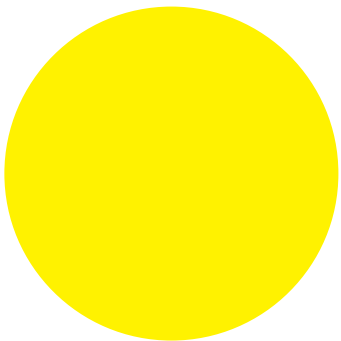


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Pulsing arteries amid flames

Chronicle of resilience, strategy, technological advancement in Iran's oil industry

By Reza Mokhtar

Energy expert

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

In the landscape of modern warfare, energy is far more than a mere economic sector; it is the throbbing pulse of national life, the backbone of public stability, and the primary target in destabilization efforts. In recent years, amidst escalating regional tensions—from high-pressure, short-term campaigns to the sustained conflicts across the Persian Gulf—the clear objective of the adversaries (the US and the Zionist regime) was to inflict a total, paralyzing shock upon Iran's energy artery. They aimed to cripple upstream facilities, shut down fuel production and refining chains, block every drop of oil export, and sever the return of foreign exchange revenues to the nation's economic cycle. However, the field reality of what unfolded shattered all the

calculations of their war rooms. Contrary to the initial goals of these aggressors, these direct and imposed threats not only failed to lead to collapse but instead sparked an unprecedented surge in cohesion, solidarity, and collective responsibility across the entire family of the oil industry. It forged a deep bond between the field worker in the facilities of Asaluyeh and Kharg, the control room engineer, the research laboratory scientist, and the energy command staff.

Field strategy and leadership: When helmsman stood in fire
The astonishing stability of critical facilities during those inflammatory days was no accident. The oil industry required a strategic mind and field command capable of balancing three fundamental pillars: protecting human life and health, ensuring non-stop production, and rapidly countering crisis scenarios. In this critical juncture, the leadership of Oil Minister Mohsen

Paknejad was both pivotal and exemplary. In a climate where threats against strategic centers had reached their zenith, his approach was not to manage from behind closed doors, but to command from the front lines. His direct and timely presence in the damaged zones sent a clear signal of stability and courage, both to the operational workforce and to international markets. This brave presence and field management ignited a wave of organizational courage and sacrifice; so much so that at the peak of the tensions, a deluge of written, voluntary requests flowed to the Minister's office from operational and administrative staff, demanding immediate deployment to the front-line operational zones, particularly Kharg Island and the offshore facilities of the Persian Gulf. Such a spirit demonstrated how leadership rooted in mutual trust and self-sacrifice could transform crushing threats into the great capital of national cohesion.

Quantitative track record of resilience: Tangible realities in four pillars
The response of the oil industry's workforce to the enemy's attacks was not merely epic; this resistance manifested in precise numbers and operational records across the four main companies: Upstream (NIOC): Despite heavy sanctions and sabotage operations in international waterways, production capacity was stabilized through the rapid reconfiguration of wells and gathering stations. International sources and credible OPEC data indicate that crude oil production was sustained at levels exceeding 3.7 million barrels per day. Projects to increase production capacity were aggressively pursued by bringing new wells and separation/processing units online, turning the dream of a total halt to Iran's oil exports into a mirage. Gas (NIGC): The greatest test of resilience occurred here. Despite critical facilities in South Pars being targeted, unprecedented restoration records were set. Damaged sections were stabilized and

recovered by the efforts of local personnel in less than two weeks. The national gas network not only remained intact, but gas refineries, relying on a daily nominal capacity of over 900 million cubic meters, maintained a stable flow for urban, power plant, and industrial sectors. Refining and Distribution: The enemy sought to trigger a gasoline famine and paralyze public transport. Yet, through the expansion and upgrading of processing units, the country's crude oil and condensate refining capacity reached the 2.4 million barrels per day mark. Stable gasoline production was maintained at 110 million liters per day, peaking at 121–127 million liters per day with blending capacities to fully meet the record-breaking consumption triggered by the crisis. Simultaneously, refinery diesel (gas oil) production saw significant growth, practically eliminating the country's dependence on imports of this strategic fuel during peak demand seasons. Petrochemicals: Standing firm against feedstock fluctuations and export disruptions, this sec-

tor remained the pioneer in value creation and foreign exchange protection. Installed nominal capacity, through the commissioning of value-chain projects, stands on the threshold of exceeding 105 million tons per year, ensuring the engine of non-oil revenue generation never dimmed even at the peak of the conflict.

Leaping from crisis management to pinnacle of science
The greatest marvel of Iran's oil industry resilience was that it did not settle for traditional maintenance. Right in the heart of the most intense pressures, it took a historic step across the frontiers of global technology. At a time when access to Western catalysts and licensors was blocked by the most severe obstacles, the elite researchers of the oil industry succeeded in creating and introducing a completely indigenous and unique technical know-how: The AQP process for desulfurization of fuel oil.

Russia, China emphasize Iran's right to pursue nuclear program

International Desk

Russia and China emphasized Iran's right to pursue its nuclear program and peaceful use of nuclear energy as the United States is trying to exert more pressure on Iran in international bodies over its nuclear activities.

Russia's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has dismissed Washington's call for Iran to abandon its nuclear program, stressing that Tehran has an "inalienable right" to pursue it.

In a post on X on Friday, Mikhail Ulyanov slammed the US for relying on "wrong assumptions" about nuclear non-proliferation.

"Iran is not obliged to abandon its nuclear program. It is Iran's inalienable right," Ulyanov said.

"Unfortunately, the position of the Republican administration is based on wrong assumptions of non-proliferation norms and the IAEA activities," he added.

Ulyanov was responding to US Ambassador to the United Nations Mike

Waltz, who claimed that Iran had "broken the rules" and was enriching uranium to 60 percent with "no credible civilian purpose."

Iran has maintained a consistent position regarding its peaceful nuclear program since the unprovoked US-Israeli wars of aggression in June 2025 and early 2026.

In both wars, the aggressors targeted Iran's civilian infrastructure, including nuclear facilities, in flagrant violation of international law and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Following the first US-Israeli war of aggression, which began amid indirect talks between Tehran and Washington, the Iranian Parliament unanimously passed legislation in June 2025 requiring the government to suspend all cooperation with the IAEA.

Under the law, IAEA inspectors will not be permitted to enter Iran unless the security of Iranian nuclear facilities and peaceful nuclear activities is guaranteed, subject to the approval of Iran's Supreme National Security

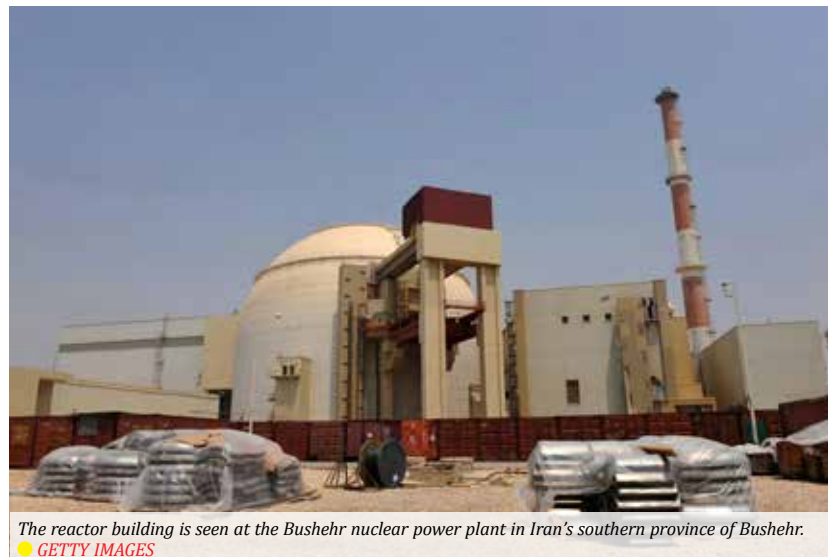
Council (SNSC).

