors or foreign governments to build renewable power plants, but had so far received no requests. "There is an opportunity for us to build wind and solar power plants along the borders to export electricity, but it has not yet been realized," he said, adding that infrastructure development would also be necessary in some cases.

New solar projects come online

Meanwhile, Iran has prepared 300 MW of new solar power capacity for operation as part of efforts to expand

its renewable power generation capacity, IRNA reported. The projects are part of the country's target of reaching 7,000 MW of renewable power capacity by the middle of the Persian calendar current year (began on March 21, 2026). The 300 MW of new capacity, developed by Pasargad Energy Development Company, is located in the provinces of North Khorasan, Semnan and Tehran. Of the new capacity, a 50 MW project in Tehran Province is due to be officially inaugurated on Tuesday in the presence of government officials. Separately, an 80 MW solar power plant was inaugurated in Yazd on Monday. The project increased the province's total operational solar power capacity to 574 MW, further strengthening Yazd's position as a leading province in solar energy in Iran. The groundbreaking ceremony for nine 3 MW solar power plants also began on Monday in Khatam County, Yazd Province, as part of efforts

to expand renewable energy generation and increase the province's solar power capacity. A 3 MW solar power plant in Garm-sar was also inaugurated on Monday, alongside the symbolic start of operations for 146 MW of solar projects in Semnan Province. In Kordestan Province, the first private-sector solar power plant was inaugurated in Saqqez. The 3 MW facility, operated by Rozan Abnous Company, was launched as part of efforts to provide stable electricity and reduce imbalances in the province's power grid, ILNA reported. The project was developed with private-sector support and cooperation from the National Development Fund and SATBA, with Bank Tejarat also participating in the project. Iran's installed renewable power capacity has recently reached 6,000 MW, with more than 80% coming from solar power plants, Ali Qaseminejad, head of the solar power development group at SATBA, said. The government has set a target of



installing 30,000 MW of renewable energy capacity within the next two years to help reduce daily power shortages and improve the long-term stability of electricity supplies. Qaseminejad said the Seventh Development Plan calls for the addition of 12,000 MW of renewable energy capacity and that the government was seeking to move closer to that target by March 2027. The agency's deputy investment director, Jafar Mohammadnezhad Sigaroudi, has said the government's target of reaching 7,000 MW by the end of the summer remained unchanged despite constraints on imported equipment.

Redefining Persian Gulf ...

Expanding economic ties with China, developing domestic defense industries, strengthening national capabilities and seeking to ease tensions with Iran are all part of this process. These countries are not seeking to replace the United States; rather, they are trying to open up greater room for independent decision-making. This shift in approach should not be seen as a sign that their security concerns are diminishing. On the contrary, the policy is largely a product of growing concerns. Regional countries have realized that in the new security environment, relying solely on an external guarantor is no longer enough.

Hormuz Strait: where regional & global security converge

Among all the geopolitical elements of the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz remains the most important link between regional and global security. The waterway is not only a route for transporting a significant share of the world's energy, but also one of the most sensitive chokepoints for maritime trade. The importance of the Strait of Hormuz means that every crisis between Iran and its rivals has consequences beyond the region's borders. Energy markets, transportation costs, maritime insurance and the global economy are all affected by stability in the area.

For this reason, the security of the Strait of Hormuz cannot be guaranteed through military means alone. Historical experience has shown that the long-term protection of vital trade routes requires a combination of deterrence, diplomacy and mechanisms for reducing tensions.

Future: from unipolar order to multilayered balance

The future of the Persian Gulf security architecture will probably be neither a complete return to the old order nor the immediate emergence of an entirely new one. What is taking shape is a form of multilayered balance. Under this model, the United States will

remain the most important external security actor; Arab countries will seek greater strategic autonomy; China will expand its economic and diplomatic role; Iran will remain an important and indispensable geopolitical actor; and the need for regional dialogue will be felt more strongly than ever. The main challenge facing the Persian Gulf is not which country can achieve complete dominance, because the experience of past decades has shown that no actor is capable of completely eliminating the others. The key question is whether the countries of the region can move away from the logic of permanent competition and deterrence alone and toward some form of managed balance.

The Iran crisis may not mark the beginning of a new order, but it undoubtedly marks the end of an old assumption: that security in the Persian Gulf can be maintained solely through external military power. The region's future architecture will be sustainable when mechanisms for confidence-building and managing disputes are established alongside deterrence. Ultimately, security in the Persian Gulf depends not only on the number of military bases or defense systems, but also on the ability of its actors to accept one fundamental reality: no stable order can take shape in the region without taking into account the interests and concerns of all its major actors.

Scenario for renewed Trump-Kim summitry after Iran war



By Victor Cha
President of the
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Department

OPINION

US President Donald Trump reportedly told South Korean President Lee Jae Myung on the sidelines of the June 2026 G7 meetings in France that he would restart diplomacy with North Korea. As if to accentuate the point, he later posted a picture on social media of his stroll with Kim Jong-un at the Capella Hotel in Singapore. During Trump's first term, he met with Kim three times in 2018 and 2019 — in Singapore, Vietnam, and Panmunjom, within the Korean demilitarized zone — which produced one joint statement about peace and denuclearization on the Korean peninsula. The conventional policy wisdom is that Trump's enthusiasm for reengagement is not shared by the North Korean leader. But a unique set of drivers could spur a renewal of diplomacy.

