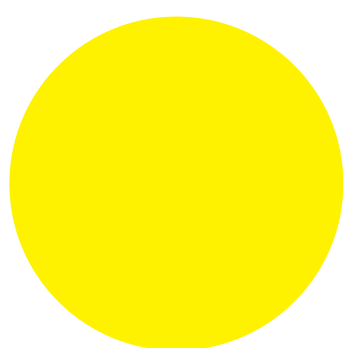


Farhadi lashes out at Hollywood's 'white savior' view of Iran
'Who asked you to come and save us?'



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President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) chairs a meeting of the government's economic coordination taskforce in Tehran, Iran, on October 4, 2026.
● president.ir

Iran, US: equations & considerations



By **Morad Enadi**
International affairs expert

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

How will the escalating tensions between Iran and the United States develop in the period ahead of the US congressional mid-term elections on November 3?

Contrary to the view of some analysts that US President Donald Trump will not launch a new military attack before the elections and will wait for the outcome of the midterms, it appears that he may start a new round of war before the congressional elections. Based on a cost-benefit approach and what can be seen as his business-oriented personality, in which profit and winning are important considerations, Trump may seek to reap the political benefits of a new conflict at the ballot box.

Against this backdrop, the escalation of the war of words and Trump's increasingly harsh rhetoric, together with the concentration of military equipment in the region, make the resumption of a new round of US attacks appear highly likely if the current situation and regional conditions continue. In fact, by embarking on a new adventure, which he would describe as bigger than the previous one, Trump would seek to use extensive media coverage and repeated posts on social media to portray the new conflict as an achievement and a victory. Another important point is the strong possibility of Israel joining the United States at this stage. Netanyahu, like Trump, has a strong need to find a way out of the current situation and move beyond the complicated equation created by the confrontation with Iran.

There is little doubt that Netanyahu has a strong need to restore Israel's image, particularly in view of the decline in the standing of Israel and its government among countries around the world.

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Speaker says Strait of Hormuz will not reopen until conditions are met

International Desk

Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said on Sunday that the Strait of Hormuz will not reopen until seven Iranian conditions set out in a June interim agreement with the US are met.

Iran presented a proposal during the UN General Assembly under which the Strait of Hormuz waterway could be reopened and normal maritime passage restored within seven days if the conditions were met, with the US replying to this proposal last week via Qatari intermediaries.

"The position of the Islamic Republic of Iran is completely clear and firm, and the Strait of Hormuz will not be opened until our seven conditions, based on the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding, are met," Qalibaf, who is Iran's top negotiator, said during an address to the parliament.

"The Americans, who speak one way in the media, have recently been submitting proposals through mediators. But

they must understand that the era of dragging out the (diplomatic) process and dictating one-sided demands is over," he stated.

Outlining Iran's dual-track approach to the ongoing US-Israeli war of aggression, Qalibaf affirmed that the nation operates on a strategy of "authority and rationality," ensuring it is neither overly excited by diplomatic maneuvers nor intimidated by military threats.

"We fight, and we negotiate," he said. "We are present with full power in the military battlefield and will confront the enemy with new surprises. Simultaneously, we use the tool of diplomacy to consolidate our military superiority and impose the rights of the Iranian nation."

The strategically vital waterway was largely closed during the war on Iran, severely disrupting regional maritime traffic and placing further pressure on energy shipments.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei said on Sunday that Tehran had clarified its broad positions



An aerial view shows ships anchored off the coast of Khasab in Oman's Musandam Governorate, near the Strait of Hormuz, on October 2, 2026.

● AFP

via mediators to the US response but that additional points remained to be communicated to Washington.

"The Americans' propositions are more or less in line with their previous positions, specifically on the nuclear issue. We told them our focus in this stage is the issue of the Strait of Hormuz and the return to security in this waterway requires clear steps from the US," Baqaei said.

He also denied Tehran had offered UN nuclear watchdog inspections of its nuclear facilities in exchange for US sanctions relief, saying Iran had not entered into nuclear discussions with Washington.

The document being circulated outlines a seven-day period of trust-building



aimed at returning the two sides to an enhanced version of the memorandum of understanding agreed in June, including concrete steps on Iran's nuclear program, an official briefed on the talks

said last week, according to Reuters. The disagreement centers on the sequencing of the steps rather than the components of the plan, the official added.

Araghchi: There is no military solution to end aggression against Iran

International Desk

Iran's top diplomat insisted on Sunday that there would be no military solution to the United States' aggression against Iran, with talks on ending the conflict apparently at an impasse. "If our enemies again choose the path of military confrontation, our response will be stronger than before, and we will defend ourselves with even more force," Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said at a gathering of foreign ambassadors and heads of foreign and international missions.

At the same time, the diplomatic door remains open, with Tehran prepared to negotiate an end to the war if the other side chooses diplomacy rather than military action, the foreign minister said.

New US sanctions would not produce results either, according to Araghchi, who rejected both military pressure and additional sanctions as solutions. "There is no military solution, nor any solution based on new sanctions," he continued, adding "only negotiations based on justice and fairness" could end the conflict.

Araghchi also said that the Iranian delegation's presence in New York during the United Nations General Assembly was "very strong and very effective," particularly because Tehran



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi speaks in a meeting with foreign ambassadors and heads of international missions in Tehran, Iran, on October 4, 2026.

● IRNA

presented its seven-day proposal for resolving the dispute with the US.

"If accepted, the Strait of Hormuz will be reopened within seven days," he explained, referring to the proposal as a diplomatic route toward ending the war.

Iran has since received Washington's official response to the seven-day proposal through diplomatic channels, although the details of the US position have not been made public. The foreign minister also said renewed contacts with Persian Gulf states were "effective, respectful and friendly," adding that a new path toward "trust, peace, stability and security" has begun.

The two sides agreed a memorandum of understanding in June that spelled out a framework for a permanent resolution, but the US violations of the terms of the agreement prompted a return to war.

Iran has closed the Strait of Hormuz since the start of the war, striking vessels that attempt to transit without its authorization.

The US has imposed its own counterblockade of Iranian ports, and has also struck vessels it accuses of violating it.

On Sunday, the British maritime security agency UKMT0 said a tanker in the Hormuz "reported being struck by an unknown projectile, causing damage to the engine room", though the crew were reported safe and no environmental impact was recorded. Iranian and US officials last week held indirect talks on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

Iran has demanded, among other things, a ceasefire across the Middle East, the unfreezing of its assets abroad, the lifting of sanctions on its oil sector and an end to the US naval blockade.

Trump, however, rejected the proposal, while leaving the door open both to further talks or renewed military operations.

Iran: US withdrawal from Iraq vital step toward consolidating Baghdad's independence

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry called the US withdrawal from Iraq a vital step toward consolidating the Arab country's national sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence.

The ministry in a statement on Saturday congratulated the people and government of Iraq on the withdrawal of American forces and other foreign troops after more than two decades of disastrous military presence.