The move was prompted by the IAEA's politically motivated resolution, which paved the way for the aggression against the Islamic Republic, and the UN nuclear watchdog's failure to condemn the illegal attacks.

Iran, as a signatory to the NPT, maintains that its nuclear program is exclusively peaceful and that there has been no diversion of nuclear material following more than two decades of inspections.

Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf and other senior officials have made clear that neither Iran's nuclear rights nor its missile capabilities are on the negotiating table. China's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations also called on Thursday for Iran's "legitimate" right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy to be respected.

"Iran's legitimate right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy should be respected," Sun Lei told a meeting of the UN General Assembly on Russia's and China's veto of a Washington-backed



The reactor building is seen at the Bushehr nuclear power plant in Iran's southern province of Bushehr. ● GETTY IMAGES

draft resolution at the Security Council against Iran.

Sun noted that the current situation surrounding Iran's nuclear program stemmed from the US unilateral withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal, of-

ficially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in 2018; its "maximum pressure" campaign against the Islamic Republic; and its launch of military aggressions while negotiations with Tehran were underway.

Army's spox reaffirms Armed Forces' readiness for any scenario

International Desk

Iran's Army spokesman Brigadier General Mohammad Akrami-Nia said on Saturday that the country's Armed Forces are closely monitoring developments in the region and are ready for any scenario.

The enemy had miscalculated by assuming it could destroy the capabilities of Iran's Armed Forces within days and achieve its objectives in the country, but resistance by the military and the Iranian nation's steadfastness upended those calculations, Akrami-Nia said during a meeting with personnel of Army's ground force.

He said the enemy's objectives went beyond Iran's nuclear and missile programs and its support for the resistance front. He said the adversary had pursued broader aims, including overthrowing the Islamic Republic and partitioning Iran.

In a separate interview with Fars News Agency published on Saturday, the Army's spokesman said Iranian Army ground forces denied the United States the opportunity to launch a ground invasion by deploying elite units and brigades along the borders.

"The elite forces and brigades of the [Army] Ground Force, by deploying along the borders, denied the Americans the opportunity to carry out a



Mohammad Akrami-Nia ● IRNA

ground invasion, and today they are still standing at their positions with morale," Akrami-Nia said.

He said the Army's air and air defense operations received extensive media coverage, including the downing of enemy aircraft, but underscored that the efforts of the Army's ground forces also deserved greater attention.

According to Akrami-Nia, the deployment of the ground forces prevented the United States from gaining the opportunity or courage to undertake a ground assault.

The Army spokesman also highlighted the ground forces' role alongside the Air Force, Air Defense Force, and Navy, saying their actions denied the enemy opportunities to act.

The US and the Israeli regime waged their first criminal war against Iran, which lasted 12 days, in June 2025. Their second aggression began on February 28, 2026, and came to a

halt in early April after 40 days.

In both wars, Iran's resistance and successful retaliatory operations forced the aggressors to accept a ceasefire.

Iran has also maintained a tight grip on the Strait of Hormuz since the early days of the second imposed war.

In July, the US conducted waves of deadly air raids on Iran and imposed a naval blockade of the country in violation of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Islamic Republic, signed on June 17, to end the war.

In response, the Iranian Armed Forces launched devastating strikes against strategic American targets across West Asia and declared the Strait of Hormuz closed to all traffic. However, fighting between the two countries have died down in recent weeks.

But new reports of the US's dispatch of military aircraft to the region are raising speculation about new conflict.

The Wall Street Journal and Bloomberg News reported on Thursday that the US is sending the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt and three warships carrying about 2,000 Marines to the Middle East. The ships will reinforce the US forces arrayed against Iran with as many as 10,000 sailors and marines.

Yemen targets Saudi's Aramco in response to airstrikes on Sana'a

International Desk

Yemen's resistance forces launched attacks on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities on Saturday following major strikes by Saudi military on Yemen's capital.

Flames and smoke were seen rising from a facility belonging to Saudi oil giant Aramco south of the kingdom's capital Riyadh on Saturday, AFP said.

The circumstances remained unclear but in recent weeks Aramco, majority-owned by the Saudi state, has come under attack from Yemen's Ansarullah resistance group targeting the kingdom as part of the war in Yemen where Riyadh is backing forces south of the country.

Aramco remains the flagship company of the Saudi economy and one of the largest firms in the world by market capitalization. Last month, the Ansarullah group said that it launched strikes targeting "sensitive sites" in Riyadh and Aramco facilities in the kingdom's port city of Yanbu.



● REUTERS

In August the group also targeted an airport and a facility belonging to Aramco in Saudi Arabia's southern Najran region.

Loud explosions were also heard in the Yemeni capital of Sana'a on Saturday, as the group reported airstrikes in the area by Saudi forces.

One correspondent heard at least five blasts in different areas, while another saw two warplanes firing missiles on the city.

Al-Masirah TV reported "Saudi aggression" against the capital, without providing details on the targets or casualties.

The channel had also earlier on Saturday reported missile strikes on the tele-

communications network in the northwestern governorate of Saada.

Saudi Arabia bombed the Yemeni capital on Thursday night for the first time since renewed fighting broke out between the two sides in July, Ansarullah said.

After several years of calm, Yemen was plunged back into war in July, pitting Ansarullah, who control most of northwest Yemen including Sana'a, against Yemen's Saudi-backed forces.

The government, based in the city of Aden, controls much of the country's south and east – a region that is larger but less populated.

Four sabotage groups dismantled in southern Iran

International Desk

Iran's Intelligence Ministry said it has arrested 31 people belonging to four organized US-Israeli-backed networks linked to efforts to foment unrest and carry out acts of sabotage in Sirjan county, in southern Kerman Province. In a statement on Saturday, the ministry said its intelligence officers in Kerman identified and dismantled the networks following information provided by the public and intelligence monitoring.

The ministry said the suspects were organized into networks using "attractive names" to lure teenagers and young people and had specific duties and plans for actively participating in nationwide calls for unrest.

The statement said the groups also prepared large quantities of Molotov cock-



● AFP

tails and equipment to damage urban surveillance cameras in preparation for street unrest and acts of sabotage.

The ministry further said the groups were involved in extensive acts of violence and destruction during the foreign-backed "coup" in January, including setting fire to a governor's office, damaging banks and government buildings, destroying public and private property and urban surveillance cam-

eras, and attacking a police facility in an attempt to seize weapons.

Peaceful protests began across Iran in late December 2025 over financial grievances, largely linked to the impact of unilateral US sanctions.

After the government intervened and President Masoud Pezeshkian held direct talks with trade guilds, tensions eased and relative calm returned by early January.

However, the situation escalated again on January 8 and 9 amid overt foreign interference, including statements by US President Donald Trump.

According to Iran's Judiciary, the violence on January 8 and 9 was part of a US-Israeli-backed "coup attempt" that resulted in widespread damage across the country and the martyrdom of thousands of civilians and security personnel.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Trade with Turkey rises 23% in seven months



Economy Desk

Trade between Iran and Turkey reached \$3.793 billion in the first seven months of 2026, up 23% from \$3.087 billion in the same period last year, with most of the increase driven by a sharp rise in Turkey's imports from Iran. Turkey's imports from Iran jumped 42% year on year to \$1.954 billion from \$1.377 billion, while Turkish exports to Iran rose by a

more modest 7% to \$1.839 billion, according to IRIB. The increase in bilateral trade comes as the United States resumed its maritime blockade of Iranian ports in July 2026. Against this backdrop, the 23-percent growth in trade with Turkey suggests that land routes have helped offset part of the pressure on Iran's maritime trade. Turkey is Iran's only western neighbor with a shared land border, with road and

rail links between the two countries remaining operational. Monthly data shows that bilateral trade gained further momentum in June and July. In June, trade between the two countries surged 73% to \$691 million, coinciding with the height of the US maritime blockade. Experts say land-based trade, given its limited infrastructure capacity, cannot fully replace Iran's

maritime trade. However, it can help ease some of the pressure by providing an alternative channel for cross-border commerce. The recent growth also points to the Iranian economy's adjustment to changing trade conditions. Experts say sustaining this trend will require investment in border infrastructure, streamlined customs procedures and greater diversification of the country's export basket.