Why would the North Korean leader be interested in more summits with Trump?

The main driver relates to the extent to which Kim Jong-un is revisionist, and not status-quo oriented. If he is revisionist in his outlook, he would look to capitalize on any available opportunity to advance the core goal of cementing his status as a nuclear weapons state. Most experts believe the failed summitry of Trump's first term — ending with the US president walking out of meetings in Hanoi — left Kim not only embarrassed but deterred from future encounters with the unpredictable Trump. Moreover, North Korea's pursuit of sanctions relief during the last round of summitry in 2018–2019 appears less of a motivation today for Pyongyang now that Russia has undermined the UN Security Council sanctions regime against North Korea by vetoing renewal of UNSCR 1874, which established the Panel of Experts monitoring organ for sanctions compliance. Any support from Moscow for UN sanctions has been replaced by North Korea's provision of billions of dollars in bountiful trade and military assistance for Vladimir Putin's war against Ukraine, stemming from Kim's supply of munitions, troops, missiles, and laborers. China has also greatly ratcheted down compliance with sanctions, boosted trade to pre-pandemic levels, and at the June 2026 summit with Kim, committed to expand cooperation across infrastructure, tourism, agriculture, and health. With all that Kim is getting from Putin and Xi Jinping, the risks associated with another meeting with Trump appear unattractive, pundits argue. What is missed in this con-



North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un (L) shakes hands with US President Donald Trump after taking part in a signing ceremony at the end of their US-North Korea summit, at the Capella Hotel on Sentosa island in Singapore on June 12, 2018.
● ANTHONY WALLACE/AFP

ventional analysis is whether revisionism, rather than the status quo, drives Pyongyang's foreign policy mindset. There is reason to believe it might, as was evident, for example, when North Korea emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic. Many believed that the leadership would remain focused on recovering and renewing trade with China after a three-and-a-half-year lockdown that devastated its economy. Instead, Kim saw an opportunity with Russia's need for ammunition and troops in the Ukraine war and proposed to Putin a military partnership that eventually led to billions in revenue and a new mutual defense treaty. In a similar vein, Kim may see opportunities in reengaging with Trump. Aside from the US president's expressed desires to meet, North Korea surmises that Trump's commitment to denuclearization as the premise of any negotiation is malleable at best as the president alternates between supporting such a goal and admitting that North Korea is a "nuclear power". Moreover, Pyongyang has learned from the Iran deal that the United States now operates in a "post-diplomacy" world where the primary delivera-

bles take the form of grand but vaguely worded statements, coupled with the promise of follow-on negotiations without any real prospect of agreements. The other lesson from Iran for North Korea is that maintaining contact may be the best way to manage Trump's unpredictability and penchant to use military force.

If revisionist, Kim may target a meeting with Trump, potentially after a US midterm election loss for the party in power, to reaffirm the basic tenets of the Singapore Declaration from their first meeting in 2018. They would likely avoid detailed denuclearization negotiations, leaving it to their teams to hash out over the next six months. Instead, Kim might push the conversation toward peace treaties, stopping US military exercises, and ending the hostile state of relations between the United States and North Korea, appealing to Trump's resume-building for the Nobel Peace Prize. These tangible outcomes might seem modest, but they would be significant to the North Korean perennial goal of achieving de facto US acceptance of the country as a nuclear weapons state.

Would that be enough for North Korea?

No. If revisionism truly drives Pyongyang's mindset, it might also spur additional ambitions to reengage with Japan. North Koreans see Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi as a political maverick unafraid to do the unconventional, a de-

fense hawk, and a beneficiary of strong public support. The best chance for engagement is with someone of Takaichi's ilk — a hawkish, not dovish, leader, creating a potential "only Nixon can go to China" opportunity. North Koreans have told the author of their disdain for the late prime minister Shinzo Abe, Takaichi's mentor, because of his supporting role in former prime minister Junichiro Koizumi's diplomacy with Kim Jong-il in 2002, only to turn hardline during his premiership. In this sense, Takaichi represents a clean break, even as her ties to Abe would protect her right flank domestically if she were to engage with North Korea. Japan has quietly moved away from its longstanding position of resolution of the abductions issue (kidnapping of, and accounting for Japanese citizens in the 1970s) as a precondition for talks.

Kim could seek a meeting with Takaichi to reaffirm the basic tenets of the 2002 Pyongyang Declaration, which could potentially bring billions of dollars into a normalization settlement. On this and the abductions issue, they could authorize negotiation teams to work out the details. Pyongyang's goal for such diplomacy



Then-Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe (R) chats with then-internal affairs minister Sanae Takaichi at Lower House's plenary session in Tokyo, Japan, on May 18, 2017.
● VCG



Moreover, Pyongyang has learned from the Iran deal that the United States now operates in a "post-diplomacy" world where the primary deliverables take the form of grand but vaguely worded statements, coupled with the promise of follow-on negotiations without any real prospect of agreements. The other lesson from Iran for North Korea is that maintaining contact may be the best way to manage Trump's unpredictability and penchant to use military force. Kim may target a meeting with Trump, potentially after a US midterm election loss for the party in power, to reaffirm the basic tenets of the Singapore Declaration from their first meeting in 2018.

is to achieve a position where the North Korean leader would have summits with both the United States and Japan — a feat not accomplished by any previous leader — as a nuclear weapons state, while dividing US-Japan-South Korea trilateral cooperation. What drives Pyongyang, however, may not drive Tokyo. Takaichi may justifiably see too much risk in such diplomacy. But she may also see opportunity in trying to reduce the threat of North Korean short-range missiles aimed at Japan when Trump cares only about long-range ballistic missiles targeted at the United States.