It said the 23-year tragedy of the US and allied military presence began with Washington's aggression against Iraq on March 20, 2003, launched under the false pretext of eliminating "weapons of mass destruction."

The statement recalled the irreparable consequences of that occupation for Iraq and the wider region, such as the killing of more than one million Iraqis, including tens of thousands of innocent women and children; material damage amounting to several hundred billion dollars to Iraq's civilian, security and governmental infrastructure; environmental destruction; and heinous war crimes, including the torture of Iraqi men and women at Abu Ghraib prison. It also said the occupation laid the groundwork for Takfiri terrorism and the rise of Daesh in Iraq and neighboring countries.



It noted that the military presence of the United States and its allies across the region has produced nothing but violence, insecurity, division and terrorism.

The statement came after a US-led coalition deployed in Iraq more than a decade ago under the pretext of fighting the Daesh terrorist group completed its withdrawal from Iraq on September 30, with the last troops leaving a base in Erbil under an agreement between Baghdad and Washington.

The US invaded Iraq in March 2003 to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime. The collusion of the US and its allies withdrew their troops in December 2011, but returned in 2014 after Daesh seized large swathes of territory, committed massacres and forced thousands of women and children into slavery. The group was defeated in Iraq in 2017 and in Syria in 2019, but coalition forces stayed on to battle the group's remnants.

Saudi Arabia launches fresh airstrikes on Yemen

International Desk

Saudi Arabia reportedly launched airstrikes on Yemen on Sunday, wounding at least two people in the northern governorates of al-Jawf and Saada as the conflict between the two sites intensifies.

Yemen's resistance forces also confirmed attacks on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities on Sunday.

Ansarullah's military spokesman Yahya Saree said the group launched a ballistic missile and drone attack on Saudi energy giant Aramco's sites in capital Riyadh and the oil-rich Khurais area in the kingdom's east.

"Both operations successfully achieved their objectives," the spokesman said in a statement posted on X. "The strikes were precise, causing large fires at the targeted sites."

Aramco remains the flagship company of the Saudi economy and one of the largest firms in the world by market capitalization.

Yemen's Saudi-backed forces also announced new operation on Sunday to retake all territory held by resistance forces, even as the resistance group made fresh gains on the ground.

The announcement sets an ambitious goal for the embattled government, which recently lost large swathes of the country's Red Sea coastline and areas around the Bab al-Mandab Strait – a chokepoint for international shipping – after a lightning offensive by the resistance forces.

"I announce today the start of military operations to retake the remaining territories of the republic and extend the authority of the state and its institutions across the entire national

territory," Rashad al-Alimi, the head of Yemen's presidential council, said in a statement.

Alimi called on all the armed forces "to begin carrying out their assigned missions, in accordance with the approved plans".

The statement came just hours after the Houthis cut a vital supply route linking the besieged city of Taiz with Aden, according to four security sources.

The Ansarullah's advance followed days of heavy fighting in and around the city. After several years of calm, Yemen was plunged back into war in July, pitting Ansarullah, who control most of north-west Yemen including Sana'a, against Yemen's Saudi-backed forces.

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



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Enemy’s economic war goals failed: *President*

Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said that Iran has not allowed the objectives of the United States and Israel in their economic war to be realized. The president made the remarks on his social media account, attributing the success of the country’s resilience to God’s grace, the people’s support and the “measures of our colleagues in the government”. “The government has adopted a new arrangement to manage the special conditions,” said Pezeshkian, adding that the enemy’s plan in recent months has been to cut the country’s vital arteries with the aim of pressuring the noble Iranian people.

Cabinet adopts new economic posture

To further strengthen the management of Iran’s special circumstances, the administration has adopted a new economic posture with plans focusing on foreign exchange market developments, budget resources and expenditures, and essential goods supplies. A meeting of the Economic Coordination Headquarters, held on Saturday evening and chaired by President Pezeshkian, reviewed the latest economic indicators and key issues, with economic officials stressing the need for greater coordination, coherent



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (C) chairs a meeting of the Economic Coordination Headquarters on October 3, 2026. [president.ir](#)

decision-making and stronger executive capacity to manage the current situation. Economic officials and deputies from several executive bodies presented updated reports on the areas under their management and emphasized the adoption of integrated policies. The Ministry of Economy presented a report on the government’s financial situation and requirements for managing resources under the current special circumstances.

Given the wartime conditions, changes in oil and tax revenues, and the need to continue providing public services and financing the country’s essential needs, the report stressed the need to make targeted use of available capacities, enhance coordination in fiscal policies and design implementation mechanisms suited to the new conditions. The Plan and Budget Organization also presented a seven-point proposed package aimed at managing the current situation,

strengthening coordination among economic policies and creating new capacities to help the country overcome the challenges ahead in a more orderly and less costly manner. Another part of the meeting focused in detail on developments in the foreign exchange market and recent fluctuations. Various aspects of the market, factors affecting foreign currency supply and demand, and policy requirements in this area were examined.

Iran ready to launch 3 satellite of Shahid Soleimani constellation: *Minister*

Economy Desk

Iran is preparing to take a major step toward developing satellite constellations, with three satellites set to be unveiled and launched as part of the country’s expanding space program, says the country’s minister of information and communications technology. Sattar Hashemi said three of the 24 satellites in the country’s Shahid Soleimani constellation are ready, which will be unveiled during the Islamic Revolution celebrations in February 2027 and placed into orbit before March 20, marking a shift toward satellite constellations, according to IRNA. Hashemi called for space policymaking to move from a supply-driven approach toward demand-driven development. He said technology is more valuable when users and societal needs are considered. Satellite networks will not replace terrestrial infrastructure and fiber-optic networks, Hashemi said, adding that Iran’s fiber rollout aims to strengthen fixed networks. “Satellite technology remains important for communications and remote sensing, including land management, water monitoring and mining,” he noted.



Hashemi said advances in launch vehicles should also be viewed through an economic lens, as launch costs account for a major share of expenses. Deploying multiple satellites per launch and developing reusable launch vehicles can reduce costs, he said, praising contributors including martyred IRGC aerospace commander General Amir-Ali Hajizadeh.

Pars-2 satellite also primed for blastoff

The head of Iran’s Space Agency said the Pars-2 satellite, an advanced version of the Paya satellite, has been completed with imaging accuracy better than three meters and has been placed on the launch schedules. Hassan Salarieh, speaking at a ceremony marking Space Week at the Ministry of

Iran’s Minister of Information and Communications Technology Sattar Hashemi (R) and the head of the country’s Space Agency Hassan Salarieh reveal a student space program at a ceremony marking Space Week on October 4, 2026. [ALIREZA MASOUMI/ISNA](#)

Communications and Information Technology, pointed to progress in the country’s space industry, Mehr reported. On recent achievements, Salarieh said Iran’s first telecommunications satellite, Nahid-2, was successfully placed in orbit, and most of its tests were successfully completed. He noted that another major success was the consolidation of space launch vehicles, including the performance of the Qaem-100 satellite carrier. He said the Chamran satellite’s performance was fully successful. Salarieh referred to heavy launches, saying the next success was the launch of the heaviest payload by the Simorgh satellite carrier. He said the simulator software test for the Saman orbital transfer block was carried out with the Simorgh carrier. The Saman block, more advanced versions of which are under construction, plays a major role in reaching high orbits.