Gas deliveries to industries surge despite output drop

Economy Desk

Gas deliveries to industries and small businesses increased by 1 billion cubic meters in the first six months of the current Persian year (started on March 21) compared with the same period last year, despite a decline in production at the South Pars gas field, the head of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) said. Saeed Tavakkoli told Shana that no restrictions had been imposed on major industries, particularly steel and petrochemical produc-

ers, although some facilities were damaged during the 40-day war. He said ensuring a stable gas supply had become more challenging following recent incidents at the South Pars gas field, but the gas network had managed to maintain supplies to key sectors despite lower overall gas deliveries. Comparing the first six months of this year with the same period last year, Tavakkoli said the volume of gas supplied to the national network was about 14% lower. Nevertheless,

the share of gas in power plants' fuel mix remained broadly unchanged. Gas accounted for 85% of power plants' fuel requirements during the first half of this year, compared with 86% during the same period last year, he said, describing the figures as evidence of the gas network's resilience under difficult conditions. Tavakkoli said the figures showed that the gas industry had prioritized supplying power plants to help prevent electricity imbalances while also using its



full capacity to maintain gas supplies to productive and industrial sectors. The approach, he added, was aimed at keeping the country's production and economic activity running despite challenging conditions.

Iranian airlines set to resume flights to Najaf

Economy Desk

Iranian airlines have been asked to submit requests to resume flights to Iraq's Najaf International Airport via email, following coordination with the Iraqi Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Transport and Aviation. Under the arrangements, the necessary instructions will be issued to Najaf airport authorities to facilitate the resumption of flights. Flights between Iran and Najaf had been suspended amid US sanctions targeting Iran's aviation industry. Najaf International Airport had previously announced that inbound and outbound flights to Iran would be suspended from September 25 until further notice. Both sides had since been working to restore



air links between the two countries. According to Tasnim, the Iraqi Prime Minister's Office said in a statement on Thursday that, following efforts by the prime minister, an agreement had been reached for Iranian airlines to operate 40 round-trip flights to Najaf International Airport each day.

The Iraqi prime minister said aviation was more than simply transporting passengers between two airports, describing it as a bridge connecting peoples. "Among the passengers are patients waiting to reach their places of treatment, pilgrims seeking to visit the holy shrines, and families eager to meet their loved ones without difficulty," he said, adding that the sector was also vital to tourism, the economy and social ties. The statement added that Iraq's foreign relations are based on the interests of its people and its commitment to establishing balanced and positive relations with different nations. It said the approach seeks to harness such ties to improve people's lives and strengthen lasting connections between nations.

ECONOMIC LENS

Iran in fragmented global economy

When geopolitics displaces economic advantage



By Mohammadreza Hosseini Aliabad
Researcher in intl economics

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

For decades, globalization rested on a simple proposition: goods would move toward where they could be produced most efficiently, capital would seek higher returns, and countries would trade even when their political interests diverged. That logic is now under pressure. Trade is no longer simply about price. Energy is no longer merely a commodity. Technology is no longer just a source of productivity. Ports, payment systems, supply chains and currencies have increasingly become instruments of geopolitical power. The global economy is therefore entering a period in which economic efficiency and geopolitical security do not necessarily point in the same direction. Governments are increasingly willing to pay more for secure supply chains, reliable energy and access to strategic technologies. The result is not the end of globalization, but a more fragmented and politically conditioned form of it. Where does Iran fit into this emerging order?

The answer is complicated. Iran possesses energy resources, a strategically important geographical position, a large domestic market and significant human capital. Yet possessing resources is not the same as converting them into economic power. A resource becomes an economic advantage only when it can be transformed into investment, technology, trade and sustainable income. Iran's geography illustrates the problem. The country sits between the Persian Gulf, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Turkey and the Indian Ocean. On a map, this looks like an extraordinary commercial advantage. But geography does not build railways. It does not modernize ports. It does not reduce customs delays. And it does not transfer money across borders. Infrastructure, institutions, finance and predictable rules do. This distinction is becoming more important as globalization becomes increasingly selective. Countries are still trading, but they are becoming more careful about whom they trade with, which sectors they expose to foreign dependence, and which technologies they consider strategically sensitive. For Iran, this creates both risks and opportunities. The risk is that exclusion from formal networks of finance, technology and trade raises transaction costs. When companies need additional intermediaries to receive payments, obtain insurance, transport goods or access technology, economic value is lost before a product reaches its final destination. But fragmentation also creates openings. China needs energy and markets. India needs connectivity and secure supplies. Central Asian economies need access to global markets. Persian Gulf economies are building new logistics, manufacturing and investment networks. Iran is geographically positioned near all of these developments. The question is whether it can turn geography into economic value. This is where international political economy becomes crucial. National power is no longer determined only by military strength or GDP. A country's ability to participate in networks of capital, technology, energy, trade and value creation is itself a form of power. For Iran, this means thinking beyond the export of raw materials.

Selling oil generates revenue. Building value chains generates economic influence. Exporting crude is a transaction. Exporting petrochemicals, industrial equipment, engineering services, technology and manufactured goods creates a network of economic relationships. The difference is fundamental. Commodity exporters remain highly exposed to global price cycles. Countries embedded in value chains capture value at several stages of production and become harder to exclude from international commerce. Iran's strategy should therefore not be reduced to sanctions evasion. Sanctions evasion, even when successful, is essentially tactical. The strategic objective should be to reduce the economic cost of isolation. That requires investment in transit corridors, long-term commercial agreements, regional trade, modern customs procedures, reliable payment mechanisms and a regulatory environment capable of attracting both domestic and foreign capital. Above all, it requires predictability. Capital does not necessarily move toward the cheapest economy. It moves toward economies where risk can be understood, priced and managed. An investor can tolerate a high cost if it is predictable. What is much harder to tolerate is an environment in which the rules themselves are uncertain. This is why Iran's strategic choice should not be framed simply as a choice between "East" and "West". Successful economies rarely operate according to such a binary logic. China trades with the United States despite profound strategic rivalry. European economies maintain commercial relations with countries with which they have serious political disagreements. India simultaneously develops economic relationships with competing powers. International economics is not a system of friendship. It is a system of interests, incentives and risk management. Iran needs the same logic if it wants to move from being primarily a resource exporter toward becoming a more integrated economic actor. The world is fragmenting, but globalization is not disappearing. It is becoming more expensive, more political and more selective. That change creates a strategic choice for Iran. It can remain primarily an exporter of energy and raw materials, competing largely on the basis of resources. Or it can attempt to become a node in wider networks of trade, investment, logistics, technology and production. The difference between these two models is not simply economic. It is geopolitical. A country that sells commodities can earn income. A country that builds networks acquires influence. Perhaps, then, the central question for Iran is not how much oil it can sell, or where the dollar trades next month. It is whether Iran can transform its geographical position, energy resources and human capital into durable economic connectivity. The future of Iran's place in the global economy will depend less on its ability to stand outside the changing international system than on its ability to find productive ways to connect to it. In a fragmented world, resources matter. But connections matter more.

Brazil's presidential election more than just another polarized contest



By Christopher Sabatini

Director of the Latin America Programme at Chatham House

OPINION

The first round of Brazil's presidential election is scheduled for October 4, with 13 candidates competing to occupy the Brazilian presidential palace, Planalto.

