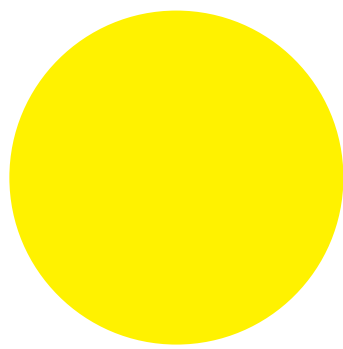


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Russia can be key partner for Iran without becoming full strategic ally

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Russia's willingness to support Iran under growing US economic pressure has again put the future of Tehran-Moscow relations in focus. Moscow has said it is prepared to help Iran meet some of its needs, raising questions about how far Russia can go while facing its own sanctions and the economic pressures created by the war in Ukraine.

The key to understanding Russia's approach, however, may lie less in its immediate economic capacity than in the way Moscow defines its interests in a changing international order. In an interview with Iran Daily, Mohammad Hossein Baghi, an international affairs expert, said Russia's relations with Iran should be viewed through the broader doctrines that have shaped its foreign policy, particularly the Primakov Doctrine and what is known as the Karaganov Doctrine.



Mohammad Hossein Baghi

For Baghi, the Primakov Doctrine represents one of the most important shifts in Russia's foreign policy thinking since the end of the Soviet Union. The doctrine advocates a multipolar international system, strategic autonomy, regional integration, pragmatism and opposition to external interference in the affairs of sovereign states.

"The Primakov Doctrine was a serious turning point in Russian foreign policy," he said. It moved Russia away from the more cooperative approach toward the United States that had emerged in the late Soviet and early post-Soviet years, and toward a policy in which Moscow seeks to preserve its freedom of action and pursue partnerships based on its own interests.

Russia was not initially in a position to fully implement such a policy. The economic and political crises that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union limited Moscow's ability to act as an independent center of power. But, according to Baghi, several developments gradually changed that situation, including dissatisfaction with the Yeltsin era, Russia's improved position under President Vladimir Putin and a series of international events that strengthened Moscow's determination to resist what it saw as the expansion of Western influence.

Russia's military interventions in Georgia in 2008, Ukraine in 2014, Syria in 2015 and the wider Ukraine conflict that began in February 2022 can, in Baghi's analysis, be viewed within this broader framework. Moscow, he argues, has sought to prevent what it considers unacceptable strategic risks while advancing its own interests.

The Karaganov Doctrine adds another layer to this picture. Associated with Russian foreign policy thinker Sergei Karaganov, it emphasizes Moscow's interests and influence in the former Soviet space and among Russian-speaking populations. While Iran is not a former Soviet republic, Baghi believes Tehran occupies an important place in Russia's wider regional calculations.

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Lebanese president calls new Israeli raids 'dangerous escalation' 2 >



The photo shows a destroyed building at a site that was targeted by an Israeli airstrike in the southern Lebanese village of Arab Salim on September 6, 2026.

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Speaker warns of 'swifter, more intense' response to US attacks

International Desk

Parliament speaker and top negotiator in talks with the United States warned on Sunday that Iran would launch "swifter and more intense response" to US strikes, saying that the "rules of the game have changed". "The Americans must have understood that the era of proportionate responses has come to an end," said Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf in an address to the parliament, adding that "any aggression against Iran's interests and security will receive a

faster, more intense and more painful response".

"Our recent operations against aggressor bases were merely a start. If they have not realized it yet, they must understand before it is too late that the rules of the game have changed," the top lawmaker added, according to IRNA.

He was referring to Iran's retaliatory attacks on US military bases in Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait and Bahrain in response to the recent US deadly attacks on different Iranian cities. At least 15 people have been killed and

scores others have been wounded in the US missile attacks in Iran's southern cities.

Qalibaf said that the US leaders "find themselves in a state of desperation, resorting to empty words, slogans, and artificial intelligence to generate photos and videos from the battlefield". He also pointed to the US economic campaign against Iran, saying that Iran would overcome the US pressure just as it defeated the US militarily and diplomatically.

Washington has imposed a blockade on Iranian ports and



Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf (L) speaks during an open session of the legislature in Tehran on September 6, 2026.

● ICANA

last month and announced what it called an "economic asphyxiation" campaign on Iran.

In his speech, Qalibaf called on authorities to better manage Iranian imports to confront the US campaign "seeking to paralyze the supply cycle and energy management".



Lebanese president calls new Israeli raids 'dangerous escalation'

International Desk

Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun accused Israel of a "persistent pattern" of targeting civilian sites following a string of strikes on the country's south, urging the United States and the international community to help stop the attacks. In a statement, Aoun said Israel's attacks are a "dangerous escalation" that go "beyond the alleged military targets to purely civilian administrations and health centers".

He cited the levelling of Ghandour Hospital and "severe" damage to the Finance Ministry in Nabatieh governate.

Aoun called on the US to take "urgent action to stop these violations and hold their perpetrators accountable".

His remarks came after at least four people were killed on Sunday in new Israeli strikes.

Israel claimed it retaliated drone attacks by the Hezbollah resistance group which targeted its soldiers in south Lebanon.

Lebanon's Health Ministry reported two people killed in south



● AFP

Lebanon's Nabatieh al-Fawqa and two women killed in nearby Arab Salim.

It said 20 other people including several women and three children were wounded in those locations as well as in the city of Nabatieh and the town of Kfar Rumman.

On Friday, Israeli strikes in the country's south and east killed four people including an 18-year-old woman. Earlier this week, Israel also said it had taken "opera-

tional control" of the strategic Ali al-Taher ridge near Nabatieh.

The attacks come despite ongoing direct negotiations between Israel and Lebanese government to end the regime's attacks on the Arab country.

Hezbollah on Saturday said the ongoing "occupation, assaults, killings and destruction" shows that the path of direct negotiations and a framework agreement with the regime has failed.

Iran hits back after US strikes oil tankers

International Desk

Iran said on Sunday that it attacked a US naval drone trying to enter the Strait of Hormuz, hours after targeting ships in retaliation for American strikes on three oil tankers.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said its navy targeted three US-linked vessels and three trespassing oil tankers.

"This morning, the terrorist and aggressor US military, in a brutal act born of desperation from the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, attacked three oil tankers belonging to the Islamic Republic, causing damage," the force said in a statement, Tasnim reported.

In response, "the fighters of the IRGC Navy targeted three oil tankers traveling along an unauthorized route through the Strait of Hormuz, as well as three vessels affiliated with the child-killing United States, in other areas," it added.

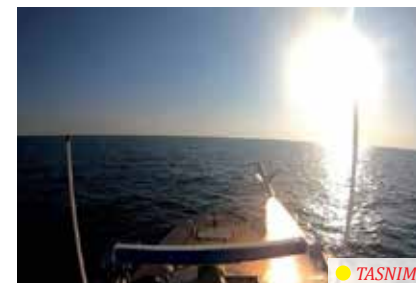
Iran closed the energy chokepoint following the launch of the latest bout of unprovoked American-Israeli aggression against the country on February 28 and has sternly warned vessels against buying into Washington's claims that the strait remains open, asserting that any vessel attempting to transit the waterway in reliance on such claims would be targeted.

The IRGC Navy reiterated the warning to all vessels present in the Persian Gulf and in the vicinity of the Strait of Hormuz, urging them not to "fall for the deception of the terrorist US military, and refrain from any suspicious movement aimed at transiting unauthorized waterways."

"Otherwise, you will be targeted," the statement concluded.

Iran's attacks came a day after the US Central Command (CENTCOM), which oversees American military operations in the region, said its forces launched attacks on three Iranian tankers in the Persian Gulf and in the Gulf of Oman.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry in a Saturday statement condemned the attacks, saying they



● TASNIM

represented a clear violation of international law.

It said the attacks "constitute a clear violation of Paragraph 4 of Article 2 of the United Nations Charter, constitute a war crime, and represent an overt threat to international peace and the security of commercial shipping."

The Iranian mission to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) also denounced the US strikes on oil tankers as "cowardly" and "an explicit admission" of crimes against civilians. In a post on X, the mission criticized the CENTCOM's statement, which claimed that its attacks on Iranian oil tankers were carried out with "precision" and "professionalism," saying such an attack was nothing to be proud of.