Iran to roll out direct cargo clearance

Iran’s Economy Ministry is set to implement a “direct cargo transport” plan aimed at facilitating trade, reducing cargo dwell times and speeding up the movement of goods across the country’s borders. Morteza Zamanian, deputy Economy Minister for Economic Policy, said the regulation for implementing the scheme will be announced next week as part of the government’s new plans to facilitate trade and reduce the time goods remain at border crossings, Tasnim reported.

Under the scheme, trucks carrying export and import cargo will no longer have to wait in long queues at border crossings, while customs procedures for the goods will be carried out at inland customs offices. The deputy minister also announced that new policies would ease unnecessary restrictions on importers’ access to foreign currency, saying the approach was aimed at increasing flexibility and speeding up the supply of goods.



ECONOMIC LENS

Pakistan’s hidden opportunity in US-Israeli war on Iran?

By Golzar Aghaei
Economic policy specialist

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

Pakistan is not a direct beneficiary of a war between Iran and the United States/Israel; the evidence presented in this piece consistently shows that the conflict would create risks in energy, trade, border security, and financial areas for Islamabad, while any gains would be indirect, limited, and conditional. Pakistan faces macroeconomic fragility, heavy energy dependence, and recurring IMF reliance, but it can still seek limited diplomatic advantage from regional turbulence if it preserves room for maneuver.

Pakistan’s current position

Pakistan enters any external shock from a position of macroeconomic fragility. The country remains exposed to inflationary pressure, energy dependence, and recurring external financing needs. Recent research describes Pakistan’s inflation as persistently high, with one study reporting 30.78% inflation in 2023 and another noting 37% in 2024. IMF dependence is also a recurring feature: one source notes 23 IMF packages between 1958 and 2023, including the \$6.5 billion 2019 program and the \$3 billion 2023 Stand-By Arrangement.

Energy remains a central vulnerability. Pakistan’s economy is described as highly exposed to imported fuel and fuel price shocks, while studies on Pakistan’s macroeconomic stability and climate stress repeatedly emphasize the importance of energy imports, oil prices, and inflation in shaping growth and stability. In this context, any war that threatens Persian Gulf shipping, raises insurance costs, or intensifies oil volatility would worsen Pakistan’s macroeconomic position rather than improve it.

Who benefits from war, and where Pakistan fits

The clearest beneficiaries of the US/Israeli war against Iran do not include Pakistan but rather actors seeking tactical pressure on Iran and actors that profit from volatility in energy and shipping markets. Global energy and transit actors are a mixed case: they may see temporary gains from price spikes, but they also face higher insurance, transport, and supply-chain risk. Pakistan does not appear as a direct war winner. Instead, the limited upside for Pakistan is political and diplomatic. From this vantage point, Pakistan’s “benefit” lies in diplomatic optionality, not in war itself.

Second, the more conditional benefit is that regional instability can strengthen the logic of connectivity and energy diversification projects if tensions later ease; the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline and CPEC are examples of projects whose value rises under détente, not under war. This means any economic upside is really a peace dividend deferred, not a war dividend.

Domestic beneficiaries inside Pakistan

Within Pakistan, the discourse identifies a few domestic factors that may gain politically from external crisis. The military and security establishment appear as the strongest internal beneficiaries because heightened external threat tends to reinforce their central role in policy and state management. Bureaucratic and political actors dependent on external finance also benefit from the leverage created by crisis since Pakistan’s reliance on IMF and foreign support increases the bargaining power of certain domestic intermediaries. In addition, security-oriented political factions may use external tension to justify securitization and internal mobilization.

Why the fading India shadow matters

The “diminishing shadow” of war with India matters because it slightly widens Pakistan’s strategic space. When Indo-Pak tensions are less dominant, Pakistan can shift attention from a purely security-driven posture toward geo-economics, connectivity, and diversified diplomacy. In other words, a softer India threat allows Pakistan to treat the Iran crisis as a diplomatic balancing problem instead of a full-spectrum existential security emergency. The war between Iran and the United States/Israel creates risks for Pakistan’s energy security, trade flows, border stability, and financial resilience. The only plausible benefits are indirect: more room for neutrality, mediation, and future connectivity projects if tensions later de-escalate. The easing of Pakistan-India war anxieties modestly improves this flexibility, but it does not convert conflict into an economic opportunity. Pakistan’s real gains lie in stability, cheaper energy, and regional integration. This paper is the second in a series on the political economy of the US-Israeli war. In the following issues, we will examine in detail the role of each beneficiary country. Turkey will be the second country examined in detail (Report 3).

Excavation points to iron-smelting at Iran's Malemoun site



By Alireza Sepahvand
Freelance journalist

REPORT EXCLUSIVE

Archaeological excavations at the historic site of Malemoun, in the Gilvand Rud Valley near Masouleh, northern Iran, have uncovered architectural and industrial remains related to the smelting and processing of iron ore. They have also made it possible to achieve a partial understanding of how those early people produced iron.

The excavations were carried out in September 2026 under the direction of Dr. Ali-Akbar Vahdati, with the supervision of the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism (RICT) as well as the Iranian Center for Archaeological Research (ICAR). Three trenches were opened by the team in the Gilvand Rud Valley to examine architectural remains and look for evidence of metalworking.

Trench 1, measuring 5 × 5 meters, revealed a stone-paved surface used for industrial purposes. A deeper excavation of about 230 centimeters showed that the site had at least two phases of occupation. The evidence from the first phase points to a mainly residential settlement, while in the second phase, industrial work and iron smelting probably became one of the site's main pursuits.

A large quantity of iron slag, furnace fragments and remains, and crushed pieces of raw iron ore was recovered from this trench. Preliminary studies show that some of the ore, including hematite and limonite, was crushed and prepared on site before smelting. These remains may shed important light on the stages of raw-material preparation and on how metalworking was organized spatially at the site.

Trench 2, measuring 4 × 5 meters, exposed the remains of a residential architectural complex. In some sections, its stone



The photo shows one of the trenches that was dug at Malemoun archeological site near Masouleh, northern Iran.
● IRAN DAILY

walls survive to a height of about 160 centimeters and, in terms of preservation, rank among the notable examples of stone architecture in the region. Associated with this architecture was a collection of plain and glazed pottery, dating mainly to the Timurid and Safavid periods and also to the Qajar period, along with a number of copper and iron objects.

The architecture and finds from this trench suggest that the earliest phase of occupation at Malemoun was probably mainly residential. The presence of a small quantity of iron slag from this phase, however, indicates that the inhabitants were familiar with the region's mineral resources.