For now, the contest is dominated by two men. Only a few percentage points (depending on the poll) separate 80-year-old President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Workers' Party (PT) — running for his fourth term — and 45-year-old Flávio Bolsonaro of the right-wing Liberal Party (PL). Flávio is the son of the man Lula defeated in 2022, former president Jair Bolsonaro (2019–23), sometimes referred to as the 'Trump of the tropics'. Lula squeaked out a narrow victory in the 2022 contest, of 50.9 to 49.1 percent in the second round, after public opinion surveys had seriously undercounted the support of his right-wing rival. Jair Bolsonaro is currently serving time for plotting a coup, after his supporters rioted in Brasília in 2023 in an effort to overturn the 2022 results.

This year's contest is more than a familial grudge match. For one, it looks a lot like recent presidential elections in the region. In June, elections in both Peru and Colombia went to a second round. Each resulted in a narrow victory for conservative candidates who, like the Bolsonaros, are aligned with the regional diplomatic agenda of US President Donald Trump. Another tight contest now looms in Brazil, the most populous country and largest democracy in Latin America, the 10th largest economy in the world, and for decades an international champion of the Global South, through blocs like BRICS. Both Lula and the younger Bolsonaro face high levels of voter rejection. More than 54 per cent of Brazilian voters disapprove of Flávio according to one poll. Lula does little better in the same survey, with 52 per cent against the president running for a fourth term.

The issues

Brazilian voters are divided over a number of issues relating to Brazil's political system and its place in the world. According to a Pew survey conducted in Brazil in early 2026, only 37 per cent of Brazilian

voters were satisfied with their democracy, down from 66 per cent in 2013. And Brazilians are ideologically split on favourable views of China versus the US. 57 per cent of Brazilians who identify as leftist have favourable views of China, compared to 40 per cent of those on the right. Those opinions flip on attitudes towards the US: 58 per cent of self-identified right-leaning voters have favourable views of the US, while only 30 per cent on the other side of the ideological spectrum do.

Division on these issues indicates that this election could have major implications for the direction of Brazil's foreign policy, its global influence, and the PT foreign policy agenda since 2003.

Brazil's situation is not unique. Distrust in democratic electoral systems has increased around the world — a sentiment that outsider political entrepreneurs have exploited. Their ability to do so stems from political polarization, discontent with the political class — and the simple fact that casting a ballot and accepting the aggregate macro tabulations of all voters requires a certain commitment of faith. As political tribes have become more separated and

disconnected from alternative views and media, it becomes easier to feed on distrust, suspicion and resentment.

According to a recent Chatham House/ Convergent Opinion survey, distrust in the electoral system is greater among those who voted for then-president Jair Bolsonaro in 2022 than those who voted for Lula that year.

Only 45 per cent of 2022 Bolsonaro voters expressed very much or some confidence that elections would be free from political interference this year, compared to 78 per cent of 2022 Lula voters. That is concerning, but not necessarily surprising. Jair Bolsonaro cast doubt on the integrity of Brazil's electoral system before the 2022 elections. (Flávio has promised to respect this year's election outcome. But he has also vowed to grant amnesties to those who took part in the 2023 riots). Fuelling this division is an escalating diplomatic row with the administration of US President Donald Trump. In July, the US imposed new 25 per cent tariffs on some Brazilian goods. The same month, the Brazilian government denied visas to two US envoys, accusing them of planning to meddle in elections — a charge the US State Department

called a 'baseless lie'.

The diplomatic dispute has escalated further, with the White House revoking the visa of Brazil's ambassador to the US, and Lula's office accusing the US of 'a deliberate escalation of hostile measures against Brazil, motivated by ideological reasons'. In his speech at the UN General Assembly on September 22, Lula warned against foreign interference in the election.

Potential foreign policy about-face

A Bolsonaro victory this year would create another friendly South American government for the Trump administration, adding to the White House's growing list of aligned leaders (either for transactional or ideological reasons) in Colombia, Venezuela, Paraguay, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Dominican Republic, and Ecuador.

Indeed, a Bolsonaro government would probably adhere to Trump's approach on various issues, including a more martial approach to narcotics trafficking and transnational criminal networks operating in or from Brazil. It will likely see Brazil joining Trump's Shield of the Americas initiative.

Flávio Bolsonaro's presidency would also bring a U-turn to PT-focused foreign policy agendas. It would trigger, if not a pulling out, then a significantly reduced role in the BRICS group, which Trump has criticized for 'anti-American policies'. And Brazil might well draw back from other global forums, such as the UN, the G20, and COP where Brasília has staked its claim as a representative of the Global South.

In reality, under the PT, Brazil's track record in supporting multilateralism has been spotty. Often it has been partisan in defending human rights and democracy even in its own neighbourhood.

Equally, it is not clear that a new Bolsonaro government would represent a triumph for Trump's so-called 'Donroe Doctrine', which seeks to establish American supremacy in the Western Hemisphere.

While a Bolsonaro-led Brazil would return Brasília to his father's anti-woke cultural battles, it would not necessarily fall into line with the Trump White House, particularly on trade. Bolsonaro distanced himself from Trump's heavy tariffs. And, as was true for his father and neighbour Argentine president Javier Milei — who both had campaigned on reducing Chinese influence — a new Bolsonaro administration would balk at reducing trade with China, Brazil's largest trading partner since 2009. China, though, may seek to reduce its Brazilian imports, if Bolsonaro strays too far in challenging Beijing.

Regardless, Brazilians face a stark choice in October. Brazil's commitment to international law and multilateralism hangs in the balance, as does the Global South's voice in the global order.



Towels depicting presidential candidates Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (R) and Flávio Bolsonaro are laid out for sale in a residential area of Brasília, Brazil, on September 11, 2026.

● SERGIO LIMA/AFP



This year's contest is more than a familial grudge match. For one, it looks a lot like recent presidential elections in the region. In June, elections in both Peru and Colombia went to a second round. Each resulted in a narrow victory for conservative candidates who, like the Bolsonaros, are aligned with the regional diplomatic agenda of US President Donald Trump. According to a Pew survey conducted in Brazil in early 2026, only 37 per cent of Brazilian voters were satisfied with their democracy, down from 66 per cent in 2013.



Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2nd-L) arrives at the Kremlin to meet with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, on May 9, 2025, as the commandant of the Kremlin salutes him.

● RAMIL SITDIKOV/RIA NOVOSTI



The article was first published by Chatham House.

Javier Milei, hypermasculinity and foreign policy

By **Juan Gabriel Tokatlian**
Professor at Torcuato Di Tella University

OPINION

Masculinity manifests itself through a set of attributes, values, beliefs, meanings, and behaviors associated with men, the product of a social construct rooted in a particular society. Masculinity finds expression in multiple spheres, including foreign policy. At the same time, political leaders of different ideological persuasions and historical contexts invoke it in the conduct of their countries' international relations. In this sense, masculinity encompasses both a rhetoric and a practice. At its core, it operates through a binary logic: it reflects and affirms aggression, dominance, and assertiveness in opposition to understanding, compassion, and empathy. It emphasizes a dual condition: on the one hand, a relationship of opposites that can evolve into enmity; on the other, a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority. Within this framework, the exaltation of polarization — both domestically and internationally — becomes paramount and is promoted with unusual zeal. In the 1980s, Ashis Nandy introduced the notion of hypermasculinity as an extreme form of machismo. More recently, Xiaoting Han and Chenjun Yin have developed the concept of reactionary masculinity to explain a heightened form of masculinity that reinforces anti-feminist discourse while emphasizing the traits of an increasingly misogynistic male subculture. In both cases, the underlying premise is the perceived need to exaggerate masculine identity because it is supposedly threatened by the feminine, which challenges male dominance. This, in turn, is an attempt to restore an order and authority allegedly undermined by advances in social justice, gender equality, minority rights, sexual diversity, identity pluralism, multiculturalism, and related developments.