"You call it precision and professionalism, while overlooking the fact that a cowardly attack on a commercial oil tanker is by no means something to be proud of or glorified," it said.

The tit-for-tat attacks come as the US has intensified its aggression against Iran in recent days, carrying out strikes on several locations across the country.

On Monday, US military bombed Iran's Larak Island in the Strait of Hormuz, killing three people. A day later, US launched missile attacks on different locations in southern cities, killing at least 12 people and wounding scores others. In response to the attacks, Iran's Armed Forces launched a series of retaliatory missile and drone strikes against US military positions in Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait and Bahrain.

Muslim nations condemn Israeli plan to forcibly displace millions from Gaza



● REUTERS

Eight Islamic and Arab countries on Sunday condemned plans voiced by Israeli ministers for the removal of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, saying the designs jeopardize a US-backed peace in the territory. Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said Wednesday Israel had plans

to remove Palestinians from Gaza but was waiting for US approval on where to displace the territory's population, AFP reported.

A day later, Israel's National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir said the plan aimed to remove 250,000 Palestinians from Gaza in the first year,

followed by the rest of the roughly two million residents over the following six years.

The foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Pakistan, Indonesia and Turkey said they condemned in "the strongest terms" the "plans and mechanisms they proposed aimed at forcibly expelling Palestinians from their land".

The ministers warned of "grave consequences of transforming calls for forced displacement into declared policy or practical measures".

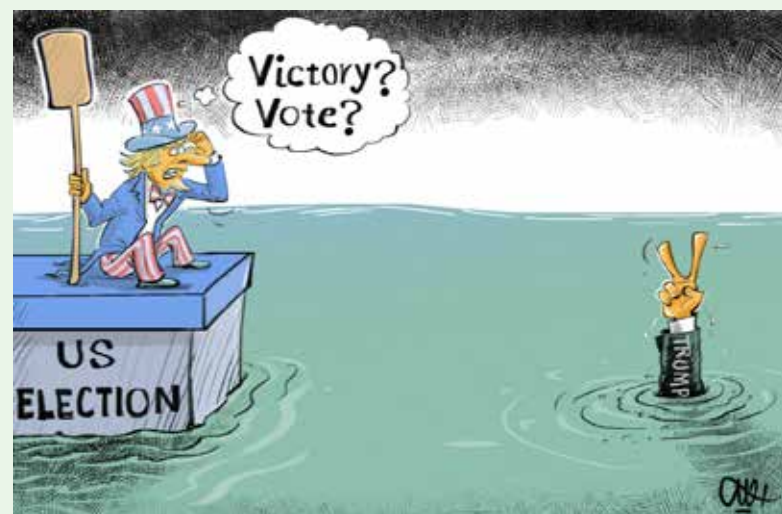
"Such measures directly challenge international efforts to achieve peace, particularly President Donald Trump's comprehensive plan to end the conflict in Gaza, which includes a firm rejection of forced displacement," they added referring to a US-backed, October 2025 peace plan for Gaza.

On Saturday the US ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee, a staunch supporter of Israel and Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank, denied there was an Israeli plan to force Palestinians out of Gaza.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Economy minister begins Russia, India visits to ‘counter sanctions, economic war’

Economy Desk

Iran's economy minister began a two-leg trip to Russia and India on Sunday aimed at "using foreign relations to counter sanctions and economic war," while boosting domestic production, trade and investment, the ministry said.

Ali Madanizadeh arrived at Moscow's Sheremetyevo International Airport at the head of a delegation for talks with Russian officials which would be followed by in a meeting of BRICS finance ministers in India over the weekend, IRNA reported.

Before departing Tehran, Madanizadeh said the two visits should not be viewed as separate events and were intended to use foreign relations to strengthen the domestic economy, expand trade and production, attract financing and investment, and create new opportunities for Iran's economy.

"The trip to Moscow is for bilateral consultations, while the trip to India is to attend the BRICS summit and hold extensive talks with the economic ministers participating in the meeting, particularly under the current circumstances of confronting the economic war against our country," he said.



Iranian Economy Minister Ali Madanizadeh (R) shakes hands with Iran's Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali after arriving at Sheremetyevo International Airport in Moscow on September 6, 2026.

In Moscow, Madanizadeh was scheduled to meet Russia's finance minister, hold talks within the BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organization frameworks, and attend a meeting with Iranian and Russian businesspeople. He said one of the main objectives of the Russia visit was to pursue bilateral economic discussions and follow up on memorandums of understanding and agreements that had previously been coordinated and are expected to be signed.

Madanizadeh described Russia as an important partner for Iran, saying, "There are very broad opportunities to expand economic relations

between the two countries, from trade and investment to financial links, transportation, energy and infrastructure."

Developing int'l North-South corridors

Madanizadeh said one of the key issues on the agenda was the development of international north-south corridors.

"Iran can play a very important role along this route by connecting the Russian economy and the countries to the north of the region with markets in the south, particularly India," he said.

"Therefore, developing transport and transit in-

frastructure is not merely a construction project, but part of Iran's long-term economic development plan to become an important regional trade route."

Madanizadeh described his second trip, to India, as being aimed at attending the BRICS meeting.

"BRICS is now one of the most important economic groupings of emerging countries, and Iran's presence in this group provides new opportunities to expand the country's economic and financial cooperation," he said.

The meeting will address issues including development financing, banking and financial cooperation, facilitating

trade and investment, and the role of emerging economies in the international financial system, he said.

"Creating markets for strategic commodities, establishing a BRICS energy market, setting up joint investment funds and developing bilateral or multilateral monetary agreements are among these issues," he added.

Madanizadeh said the Ministry of Economy was seeking to turn economic diplomacy from a largely political and ceremonial concept into a practical tool for economic growth and development.

"Our goal is clear: to use the potential of foreign relations to counter sanctions and economic warfare, strengthen the domestic economy, expand trade and production, attract financing and investment, and create new opportunities for Iran's economy."

Already hit by Western sanctions over its nuclear program, Iran's southern ports remain under a US naval blockade imposed as part of a pressure campaign following a 40-day US-Israeli war that began on Feb. 28.

Madanizadeh expressed hope that the two visits would have a tangible impact on the country's economy and people's lives.

ECONOMIC LENS

Logistics: Hidden engine of competitiveness in global economy

By Mohammadreza Hosseini Aliabad
Researcher in int'l economics

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

A longstanding misconception is crumbling within the global economy: the notion that a country's competitiveness can be measured solely by its output volume, labor costs, or access to raw materials. These variables still matter, yet there exists a decisive link between "production" and "market" that typically remains overlooked: logistics.

Today, a good may be manufactured in a country at a very low cost; however, if delivering it to market proves time-consuming, high-risk, and expensive, a significant portion of that initial advantage is eroded. For this reason, logistics must be regarded not as a post-production expense, but as an integral component of the true cost of competitiveness.

This shift in perspective carries a major implication for the geography of global production. In the past, firms primarily sought the cheapest locations for manufacturing; but the experience of supply chain crises, geopolitical tensions, disruptions to maritime routes, and escalating commercial risks has introduced a new criterion into their calculations: reliability.

This has given rise to a significant transformation: international corporations are no longer optimizing merely the "cost of production"; they are now optimizing the entire value chain.

This evolution is observable in the emerging concept of "supply chain resilience." Firms are gradually moving away from heavy dependence on a single supplier, a single port, or a single route, and shifting toward multi-sourcing, relocating a portion of production closer to consumer markets, and establishing alternative corridors. Under such conditions, a degree of cost increase may be accepted in order to mitigate the risk of a complete production standstill.

The global economy, therefore, is paying a new price for security: the price of reliable logistics.

Yet the matter is not confined to corporations alone. Trade routes have now become a component of the geo-economic competition among nations. Ports, railways, transit corridors, and commercial gateways

are no longer mere infrastructure; they can serve as instruments of economic leverage. A country situated along a critical trade route—and equipped with the infrastructure necessary for the rapid, low-cost movement of goods—can generate economic value from the very transit of goods itself.

More importantly, the value of a route is not derived solely from transport revenues. Around a successful logistics hub, a cluster of economic activities emerges: warehousing, packaging, distribution, insurance, financial services, maintenance and repair, and even the establishment of new industries.

For this reason, competition over corridors is, in essence, competition over the future distribution of production.