Trench 3, measuring 3 × 2 me-

ters, revealed the remains of an iron-smelting furnace. The furnace consists of a rectangular stone structure whose inner stone walls had melted and fused under intense heat. The surrounding soil had also been strongly affected by heat and had become discolored. A considerable quantity of iron slag of different types, along with numerous fragments of mineral-bearing rocks containing iron minerals, was recovered around the structure. The variety of the slag may reflect different stages or conditions of smelting and furnace operation, and a detailed study of these remains may help reconstruct the iron-production technology used at the site.

Before the excavations, geophysical investigations had been conducted at Malemoun by Shahid Beheshti University, under the direction of professor Kourosh Mohammadkhani, to identify magnetic anomalies. The results revealed several large anomalies in different parts of the site,

suggesting the possible presence of structures associated with iron-smelting furnaces.

This year's excavations, by uncovering furnace remains, iron slag and other evidence of metalworking, confirmed that metallurgical work took place at the site.

Taken together, the evidence from the three trenches suggests that occupation at Malemoun probably began in the Timurid period, and especially in the Safavid period, while ironworking in the area — particularly in the late Safavid and Qajar periods — grew into one of the region's concentrated centers of iron smelting.

The Malemoun site lies in the Gilvand Rud Valley, amid dense forest and near the Malemoun



The excavation team and locals pose for a photo above one of the trenches at Malemoun archeological site near Masouleh, northern Iran.
● IRAN DAILY



and Khelellun rivers. Its proximity to the iron-ore deposits of Asman-Kuh — known locally as "Asenkouh" or "Iron Mountain" — together with access to water and extensive forest cover for wood and charcoal, created favorable conditions for settlement and for the growth of iron production in this part of Gilan Province.

Earlier archaeological work around the village of Masouleh has also shown that iron extraction, smelting and processing are distributed across more than 30 nearby areas. The growing number of sites tied to iron production and processing points to an extensive network of iron-production sites in the region. The number of sites that could be investigated through a systematic program is also considerable.

The excavation of Malemoun, one of the important ironworking sites within the Cultural Landscape of Masouleh, is particularly significant because it offers a chance to study, at the same time, the sequence of occupation, the architecture, the spatial organization of industrial work, iron-ore preparation, smelting furnaces and the remains of the iron-production process.

Continued archaeological work and specialized studies of the furnaces, slags, mineral-bearing rocks and abandoned iron mines can lead to a more precise understanding of iron-production technology and the production chain, the scale of industrial work, and how that work was organized in the Gilvand Rud Valley. Such studies can also deepen our understanding of the role of the iron industry in the economic and social formation and development of the Masouleh region. The results of the Malemoun excavations further demonstrate the site's considerable potential for continued archaeological research and for reconstructing the spatial organization and technological processes of iron production within the Cultural Landscape of Masouleh. Such research can contribute significantly to understanding one of the most important economic and industrial dimensions of the region's history.

Mostafa Pourali, director of the Masouleh World Heritage nomination dossier, also commented on the excavations in the Gilvand Rud area.

"Archaeological studies focusing on the identification of ironworking sites and ancient iron-smelting furnaces within the Cultural Landscape of Masouleh have been carried out over the past several years as part of the revision of the Masouleh World Heritage nomination dossier, and the completion of its studies," he said.

In this context, joint studies and excavations have been conducted by Iranian archaeologists and archaeologists from China in the Khanbaji Sara area.

"The distribution and extent of these areas throughout the Cultural Landscape of Masouleh indicate the existence of an extensive network of ironworking sites across the landscape," Pourali further maintained.



Taken together, the evidence from the three trenches suggests that occupation at Malemoun probably began in the Timurid period, and especially in the Safavid period, while ironworking in the area — particularly in the late Safavid and Qajar periods — grew into one of the region's concentrated centers of iron smelting.

By Sebastian Usher
Middle East analyst,
reporter

OPINION

Recent international conflicts raised again the question of why it is so hard to hold actors accountable for the destruction of buildings and objects with real cultural significance. Bijan Rouhani, a senior researcher at the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa project, says that the legal framework may be strong on paper but in practice it almost inevitably falls short. "No state actor has ever been tried for this offence. The obstacle is no longer evidence. We have satellite imagery, remote sensing and monitoring teams. The obstacle is jurisdiction and political will."

Looking at the cauldron of conflicts convulsing the world, the question is ever more pressing as to whether effective action is possible to stop the damage being done or ensure accountability when it does.

A casualty of war

Tareq Abu Dayyeh sells craftwork, souvenirs and antiquities in Gaza. The Great Omari Mosque features on many of the items he sells. It represents the very identity of Gaza — charting its history through the building's many manifestations from ancient pagan temple to Byzantine church to 7th-century mosque to Crusader Cathedral and then back to being a mosque.

The Great Omari Mosque was all but destroyed in an Israeli strike in 2023. The Israeli military said the strike was targeting Hamas.

Now, Dayyeh says his heart is broken every time he sees the ruins. "When your past is destroyed, you have no present."

The war in Gaza has claimed tens of thousands of lives and an estimated 200,000 buildings have been damaged or destroyed by Israeli bombardment. But despite the overwhelming death and devastation, such cultural losses run deep. This is a sentiment expressed throughout history by people living through war. In Sudan, Lebanon, Yemen and Iran, the alarm has been raised time and time again. More than 100 sites in Iran are reported to have been damaged during the aerial war launched by the US and Israel back in February. They include the UNESCO-listed Golestan Palace in the capital, Tehran, and Naqsh-e Jahan Square in Isfahan.

The civil war in Sudan has further imperilled one of the ancient wonders of the world — the Meroe Pyramids, built during the flourishing civilisation of the Kingdom of Kush.

UNESCO, which designated Meroe as a World Heritage Site in 2011, has warned that the fighting has halted all preservation work there, leaving the fragile ancient structures prey to erosion from the encroaching sand and vegetation.

A difficult task

In response to the massive destruction of World War Two, the first-ever international treaty exclusively dedicated to protecting cultural heritage during armed conflict was adopted in The Hague in 1954.

It applies to monuments and architecture, but also works of art and books, requiring states to safeguard and respect cultural property and refrain from any actions that might endanger it.

Since the Hague Convention, there have been several additional moves to strengthen protective measures for cultural heritage. A Second Protocol to the Convention in 1999 said that any site that

Cultural treasures being destroyed worldwide

So why no-one being punished?



Golestan Palace's hall of mirrors in Tehran, Iran, was damaged with its intricate mirrorwork shattered during a US-Israeli air raid on the vicinity of this cultural heritage.