Would this spur opportunities for inter-Korean engagement?

In this revisionist mindset, North Korea would not seek to engage South Korea as part of its diplomatic outreach. In 2024, North Korea swore off any further dialogue with the South. Rather than engage in peaceful coexistence as the Lee government has proposed, a revisionist diplomatic strategy that engages Washington and Tokyo while bypassing Seoul would be most attractive. It could divide the allies and isolate its southern rival, not unlike what South Korea did to North Korea in the 1990s at the end of the Cold War when it succeeded in establishing relations with Moscow and Beijing.

Wouldn't China oppose North Korean contacts with the United States?

Under normal circumstances, China would not support US-North Korea diplomacy. But for Beijing, today's circumstances are far from normal. The main driver for China in this scenario is whether Beijing wants to hedge against both Trump's unpredictability and Putin's ties to Kim.

Beijing usually has trepidations about US-North Korea contacts that might harm its equities on the peninsula. Prior to Trump's first meeting with Kim in 2018, Xi Jinping held no meetings with Kim Jong-un, confident in China's influence over its smaller communist brethren. But once Trump's diplomacy started, Xi met five times with Kim to protect Chinese interests. This applies not just to the United States. After Trump's diplomacy with Kim failed, Xi stopped meeting Kim from 2019 to 2025; however, once summitry started between North Korea and Russia about cooperation in the Ukraine war, Xi met with Kim two times, including Xi's only overseas trip thus far in 2026 to Pyongyang in June. Given the current constellations of geopolitical forces, however, China could promote a renewal of Trump-Kim diplomacy. This is largely because Beijing may want to ingratiate itself with Trump, but also subtly dilute Russia's growing influence over North Korea. China experts have told the author that Beijing is not supportive of the trajectory of

Moscow-Pyongyang cooperation, but that any direct intervention could sour China's relations with both. Helping Trump meet Kim may be a more subtle

way of achieving this goal. Media reporting coming out of the Trump-Xi summit suggests that the two leaders spent time discussing North Korea. It would

not be surprising if during Xi's follow-on trip to Pyongyang, China conveyed a message of support for US-North Korea diplomatic reengagement.

Should such geopolitical machinations come to fruition, they would generate flashy news headlines and achieve a superficial reduc-

tion in tensions, but none would address the fundamental issues of denuclearization or peace. But in a "post-diplomacy" world, this may be the

best we can hope for.

The article was first published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Why South Korea's president skipped Washington for Silicon Valley, Brasília



By Darcie
Draudt-Véjares
Policy analyst

OPINION

Earlier this month, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung completed the longest international tour of his presidency to date. Lee first stopped in San Francisco, then traveled to Brazil, Chile, and Argentina before a final stopover in Germany. The tour was not a series of unrelated visits but an attempt to organize Korea's diplomacy around the geography of its compute economy. The mainstream narrative in Washington casts Seoul's foreign policy in terms of its need to prioritize coordination with its US security patron to alternately deter and engage Pyongyang.

But the scale of Lee's trip and the composition of the delegation accompanying the president revealed a broader strategic ambition: Korea sees its future as extending beyond competition with North Korea and the management of the China-US rivalry. Instead, Lee aimed to establish Korea as a critical middle power and a source of crucial supply chain management amid overlapping economic and security challenges.

Industrial diplomacy and the new economic geography

Lee's tour, augmented by a corps of industrial juggernauts, was the latest display of Korea's industrial diplomacy — the collaborative efforts of government officials and private-sector leaders to pursue national growth and security at the nexus of industrial policy, foreign affairs, and commercial engagement. This effort responds to the convergence of economic and security challenges faced by Korea and other middle powers from America's new and evolving tariff project, technological competition between China and the United States, and a latent energy crisis exposed and exacerbated by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Korea's strategy under Lee treats supply chain management as a necessary component of contemporary diplomacy. Contemporary industrial ecosystems depend on both domestic factors, such as national regulatory and incentive schemes, and global ones: transnational flows of resources, technology innovation and transfer, intermediate components, transport systems, telecommunications networks, and market access. In an increasingly competitive landscape, these jealously-protected strategic inputs are treated as essential to national survival.

A lot of the groundwork for Ko-



South Korean President Lee Jae Myung (R) shakes hands with Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang in San Francisco, the US, on July 24, 2026, on the sidelines of the AI Summit that the former hosted.
● BLUE HOUSE

rean industrial diplomacy precedes Lee's presidency. Korean national strategy has incorporated elements of industrial diplomacy in diverse sectors from semiconductors and batteries to ships and autos. In the United States, South Korean officials and firms have coordinated with multiple levels of government on major investments. They've taken advantage of Biden-era CHIPS and Science Act incentives for next-generation semiconductor fabs in Texas and worked with the state of Georgia on a cutting-edge electric and hybrid vehicle plant — the largest development deal in the state's history. They've also worked with Pennsylvania on the continued expansion of Hanwha's newly acquired Philadelphia shipyard — an investment that the Trump administration has since embraced as part of its push to rebuild US

shipbuilding capacity.

As a result, Lee's industrial policy pitches that national security increasingly depends on economic productivity, competitiveness, and prosperity rather than operating as distinct domains.