Technology has further complicated this equation. The logistics of the future will not be defined merely by roads, ships, and railways. Data has become equally critical. A company capable of predicting cargo arrival times, demand, inventory levels, route conditions, and the probability of disruption can hold less capital tied up in inventory and make decisions with greater speed.

Here, artificial intelligence is not a decorative tool; it can directly influence the cost structure and risk profile of the supply chain. Consequently, the competition of the future will take place between logistics networks, not merely between factories.

Ultimately, the future of global production may be less about "where to produce" than we imagine, and more about "how to be connected." A country that produces but cannot connect to markets quickly, securely, and predictably forfeits a portion of the value; conversely, a country capable of transforming production and trade routes into an efficient network—even without being the largest producer—can capture a substantial share of global value.

In the twenty-first-century economy, competition is not only about manufacturing goods; it is about making the route to global markets shorter, cheaper, and more reliable. Perhaps this is why, on the new map of economic power, the value of a route sometimes exceeds that of the destination itself.

Exports to Pakistan jump 45% in four months

Economy Desk

Iran's exports to Pakistan soared 45% to \$520 million in the four months through June 2026, according to Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce, while shipments for the first half of the year rose 29%

from a year earlier. Iran exported \$520 million worth of goods to Pakistan during the period, compared with \$358 million in the same period last year, Eqtesad-e Moaser reported on Sunday.

Separately, Pakistan's Ministry of

Commerce said Iranian exports to the country reached \$750 million in January-June 2026, nearly 30% up from \$580 million in the same period of 2025.

The surge in Iranian exports to its neighboring country comes as US hostilities with Iran and

the resulting disruption to trade through the Strait of Hormuz have affected regional commerce. Pakistan is among the alternatives Iran has turned to since coming under a US naval blockade, with Tehran increasingly relying on these corridors.

Iran produces record 14.1m tons of wheat in H1

Economy Desk

Iran has produced 14.1 million metric tons of wheat in nearly six months, a record level, Deputy Agriculture Minister said on Sunday.

"So far this year, for the first time in history, we achieved wheat production of 14.1 million tons in the country,

which is a significant figure," Majid Anjafi said, referring to the Persian calendar year that began on March 21, according to IRNA.

Anjafi described the agricultural sector's performance in producing essential commodities as highly successful.

"Current trends show that

productivity and increased production in the agricultural sector are on the rise," he said.

According to Agriculture Ministry data, Iran cultivated nearly 11.7 million tons of wheat last year, of which about 7.8 million tons was purchased by the government under a guaranteed

procurement program.

Anjafi said 85% of the country's food needs are now met through domestic production, while only 15% of food products are supplied through imports, highlighting the agricultural sector's capacity to contribute to food security.

He also pointed to the diffi-



cult conditions facing agriculture last year because of drought.

"Despite drought, uneven rainfall, economic difficulties, sanctions and conditions resulting from the US war against the country, agricultural and horticultural output surged by a total of 7 million tons through the efforts of nearly 10,000 farmers, researchers, experts and managers," he said.

Anjafi said the production sustainability program should not be limited to wheat and should also be planned for pulses, medicinal plants and other crops suited to the capacity of dryland farms.

He described the development and promotion of crops grown in dryland areas as a priority for the agricultural sector, saying sustained production required serious attention to dryland farming.

In provinces where the program has been pursued more actively, farmers have adopted modern farming methods using the latest research findings as well as new machinery and technologies, he said.

TENDER NO.: 08-38-0440048

First Announcement

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY
AHVAZ-IRAN

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	UNIT
01	ROCK BITS, JET TYPE, LESS NOZZLES 12-1/4 IN., I.A.D.C.S.1.7	35	NO
02	ROCK BITS, JET TYPE, LESS NOZZLES 8-1/2 IN., I.A.D.C.S.1.7	100	NO
03	ROCK BITS, JET TYPE, LESS NOZZLES 8-3/8 IN., I.A.D.C.S.1.7	80	NO
04	NOZZLES FOR SIZE 8-3/8 TO 12-1/4 INCH	225	NO

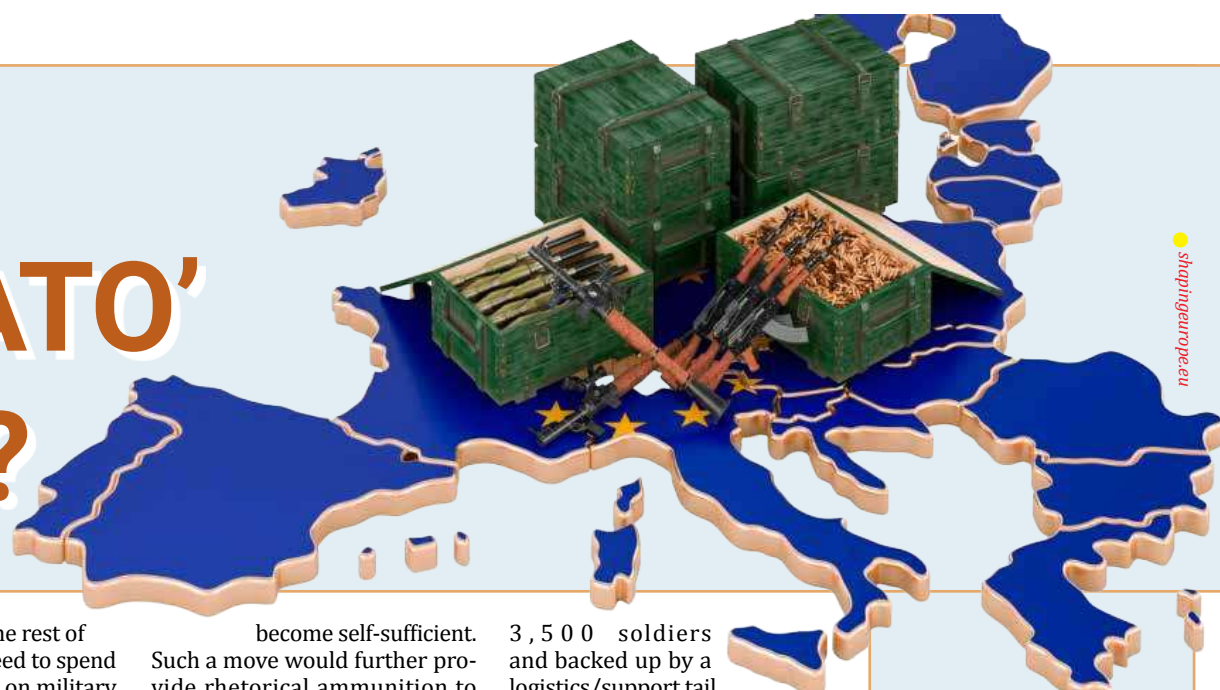
Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: www.setadiran.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, 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 25,018.17 EURO or 42,744,220,000 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS CFR, BANDAR IMAM KHOMEINI, IRAN. PAYMENT TERM IS C.A.D. INCLUDING 25% ADVANCE PAYMENT, SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL.

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex,
Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran
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What is value of 'Europeanized NATO' for United States?