● ANADOLU

has been placed under enhanced protection due to its immense cultural significance must not be made a military target even if it is being used in such a way as to have become a 'military objective' — unless there is no other feasible way of ending its use in that way. When the International Criminal Court (ICC) was established in The Hague in 2002, part of its remit was to bring accountability for deliberate attacks in war against buildings of religious, artistic and educational value as well as historical monuments, which had been defined as war crimes. But this has been a complex and difficult task. So far, only one case has been successfully brought at the ICC. Ahmad al-Faqi al-Mahdi was a jihadist militant leader in Mali who was found guilty of directing attacks that destroyed mausoleums and a mosque in Timbuktu. He was sentenced to nine years in prison.

Rouhani says that without the full backing of the major powers and a genuine commitment to international law and its enforcement, the world will simply keep watching the same devastating pattern repeat itself.

"For most governments, heritage is a secondary concern, unless it becomes useful for propaganda,"

Rouhani says. "The Hague Convention requires states to build protection into their military rules and to respect cultural property abroad as well as at home. Looking at the scale of damage in recent conflicts, it is difficult to conclude that these obligations are taken seriously."

In conflicts from Ukraine to Iran to Gaza, where schools and hospitals are seen as permissible military targets by combatants, how likely is it that a museum or pile of ancient stones, however freighted with beauty and history and memory, will be spared?

Heritage ambulances

One international group that's played a big role is the Aliph Foundation, which was set up in Geneva in 2017 to protect and repair cultural heritage. Alexandra Fiebig, a project manager with Aliph, says that her group provided millions of dollars in funds to Ukrainian museums scrambling to move their most valuable items to safety. This has involved the use of what she describes as 'heritage ambulances': "These vehicles that have specialised equipment and space with specialised teams and equip-

The photo shows some of the 700 Iraqi antiquities that were recovered from smugglers along the Syrian-Iraqi borders. These antiquities were looted from Iraq amid the chaos of the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein.

● LOUIA BESHARA/AFP



ment, they were in the beginning travelling a lot to affected museums that were damaged through military action."

Now, she says the teams also check on the artefacts that were transported in great haste to safer places to make sure they remain in good condition.

Other conflicts have seen civilians take similar measures to protect their culture.

In February 2015, Daesh (ISIS) turned its attention from hacking down ancient statues and artefacts in Mosul in northern Iraq to ransacking its written heritage as its fighters laid waste to the city's much treasured public libraries. They burned the Central Library and destroyed or stole many thousands of books — many of them rare manuscripts that told the story of the city.

"These were not simply books or shelves, they represented decades of knowledge and research and formed an important part of the intellectual heritage of Mosul University and the wider community... Within days, everything was gone," Dr Mohammed Jasim Mohammed al-Hamdani says. The main library in Mosul has played a key role in his life — to such an extent that he is now the director there.

"Seeing it destroyed felt like losing a part of myself. Many people in the city had a story connected to the University of Mosul and therefore the loss felt very close to home. And this is why when that part of Mosul was liberated from ISIS, young people, old people rushed to the library to save what they could."

A lucrative trade

The obverse of communities taking it into their own hands to protect cultural property is the looting of those same sites.

Again, this is a byproduct of war that dates back to the dawn of history.

Blue Shield International is a group that operates in multiple war zones, working with armed forces and local heritage officials to such an extent that it's come to be known as the Red Cross for culture.

Dr Emma Cunliffe, the head of operations for the group, says that understanding the reasons for looting — which can vary from place to place — is a necessary starting point: "That might then in turn result in greater sanctions, greater prosecutions to take it seriously as a threat." She says that it's important, if possible, to convey a sense to local communities that by assisting this, they are selling their own heritage. In Iraq and Syria for example, both during and after the ISIS rampage, looting of priceless artefacts was carried out on an industrial scale. The precious objects were spirited out and trafficked abroad, including to the US. A years-long investigation by the US Justice Department traced and tracked the smuggling routes and resulted in thousands of looted artefacts being returned to Iraq.

In Europe and elsewhere, co-ordinated, multi-national police and customs operations take place

regularly, seizing large numbers of stolen antiquities and arresting some of the traffickers. But the trade remains highly lucrative and the plethora of conflicts provides ever more opportunities.

In Sudan, the national museum in Khartoum was stripped of its treasures in 2023 when it came under the control of one of the warring factions, the RSF, which loaded them onto trucks and left the display rooms bare.

As in other conflict zones like Ukraine, specialised training has been provided for those involved in trying to recover the antiquities, which has had some success. But much of the museum's display — which told the story of the region over thousands of years — may have disappeared for good.

Slim chance of deterrence

The challenges of trying to limit the scale of destruction and looting of cultural heritage are huge. At an international or state level, there are regulations in place, but putting them into practice in a timely fashion is difficult enough — and often there isn't even the will to attempt this. Local initiatives backed by organisations like Aliph and Blue Shield International can make a difference on a small scale. But if — as seems the case right now — the chances of anyone facing consequences for destroying a heritage site are close to zero, then there is all but no real deterrent.

"What would change the calculation is not harsher sentences," says Dr Bijan Rouhani, "but a real prospect of being named — arrest warrants for the commanders who authorise these strikes, prosecutions in national courts under universal jurisdiction, and targeted sanctions on named individuals. Those measures don't require a new treaty. They require states to be willing to use the instruments they already have, against allies as well as adversaries."

Of all the recent attempts to erase the cultural past embodied in stone, Palmyra in Syria still stands out. ISIS blew up temples there and might have done far worse if it had not been defeated. One man became emblematic for standing up to them. For 40 years, the archaeologist Khaled al-Asaad had been the principal custodian of Palmyra. He was in his eighties when ISIS descended on the ancient city. They captured him and tortured him to try to find out where its most valuable artefacts had been hidden. When he refused to tell them, they beheaded him in a public square and hung his corpse from a traffic light.

Al-Asaad was celebrated across the world as a heroic defender of culture against the forces of darkness. He was awarded the Order of Civil Merit in Syria and in Palmyra, a school was named in his honour. But nothing is free from political complications. Years later, under the new authorities in Syria, his name has now been removed from the school.

The full article first appeared on BBC.



Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games

Iran wraps up campaign in sixth place with 19-gold haul

Sports Desk

Iranian athletes collected seven medals, including four golds, on the penultimate day of the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in Japan, helping the country secure a sixth-place finish in the overall standings at the continental multi-sport event. Saturday's medals, which also featured one silver and two bronze medals, took the Iranian delegation's haul to 19 golds, 18 silvers, and 15 bronzes. The national volleyball team brought the curtain down on the Iranian delegation's 14-day quest for glory by claiming the top prize in the men's event on Sunday, thanks to a

tion-packed four months, after head coach Roberto Piazza's side suffered nine defeats, including a five-set setback against Japan, in 12 outings in the preliminary round of the Volleyball Nations League in June, and again fell short against Japan in the Asian Championship final last month to miss out on direct qualification for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.

"I am really happy for the Iranian people, from whom I have received a lot of support and encouragement," Piazza said after the final. "I know the process of winning this medal was not easy. We dropped two sets against Indonesia and lost two to South



the host's wrestler 9-5 for a second successive Asian Games gold of his career.