Korea's two-part Americas strategy

Lee's delegation pursued two complementary functions during the tour. The first was to position Korea within the various parts of the compute ecosystem: upstream with Latin American providers of critical minerals and downstream with Silicon Valley technology innovators. The second was to present Korea's own compute ecosystem — ranging from semiconductors to language models — as a potential core partner.

In San Francisco, Lee focused on technology firms and legitimacy, seeking to build relationships with some of the world's biggest AI players. Lee hosted an AI summit — attended by OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei, NVIDIA President and CEO Jen-

sen Huang, and Broadcom CEO Hock Tan, among others — that he used to herald Korea's potential position as a global AI production hub and to expand relationships with Silicon Valley startups and venture capital companies. The summit was also a bid to legitimize Lee's ambition for Korea to become an AI powerhouse. His core economic strategy at home has centered on a national push for AI leadership through expanded semiconductor production and innovation, physical AI, and data center construction.

In Latin America, Lee focused on minerals, markets, and supply chain diversification. Lee inked deals in Brasília, Santiago, and Buenos Aires, with the leaders pledging follow-on initiatives. These included joint aircraft development and co-operation on critical mineral supply chains with Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da



Argentina's President Javier Milei (L) and South Korea's President Lee Jae Myung pose with a chainsaw during a meeting at the Casa Rosada in Buenos Aires on July 31, 2026.
● AFP



Lee's strategy reflects an effort to bridge economic ecosystems and suggests how political leadership increasingly requires a broad vision of cooperative global supply chain management. Traditional diplomacy is no longer sufficient. As industrial policy has returned to prominence around the globe, governments are increasingly involved in supporting national industries that span borders.

Silva, as well as separate bilateral memorandums with Argentine President Javier Milei and Chilean President José Antonio Kast to pursue joint lithium and copper projects.

Lee's strategy reflects an effort to bridge economic ecosystems and suggests how political leadership increasingly requires a broad vision of cooperative global supply chain management. Traditional diplomacy is no longer sufficient. As industrial policy has returned to prominence around the globe, governments are increasingly involved in supporting national industries that span borders.

Industrial networking as diplomatic strategy

Lee's tour offers a view of the direction in which South Korean leaders are trying to move national strategy away from Pyongyang and toward industrial diplomacy. Notably, his trip was the first time in two decades that a Korean president visited US soil without meeting the American president. The absence of a Washington stop matters because the tour cannot be understood solely as an exercise in alliance management. By focusing instead on private-sector leaders in Silicon Valley, Korea sought to shift the narrative away from an exclusive focus on its traditional security contest with North Korea and toward its prospective role in the global innovation system.

Korea is attempting to convert industrial capability in core emerging technologies into diplomatic agency by connecting regions that Washington usually treats separately. Latin America has not traditionally been a focus of South Korean foreign policy, separated from Korea by the vast Pacific Ocean and facing different sets of security interests and threats. But nontraditional partners such as Brazil, Chile, and Argentina could become important partners for South Korea's current national goals: supporting its technology and heavy-manufacturing industries, maintaining economic competitiveness, and diversifying security and economic relationships beyond China and the United States to reduce exposure to the costs of US-China strategic competition.

The tour does not demonstrate that this strategy will succeed. But it does show how Seoul is trying to use industrial diplomacy to manage a fragmented economic geography — linking technology firms, resource suppliers, and markets that Washington usually treats separately.

The article was first published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

U20 Wrestling World Championships:

Khalili, Mohammadnejad win freestyle golds, but Iran hits decade-low finish

Sports Desk

Iranian wrestlers ultimately enjoyed a taste of freestyle glory at the U20 Wrestling World Championships, winning two gold medals through Sina Khalili and Abolfazl Mohammadnejad on the final day in Bratislava, Slovakia, on Sunday. However, the two golds, coupled with Abolfazl Rahmani's 92kg silver and a 61kg bronze for Ahoura Khateri on the preceding days, did little to prevent Iran, which had been crowned champion three times over the previous five editions, from recording its lowest finish in the freestyle standings in a decade. With six other members of the squad finishing empty-handed in their respective categories, Iran had to settle for fourth place with 103 points. The United States, which completed a clean sweep of medals across all 10 classes, including four golds and three silvers, collected 205 points for a third successive team crown. Eligible for team points for



Iranian freestyle wrestlers Sina Khalili (L) and Abolfazl Mohammadnejad are pictured after securing gold medals in their respective divisions at the U20 Wrestling World Championships in Bratislava, Slovakia, on Aug. 23, 2026.

UWW

the first time since 2022, Russia finished runner-up with 155 points, thanks to a seven-medal haul, including two golds. Japan was third with 130 points, bagging one gold, two silvers and three bronze medals.

Golds bring relief

It was perhaps destiny that Khalili met Haji Karimov in the 70kg final, after the Iranian had suffered a final defeat against another Azer-

baijani opponent in Kanan Heybatov at the U23 World Championships last year. A former U17 world champion, Khalili did not take any chances in Sunday's showdown, starting on an aggressive note and keeping Karimov, who was soon called for passivity, on the back foot. Khalili worked on his snapdowns and scored a takedown for the first points of the final before wrapping

the Azerbaijani wrestler's legs around his head and turning him three times to lead 7-0 in the first two minutes. Khalili decided to switch his strategy in the second period and sat on his lead. Karimov managed a stepout and a takedown, but that was never going to trouble Khalili, who captured Iran's first freestyle gold with a 7-3 victory. "I had some really tough



opponents, including wrestlers from the United States and Azerbaijan," Khalili said. "They were strong competitors, but I was able to perform at my best and win the gold medal. "Last year at the U23 Worlds, I lost to Heybatov after one moment of carelessness. When I saw that another Azerbaijani wrestler had reached the final, I was even happier, and it gave me even more motivation."