By Michael E. O'Hanlon
Director of research in
Foreign Policy program at
the Brookings Institution

OPINION

NATO has been, and remains, the greatest alliance in human history. That was true through the Cold War, through the 1990s and Balkans missions, through the 2000s and early 2010s in Iraq and Afghanistan, and now again in the period of great-power rivalry since 2014, when Russia attacked Crimea. Earlier this century, when America's NATO allies were at their worst in terms of military burden-sharing, they were still with the United States in the struggle against al-Qaida and Daesh (ISIS). Now, with most European countries starting to do much more to provide for their own security, the benefits of the alliance to the American government and people are even greater. I don't believe in the premise of a "Europeanized NATO" literally or completely. A "Europeanized NATO," to some, might mean non-US members of the alliance taking full responsibility for the continent's defense. But to me, that is oxymoronic because NATO by definition and by treaty is an organization through which members in Europe and North America collectively promise to ensure the defense of each other. So logically, a Europeanized NATO is one in which European members take much more responsibility — even primary responsibility, in an ideal world — for the defense of their own continent. If this were to occur, the US (and Canadian) role would then be supplementary rather than foundational. Were the European countries of NATO (and Canada) to develop

roughly three times today's deployable conventional combat capacity — including much greater use of drones and counter-drone defenses — they could effectively defend NATO's exposed eastern flank. That capability would allow such a "Europeanized NATO" to collectively deploy a combined non-US force that would be approximately prepared to defeat Russia in at least certain contingencies there. I believe that this capability can be achieved within the 3.5% of GDP target that NATO has adopted for traditional defense spending — indeed, it might well be achievable at slightly lower levels, but in that case, only if European governments are brutally efficient about how they allocate their military resources. NATO can become more European, with non-US allies seeking to become an equally strong overall pillar of the alliance. But NATO will not and should not become truly Europeanized — with Europe being independently responsible for its own defense — for the following reasons:

- Even with the United States fully committed to its traditional role of alliance backstop and guarantor, NATO is a long way away from having a robust defense against Russian attack, particularly in the Baltic states, where the geography and topography are too favorable for Russia. Short of NATO establishing a forward defense in the Baltics analogous to the one it maintained in Cold War Germany, with several divisions at its core (which, to be clear, I am not recommending), that is unlikely to change. As a senior NATO official told me, according to official alliance war plans, all NATO countries combined would need to spend 3.5% of GDP on their armed forces for a decade to produce robust defensive capabilities. Without the United States, simple

math suggests that the rest of the alliance would need to spend well over 5% of GDP on military forces for over a decade to create the same aggregate capability — assuming the allies could agree on how to organize and command their combined force structures. That is not politically or strategically realistic — and a decade is a long time to wait, in any case.

- The French force de frappe, even if joined with the UK's nuclear forces, cannot in my judgment plausibly counter Russia's nuclear forces. That is especially true for a scenario in which the vulnerable Baltic states are being threatened or overrun by Russian conventional forces and NATO Europe wants to use nuclear threats to reverse the tide of battle. I do not see such a threat as credible — and, more importantly, Moscow might not either. Russia's nuclear forces are more than 10 times the size of combined UK/French forces, and we are talking about a scenario in which Paris and London would be asked to risk Toulouse to save Tallinn (or whichever alliteration you prefer).

- While US President Donald Trump often creates anxiety for those of us who support the NATO alliance, we are now five and a half years into his presumed eight years in the White House, and the United States remains a member. We may get through this after all. While Trumpism may outlast Trump in some ways, as Tom Wright has usefully explained in his new book, Trump's outright contempt for the alliance is unlikely to be replicated by a successor — and Trump himself has not yet dismantled the alliance. There is therefore no reason to create a self-fulfilling prophecy by creating a (false) hope that a Europeanized NATO (plus Canada) can

become self-sufficient. Such a move would further provide rhetorical ammunition to American political voices who favor US disengagement from Europe.

That said, there are a number of ways in which the United States would enormously benefit from a Europe that could do roughly three times more than what it can do now, in the realm of deployable military force structure. At present, based on estimates by the RAND Corporation, Barry Posen of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Atlantic Council, myself, and others, European countries could collectively muster at most three to four brigades of ground combat power, and commensurate tactical air power, in a forward defense of the Baltics. If tripled to 10 to 12 brigades, plus logistics and other support plus airpower, Europe and Canada would possess a plausible capability to mount an initial forward defense of the alliance's eastern flank, in my estimation. That would not be nearly enough to be confident for all contingencies — hence the continued need for a major American role, too. But it would constitute a credible and serious fighting capacity.

European allies do not need all of their 100+ existing brigades and associated helicopters and fighter jets to be able to operate in the Baltics; they only need to make 10% to 15% of their total force structure deployable and sustainable in distant theaters. To reach this capability, the big countries of Europe should each aim to be able to deploy and sustain at least two brigades of combat ground power in a region like the Baltics — with each brigade having roughly

3,500 soldiers and backed up by a logistics/support tail probably again twice as large, for a total of about 10,000 soldiers per brigade equivalent — plus associated airpower. Most other countries should aim for a single brigade; some of the smallest members might pair up with a neighbor and provide the brigade together.

For the United States, there would be enormous benefits from such a European pillar of the alliance that approached America's own likely capacities for waging war in Europe. They include the following:

- A "Europeanized NATO," as I am using the term, with a focus on tripling deployable non-US conventional capabilities for defending the alliance's eastern flank, would make it easier for the United States to follow the logic of its widely endorsed national defense strategies of the last decade. At present, even 15 years since the "rebalance" or "pivot" to Asia began, and eight years after former secretary of defense Jim Mattis's National Defense Strategy prioritized great-power competition with China, the United States has increased the share of its military spending and deployed capabilities devoted to the Asia-Pacific by at most a couple of percentage points.

- A Europeanized NATO could provide the core of an initial defense of the alliance's eastern region, which might prove particularly crucial if the United States were slow to respond to a major crisis in Europe. Such a scenario could occur if the United States



The French force de frappe, even if joined with the UK's nuclear forces, cannot in my judgment plausibly counter Russia's nuclear forces. That is especially true for a scenario in which the vulnerable Baltic states are being threatened or overrun by Russian conventional forces and NATO Europe wants to use nuclear threats to reverse the tide of battle. I do not see such a threat as credible — and, more importantly, Moscow might not either. Russia's nuclear forces are more than 10 times the size of combined UK/French forces, and we are talking about a scenario in which Paris and London would be asked to risk Toulouse to save Tallinn (or whichever alliteration you prefer).



A soldier operates a drone jammer MANPAD type "Bronson" during the NATO exercise STEADFAST DART 26 in Bergen, Germany, on February 19, 2026.

• LIESA JOHANNSEN/REUTERS

was already fighting in another theater (the current US National Defense Strategy is predicated on no more than one war at a time) or because an adversary had compromised the necessary infrastructure to deploy US forces. Knowing this in advance, Vladimir Putin or a future Russian leader would have fewer reasons to think they could pull off a quick win against NATO — thereby strengthening deterrence.

- A Europe that is truly committed to pulling its own weight militarily is also more likely to be seen as capable of contributing to

the alliance's eastern members, strengthening aggregate deterrence. A Europeanized NATO would present a united front in which major Western European countries themselves were actively demonstrating that they were truly committed to alliance security too.

- A Europeanized NATO would be pumping enough resources into military modernization and acquisition to develop true complementary areas of excellence that might even exceed America's in some ways, strengthening the

overall Western alliance vis-à-vis Russia and China. Right now, Germany may make a better tank than the United States, at least for some topographies, but I am otherwise hard-pressed to identify areas in which America's NATO allies are at the vanguard of alliance military modernization. (Ukraine may make better, more affordable drones, but it is unlikely to ever join the alliance.)

- A Europeanized NATO would develop defense industrial base capabilities at size and scale that increase the Western world's overall resilience and surge ca-

capacity. As we have all learned in recent years, it is incorrect and imprudent to assume one can quickly ramp up production of key military equipment once a crisis occurs, given the nature of modern defense industrial bases and their many bottlenecks and single points of failure. The US defense industrial base is presently inadequate to backstop the alliance's equipment needs; it needs to become deeper and more resilient, but so does Europe's. Last but not least, a Europeanized NATO can reduce the strength

of political forces in the United States that see an ungrateful set of allies with low defense spending across the Atlantic and choose to disengage from NATO as a result. As noted, I do not expect this outcome — but we should all be trying to make it even less likely. A tripling in projectable force by NATO's non-US members, to the point where they could collectively deploy and sustain 10 to 12 brigades of ground power and associated airpower and support, could go far toward achieving this objective.

Right now, Europeans are doing a lot — including not only with their own militaries. Yet the politics of sustaining support for NATO remain perilous, and future support for the alliance in America, while likely, is far from assured. As long as we collectively avoid giving the impression that Europeanizing NATO translates into American disengagement from Europe, the project makes enormous sense.

The article was first published by Brookings Institution.



Why NATO, transatlantic bond will outlast Trump

The illustration features US President Donald Trump and the NATO emblem.
● ZEHRA KURTULUS/TÜRKİYE TODAY

Europe needs to invest in its military capability regardless of the trajectory of US policy. In the best-case scenario, the transatlantic bond strengthens because the United States finds Europe a more capable partner. In the worst-case scenario, the United States quits Europe, but Europe is better prepared to assume responsibility for its own defense.