"It was a truly demanding competition for me. Few people thought I could win the gold medal, but, by God's grace, I was able to achieve this success," Emami said.

"The level of competition was really high. There were world champions and renowned wrestlers in my weight class, and I wrestled against all of them."

When asked about his win over Olympic champion Jamalov, Emami said: "To be honest, few people fancied my chances against him. Even before the competition, some were worried that

league of his own, claiming three straight-round victories to add the gold medal to the silver he won at the previous edition in Hangzhou 2022. Salimi opened with a 2-0 win (19-10, 14-4) against Asian Championships bronze medalist Tang Hao of China, followed by a comfortable straight-round triumph (15-2, 13-2) against Jordanian Mohammad Aladarbi in the final.

In a repeat of his +87kg final victory over Marat Mavlonov at May's Asian Championships, Salimi was ruthless against the Uzbek opponent, winning 26-4 and 20-8.

Hajimousaei, meanwhile, enjoyed a decent run to the final but fell short



Iranian opposite Amin Esmailnejad hits a spike during a victory over Japan in the men's volleyball final at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in Japan on October 3, 2026.

● IRIFF

3-1 victory (28-26, 19-25, 25-21, 26-24) over the host in the final.

Prolific opposite Amin Esmailnejad led Iran with 22 points, with outside hitters Ali Haqqarast and Morteza Sharifi also reaching double figures, contributing 15 and 13 points, respectively, as Iran secured a fourth successive men's volleyball gold at the Asian Games. Outside hitter Tatsunori Otsuka, meanwhile, chipped in a game-high 24 points for the depleted Japanese side, which omitted the high-profile trio of Yuji Nishida, Yuki Ishikawa, and Ran Takahashi from its squad for the Games.

The final victory provided a bit of relief for the Iranian men's volleyball team at the end of an ac-

Korea during the tournament, but we have to bear in mind that it was not an easy tournament. The players were alert and had come determined to do something special for the people of Iran. I am truly happy, more for the people of Iran than for myself."

"In my dreams, I am thinking about another medal, which I believe could be more important than this one. "I am getting older and my time is becoming more limited, so I hope I can achieve this dream. There is a lot of talent in Iran, but we have to know how to put these talents on the right path. If we can do that properly, I can keep that dream in my mind," added the Italian. Wrestling glory

The wrestling event, as expected, proved to be the most prolific for Iran, yielding six golds and one bronze medal across 12 freestyle and Greco-Roman categories.

Amirali Azarpira rounded out the glorious campaign by grabbing gold in

the freestyle 97kg class on Saturday, defeating Uzbekistan's Sherzod Poyonov 10-0 in the final – a third superiority win in four bouts for the Iranian at the Nagoya City Inae Sports Center. The pinnacle of Azarpira's campaign came in

Younes Emami celebrates with the Iranian flag after winning the freestyle wrestling 74kg gold medal at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in Japan on October 3, 2026.

● IAWFIR

4-3, making amends for his final defeat against the Japanese wrestler, who is of Iranian descent, at April's Asian Championships in Bishkek. Younes Emami, meanwhile, secured an impressive gold medal in the 74kg division, defeating three prominent opponents in the process. A two-time world bronze medalist, the Iranian began the day with a 7-6 victory over reigning Olympic champion Ra-

Iran's Arian Salimi poses with the men's taekwondo +80kg gold at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in Japan on October 3, 2026.

● ISNA



the semifinals, where the Olympic bronze medalist defeated Arash Yoshida

zambek Jamalov, before outmuscling India's Sagar Jaglan by technical supe-



Amirali Azarpira (R) salutes the Iranian flag after winning the freestyle wrestling 97kg gold at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in Japan on October 3, 2026.

● IAWFIR

riority (10-0) to reach the last four.

Emami then defeated Kazakhstan's Nurkozha Kaipanov – a 2024 world champion at 70kg – 4-2 to set up a final clash with Japan's 2025 world champion Yoshinosuke Aoyagi.

I might struggle in my opening bouts, but, thank God, I was able to manage the competition well from the very beginning and eventually win the gold medal."

Mohammad Nokhodi (86kg) and Amirhossein Zare' (125kg) had also won gold in their respective freestyle events on the previous day, while Alireza Abdevali (77kg) and Amin Mirzazadeh (130kg) triumphed in Greco-Roman, with Mahdi Bali finishing with a consolation bronze in the 97kg category.

Taekwondo triple On the final day of the taekwondo event, Iranians collected three medals.

Arian Salimi spearheaded the medal hunt by winning the ultimate prize in the men's +80kg class, with Mahdi Hajimousaei settling for silver in the -68kg event, while in the women's competition, Fatemeh Ahmadi took bronze in the +67kg category.

Reigning Olympic champion Salimi was in a

against world champion Banlung Tubtimdang of Thailand, losing 6-5 and 3-2.

Ahmadi finished her campaign in the semifinals against South Korea's Song Dabin, suffering 7-1 and 2-0 defeats in straight rounds to collect a second women's medal for the Iranian taekwondo squad, after Saghar Moradi had won a historic gold on the preceding day. Elsewhere, Iran also celebrated a historic success in the padel event, winning a first-ever Asian Games medal after Farshad Shahi and Amirmohammad Jamshidi teamed up to defeat Hani Golestani and Arya Roghani 2-0 (6-3, 6-4) in an all-Iranian bronze contest in the men's pairs category.

Iran has more than 14,000 historic buildings

Iranica Desk

Iran is home to more than 14,000 historic buildings, while the number of museums in the country has increased 16-fold since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Ali Darabi, deputy minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, said.

According to Mehr News Agency, Darabi said Iran was unique in the scale of its historical and cultural heritage, arguing that no other country in the world had as many as one million historical sites, Mehr News Agency reported.

"No country in the world has a million historical works," he said. "Nor is there any country that has UNESCO nomination dos-

siers waiting to be registered for as far ahead as the next 60 years. When we speak of Iranian-Islamic culture, authenticity and identity, we are talking about these realities."

Darabi said that any account of Iran's history would inevitably begin with Khorasan, citing both the presence of the shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH) in Mashhad and the region's role in shaping Iran's civilizational and cultural identity.

"From ancient times to the present, the secret of our survival and Iranian identity has always been our civilization and culture," he said. "Did Iran not withstand the Mongol invasions? Did we not endure Alexander's destruction? Has everyone

who came to this homeland with a sword not eventually learned the ways of civilization?"

He noted that Iran had submitted at least one nomination for UNESCO registration at each of the organization's past three sessions. One such nomination concerned the caves and archaeological sites of Khorramabad, which date back approximately 63,000 years. According to Darabi, the then-secretary of the UNESCO session had described the registration of the site as an honor for the organization's World Heritage collection.

Darabi also referred to remarks attributed to the US president, who he said had declared that "America

will destroy Iran's history and civilization," adding that museums and historic sites had also been targeted during wars.