Later in the day, making amends for his defeat in the 2025 final, reigning U23 world champion Mohammadnejad defeated American Dreshaun Ross 5-3 in the 125kg final. Ross was put on the activity clock after some early hand-fighting, while Mohammadnejad was in trouble when the American caught his leg. However, the Iranian was quick to escape the hold and count-

er Ross for a stepout. Once the activity clock expired, Mohammadnejad led 2-0. A later stepout stretched his advantage to 3-0. In the second period, Ross shot a double-leg, but Mohammadnejad managed to counter with a takedown to lead 5-0. Ross bounced back with a stepout and a takedown in the final five seconds, but it was too little, too late.

The under-par freestyle campaign came after Iran also endured a Greco-Roman tournament to forget, at least by its own standards, earlier in Bratislava, missing out on a fifth successive team crown.

Armin Shamsipour was the only Iranian gold medalist across the 10 divisions, triumphing in the 55kg class, while Amirali Heidari (60kg), Ali Gharibi (63kg), Amirmahdi Saiedi-Nava (77kg) and Ali Nematzadeh (87kg) added four bronzes to the medal haul. Iran settled for the runner-up spot with 109 points, 33 behind Russia, which collected three golds, two silvers and one bronze.

AFC Women's Champions League:

Didar double seals comeback win as Khatoon advances to group stage

Sports Desk

Iranian international striker Sara Didar netted twice as Bam Khatoon FC came from behind to beat Jordan's Etihad Club 3-1 in a must-win game in Hisor, Tajikistan, on Sunday and qualify for the group stage of the AFC Women's Champions League. Second to Etihad on goal difference prior to the contest, Khatoon knew that nothing short of maximum points would be enough to go through, and the Iranian

side rose to the occasion, keeping calm despite going behind early in the game. Leen Al-Btoush, taking advantage of shoddy defending, put Etihad Club ahead in the 10th minute when she stole in from the back, picked up a cutback from Carrie Consolino and curled the ball past a rooted Raha Yazdani. The 12-time Iranian top-flight champion's efforts to find an equalizer were hampered by poor finishing from Didar and Maryam Dini, as well as the efforts of Etihad keeper Sherin Al Shalabe,

who repeatedly read their attacks in advance. The custodian, however, failed to detect a lurking Didar in the 32nd minute, with the striker latching on to Melika Motevalli's cross and guiding a looping header beyond Al Shalabe and into the bottom-left corner. Fatemah Shaban and Roujin Tamrian thought they had put Khatoon ahead late in the first half, only to see their strikes ruled out for offside. Motevalli and Fatemah Amineh came close to giving

the Iranian outfit the lead after the break, but they had to wait until the 71st minute, when Shaban outpaced defender Alanoud Al Zabrey on the left and steered her shot beyond Al Shalabe into the right corner. Didar then sealed the match with her second goal in the 76th minute – and fifth in three outings – after collecting a pass from Dini and, running parallel to the goal, chipping the ball past the lunging custodian. A second win in three games saw Khatoon win



Bam Khatoon striker Sara Didar celebrates after scoring in a 3-1 victory over Jordan's Etihad Club in AFC Women's Champions League preliminary stage in Hisor, Tajikistan, on Aug. 23, 2026.

AFC

Group E with seven points – two clear of Saudi champion Al Nassr, which demolished CSKA Dushanbe 12-1 later on Sunday – and earn its third consecutive

group-stage appearance in the continent's elite club competition. A quarterfinalist in the 2024/25 season, Khatoon began its preliminary cam-

paign with a 3-0 victory over CSKA Dushanbe before Didar's 95th-minute strike salvaged a point in a 1-1 draw against Al Nassr on Thursday.

Iran names basketball squad for World Cup qualifiers, Asian Games

Sports Desk

Greek head coach Sotiris Manolopoulos has named Iran's 14-man basketball roster for the upcoming FIBA World Cup Asian Qualifiers and the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games. Having won the first-round group thanks to two victories over Syria either side of an impressive win against Jordan in July, Iran will resume its World Cup qualifying campaign against New Zealand in the second-round Group E opener in Pasay, Philippines, on Friday, before

taking on the Philippines two days later. The crucial double-header will be followed by the basketball event at the Asian Games, which will get underway on Sept. 10. A silver medalist in 2014 and 2018, Iran will chase a fourth men's basketball medal at the multi-sport event. Iran has been drawn into a tough Pool B alongside Jordan – the silver medalist at Hangzhou 2022 – Chinese Taipei, which reached the semifinals in the previous edition, and Qatar. The national squad fea-

tures a noticeable influx of young players and a significantly lower average age, signaling a generational shift in Iranian basketball. The most notable inclusion, however, is the return of veteran Mohammad Jamshidi, whose most recent international appearance came during the 2023 FIBA Basketball World Cup qualifiers. The 35-year-old forward, along with the other two senior players, Arslan Kazemi and Arman Zangeneh, is expected to add a touch of experience to the young squad for the

two major events. The following is Iran's full 14-man squad: Arslan Kazemi, Mohammad Jamshidi, Arman Zangeneh, Salar Monji, Mobin Sheikhi, Matin Aqajani, Hassan Aliakbari, Peter Grigorian, Mohammad-Mahdi Heidari, Seyed Mahdi Jafari, Navid Rezaeifar, Alireza Sharifi, Salar Taheri and Mohammad-Mahdi Jalali.