As Europeans contemplate their options, they also need to be realistic about their continuing dependence on US military power. The increases in defense spending to which Europeans have committed are impressive, but it will take a decade or more for new expenditures to fill significant gaps in military capability. In the meantime, Europe will continue to need US manpower, firepower, lift, and intelligence.

Britain and France do have nuclear weapons, and Paris has been floating the idea of forward deterrence — the extension of France's nuclear umbrella to its neighbors. But the British and French arsenals are small and limited in capability. They do not

pack the deterrent punch of the US nuclear umbrella. As Europe faces down the war in Ukraine and the threat Russia poses to countries on NATO's eastern flank, it simply cannot afford a strategic divorce from the United States.

Europe's strategic deficit is also political in nature. Europeans need not only more military power, but also the political will to aggregate the power they have. Pooling sovereignty as well as defense resources would endow the European Union with the authority to oversee procurement of weapons, the division of defense responsibilities among member states, and overall security policy.

Yet member states remain reluctant to give up national control over matters of war and peace. Indeed, the growing strength of populist parties and ethnonationalism is fueling anti-EU forces that are making it even more difficult to move authority over security policy from national capitals to EU institutions in Brussels. Absent greater political unity, which is for now unattainable, Europe will continue to punch below its weight.

Passionate calls for Europe's strategic autonomy sound good, but it's not happening. The bottom line is that the United States still needs Europe, and Europe still needs the United States. That reality will not change anytime soon.



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By Charles A. Kupchan
Special assistant to former US president Barack Obama

OPINION

Europeans are understandably worried that their strategic partnership with the United States is coming to an end. President Donald Trump's dismissive attitude toward NATO, his decision to turn off aid to Ukraine, his threats to seize Greenland from Denmark, his errant attack on Iran — these and other moves give Europeans good reason to wonder whether they can still count on their US ally.

Yet it is far too soon to pronounce the irreparable rupture and death of the transatlantic alliance. Yes, Europe needs a plan B: prudence necessitates that Europeans get ready for self-reliance just in case Trump, who is impulsive and unpredictable, decides to pull the plug and leave NATO. But that outcome is highly unlikely. The transatlantic alliance rests on common interests and values that endure. The United States' best partners are still its European allies, and Europe still needs US power and purpose to ensure its security. Accordingly, Europeans should continue to increase their defense budgets and seek to acquire more geopolitical heft. But they should play the long game with Trump, working with him when possible and standing up to him only as necessary. It is quite likely that NATO will emerge from the Trump era not only intact but fortified by a strengthened European pillar.

Transatlantic bond benefits the United States

Trump is right to insist on a re-balancing of the Atlantic alliance. For too long, Europeans underinvested in their militaries, lulled into complacency by the United States' protective shield and the seemingly stable peace that

emerged after the Cold War's end. Trump could certainly be more tactful as he pushes European allies to ramp up defense spending; his hectoring unnecessarily breeds resentment. But coupled with a resurgent Russian threat, Trump's pressure campaign is working. Nearly all NATO members have agreed to spend five percent of GDP on their armed forces and security infrastructure by 2035. It is particularly important that Germany, Europe's largest economy, has built a solid political consensus behind major investments in its military establishment.

To be sure, Trump has on occasion mused about withdrawing the United States from NATO and continues to call allies "delinquent" when it comes to defense spending. Meanwhile, the Pentagon is undertaking a force posture review that could lead to the downsizing of the US military presence in Europe.

Yet Trump is quite unlikely to walk away from the transatlantic alliance. Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine and Moscow's threatening posture toward NATO's eastern flank would make it an act of strategic folly for the United States to quit Europe. US forces are still needed to deter and defend against potential Russian attack. Moreover, forward bases in Europe provide the United States with platforms for projecting military power into Africa, the Middle East, and beyond.

Europeans are working hard to fulfill Trump's demands that they shoulder their fair share of the burden of defense. And even amid its military shortcomings, Europe has repeatedly demonstrated that it is a loyal and capable ally. European and US soldiers teamed up to bring peace to the Balkans in the 1990s. After 9/11, European soldiers fought alongside their US counterparts in Afghanistan. NATO played a role in the US-led campaign against the self-proclaimed

Daesh (Islamic State). And thanks to transatlantic teamwork, Ukraine has survived the continuing Russian onslaught.

Given its track record, NATO enjoys the strong bipartisan support it deserves — both in Congress and among the US public. Vibrant transatlantic trade, investment, and tourism strengthen the bond. Transatlantic trade in goods and services tops \$2 trillion per year. During these busy summer months, more than one thousand flights crisscross the Atlantic every day. This network of strategic, political, economic, and societal linkages gives Trump every reason to keep NATO alive and well.

Europe's strategic autonomy isn't happening

Given that Europe has good reason to assume that the transatlantic bond will long outlast Trump, its best strategy is to manage and work with him — not confront and break with him. Moreover,

Troops from NATO's Forward Land Forces (FLF) multinational battlegroup in Hungary stand alongside one another during a large-scale military exercise in September 2025.
● NATO



The article was first published in Arabic by Al Jazeera.

AVC Men's Volleyball Continental Championship: Piazza hails 'important step forward' after Iran beats India

Sports Desk

Italian head coach Roberto Piazza praised Iran's fighting spirit in the second set as "an important step forward" after his team defeated India 3-0 (25-20, 28-26, 25-18) at the AVC Men's Volleyball Continental Championship in Fukuoka, Japan, on Sunday.

Outside hitter Pouria Hosseinkhanzadeh contributed a game-high 20 points, with middle blocker Mohammad Valizadeh and opposite Ali Hajipour adding 11 apiece, as Iran tallied 47 points from attacks, 16 blocks and three service points, while benefiting from 12 Indian errors. A second straight-set victory in Pool B, following the opening-day win against New Zealand, saw Piazza's side secure a place in the quarterfinals and move ahead of Belgium and Canada to 17th in the FIVB Men's World Ranking. Indian outside hitter Yadav Chirag led his team with 11

points, while Jerome Vinith finished with 10, though their contributions could not prevent a second loss in Fukuoka, having fallen by the same scoreline against China.

The pivotal moment of the contest came in the second set when Iran trailed 22-19 but responded with a side-out and a block to turn the momentum around and eventually win the set.

"I'm happy today because in the second set we took an important step forward," Piazza said after the match. "We had good motivation and energy, and all the players believed we could do something special, even when we were three points behind," added the Italian. "India was really playing well, but Iran continued to fight, and I'm very happy about that."

Piazza still acknowledged that his team had room for further improvement, particularly in transition play. "There were moments



Iranian outside hitter Pouria Hosseinkhanzadeh (9) hits a spike during a 3-0 victory over India at the AVC Men's Volleyball Continental Championship in Fukuoka, Japan, on Sept. 6, 2026.

● AVC

"India have shown that they are one of the respectable teams in the competition."

"The second set was very tight, but eventually Iran managed to get the crucial points and take the lead," Valizadeh said.

The top spot in the group will be up for grabs when Iran faces China on Wednesday, a significantly tougher test for Piazza's men and a rematch of the 2023 semi-finals, which Iran won in straight sets.

"It will be a difficult match because China are ranked higher than our previous two opponents, New Zealand and India. I hope Iran can put in a good performance and win the match to

advance to the next round as group leaders," said Valizadeh.

As if Iran needed extra motivation to chase a fifth continental title in eight editions and make up for the 2023 final setback at home against Japan in a likely showdown with the Asian powerhouse in Fukuoka, the champion will qualify for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics – a far more realistic shot at securing a place in the sporting extravaganza compared with next year's World Championship, where the top three will qualify, or the three remaining berths available through the FIVB World Rankings.

To that end, however, Piazza's side will have to make a significant improvement on its disappointing Volleyball Nations League campaign in June, when Iran suffered nine defeats – including a 3-2 loss to Japan – in 12 outings to finish 14th in the 18-team preliminary-round table.

FIBA West Asia Super League Final 8:

New-look Shahrddari to renew Sagesse rivalry in Group B

Sports Desk

Iranian club Shahrddari Gorgan has been drawn alongside Lebanese powerhouse Sagesse SC, Saudi Arabia's Al Ula Club and Qatar's Al Arabi SC in Group B of the upcoming FIBA West Asia Super League Final 8, which will kick off on Sept. 25 in Zouk Mikael, Lebanon. The draw for the regional

eight-team showpiece took place in Beirut on Saturday, with two-time defending champion Al Riyadi Beirut, Saudi Arabia's Ittihad Club, Kuwait SC and India's Indian Railways completing the cast in Group A.