He reiterated that more than 43,000 of Iran's historical sites have been officially registered since 1931, out of an estimated total of one million historical works.

He also quoted UNESCO's ambassador to Iran, who is of Indian origin, as telling him during a visit to Alamut Castle that the best option for UNESCO would be to inscribe the whole of Iran as a single, integrated world heritage site.

"When we speak of Iranian-Islamic culture, authenticity and identity, we are speaking about these facts," Darabi said.



Turning to Iran's museums, Darabi said the country currently had 830 museums, compared with fewer than 50 before the 1979 Revolution. He noted that India, with a population of 1.5 billion, currently has around 800 museums.

Under Iran's Seventh Development Plan, the number of museums is expected to rise to 1,000, he said.

Darabi also highlighted the development of Iran's her-

itage institutions during periods of conflict. He said the Cultural Heritage Organization was established during the Iran-Iraq War, while the country's National Cultural Heritage Document was approved during the 12-day war and its National Museum Management Document was approved during the 40-day war.

He described the continued preservation and registration

of the country's cultural heritage during periods of crisis as a source of national pride. "It is important to tell these stories so that public awareness of these achievements can grow," Darabi said, adding that cultural heritage associations — with Khorasan Razavi among the leading provinces in supporting such civic organizations — had an important role to play.

Iranica Desk

The sound of a hammer striking metal, the heat of the furnace, and sparks flying across the workshop are all part of the image traditionally associated with knife-making in Zanjan — a craft that, in this city, represents far more than the production of cutting tools. It is regarded as an important part of Zanjan's historical and cultural identity.

The discovery of a knife alongside one of the "Salt Men" found at the Chehrabad Mine has provided researchers with some of the earliest known evidence of the craft's history in the region. Provincial cultural heritage authorities date Zanjan's knife-making tradition back more than 18 centuries. Since then, skills ranging from blade forging and handle-making to metal tempering and finishing have been passed down through generations of Zanjani craftsmen, helping establish the city as one of Iran's best-known centers of traditional knife-making, IRNA wrote.

Although metalworking has a very long history on the Iranian Plateau, one of the most important pieces of direct evidence for the history of knife-making in Zanjan is linked to the discovery of the Salt Men at the Chehrabad Mine. Among the belongings found with one of the ancient miners was a knife with a goat-horn handle, which has been identified as one of the oldest known pieces of evidence of knife-making in the Zanjan area.

The archaeological find indicates that the manufacture of cutting tools has

a long history in the region and that expertise in metalworking was already well established there many centuries ago.

The historical development of knife-making in Zanjan is not limited to a single archaeological artifact. The craft evolved through different historical periods, and as the needs of society changed, so too did the form and uses of its products.

Local sources refer to the Safavid period and craftsmen such as Abdolghaffar Sakkak as part of the history of master knife-makers in Zanjan. In later periods, the craft continued to develop, and the variety of products gradually increased.

In fact, Zanjan's knife-making tradition should be viewed as part of the city's broader history of metalworking. The city's expertise in working with metal was by no means limited to knives; it also found expression in crafts such as copperware, filigree, and other forms of metalworking.

Zanjan's reputation as a center of metalworking is not the result of the efforts of a single generation or a handful of workshops. Rather, the city has developed a rich tradition of craftsmanship over centuries. Within this environment, knife-making has also managed to adapt to changing circumstances.

In the past, a significant share of metal production was devoted to everyday needs, as well as to weapons and other military tools. As lifestyles changed and the use of bladed weapons declined, knife-makers shifted their focus toward more prac-

Zanjan keeps its centuries-old knife-making tradition alive



tical products, including kitchen knives, gardening and agricultural tools, butcher knives, and various types of penknives.

The survival of the craft has, to some extent, been linked to the craftsmen's ability to adapt the function of their products and produce knives suited to changing needs.

This adaptability is considered one of the reasons knife-making has endured in Zanjan. A master craftsman does not simply produce a metal blade; he must make decisions

about its weight, balance, handle design, intended use, cutting quality, and final finish. As a result, a handmade Zanjan knife is often the product of a series of specialized skills brought together within a small workshop.

The range of products made by Zanjan's knife-makers is extensive. Sources documenting the province's handicrafts generally divide Zanjan knives into two broad categories: simple or conventional knives, and compound or more complex knives.

Simple knives typically consist of a blade and a handle. In traditional examples, goat horn and other natural materials are often used to make the handle. The second category, compound or complex knives, has a more varied technical structure and includes spring knives and penknives. In spring knives, a spring is housed within the handle, providing flexibility while also helping to control the blade.

The locking knife is another of Zanjan's best-known

traditional products. These knives are made in a variety of sizes and designs and, thanks to their folding mechanism, have a range of practical uses.

Fruit knives are among the more delicate products, with greater emphasis placed on the proportions of the handle and blade, the quality and precision of the finish, and the knife's overall aesthetic appeal. Behind the fame of Zanjan knives are generations of craftsmen — master artisans who have spent much of their lives beside furnaces, anvils, hammers, and polishing tools, passing their skills on to their apprentices.

These craftsmen demonstrate that knife-making remains a living tradition in Zanjan, one in which the experience of past generations is combined with the creativity of a new generation. Some young artisans have even designed new models that preserve traditional manufacturing techniques while also responding to contemporary tastes. In recent years, cultural heritage officials have also highlighted the potential of products made by young artisans to reach international markets.

Despite this potential, traditional knife-making also faces a number of challenges. The influx of foreign-made products, changing consumer preferences, and the economic difficulties faced by small workshops are among the issues raised in reports on the industry.

Another important concern is the transmission of traditional craftsmanship and specialized knowledge. Some techniques used to produce particular types of knives are known

only to a limited number of master craftsmen. As these artisans pass away or leave the trade, there is a risk that some of this knowledge could be lost with them.

From this perspective, supporting knife-making means more than simply supporting a product. It means preserving an entire chain of skills, tools, specialized terminology, designs, and accumulated experience that have developed over generations.

Today, the name "Zanjan knife" evokes an image that goes beyond that of a simple tool: it represents a city that has preserved its long history of metalworking in the form of a small yet highly detailed craft. Zanjan remains one of Iran's most important centers of knife-making, with its workshops serving as a meeting point between tradition and innovation. The sound of hammers in these workshops is not merely the sound of a blade taking shape; it is the sound of a heritage continuing — a heritage rooted deeply in the history of the region, whose future depends on the skill of craftsmen, the transmission of knowledge to a new generation, the preservation of production quality, and the proper promotion of this traditional art.

Ultimately, a Zanjan knife is more than a blade and a handle. It is part of the industrial and artistic identity of a city that, over the course of centuries, has transformed metalworking into a cultural language — a language that can still be heard today in Zanjan's small workshops, amid the sounds of furnaces and anvils.

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Farhadi lashes out at Hollywood's 'white savior' view of Iran

'Who asked you to come and save us?'