Iranian players participate in training session in Tehran, Iran, on Aug. 6, 2026.

MARYAM SATTARI/IRIBF



Aash, handicrafts take center stage at Zanjan festival

Iranica Desk

The 19th National Iranian Aash Festival and the 20th National Handicrafts Exhibition opened on Monday, August 24, and will run through August 28 at the Caspian International Exhibition Center in Zanjan, the provincial director-general of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts said.

Seyyed Mikaeil Mousavi told

ISNA that all the necessary infrastructure for the event had been prepared. "This year, 40 booths have been set up for cooks from 23 provinces, while 155 handicrafts booths have been prepared for artisans from 29 provinces. Some of the participants have already arrived in Zanjan," he said.

Mousavi said billboards and banners promoting the festival had been installed across

the city and that necessary arrangements had been made to welcome tourists.

He also announced the launch of a special tourist train for the event. "This year, a tourist train has been launched from Tehran to Zanjan. Tourists will arrive in Zanjan on Thursday morning, visit the Soltanieh Dome, and then tour the exhibition and Aash festival. Therefore, the exhibition will open one hour earlier on

Thursday," he said.

Travel agencies have also prepared special tourism packages and dedicated tours for the festival to provide services to visitors, he added. Mousavi noted that nomadic communities from different provinces will also participate in the festival by setting up traditional black tents, where they will introduce their culture, customs and local foods to visitors.



● IRNA

Hurand blends ancient history with Arasbaran's natural beauty

Iranica Desk

Nestled among the lush mountains of northern East Azarbaijan Province, Hurand is a quiet, pleasant city that remains relatively unfamiliar to many tourists. Located in the historic and natural Arasbaran region, Hurand borders Parsabad to the north, Germe in Ardabil Province to the east, Meshgin Shahr to the southeast, Kaleybar to the west, and Ahar to the south. The city lies about 172 kilometers from Tabriz, and the road to Hurand winds through scenic mountains, forests and valleys.

Hurand has a long history of human settlement. Historical remains indicate that the area was inhabited even before the advent of Islam. Its mountainous setting, permanent rivers and extensive forest cover played an important role in the development of ancient settlements and civilizations in the region.

One of Hurand's most important features is its location within the Arasbaran forests,

which have been recognized by UNESCO as a biosphere reserve because of their ecological value and biodiversity. The forests are considered one of Iran's most important ecosystems and play a significant role in preserving plant and animal species.

Hurand has about 11,000 hectares of forest and more than 70,000 hectares of rangeland. This natural expanse keeps the region's landscapes green and

scenic for much of the year. Permanent rivers, springs and deep valleys add to the area's beauty, making it an attractive destination for nature enthusiasts, photographers and wildlife lovers.

One of Hurand's best-known natural attractions is Tombakuluq Forest, located only about one kilometer from the city center. Thanks to its easy access, diverse vegetation and pristine landscapes, the forest

is considered one of the region's popular tourist destinations.

Yew, hornbeam, hazelnut, walnut, sumac and oak trees, along with various native plant species, give the forest a distinctive character. Many environmental experts consider Arasbaran one of the country's richest forest habitats, home to hundreds of plant and animal species.

The forest is also a habitat for valuable wildlife species such as brown bears, foxes, lynxes, wild boars, partridges, golden eagles, falcons and other birds of prey. However, observing these animals is possible only under appropriate conditions and with respect for environmental protection principles. Visitors should avoid approaching wildlife or disturbing its habitat.

Seventeen kilometers from Hurand, in Chinab village, lies a historical and natural area known as Qobul Valley. In addition to its natural beauty, the area is of considerable archaeological importance. Studies in-

dicate that the site is more than 3,000 years old. Qobul Valley lies behind a rocky mountain, with the well-known Hashtsar Mountain visible opposite it. Numerous small and large caves are among the area's most distinctive features.

Local residents believe that some of these caves could accommodate thousands of people. Although such accounts require scientific verification, the scale of the caves and the natural rock formations surrounding them are impressive. The area holds particular appeal for those interested in geology, nature tourism and history.

Twelve kilometers from Hurand, in Pashtab village, stands a historic fortress known locally as Pashtu Castle. The fortress is believed to date back to the Parthian period. Its most notable feature is its location atop rocky heights, with deep cliffs surrounding it that once helped protect the stronghold.

Alongside its pre-Islamic heritage, Hurand is also home to valuable Islamic-era structures. The Jaame Mosque of Hurand,

which is more than 300 years old, is one of the city's most important historic buildings. Built on two levels, the mosque includes sections such as the Shahneshtin, Mojaverkhaneh, Saqqakhaneh, firewood storage and water room.

Twelve kilometers from Hurand is Kujan village, which offers scenic views because of its location in a mountainous valley. Wooded areas and orchards surround the village.