The teams will be involved in a round-robin group phase, after which the top two teams from each group will advance to the semifinals.

Shahrddari will enter the Final 8 on the back of a third-place finish in Group A in the preliminary phase, winning three of its seven outings – including a 97-92 triumph over Sagesse in November.

The Iranian club, however, will face a particularly difficult challenge this time around after undergoing major changes in recent months, with the club

losing virtually its entire original roster and making changes to its coaching staff ahead of the Final 8.

The Gorgan-based club will be without several of its key figures, including Iranian internationals Mobin Sheikhi and Peter Gregorian, as well as American duo Perry Petty and Jordan Hamilton, who have all left the club.

Mehran Hatami has taken over as head coach, leaving the club's new-look squad with limited time to prepare for the competition against some of the star-studded teams in West Asia.

Shahrddari's best result in the previous three editions came in the 2023/24 season, when the Iranian club defeated Kuwait SC in the third-place playoff.



World Taekwondo Grand Prix Series:

Iranians' woes continue on Day 2 in Muju

Sports Desk

Iran endured yet another disappointing day at the World Taekwondo Grand Prix Series event at the iconic Taekwondowon venue in Muju, South Korea, after three Iranians – including Olympic silver medalists Nahid Kiani and Mehran Barkhordari – all finished empty-handed in their respective events.

Desperate to bounce back from a shock first-round defeat at the WT Women's Open Championships last week in Taiyuan, China, Kiani opened her women's -57kg campaign with a 2-0 victory over Poland's Niko Lisowska before suffering a straight-round loss to fifth-seeded Amina Dehhaoui – Kiani's second defeat against the young Moroccan following the Chuncheon Korea Open setback in July.



Iran's Mehran Barkhordari (blue) suffered a first-round exit in the men's -80kg division at the Muju Taekwondowon 2026 WT Grand Prix.

● WORLD TAEKWONDO

Barkhordari, meanwhile, bowed out early in the men's -80kg division, losing 2-1 to American Isaiah Young in his first bout. Barkhordari's compatriot Amirsina Bakhtiari – an Asian gold medalist in May – had a better run in the -80kg class, beating Spain's Juan Antonio Ca-

novas 2-0 and Jordanian Saleh El-Sharabaty – an Olympic silver medalist in Tokyo 2020 – 2-1, but was ultimately undone by Young in the quarterfinals.

Sunday's setbacks came after Iran's Abolfazl Zandi and Mahdi Razmian suffered second-round

exits in the men's -58kg category on the opening day of the competition. Reigning world and Olympic champion Zandi opened his campaign with a straight-round victory over Saudi Arabia's Riad Nasser Hamdi before losing 2-1 to two-time world champion Bae Jun-seo of South Korea. Razmian, meanwhile, defeated Chinese Taipei's Pan Kuei-en 2-1 in his first outing but fell short against Croatia's Josip Teskera by the same scoreline.

The G6 event in Muju serves as part of the qualification pathway for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics, with the gold medalists earning 60 Olympic ranking points. Olympic champion Arjan Salimi and Mohammad-Hossein Yazdani will represent Iran in the men's contests on the final day of the competition.

World Nomad Games 2026:

Taghani wins Pahlevani wrestling gold as Iran bags two medals

Sports Desk

Mostafa Taghani headlined Iran's two-medal haul on the fifth day of the World Nomad Games in Kyrgyzstan by grabbing gold in Kurash after defeating his Turkmen opponent 5-4 in the third-place playoff. Taghani defeated the host's Seytek Dogdurbek Uulu

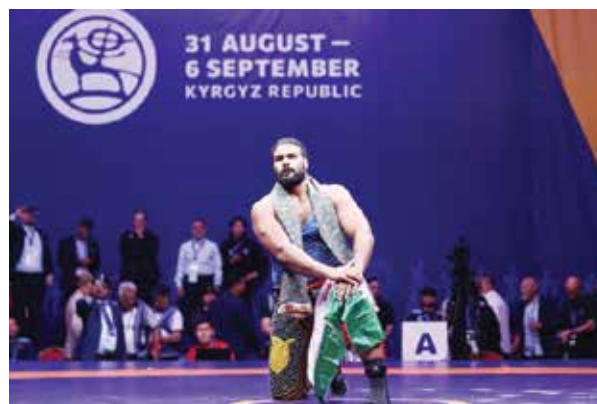
by pin in the final of the +90kg class, with Mongolia's Bat-Orshikh Batsuuri settling for bronze.

Taghani's compatriot Merasad Shokri, meanwhile, secured a bronze medal in Kurash after defeating his Turkmen opponent 5-4 in the third-place playoff.

The two medals took Iran's

tally to 15 – including four golds – at the sixth edition of the multi-sport event, which is dedicated to traditional ethnic sports practiced across Central Asia. Mostafa Najafi claimed the top prize in the men's +100kg Güleş event – a traditional Azerbaijani/Turkic form of belt wrestling – on Friday, thanks to a 6-1 victory over his Azerbaijani opponent.

Sajjad Soltaninejad won the Strongman title, finishing atop the standings after three days of grueling competition and successfully negotiating a series of demanding and heavy events. Meanwhile, Reza Qeitasi, Iran's flag bearer at the opening ceremony, won gold in the men's Tayak Tartysh on Wednesday, securing the first gold medal for the country's 130-athlete delegation.



● ISNA

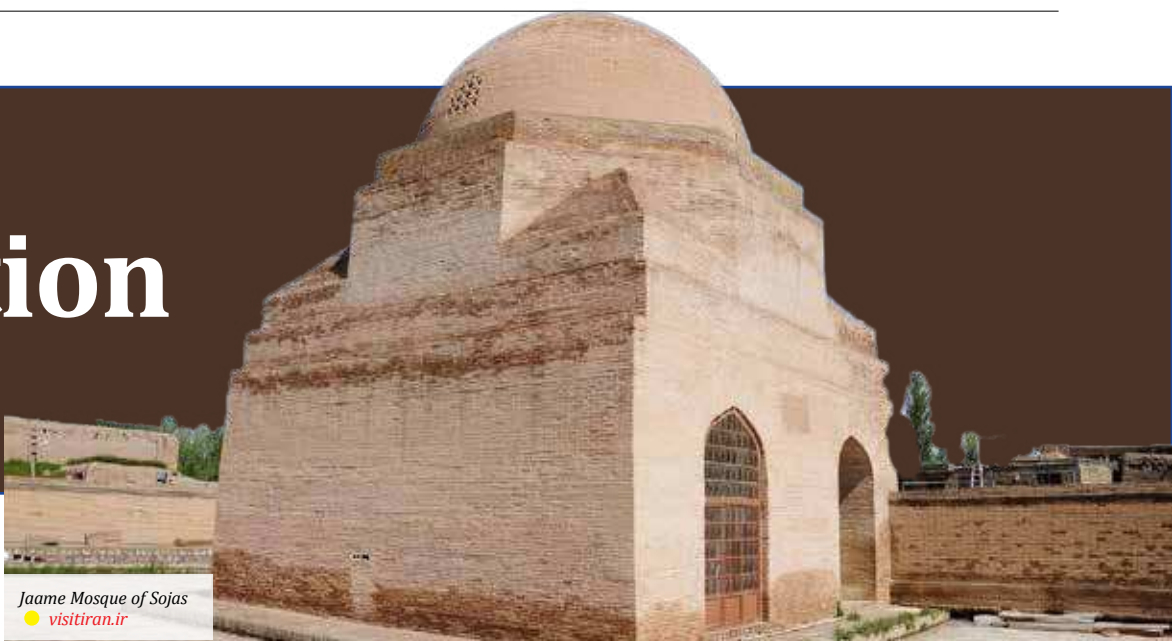
Six historic sites undergoing restoration in Zanjan Province

Iranica Desk

The restoration of six historic and nationally registered sites in different parts of Zanjan Province has begun, according to deputy head of the Provincial Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization. Mohammad-Reza Mohammadpour said the restoration projects are being carried out with a focus on protecting the province's cultural heritage and preserving its historical identity. Highlighting the importance

of safeguarding historic urban fabrics and nationally registered monuments, he said specialized restoration teams are currently working on several valuable sites, including the historic Molla Hassan Kashi Mausoleum in Soltaniyeh, Jaame Mosque of Sojas and the historic Zarrin Rud Bathhouse in Khodabandeh. He added that restoration work is also underway at the Pir Ahmad Zahrnush Mausoleum in Abhar, while a project to organize and improve the façades around En-

ghelab Square and the historic bazaar area in Zanjan is also being implemented under the supervision of experts. Mohammadpour said the projects are aimed at preventing further deterioration of the historic structures and boosting historical tourism in the province. "These projects will not only help preserve the country's national heritage, but also recreate a glimpse of the grandeur of the past for future generations," he said. Zanjan is one of Iran's histori-



Jaame Mosque of Sojas
visitiran.ir

cally significant regions, with a heritage shaped by successive periods of Iranian history. Its location in northwestern Iran, along important routes connecting the central Iranian plateau with the northwest, contributed to the development of settlements and the movement of people, goods and ideas across

the region.