The purpose is to recover a form of masculine hegemony perceived to be under siege. Bombast and hyperbole become defining features of a narrative that calls for nothing less than a crusade to defend a supposedly endangered — perhaps even pre-modern — West that claims to need leadership. In short, this new “culture war” is also a struggle to reassert male dominance. In the case of President Javier Milei, he has become a leading example of the influence of reactionary hypermasculinity on the formulation and implementation of foreign policy. In his January 2025 address at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Argentinian President Javier Milei laid out several of his core beliefs and principles. He described the idea of social justice as “sinister, unjust, and aberrant”. He continued, “feminism, diversity, inclusion, equity, immigration, abortion, environ-

mentalism, gender ideology, among others, are all heads of the same creature whose purpose is to justify the expansion of the state.” Women, he argued, “do not complain that most prisoners are men, nor that most plumbers are men... let alone that most people killed in wars are men”. He also asserted that, “in its most extreme forms, gender ideology quite simply amounts to child abuse. They are pedophiles...” Taken together, he presented these claims as evidence that “the West has gone astray and must be set back on course.” Implicitly, he casts himself as the one entrusted with that mission. In his speech before the Conservative Political Action Conference in February 2025, Milei was unequivocal: “Only through this international alliance of the Right will we be able to put an end to the political caste we are confronting, which

is dragging the West into its darkest depths... Having a clearly defined enemy is a fundamental aspect of our cultural war... (and for that reason) we are fighting a crucial battle for the future of humanity.” Consequently, he argued, it is essential to combat such “aberrations” as “the climate paranoia agenda” and “the excesses of gender ideology,” among others. During a June 2025 visit to Israel, Milei elaborated on his ideas further by stating: “Whether we accept it or not, the West is now facing a defining test... (for) it is being poisoned by an internal, self-inflicted barbarism; woke ideology and its moral relativism.” He then stated at the Liberty International World Conference in August 2025: “The Argentine Republic fell victim to a new political class that made social justice its banner... Argentina is therefore a battle-

Argentina's President Javier Milei arrives with a chainsaw at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), in Oxon Hill, Maryland, the US, on February 20, 2025.
● GAGE SKIDMORE/FLICKR



Javier Milei, he has become a leading example of the influence of reactionary hypermasculinity on the formulation and implementation of foreign policy. This mode of masculinity has been framed within a deeply apocalyptic vision of the West. A fascination with danger, heroism understood as relentless resolve, and cruelty elevated to the level of creed are characteristic features of the hypermasculine personality.

Argentina's President Javier Milei (2nd-R) approves of US President Donald Trump as the latter gestures during their meeting at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center in Oxon Hill, Maryland, the US, on February 22, 2025.
● THE WHITE HOUSE



field on which the future of millions of people is at stake, where two completely antagonistic models of the nation confront one another.” Milei continued by claiming that society is afflicted by parasitic ideas that must be fought vigorously: “The first example of a mental parasite is the notion of social justice... This naturally leads us to another mental parasite: the notion of social rights... For decades, they have been inoculating our people with these mental parasites...and that is why the cultural war is so important.” Milei’s reactionary hypermasculinity in foreign policy has not been merely rhetorical. At the Organization of American States, the United Nations, and at both regional and international summits, the Argentine government has distanced itself from initiatives related to gender equality, climate change, and social justice, voting against resolutions that enjoyed overwhelming support across the Americas and the wider international community. For example, in 2024 at the UN, Argentina’s Milei was the only country to vote against a UN General Assembly resolution on preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls in the digital environment. At a Ministerial meeting of the G-20 in 2024, Argentina was the only nation that did not sign a declaration on gender equality and women empowerment. In 2025, the government voted against UN resolutions that included gender issues: among others, the call to systematically mainstream a gender perspective into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the call in favor of the improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural area. At the November 2025 Community of Latin American and Caribbean States-European Union, Argentina rejected parts of the final declaration that referred to gender questions, among other issues. Javier Milei, he has become a leading example of the influence of reactionary hypermasculinity on the formulation and implementation of foreign policy. This mode of masculinity has been framed within a deeply apocalyptic vision of the West. A fascination with danger, heroism understood as relentless resolve, and cruelty elevated to the level of creed are characteristic features of the hypermasculine personality. Exaggeration and distortion are likewise intrinsic to the notion of reactionary masculinity. This, in turn, has enabled Javier Milei to use his considerable international visibility to launch what Richard Shorten describes as a “reactionary diatribe”: the systematic use of digression, repetition, and relentless insistence. It is entirely possible that, on a personal level, the president’s style of masculinity — closely resembling that of Donald Trump — has served him well. But the world is worse off with Milei and Trump’s brands of machismo.

The article first appeared on E-International Relations.



Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games: Historic rowing triumph 'three years in the making', Mojallal says



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

of her goal.

Her appearance at the Paris Olympics, where she faced some of the world's leading rowers, was a challenging experience but, she says, helped her mature both mentally and athletically.

Now 24, Mojallal, who also won the singles sculls bronze at the multi-sport event, has set her sights on the World Championships and an Olympic medal in Los Angeles. She believes Iranian rowers need to compete more frequently at international events to close the gap with athletes from Europe and the United States and gain more direct experience against the world's best.

In an interview with Iran Daily, Mojallal spoke about her three-year quest for historic gold, the demands of training, the challenge of competing in both singles sculls individual events, the lessons she learned from the Paris Olympics and her ambitions for Los Angeles.

Iranian rower Fatemeh Mojallal poses with her lightweight single sculls gold medal at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in Japan on September 24, 2026.
● IRNA



IRAN DAILY: You won the first Asian Games gold medal in the history of Iranian women's rowing in Nagoya. What did you feel when you crossed the finish line and realized you had won? Did you genuinely believe you could win gold beforehand?

MOJALLAL: I had been planning for this goal since I returned from the previous Asian Games. I wanted to break the jinx of gold in Iranian women's rowing and become the first Iranian woman to win this medal at the Asian Games.

I put all my effort into achieving that goal. Based on the times I had recorded in training and domestic competitions, I knew I had a good chance of winning gold. Of course, every race has its own circumstances and you can never guarantee the result beforehand, but I felt I was ready to compete for gold, so I entered the competition with a lot of confidence.

Still, when I crossed the finish line and the gold was confirmed, it was an incredible moment. I was extremely happy and experienced one of the best moments of my life.

You said you had been planning for this goal for three years. What difficulties did you face during that period, and what were your training sessions like?

I started training immediately after returning from the previous Asian Games. I also wanted to win a medal in the single sculls, so I was almost constantly at training camp. Sometimes we trained for 50 or 60 days and I would only go home for a day or two. For the first two years, our camps were held in Tehran, while in the last two years we trained in Urmia. Urmia is my hometown, and although the training camp was no more than about 20 minutes from my home, I only went home when the camp was suspended and the other athletes returned to their cities for a break.

Even during breaks, I continued training because I was highly motivated. We generally had three training sessions a day at camp, and by the time we came out of the water, it was often already dark. The training conditions were really demanding, but I knew I had to endure those difficulties to achieve my goal.

You competed in both lightweight and openweight events in a short period and even had

two finals on the same day. How did you manage your energy?

I always compete in the openweight single sculls because it is an Olympic event, but this time I competed in lightweight for the first time. To race in lightweight, I had to lose weight. I followed a strict diet, and losing weight was genuinely difficult because I have a very low body-fat percentage. Nevertheless, I lost around five kilograms. For the lightweight event, the athlete must weigh under 59kg.

The lightweight and openweight events were initially scheduled for different days, but the schedule changed and both races were held on the same day. As a result, I competed in two finals in one day.

The lightweight final was particularly demanding. The rower from Hong Kong was also fighting for gold, and we raced the full two kilometers almost neck and neck. The positions kept changing throughout the race, and at times I was second or third. Eventually, I managed to overtake my rival in the final 500 meters.