Hurand has a mountainous climate, with cold, snowy winters and relatively cool autumns, so traveling during these seasons can involve some limitations. Spring is the best time to see the lush forests, blossoming trees and swollen rivers. Summer, with cooler temperatures than many other parts of Iran, also provides favorable conditions for nature tourism, mountain climbing and visits to villages and historic sites. If the main purpose of a trip is to enjoy the natural beauty of Arasbaran, late May to early September is considered the best period to visit Hurand.



● MKEHR

Reading Room

Hafezieh Library preserves Shiraz's literary heritage

Iranica Desk

Stepping into the serene grounds of the mausoleum of Shiraz's renowned lyric poet Hafez, a sign for an old library just behind his tomb catches the eye and invites visitors to explore. Above its modest entrance is a sign reading "Hafezieh Library," while a door decorated with the traditional woodcarving artistry of Shiraz opens the way to this repository of books.

Upon entering, a table and several chairs occupy the center of the room, while attractive bookshelves stand beneath a ceiling reflecting the architectural style of Shiraz's Zand period. The library's tranquil silence creates an enchanting atmosphere.

The library has a history spanning eight decades and is regarded as an old pearl nestled within the Hafezieh complex. Generations of book-loving Shiraz residents have fond memories of the library, while

prominent scholars and intellectuals of the city have repeatedly enriched its valuable collection by donating books. To learn more about the history of Hafezieh Library, IRNA spoke with Zeynab Mohebi, a senior librarian and head of the public library.

Mohebi said that evidence indicates that after restoration work was carried out at Hafezieh between 1927 and 1937, the need was felt to establish a library next to the tomb of Hafez. As a result, the mausoleum building of Qasem Khan Vali, one of the structures dating from the reign of Karim Khan Zand, was designated as a library. Referring to handwritten notes found in some of the books in the rich collection, she added that, on the orders of Abolqasem Shokrayi, the then director-general of the provincial Department of Culture, a number of books were transferred from the Fars National Library to Hafezieh Library on December 18, 1950,

forming the initial core of the collection.

Mohebi further noted that, beginning in 1967, Hafezieh Public Library continued its activities under the Office of Libraries of the Ministry of Culture and Arts at the time. Since 2003, following the approval by the Iranian Parliament of legislation establishing the country's Public Libraries Administration and its endorsement by the Guardian Council, Hafezieh Public Library has operated under the Public Libraries Institution and the Fars Province Public Libraries Department.

Over the years, prominent figures in the intellectual and cultural life of Fars have donated their libraries, or portions of their personal book collections, to Hafezieh for public use, thereby ensuring that their names would remain part of the library's history.

According to the head of Hafezieh Library, one such

figure was Lotfali Suratgar, one of the founders of the Faculty of Literature at Shiraz University, who donated 700 books to the library in 1970. Mohebi added that in 1971, Mohammad Kazemi Shirazi, a noted scholar of his time, donated 5,100 books to Hafezieh Library, many of them printed in Beirut, Cairo, Damascus and Najaf, along with bookshelves and fine furniture. In 1976, Lotfali Moaddel donated 1,020 books to the library. That same year, another 500 books were transferred from the Persepolis Library and Scientific Institution to Hafezieh Library.

She added that in subsequent years, other prominent figures also donated books from their personal collections to the library.

With such a history, Hafezieh Library is considered one of the oldest public libraries in southern Iran. Handwritten notes found in some of the books in its collection indi-



● IRNA

cate that it has been in operation for more than 76 years. Today, Hafezieh Library houses 21,749 books. Its rich collection includes 2,600 Arabic-language books, 276 valuable lithographed books, 503 books printed using letterpress techniques, and 16 books produced through offset printing and other printing methods.

The library also has a rich collection devoted to Hafez studies, including editions

of the Divan of Hafez in 15 languages as well as various commentaries on the works of the celebrated Shirazi poet, making it one of Iran's unique libraries in this field.

In addition, its location within one of Iran's most popular heritage and tourist sites has made Hafezieh Library a destination for culture enthusiasts as well as numerous domestic and international visitors. The library has members from across Iran.

The Pretender: Young filmmaker's portrait of Attar of Nishapur

Ramin Hosseinpour's New Short Documentary on Attar of Nishapur

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Ramin Hosseinpour is an Iranian film director, architect and composer, known for blending cinema with architecture and rock music. After making the experimental short films *Ghanimat* (2014) and *Eshtiagh* (2017), both of which were screened at international festivals and reached the finalist stage, he has in recent years gained a stronger presence at international festivals with *Sculpture* (2022), a short documentary centered on Rumi and Shams Tabrizi, for which he has received several awards. Hosseinpour is currently developing *The Pretender*, a short animated documentary about the life and mystical journey of Attar of Nishapur against the historical background of the Mongol invasion. He is serving as the film's screenwriter, director and composer, including composing its orchestral score. The international success of *Sculpture* (2022) and its run on the festival circuit drew attention to Hosseinpour's subsequent projects. He is currently developing *The Pretender*, a short animated documentary on Attar of Nishapur, which he has stated he intends to present at major international festivals. *Sculpture* received third place at the Rhode Island International Film Festival in 2022, one of the Academy Awards® qualifying festivals in the United States, and later won the Special Jury Prize and Best Short Documentary at the Toronto International Nollywood Film Festival (TINFF) in 2025, a Canadian Screen Award qualify-



Ramin Hosseinpour

ing festival. In addition to these highlights, the film received approximately seventy awards across various international festivals.

IRAN DAILY: First, could you tell us a little about your background in short filmmaking and the path you have taken from your early works to *The Pretender*?