The province is home to a diverse collection of archaeological sites, historic monuments, religious buildings, traditional markets and other structures reflecting different periods of Iran's past. Among its best-known heritage sites is the historic city of Soltaniyeh, whose

monumental architecture reflects the importance of the region during the medieval period. The restoration projects now underway are part of broader efforts to protect this layered heritage and ensure that Zanjan's historic monuments remain an enduring part of the province's cultural landscape.

Chega Sofla sheds new light on life before rise of cities

Iranica Desk

In southwestern Iran, on the Zaydon Plain near the Zohreh River, Khuzestan Province, an archaeological site is offering new insights into how human societies developed in the millennia before the emergence of cities. Known as Chega Sofla, the site has evolved in recent years from a relatively little-known location in Iran's archaeological landscape into an important focus of research into the social, ritual and cultural complexity of prehistoric communities, according to chn.ir. The significance of Chega Sofla lies not only in its antiquity but also in the diversity of evidence uncovered there. Dating to around 6,000 years ago, the site suggests that life in southwestern Iran before urbanization was far more complex than a simple picture of small rural communities focused primarily on subsistence.

Archaeological evidence points to a society with dedicated spaces for ritual activities and burial, as well as systems of production, exchange and symbolic expression. These discoveries have attracted growing international attention. Archaeology Magazine featured Chega Sofla in an article titled "Ahead of Their Time," examining the unexpected complexity of Chalcolithic society in the Zohreh Valley. Smithsonian Magazine and Live Science have also highlighted discoveries from the site, particularly human remains showing evidence of intentional cranial modification and severe trauma.

Archaeological excavations at Chega Sofla, which began in 2016, have gradually revealed a remarkable range of remains, including a ritual complex, an extensive cemetery, architecturally distinctive tombs, decorated standing stones, pottery, silver ornaments, copper tools and stone seals.

Among the most striking discoveries are standing stones found beneath the floor of a ritual structure. Some bear symbolic designs, including depictions of wild goats facing one another. The combination of ritual architecture, elaborate burial

practices, symbolic objects and evidence of production and exchange raises an important question: how did a society still living before the rise of cities develop such organized social and ritual structures?

The evidence from Chega Sofla suggests that these elements were not isolated. Ritual practices, burial traditions, production, exchange and symbolic systems appear to have been interconnected parts of a broader social structure. The ritual complex is among its most significant features. It includes an offering platform, a monumental structure and standing stones decorated with symbolic designs. Evidence of animal offerings within the complex further indicates the important role of ritual in the community. Chega Sofla therefore offers



more than isolated evidence of religious practices. Its remains point to a broader social and spiritual system in which ceremonies, sacred spaces, symbols and relationships within the community were closely connected.

This becomes particularly significant when the site is viewed within the wider context of the fourth and fifth millennia BCE. During this period, large cities had not yet emerged in their later form, but communities in parts of the Near East were developing increasingly complex social, economic and ritual systems.

Alongside the settlement and ritual complex, the Chega Sofla cemetery is one of the site's most important sources of information about its inhabitants.

According to information published in Chega Sofla's UNESCO



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World Heritage Centre dossier, the site consists of two main components: a settlement and a cemetery. The settlement covers approximately 20 hectares, while the cemetery extends over an area about 2,000 meters long and 800 meters wide.

UNESCO dates Chega Sofla, based on absolute dating, to approximately 4700-3700 BCE and identifies the distinctive architecture of its tombs, its ritual complex and its decorated standing stones among the site's key features.

The cemetery is particularly valuable because burials can reveal information about social organization, ritual beliefs, individual status, cultural relationships and attitudes toward death.

Human remains from the cemetery have also provided some of the most intriguing evidence about the people who lived at

biological information. They raise questions about identity, social relationships, cultural practices and the ways in which individuals were treated within the community. Intentional cranial deformation is particularly significant because both deliberately modified and naturally shaped skulls have been found at Chega Sofla.

The practice involved altering the shape of the skull during early childhood, and its presence at the site raises questions about the cultural meaning attached to physical appearance.

Was cranial deformation a marker of group identity? Did it indicate social status or membership in a particular community? Or was it connected to ritual or aesthetic beliefs?

There are still no definitive answers. Yet the uncertainty itself



Chega Sofla.

In 2025, one of the site's skulls again brought Chega Sofla to international scientific attention. Smithsonian Magazine reported on the remains of a young woman whose skull had been deliberately reshaped into a conical form. Researchers have associated the unusual shape with intentional cranial deformation carried out during infancy.

The skull also showed evidence of severe trauma. According to published reports, the injury occurred close to the individual's death, although researchers have not been able to determine with certainty whether it was intentional or accidental.

Live Science likewise reported on the discovery, focusing on an individual who had suffered severe head trauma around 6,200 years ago.

Such remains provide more than

highlights the value of the archaeological evidence.

Archaeology is not only about identifying objects and structures. In many cases, the significance of a discovery lies in the new questions it makes possible. Chega Sofla cannot be considered in isolation from the broader transformations taking place across the Near East during the fourth and fifth millennia BCE.

The site belongs to a period when communities were moving beyond simple village-based forms of organization and developing increasingly complex social and economic systems, while the emergence of large urban centers was still some distance away.

The copper tools, varied pottery, stone seals, ornaments and other objects recovered from Chega Sofla may also provide evidence of cultural and exchange connec-

tions extending beyond the site's immediate surroundings.

The community appears to have been part of a wider network of prehistoric settlements across the Near East. Further research could help clarify patterns of communication, exchange and the movement of people, objects and ideas between communities in southwestern Iran, Mesopotamia, the Persian Gulf and neighboring regions. Perhaps one of Chega Sofla's most important characteristics is that its story remains unfinished.

Each excavation season provides new information while raising further questions. How was the community organized? What role did the ritual complex play in everyday life? What did the decorated standing stones represent? Why were some individuals subjected to cranial deformation? And how did Chega Sofla interact with other communities along the Zohreh River and beyond? Together, these questions point to the site's broader significance. Its archaeological remains offer an opportunity to reconstruct a human world that emerged in southwestern Iran thousands of years ago and to explore how people organized their communities, expressed beliefs, buried their dead, produced objects and maintained connections with other groups.

UNESCO has also presented Chega Sofla as a ritual landscape comprising a settlement, cemetery, ritual space and symbolic evidence that together provide an integrated picture of the prehistoric culture of the region. The site has been on Iran's Tentative List of World Heritage since 2021. What has attracted international attention to Chega Sofla is ultimately the challenge it poses to a long-standing image of life before cities.

The evidence suggests that prehistoric communities were not necessarily simple or loosely organized societies. Thousands of years before the emergence of the great cities of the Near East, communities in this region were already creating ritual spaces, developing distinctive burial traditions, using symbolic systems, engaging in specialized production and maintaining cultural connections.



Russia's creative-industry shift opens new door for Iranian publishing

Arts & Culture Desk

Russia's publishing industry is moving beyond the printed page toward a broader creative economy, opening fresh opportunities for Iranian books to reach new audiences through translation, adaptation and rights deals, a senior Iranian cultural official said Saturday at the Moscow International Book Fair.