The openweight race was also very difficult. The winner was a world champion and the runner-up had an Olympic silver medal, but I managed to stay very close to them and cross the finish line.

I had prepared myself for such conditions. Our training was also extremely demanding, and we sometimes had three sessions in a single day. Afshin Farzam, the national rowing team head coach, repeatedly simulated different race conditions and pressures for us, so I was prepared both physically and mentally.

You also experienced changes in the coaching staff during your preparation. You worked with a Russian coach for a period before Mr. Farzam took charge again. How did those changes affect your performance?

After rowing separated from the Iranian Canoeing Federation, our coach changed. We worked with one coach for about a year, but unfortunately we experienced a significant decline during that period. The conditions were not good and we felt we were not making the necessary progress in training.

The arrival of the Russian coach helped us move on

from that difficult period. During the relatively short time he was in charge, he planned demanding sessions and introduced different training methods. I liked the new conditions, although many of the athletes were unhappy with the intensity of the training.

Overall, the whole team wanted to continue working with Mr. Farzam, and fortunately that happened. He took charge again and we were able to return to our previous conditions. He knows the members of the team very well and understands what type of training each athlete needs. He also keeps himself up to date scientifically and in terms of training, and we had already seen the results of his planning at various competitions.

The Paris Olympics was your first experience at the highest level of international competition. How much did it contribute to your development?

Paris helped me tremendously and changed me a lot. The level of rowing in Asia is very different from that in Europe and the United States, as is the level of the World Championships and the Olympics. Until then, we had not had much serious experience at major international competitions, so Paris was my first experience of competing at that level.

I raced several times in Paris, and that experience really shaped me and made me more experienced. Perhaps I did not achieve the result I wanted at the time, but it was extremely valuable and useful from a sporting perspective. Because of that experience, even when the competition schedule changes or I have to race twice in one day, it is no longer a major issue for me as it might have been in the past. The Paris Olympics made me much stronger mentally and physically.

You are now 24. Many believe rowers tend to mature as they gain age and experience. Do you think you are still some way from reaching your peak?

Experience is definitely very important. I think the older and more

experienced a rower becomes, the more mature they become as an athlete.

I am still young and hope that by competing more at the World Championships, I can gain more experience and reach my peak in the two years leading up to the Olympics. There are usually four major international rowing competitions each year. If we can compete in at least one or two of them annually, it could greatly help our team make history at the Olympics.

At the same time, I recorded a very good time in Nagoya and gained valuable experience, and I think I am currently at the peak of my sporting career. I have competed at two Asian Games and one Olympics.

My personal and Iranian record, which I had previously set myself, was around 7:37 when I was trying to qualify for the Paris Olympics. In Nagoya, I clocked 7:24, significantly improving my record. The world record is around 7:23, so I am now very close to it. That gives me a lot of motivation to achieve something special at the Olympics.

With these performances, expectations are high for you to win a medal at the Los Angeles Olympics. What do you think?

Definitely. My goal is to compete strongly at the Olympics and fight for the best possible medal. However, we have to be realistic because the level of competition at the world level is very different from Asia, and athletes from Europe and the United States are extremely strong.

The only way we can close the gap is to compete more at international events and regularly race against them. I hope that over the next two years we can take part in more international competitions so that we can reach our Olympic goals with greater experience and preparation.

What impact did the separation of the Rowing Federation from the Iranian Canoeing Federation have on your preparation?

Previously, the Canoeing Federation had around eight or nine different disciplines, and the budget and facilities had to be shared among all of them. After the federation was separated, there has been greater focus on our sport.

Our conditions have improved during this period. Athletes' salaries have increased, while the arrangements at training camps, including nutrition and

accommodation, have also improved. When management can focus more closely on a single sport, conditions naturally improve for the athletes. I think this greater administrative focus has been one of the factors behind the better conditions in rowing, and I hope this trend continues.

You have spoken about difficult training conditions and limitations you have faced at times. How can an athlete maintain motivation and the quality of their preparation in such circumstances?

For a professional athlete, the important thing is not to lose sight of their goal. Conditions are certainly not always ideal and there are sometimes various problems, but if you want to compete at a high level, you have to be able to adapt to the circumstances.

I try to focus on my training and my goal. Some days may be difficult, but ultimately, consistency and hard work determine the result.

You dedicated your gold medal to Iranian girls. What message do you have for young Iranian women who want to pursue their goals?

I think self-confidence is the most important thing that can help an Iranian girl achieve her goals. I would tell Iranian girls to always trust themselves and believe in themselves.

If you believe in yourself and work hard for your goal, you can certainly achieve your dreams. I dedicate this medal to all Iranian girls and hope they will pursue their goals with confidence.

With the level of competition in Asian rowing increasing, how do you see the future of Iranian women's rowing? Do you think Iran can become one of the leading powers in the sport?

The level of rowing in Asia is high, and countries in East Asia such as China are very strong. Competing against them gives us valuable experience. As we can see now, our athletes are among the medal contenders in Asia.

I think that if we can improve our facilities, training camps and participation in international competitions, we can close the gap with the best rowers in Asia.

Winning gold at these Asian Games was an important achievement, but we should not be satisfied with just one medal. We have to use this success as motivation to continue moving forward.



Iranica Desk

Iran’s Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts said the historic port of Siraf has been prioritized for inscription on UNESCO’s World Heritage List, given the historical and cultural potential of Bushehr Province.

According to IRNA, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri made the remarks while speaking to reporters at the conclusion of a two-day visit to Bushehr Province.

He said the inscription of Siraf as a World Heritage Site would bring about a major transformation in the region’s economy, employment and tourism sector. Salehi-Amiri said three nomination dossiers — Siraf, Tus and Iran’s Jaame Mosques — had been prioritized this year, but Siraf was given precedence because of the particular circumstances and potential of Bushehr Province.

Referring to the recent inscription of Alamut Castle as Iran’s 30th World Heritage site, he said 58 other sites are currently on the country’s Tentative List. He added that if UNESCO’s time restrictions on nominations were lifted, the inscription of these sites would further strengthen Iran’s position as a leading civilization in the world.

Iran advances UNESCO bid for historic Siraf Port



The minister said Iran currently has one million historical sites, 43,000 nationally registered

heritage sites and 30 sites inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Salehi-Amiri also praised Bushehr Governor General Arslan Zar’e for his performance

in the fields of cultural heritage and tourism, as well as in other areas, saying his work had

received recognition from the current government.

Describing the programs carried out during his visit, he said he had met with investors, tourism operators and trade associations in the province, listened to their concerns, and addressed some of the issues in cooperation with the provincial governor, while other matters had been referred for follow-up.

Referring to a major Tourism Week celebration held in Bushehr, Salehi-Amiri said the aim was to encourage domestic and international tourists to rediscover Iran’s southern coastline and Bushehr.

“Everything that is beautiful about Iran is reflected in Bushehr,” he said.

The minister also referred to the opening of the Raisali Delvari Museum, describing it as one of the country’s most beautiful museums following its modern redesign. He said the museum’s conceptual design and arrangement of exhibits portray the historical evolution of resistance.

He also referred to his visits to the province’s Jaame Mosque and historic castles, expressing hope that, following the necessary restoration work, these monuments would also be inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Discover hidden beauty of Jahanam Darreh

Iranica Desk

When you first hear the name Jahanam Darreh (meaning Hell Valley), the first image that may come to mind is a frightening, desolate place — somewhere that sends shivers down your spine. The reality, however, is quite different. Located near Meshginshahr, Ardabil Province, Jahanam Darreh is one of the most pristine and spectacular natural wonders in the region. Far from being devoid of life, the valley is a vibrant part of Ardabil Province’s natural landscape, where striking contrasts come together to leave visitors spellbound.