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Asghar Farhadi lambasted what he described as the perceived hegemony of American cinema, saying Hollywood films about countries such as Iran could present the world from a superior position and perpetuate the image of an American coming to save others.

Farhadi, a two-time Oscar-winning director, was speaking with American trade magazine Variety at the Rio Film Festival, where he is presenting his latest film, "Parallel Tales". The festival runs from Oct. 1 to Oct. 11.

Asked about Ben Affleck's "Argo", which won the Oscar for Best Picture a year after Farhadi's "A Separation" won the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film, he said he had watched it when it was released and felt it was a "Hollywood thing".

"Argo", loosely based on a true story, stars Affleck as a Latino exfiltration specialist who poses as a Hollywood producer to help rescue six Americans trapped in Tehran during the US embassy takeover in Iran in late 1970s and

early 1980s. The film's portrayal of Iran was described during the discussion as being "like you're in hell".

Farhadi said the problem with such films, and with some people in the United States, was that they "look at the world from up to down". He questioned why some Americans believed they occupied a higher position than others and blasted what he called the ego behind that view.

He also challenged claims about American democracy, saying: "You don't have democracy. It's a lie."

Farhadi referred to his own time in the United States several years ago, when he was working on a project and traveled to San Francisco as part of his research. He said he met incarcerated men, including Black people and people from other countries, and saw the "real America", while saying that part of the country was not visible to people around the world.

The filmmaker said he objected to the idea that other societies should become like the United States, even when such an attitude was presented as an act of kindness. He said he did not want that.

Returning to "Argo", Farhadi said films of this kind were not deep and were made as a business. He rapped the recurring figure of a white American man saving others and asked why an American should go to countries such as Iran or Cuba to rescue people. "Who asked you to come and save us?" he said.

Farhadi said politics was also present whenever filmmakers talked about society, family life, relationships and people's difficulties. But he said he tried not to address politics directly in his films because the cinema he believed in should give audiences space to discover something about themselves.

He said his next film would be made in his native Farsi. Asked whether it could address the current war in Iran and the conflict in Palestine, he said: "Not directly."

Farhadi also explained why "Parallel Tales" was moved from the United States to France. The film was originally planned to be shot in the US, where he spent three years writing, researching and casting American actors, including major names. But he said he increasingly felt unable to connect with



the project and eventually decided to change it.

Moving the story to France and production overseas was "not an easy decision", he said, but he concluded that "the DNA of this film is more European than American".

The film stars Isabelle Huppert, Vir-

ginie Efira and Vincent Cassel. Farhadi said he sent the script to selected actors after arriving in France and was "so lucky" that they all immediately agreed to join. On set, he said, he does not think about their status or fame but treats them all as his team, family and actors.

Iranian cultural program reaches final stop in Russia's Astrakhan



Iranian artists perform during a 12-day cultural program in Russia which reached Astrakhan on October 4, 2026.

● IRNA

The program opened formally at Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre on Sept. 28, with Iran's Culture Minister Abbas Salehi and Russia's Culture Minister Olga Lyubimova attending. Iranian artists performed traditional music at the opening ceremony.

After Moscow and St Petersburg, the program moved to Kazan before reaching Astrakhan, its fourth and final host city.

In Astrakhan, Iranian musicians performed traditional pieces at the Astrakhan Philharmonia, drawing an audience that included Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to Russia, Astrakhan regional officials, Iran's consul general and local cultural figures. Astrakhan Vice-Governor Denis Afanasyev underscored the importance

of cultural cooperation with Iran, while Jalali said culture and the arts could bring the peoples of Iran and Russia closer together. He also described Astrakhan as an important meeting point for different cultures in Russia.

The program also featured an exhibition of photographs showing Iran's historical monuments, cultural heritage, natural landscapes, tourist attractions and diverse climate.

A separate exhibition at the Astrakhan Regional Scientific Library displayed Persian literature and Iranian culture, including works by classical and contemporary Iranian writers and poets, Russian translations of Persian works and Persian translations of Russian literature.

One of the exhibition's notable items was the "Catherine's Shahnameh", a Persian-language edition published in St Petersburg in 1793. Displayed alongside Persian and Russian books, it highlighted the long history of liter-

ary and cultural exchanges between Iran and Russia.

Ahmad Heydarian, Iran's consul general in Astrakhan, highlighted the city's longstanding historical and human links with Iran, pointing to centuries of travel and interaction between Iranians and residents of the region.

Astrakhan's culture minister highlighted cooperation in cultural exhibitions, cinema and filmmaking and pointed to the Caspian Seasons festival as another channel for cultural exchanges involving Iranian artists and cultural figures.

The wider program also includes 11 Iranian feature films and animations screened in Moscow, Kazan and Astrakhan, alongside music, traditional arts, creative industries and specialist meetings.

The events follow Russia's cultural week in Iran in June 2025, adding to an ongoing exchange between the cultural institutions of the two countries.

Iran, US: equations ...

A clear example of this was witnessed by the international community at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, when delegates left the hall during Netanyahu's speech.

More important, however, is Israel's parliamentary election on October 27. The election race has created considerable stress and uncertainty for Netanyahu and his Likud party. Against this backdrop, Netanyahu sees a resumption of the war with Iran as a way out

of the current situation.

It should also be noted that Israel has sought in recent months to take advantage of the situation by avoiding direct involvement in US attacks. It has attempted, first, to partially repair the damage caused by missile attacks and strengthen its defensive systems. At the same time, it has sought to have the United States bear the costs of the low-intensity war of recent months.

China's position also deserves attention. At the first level, Beijing is not seeking contin-

ued tensions in the region and prefers the main region from which China obtains its energy supplies to remain stable and peaceful.

At another level, however, China may not be unwilling to see a continuation of a low-intensity war in the Persian Gulf if this keeps the United States engaged in the region and prevents Washington from putting its full weight behind pressure on China.

In other words, such a situation could give Beijing an opportunity to advance its Taiwan

strategy and engage in stronger competition with its main global rival at a lower cost.

Russia's position also deserves attention. With the war in Ukraine becoming increasingly prolonged, tensions with Europe intensifying on the one hand, and extensive US sanctions on the other, Moscow is likely to closely follow developments in the region and assess how changes in the regional situation may affect its own strategic interests.

A continuation of tensions in the region could, from Mos-

cow's perspective, have the effect of drawing some of the international attention and pressure toward developments in the Middle East, while also influencing the broader strategic balance between Russia, the United States and Europe.

Given these considerations and the complexities governing the regional and international equations, Iran needs to carefully analyze the policies and considerations of each actor that has an interest or a role in the current situation.

Iran should design and pursue

its political and military actions and responses in a way that takes these calculations into account and allows it to achieve the greatest possible gains at the lowest possible cost.

The developments surrounding Iran and the United States are therefore not shaped solely by the direct confrontation between the two countries. The calculations of Israel, China and Russia, as well as their respective interests in the continuation or reduction of tensions, are also important elements of the broader regional equation.