Alireza Nouri-Zadeh, director general for cultural associations and activities at Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, said his meetings with Russian publishers and book-industry officials pointed to growing interest in Iranian contemporary literature and children's books, IRNA reported.

The potential, he said, lies in turning books from stand-alone products into the starting point of a wider cultural and commercial chain, spanning animation, film, games, toys and educational prod-

ucts.

"Book publishing is no longer limited to printing and selling paper copies," Nouri-Zadeh wrote in an account of Iran's participation in the fair. "A book can become the nucleus of an economic and cultural chain."

Russian publishers are placing greater emphasis on children's and young-adult literature, viewing successful titles as platforms for illustration, animation, games and other creative products, he said. Iran, with its established pool of writers, illustrators and publishers, has considerable room to enter that market.

Nouri-Zadeh also said several Russian publishers had expressed interest in acquiring publication rights to Iranian children's books and contemporary fiction after learning about the Tehran Publishing Fellowship.

The Moscow meetings involved major Russian publishing houses,

including Eksmo and AST, as well as representatives of the Russian book industry and creative-sector institutions. Talks focused on copyright exchanges, introducing Iranian works and expanding joint projects.

At a separate literary meeting during the fair, Iranian and Russian officials called for a stronger two-way translation movement, particularly for contemporary works. Nouri-Zadeh said Iran has 22,000 active publishers and released about 107,000 book titles last year, including 82,000 original works and 24,000 translations.

Iran has also put incentives in place to support Persian-to-Russian translations, including grants and funding for the publication of 20 Iranian titles in Russian.

Nouri-Zadeh said the next step was to move beyond ceremonial cultural exchanges and turn interest into professional agreements on translation, publishing rights, distribu-



tion and marketing.

"The opportunity is real," he said, calling for sustained negotiations and joint projects to ensure Irani-

an literature secures a lasting foothold in Russia's evolving publishing and creative-industries market. The 39th Moscow International

Book Fair opened on September 2 and closes Sunday, bringing together more than 300 publishers from Russia and 10 other countries.

Iran, Turkey stress continued scientific, cultural ties



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran and Turkey called for continued scientific and cultural cooperation by drawing on their shared historical and civilizational heritage, during a meeting Saturday between Iranology Foundation President Ali Akbar Salehi and Turkish Ambassador

to Iran Hicabi Kirlangic in Tehran.

The meeting came as Kirlangic prepares to wrap up his diplomatic mission in Iran, offering both sides an opportunity to review years of cultural and academic engagement and reaffirm their commitment to keeping those ties on track under Turkey's

incoming ambassador, iranology.ir reported.

Salehi praised the Turkish envoy's cultural activities during his years in Iran and called for deeper scientific and cultural exchanges between the two neighboring countries.

He pointed to the broad potential for cooperation in history, culture, civilization and shared heritage, urging closer links between Iranian and Turkish academic and cultural institutions to foster greater mutual understanding between the two nations. Kirlangic, who has a longstanding interest in Persian language and literature, welcomed his engagement with Iranian academic and cultural centers during his posting. He also voiced support for

maintaining and expanding cultural interaction between Tehran and Ankara. The Turkish ambassador had previously visited the Iranology Foundation twice and became acquainted with its research activities and cultural programs. His familiarity with Persian literature and interest in Iran's historical and cultural fields helped forge closer connections with the country's academic and cultural institutions during his mission. As his diplomatic tenure draws to a close, Salehi and Kirlangic agreed that Iran and Turkey should continue to tap into their shared cultural and scientific capacities to deepen mutual understanding and strengthen people-to-people ties.

Tehran, Yerevan discuss reciprocal publication of literary works

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran and Armenia discussed support for the translation and reciprocal publication of literary works as officials met on the sidelines of the ninth Yerevan International Book Festival in the Armenian capital.

Ebrahim Heydari, head of Iran's House of Book and Literature, and Anna Chulyan, director of the National Library of Armenia, also discussed the exchange of books and library materials, literary events and the participation of publishers and writers in book fairs, ILNA reported.

Heydari said translation offered one of the most important

avenues for cultural cooperation, stressing the need to support the translation and publication of works by Iranian and Armenian authors in each other's languages.

The meeting also covered the development of the National Library of Armenia's dedicated Iran section. Iran's House of Book and Literature agreed to assist with strengthening and expanding its holdings, according to a statement from the Iranian institution.

Chulyan outlined the Armenian library's work in preserving the country's written heritage and maintaining its national bibliography. She said the exchange of resources

and experience between the two national libraries was important.

The officials also discussed literary meetings, the presentation of works from both countries and greater participation by authors, translators and publishers in international book events.

The ninth Yerevan International Book Festival, which runs from September 4 to 6, has brought publishers, writers and literary professionals from several countries to the Armenian capital. This year's program centers on language, literary translation and the role of language in preserving cultural memory.

Russia can be ...

This helps explain why Russia can be an important partner for Iran without necessarily becoming an unlimited strategic ally.

"Russia does not accept the US-led liberal order and seeks, in various ways, to challenge it," Baghi said. "At the same time, pragmatism in Russian foreign policy means that partnerships and alliances are pursued as long as they serve Russia's interests."

That principle is particularly relevant as Iran seeks to expand economic cooperation with Russia in areas such as trade, energy, transportation, essential goods and financial arrangements. Such cooperation can help both countries reduce some of the effects of Western sanctions and create alternative channels for economic exchange. But Baghi cautions against interpreting this cooperation as evidence that Moscow is prepared to confront Washington on Iran's behalf.

"Given that Iran is under Western sanctions

and is politically considered a high-risk country, Russia's foreign policy behavior shows that it does not want to tighten its relationship with Iran without limits," he said.

Russia's own confrontation with the West has made tactical partnerships more valuable. Moscow needs relationships that can support its economic and political interests while avoiding unnecessary escalation with the United States and its allies. Iran, in this context, can be an important partner, but the relationship remains subject to Russia's strategic calculations.

"Assistance to Iran, in economic, commercial, political and military areas, will go as far as it does not lead Russia into a direct confrontation with the United States," Baghi said.

The distinction between tactical and strategic cooperation is therefore central to the future of Tehran-Moscow relations. The two countries have significant areas of overlapping interest, but Baghi argues that

this should not automatically be described as a comprehensive strategic partnership. Russia's definition of a strategic partner, he notes, has a specific meaning. Even Moscow's relationship with China, despite being described by both sides as a strategic partnership, is influenced by necessity and changing interests. "I believe Russia's partnership with Belarus is more strategic than its partnership with China," he said.

This does not reduce the importance of Russia for Iran. Rather, it suggests that Tehran can benefit from cooperation with Moscow by focusing on areas where interests genuinely converge. Trade, energy, transport links and financial mechanisms can provide practical opportunities, particularly when both sides seek to reduce their exposure to Western pressure.

At the same time, Russia itself remains part of the international system it criticizes. This is one of the main limitations on the emergence of a completely separate economic order outside Western structures.

"Although countries such as Russia and China are critics of the current world order, they have no choice but to play a role within the same structure and the same order," Baghi said.

In his view, Russia's position as a major power also rests primarily on its political and military capabilities rather than on economic or technological strength. He argues that Moscow's permanent seat on the UN Security Council and its nuclear arsenal give it a level of strategic weight that cannot easily be ignored.

"I place Russia, with some qualification, among the great powers," Baghi said. "Without its veto power and nuclear weapons, it would not have much to say in the global economy or economic and technological innovation."

This balance also affects Russia's relations with Washington. Despite their differences, Baghi believes that the two sides have reasons to maintain broader channels of communication because of Russia's position in

the international system.

"There is undoubtedly coordination between Moscow and Washington at the broader level, regardless of who occupies the White House," he said. "This coordination also applies to Iran."

For Iran, the message is therefore one of opportunity combined with realism. Russia can provide meaningful economic, political and security support, and closer cooperation can help Tehran expand its room for maneuver under sanctions. But Moscow will ultimately measure every step against its own national interests.

The future of Iran-Russia relations, in Baghi's assessment, is therefore more likely to be shaped by a steady expansion of practical cooperation than by the creation of an unlimited alliance. The two countries have strong reasons to work together, but the durability of that partnership will depend on how effectively they align their interests while preserving their independent strategic choices.