In Jahanam Darreh, rugged, seemingly lifeless rocks meet restless streams and the vivid green of wild vegetation in a remarkable natural interplay. The valley is more than simply a tourist destination; it is an experience — an encounter between people and the immense power of the earth. Here, visitors can almost hear the silence and, surrounded by towering rock walls, feel both small and connected to something much greater. For those weary of the bustle of city life, the valley offers a peaceful refuge hidden in the heart of nature.

A journey to Jahanam Darreh calls for a different way of looking at the landscape. Visitors should not approach it merely as spectators, but as explorers, taking time to discover its details. From geological layers that tell a story stretching back millions of years to plants emerging from cracks in the hard rock, every element forms part of a much larger narrative. In this report, we explore what travelers need to know for a complete visit to the area, from its geological features to recreational activities and practical considerations.

Jahanam Darreh is the product of a long and complex geological process. Set within the Sabalan Mountains, the valley has been shaped by the erosion of limestone and dolomite formations. Unlike some conventional valleys formed primarily by



rivers, Jahanam Darreh bears the imprint of both water and wind erosion. Over the course of countless ages, flowing water and repeated temperature changes have carved deep fissures into the mountains. The layered structure of the rocks reflects different periods of geological change, with each layer preserving part of the earth’s history.

But anyone who imagines the area as nothing more than rock would be mistaken. Jahanam Darreh is home to a sensitive and distinctive ecosystem. Many of the wild plants found here are native to the region and have developed a remarkable ability to withstand the dry conditions and cold mountain climate. Medicinal plants and wildflowers that add splashes of color to the landscape in spring are all part of this ecosystem. The area also provides shelter for numerous bird species and small animals that have remained largely undisturbed by human activity.

For photography enthusiasts, Jahanam Darreh is an extraordinary natural studio. The interplay of light and shadow along its towering walls, particularly around sunrise and sunset, creates scenes that are difficult to replicate elsewhere. Long shadows cast by the cliffs across the valley floor and reflections of the sky in the river offer exceptional opportunities for photography. Hikers and mountaineers can also explore a variety of routes



and enjoy panoramic views from the edges of the valley. Because a trip to Jahanam Darreh is far from an ordinary walk, proper equipment is essential for both safety and comfort. Visitors should avoid heading into the area in ordinary city clothing. Sturdy hiking boots with slip-resistant soles should be a top priority, particularly on wet rocks. A properly fitted backpack, layered clothing to cope with sudden changes in mountain temperatures, and trekking poles for balance on steep sections are also recommended. Travelers should also carry bags for collecting their waste and take all rubbish back with them. Those planning to spend a full day in Jahanam Darreh should start early. Arriving in the morning provides an opportunity to see the valley covered in early mist and listen to the gentle sound of the river. The first part



of the day can be devoted to hiking and exploring the lower sections of the valley. Around midday, visitors can take a break at a safe location beside the river and enjoy the surrounding landscape. The afternoon can then be dedicated to photographing the sunset, when warm light washes over the rocky walls. Visitors should always begin their return journey well before darkness sets in. Choosing the right season is also important, both for the quality of the experience and for safety. For those hoping to see nature at its most vibrant, spring is an excellent time to visit. As the snow melts from the mountain slopes, fresh vegetation and colorful wildflowers transform the valley. Soft sunlight falling across the rocky walls creates an almost dreamlike setting for photography. At the same time, visitors should exercise caution,

as melting snow can make some routes slippery. By late spring and early summer, Jahanam Darreh reaches another high point in its appeal. This period is particularly attractive to hikers and mountaineers, as temperatures become more moderate and the risks associated with slippery trails and unstable conditions generally decrease. The river continues to flow strongly, while temperatures remain comfortable enough for extended walks. For travelers hoping to spend hours among the valley’s cliffs without the extremes of sudden cold or oppressive heat, early summer can provide favorable conditions.

Other seasons require greater caution. In autumn, the changing colors can make the landscape especially striking, but shorter days mean darkness arrives earlier than expected, making time management crucial. Winter visits, meanwhile, are best left to highly experienced travelers equipped for severe mountain conditions. Ice-covered rocks and snowfall can make the routes extremely difficult and hazardous. Checking the weather forecast carefully before setting out is therefore essential.

A trip to Jahanam Darreh does not have to end with a hike among the rocks. The area forms part of a broader and diverse tourism network in Ardabil Province, and visitors can enrich their journey by exploring at-

tractions around Meshginshahr. After the exertion of hiking through the valley’s rugged terrain, travelers can visit the hot springs of Meshginshahr. With gentle steam rising into the surrounding air, the springs offer an opportunity to rest and unwind after a day outdoors. Soaking in the mineral-rich waters can provide a welcome break before reflecting on the day’s adventures in Hell Valley.

For those seeking an experience beyond nature and relaxation, the region also offers a rich historical heritage. Meshginshahr and its surrounding areas are home to numerous archaeological and historical sites. Among the best-known attractions is the Meshginshahr Suspension Bridge, an impressive modern structure that offers an exciting experience for visitors as well as striking views of the surrounding valleys and landscape.

Another important attraction is Qahqaheh Castle. With its distinctive architecture and dramatic setting, the historic fortress offers visitors a glimpse into the region’s past. Built high on a hill, the castle also commands sweeping views of the surrounding plains.

Together, these attractions can transform a simple excursion into a broader journey of discovery. Visitors can begin the day with an adventure in Jahanam Darreh, unwind afterward in the hot springs, and then take in the scale of the suspension bridge and the history of Qahqaheh Castle.

To complete the experience, travelers can also visit the archaeological site of Shahr-e Yeri. Its stone figures, carvings and other archaeological remains offer an introduction to the ancient civilizations that once inhabited the region.

In this way, a trip around Meshginshahr can encompass many different dimensions of the landscape — from the excitement of rugged nature and the relaxation of mineral springs to the depth and mystery of ancient history.



Minister proposes five-year roadmap to cement Iran-Pakistan cultural, tourism ties



Iranian Culture, Heritage and Tourism Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri (c) and Pakistan's Ambassador to Iran Imran Ahmed Siddiqui (2nd l) pose for a photo at Tehran's Saadabad Cultural-Historical Complex on October 3, 2026.

● ANA

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian Culture, Heritage and Tourism Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri proposed on Saturday a five-year roadmap to deepen cultural and tourism cooperation with Pakistan, seeking to move ties beyond periodic exchanges and towards more structured and practical cooperation. Salehi-Amiri made the proposal during a

meeting with Pakistan's Ambassador to Iran Imran Ahmed Siddiqui at Tehran's Saadabad Cultural-Historical Complex, IRNA reported. He said political and economic relations would gain greater depth when built on the two countries' longstanding cultural ties. The minister said cultural affinity meant the scope for cooperation was much

greater than its current level and that their historic and cultural links should not be allowed to break. "Our specific proposal is to draw up a five-year roadmap in the fields of culture and tourism and move forward with its implementation step by step," Salehi-Amiri said. He said the plan should help people in both countries learn more about each other's civilizations, cultures and tourism potential. Iran, the minister added, could use media, social networks and influential public figures to showcase its attractions in Pakistan, including by inviting people with millions of followers to visit and share their experiences.

He also called for stronger links between tourism agencies to develop joint tours and increase tourist exchanges. Salehi-Amiri said Iran should examine why Pakistan has a smaller share of its tourism market even though many Iranian tourists travel to Turkey and other neighboring countries. He proposed creating a joint cultural tourism route featuring the historical, cultural and natural attractions of both countries, including Pakistani cities such as Lahore and Peshawar. He also proposed reciprocal exhibitions, saying Iran could hold an exhibition in Tehran highlighting Pakistan's cultural and historical heritage, while Pakistan could promote Iran's attractions to its own public. Salehi-Amiri said Iran holds numerous works and documents related to Pakistan in its cultural and museum collections, including gifts presented by former Pakistani presidents. Siddiqui said Iran and Pakistan already had extensive contacts and travel between their peoples but had yet to make full use of those links.