HOSSEINPOUR: In 2014, I made a film called *Ghanimat*, which was an experimental short. I then made *Eshtiagh* in 2017, which was also an experimental short. Both films were screened at international festivals.

After *Eshtiagh*, I moved on to a project that took from 2020 to 2022 to complete. It was a film called *Sculpture* (2022), which explored Rumi and his relationship with Shams Tabrizi. The film was screened at various festivals and went on to receive several international awards.

What story did *Sculpture* specifically tell about Rumi and Shams Tabrizi, and from what perspective did you approach their relationship?

HOSSEINPOUR: The story begins when Shams goes to Rumi's home. Rumi has a book in his hands containing his poems. Shams engages him in conversation and eventually takes the book from Rumi and throws it into a pool. Rumi becomes worried, but the book sinks into the water and later returns intact, described as emerging from the water by divine or spiritual permission.

I incorporated this story into the film as a conceptual adaptation. In the film, there is a sculptor sitting at his desk who hears Rumi's poetry and recreates it in his surroundings in the form of figures and sculptures. In fact, the figure that takes shape is a kind of representation of that book and of the relationship between Rumi and Shams. The film also has the quality of a reading, with the text itself becoming part of the work, while poetry serves as one of the main elements of the narrative.

What challenges are involved in bringing profound mystical and historical concepts into the format of a short film?

HOSSEINPOUR: When you tell a big story in a short amount of time, you must be able to bring the sequence of events and concepts together with the

mise-en-scène, découpage, architecture and musical harmony, without allowing any of these elements to stick out from the overall structure of the film.

Since 2014, I have been pursuing an approach that focuses on blending cinema with architecture and rock music, alongside orchestral composition. I don't see cinema as being limited simply to dialogue, actors and sets. For me, color, rhythm, space, rock intensity, orchestral sound and concept are also languages of cinema. Sometimes I use musical rhythm to create excitement, sometimes color, and sometimes architectural space. Ultimately, all these elements should be blended into the service of a single structure.

Let's turn to your new work, *The Pretender*. How did the idea for the film and the choice of Attar of Nishapur as its central figure come about?

HOSSEINPOUR: The Pretender is about the Mongol invasion of Iran and the city of Nishapur, as well as the life and mystical journey of Attar of Nishapur. The film explores Attar's life, thought and mystical journey through a conceptual and historical approach, while avoiding a conventional biographical treatment.

What stage of production is the film currently at? And do you have plans to take *The Pretender* to major festivals?

HOSSEINPOUR: The project is currently in production, and I hope to finish it by the end of this year. But because it is a demanding project, I cannot rush it. We are trying to maintain the quality of the work. If the conditions allow, we hope to present *The Pretender* at major international festivals. With *Sculpture*, I gained valuable experience on the festival circuit, so it is natural for me to have greater expectations for this new work and for a subject like Attar.



Multidisciplinary Background

Ramin Hosseinpour was born on March 20, 1987. He holds a Ph.D. in Architecture and bachelor's degrees in Film Directing and Music.

In architecture, Hosseinpour has worked as a lecturer and designer, with publications on vertical architecture, human-technology relations, ecology, and structural behavior in skyscrapers.

In music, Hosseinpour works as a composer and rock vocalist, with five rock albums: 8Choices, Contempo-

rary, Avangard (Vol. 1), The Pretender, and Ganjoor (Vol. 1), as well as several singles. His music has received multiple awards at international festivals, including a Bronze Medal at the Global Music Awards, Best Male Vocalist at the LA Music Video Awards, and Best Composer at the LA Sun Film Fest.

In January 2026, Hosseinpour was interviewed by The New Arab about the work and legacy of Iranian filmmaker and playwright Bahram Beyzai.



TENDER NO.: 08-38-0240005

second Announcement

The National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC) is seeking to procure the specified goods listed in the table below through a Qualitative Evaluation Call for conducting a public tender via the Government Electronic Procurement System (SETAD). All stages of the tender process including the receipt of tender documents, submission of bidders' proposals, and the opening of bid envelopes, shall be carried out exclusively through the Government Electronic Procurement System (SETAD) portal at www.setadiran.ir. Bidders who have not previously registered must complete the registration process on the aforementioned portal and obtain an Electronic Signature certificate to participate in the tender.

Item	Material Description	Quantity
1	PARTS FOR "HYDRA RIG" COILED TUBING IN MODEL: HR660, SER. NO. J13471, JOB#302197 REF. HYDRA RIG INJECTOR CHAIN ASSEMBLY, CD316387C GRIPPER 1.25 IN. (OPTIONAL) FIRST 7 DIGIT OF IRANCODE:6222260,NAFT_CODE:62222605655630 P/N:CD366723	60NO
2	GRIPPER 1.75 IN. (OPTIONAL) FIRST 7 DIGIT OF IRANCODE:6222260,NAFT_CODE:62222605655630P/N:CD366722	60NO

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: www.setadiran.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded. The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 3,609,02 EURO or 6,146,945,095 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

THE ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS CFR BANDAR IMAM KHOMEINI, IRAN. PAYMENT TERM IS C.A.D. INCLUDING AN ADVANCE PAYMENT. SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex, Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran
Tel. No.: 061 34124644 Fax No.: 061 34457437

PUBLIC RELATIONS

www.shana.ir www.nisoc.ir <http://lets.mporg.ir> www.setadiran.ir