"Removing barriers and making people more familiar with tourism destinations in both countries was important," he said. The ambassador said Pakistan was planning an exhibition in Iran titled "Pakistan Through Time", displaying different periods of the country's history and culture. He also proposed a discussion on Pakistan's history, culture, cultural heritage and shared links with Iran alongside the exhibition. Siddiqui said existing memorandums and agreements should move from documents to implementation and that cooperation should not be limited to exchanges of official delegations. He called for lasting links between institutions, provinces, Pakistani states, and cultural and tourism organizations. The envoy said he planned to meet Iran's deputy culture and tourism minister this week or next week to follow up on the proposals, while continuing consultations with Pakistani tourism officials. "Our goal is to move relations between Iran and Pakistan from agreements and talks to practical action," Siddiqui said.

Iran turns to AI, satellite data in push for homegrown space economy

FEATURE REPORT

Iran is seeking to turn its growing satellite capabilities into practical services and a domestic space economy, using artificial intelligence to process imagery, predict technical failures and build platforms that can make satellite data more accessible to researchers, businesses and government agencies. At the center of the effort is "RAZ", a national platform for monitoring and processing Earth-observation data being developed by the Iranian Space Research Center (ISRC), bringing together years of work by Iranian researchers in remote sensing. The ISRC is also developing "Iran-Zamin", a domestic platform described by its acting head Nader Makari as an Iranian version of Google Earth, as Tehran seeks to make greater use of its own satellite resources. "The projects are part of a broader shift in the center's approach," Makari said at a news conference attended by Iran Daily in Tehran on Saturday, from developing space technology for its own sake towards technologies designed around practical needs and the creation of a sustainable space economy. "Artificial intelligence is being used across that chain, rather than simply to analyze satellite imagery," Makari said. Researchers are applying locally developed AI algorithms to improve image resolution, predict potential failures and correct them, while also using the technology in satellite constellation design, communications systems, navigation and algorithm development. One application is "super-resolution", which can enhance the detail available in satellite images. The ISRC is also developing algorithms that can anticipate technical problems and help correct them, potentially reducing the risks associated with expensive

space missions. RAZ, whose name refers to "monitoring information about the Earth", is designed to support both optical and synthetic aperture radar, or SAR, satellite data. It will provide advanced processing and analysis tools and could also serve as a platform for universities and researchers to develop and test their own AI algorithms using space data. The ISRC is also developing a geoportal that would allow users to search for, view, order and receive satellite images and remote-sensing products online. Makari said the archive of imagery from Iran's Khayyam Earth-observation satellite was also available to the center and would serve as a strategic source of data for both RAZ and Iran-Zamin. "The demonstration version of Iran-Zamin has been completed and is due to be unveiled at a later stage," Makari said. He added that the system was being developed in response to repeated interruptions to Google Earth's service for users in Iran. The push is not limited to mapping and imagery. The center has developed two three-dimensional simulation software systems designed to recreate conditions a satellite could face in space before launch. "The systems can also be used after launch as support tools at mission-control centers," Makari said, helping researchers test scenarios on the ground and reduce the financial and operational risks of failed missions. The ISRC is also seeking to expand the use of satellite data beyond the space sector itself. A newly established applications research center is expected to work on monitoring, supervision and forecasting for industries and government agencies, with potential uses ranging from monitoring mines and agricultural land to managing water resources, tracking drought

and land subsidence and monitoring urban development. The strategy also includes a push towards a domestic navigation constellation. Makari said the center had drawn up a national navigation strategy that envisaged combining a homegrown constellation with newer navigation techniques, including augmentation, complementary systems and signals of opportunity. "Researchers are already working on the infrastructure required for the plan, with part of the strategy expected to be put into operation next year," he said. The program has continued despite damage sustained by the ISRC during recent attacks. "Buildings were damaged and some equipment was destroyed," Makari said, but the center resumed operations within a short period. Some projects have also been redesigned to reflect new requirements, including liquid-fuel systems under the Saman program and constellation-related technologies under the Nahid program. Makari said resilience and passive defense had become integral parts of the design of new projects and infrastructure. Among the center's strategic projects are the Pars-3 remote-sensing satellite, the Nahid-3 telecommunications satellite, the Saman orbital transfer block and technologies for building satellite constellations. The broader objective, however, is to ensure that such technologies generate services and economic value on Earth. Makari said the ISRC wanted to identify the real needs of government agencies and other users first and then develop satellites and technologies accordingly. It is therefore increasing cooperation with government bodies and users of space-based services and working on dedicated satellites for organizations



Nader Makari, acting head of the Iranian Space Research Center, holds a press conference in Tehran, Iran, on October 3, 2026.

● IRAN DAILY

that require them. The center also wants private companies and knowledge-based firms to gain greater access to raw and processed space data so they can develop value-added systems and services for customers. "Part of the funding for future technology development could eventually come from orders and budgets provided by users of those services, as well as private investment," Makari said. That would mark a change in the role envisaged for the ISRC: from building satellites and developing technology to creating a wider ecosystem in which satellite data can be processed, delivered and turned into services for agriculture, water management, mining, urban planning and other parts of the economy. For the center, the challenge will be to convert its growing stock of satellite technology and data into applications that users can access reliably and that can support a sustainable space economy.

Pulsing arteries amid ...

By ingeniously combining an Ultrasonic Reactor and a Steam Catalytic Oxidation Reactor, this technology offered a technological and economic response to one of the most complex refining and environmental problems of the current century. The AQP process succeeded in reducing the sulfur content of heavy fuel oil to international standards without the need for the extremely heavy operational conditions, exhausting hydrogen pressures, and exorbitant costs typical of conventional hydrotreating. This event delivered a clear message to the

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international scientific and industrial community: military siege and threats not only failed to stop the wheels of Iran's oil industry but elevated the country from a buyer of technical knowledge to a license holder and a pioneer in novel refining technologies. Exposing Psychological Warfare and the Solidity of Financial Transparency Alongside the field confrontation, a heavy media war was organized to target the structures of Iran's energy trade. The designers of this campaign attempted to distort the legitimacy of the country's energy commerce by spinning

narratives around concepts like "trustees," "traders," and "sanction-evasion mechanisms," implying that foreign exchange revenues were not returning to the country. The truth, however, is that the mechanism for selling oil and derivatives during these sensitive times was a vital lifeline for the country's economic survival against maritime piracy and international economic terrorism. The energy command structure, in coordination with regulatory bodies and the judiciary, placed every potential violation, error, or abuse under the microscope with

decisiveness and zero tolerance, ensuring not even one dollar of the Iranian people's interests was lost. The stable flow of currency from energy exports confirms that the poisonous arrows of this media war also hit the rocks.

Looking Ahead: The Necessity of Strengthening Bonds within the Persian Gulf Holding

The triumphant experience of passing through these sensitive junctures showed that the primary key to survival and progress is "internal cohesion." Wherever executive, research, and admin-

istrative branches moved under a single, empathetic command, the impossible became possible. Today, the greatest economic driver and symbol of convergence in the country's petrochemical industry is the Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Holding. This massive holding is the beating heart of wealth production, value creation, and channeling export revenues into the nation's arteries. Therefore, preserving and elevating the achievements of the "Defense Era" in the energy sector dictates that President Masoud Pezeshkian, has taken a direct and special view toward consol-

idating unity and synergy within the management and shareholder pillars of this major holding. Iran's oil industry has emerged from the storms of fire, terror, sanctions, and threats more robust and technologically advanced than ever before. An army of specialists, researchers, and unsung heroes, under the banner of compassionate and field-ready energy command, proved that oil in Iran is not merely an extracted hydrocarbon; it is a symbol of resilience, technical intelligence, and the unwavering determination of a nation to live with dignity.