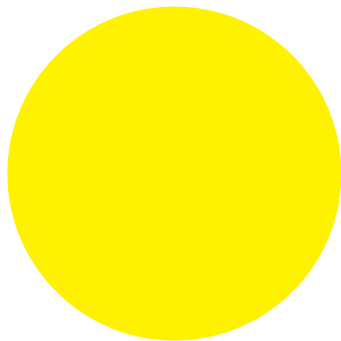


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A protester faces off with riot police in France's capital Paris, during demonstrations by high school students for better conditions at their schools on October 17, 2026.



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Iran-Pakistan border disruption unlikely to trigger short-term transit crisis

By **Delaram Ahmadi**
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Reports emerged on Saturday that commercial activity at a crossing between Iran and Pakistan had been suspended. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei subsequently confirmed that border traffic and exchanges between the two countries had been temporarily halted, citing "technical issues and the need to take precautionary measures." He said the problem would be resolved as soon as possible following consultations between Iranian and Pakistani officials. The disruption comes as Pakistan's land bor-



Amin Rezaeinejad

ders have taken on greater importance for the transit of Iranian goods following the US naval blockade. However, Amin Rezaeinejad, an expert on Pakistan affairs, told Iran Daily that the border closure would not trigger a crisis in Iran's goods transit in the short term, although a prolonged disruption could create serious problems in the long run.

IRAN DAILY: What impact could a temporary suspension of cross-border exchanges have on Iran's foreign trade and transit capacity?

REZAEINEJAD: Iran continues to move goods through its other borders. Pakistani officials have also indicated that the closure will probably be limited to Saturday and Sunday. So the situation may not develop into the kind of crisis we anticipate. It would be premature to as-

sume that Iran's borders with Pakistan are being completely sealed off and that trade between the two countries could be entirely restricted. Even if that happens, Iran can still temporarily maintain its transit routes to China through its northern borders, via Afghanistan and the Wakhan Corridor. However, this route cannot replace the Pakistani border because goods are unloaded at the port of Karachi and transported from there toward Iran. The Wakhan Corridor does not currently have the capacity to handle such volumes. This would leave Iran relying on its northern borders with neighboring countries, as well as its western borders with Iraq and, to some extent, Turkey in the northwest. If the closure persists, Iran will lose part of its transit capacity. However, a goods transit crisis is unlikely to occur in the short term. The situation could become

more serious over the longer term. Iran has several border crossings with Pakistan, all of which are regularly active. If these crossings are closed, the disruption could eventually become a source of crisis, particularly given the restrictions on air and maritime routes—in effect. But in the short term, I do not expect any major consequences.

Given the US Treasury Department's recent warnings about foreign financial institutions doing business with sanctioned Iranian entities, to what extent is it possible that the suspension of commercial activity at Iran-Pakistan border crossings has been influenced by political and economic pressure from Washington, beyond the stated technical reasons?

One important factor in Pakistan's relationship with the United States is the country's

substantial debt exposure to Washington through its obligations to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. This debt is roughly three times Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves. We will have to wait to determine whether the closure is genuinely due to technical issues. Officials have indicated that the border will probably reopen on Monday. If it remains closed beyond that point, we may be able to conclude that the United States is putting pressure on Pakistan, given the scale of its debt. In that case, the stated technical reasons may well be a pretext, and Pakistan may have closed the crossings because of the economic pressure it faces as a result of its debt obligations. In practice, this would mean that Pakistan was aligning itself with Washington's policy of imposing a land blockade on Iran.

To what extent does Islamabad have the capacity and political will to resolve the problem swiftly and prevent further disruptions to cross-border traffic? What steps could help ensure that external pressure does not undermine trade relations between the two countries?

Pakistan is heavily influenced by the United States, and that cannot be overlooked. Despite the substantial investments China has made in the country, Pakistan's trade balance still tilts toward the United States and Western countries more broadly. This is a factor that cannot be ignored. As a result, Pakistan is heavily dependent on the United States economically, including through the World Bank, the IMF and the international monetary order established by Washington. Pakistan remains deeply tied to this system.

Iran says its seven-day plan to reopen Strait of Hormuz still on table

Araghchi: Lebanon's internal affairs a matter for Lebanese themselves

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Sunday that Tehran's offer to Washington to reopen the Strait of Hormuz within seven days is still on the table. Araghchi made the remarks in an interview with Iran's official news agency IRNA on the sidelines of the 52nd session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Council of Foreign Ministers in the Iraqi capital Baghdad. He said Iran's conditions for ceasing hostilities and reopening the strait were "completely clear" and had been submitted to the United States under the seven-day plan. Washington has presented its views on the plan, which Tehran is reviewing, he added. "Iran's plan is still on the table," Araghchi said. "If they (the United States) meet those conditions, the Strait of Hormuz will be reopened on the sixth day, and negotiations will resume on the seventh." He said that Iran's conditions are neither extraordinary nor unusual, adding

that they are the same commitments "the United States had already accepted in the memorandum of understanding and other negotiations." The US and Israel launched an unprovoked aggression against Iran on February 28, killing thousands of Iranians, Iran's Leader and several senior military officials. Iran retaliated with attacks on the US military bases in regional countries and Israel's positions in the occupied territories. An April ceasefire put an end to the most intense fighting after Tehran and Washington signed a 14-point Memorandum of Understanding brokered by Pakistan and Qatar. However, the US began attacking Iran in July after it violated the terms of the agreement under the pretext of Iranian strikes on vessels in the Strait of Hormuz. The US also recently shifted toward a campaign of what it calls "economic asphyxiation" of Iran, imposing sanctions on various sectors in Iran. Araghchi reiterated that Iran will not bow to threats and is prepared to



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (c) looks on during the family photo during the 52nd session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers in Baghdad on October 17, 2026.

● AFP

defend itself, while remaining ready to pursue diplomacy.

Relations with Lebanon

Araghchi also pointed to his meeting with Lebanon's Foreign Minister Youssef Raji in Baghdad, saying that talks had been respectful but frank and serious. Araghchi also acknowledged significant differences in outlook between Tehran and Lebanon's current government over how to resolve outstanding issues. He said, however, that both sides agreed on the need to focus on expansion on government-to-government ties, as well as relations between Iran and Lebanon as a whole. Iran's top diplomat underlined that decisions on Lebanon's internal affairs belonged to the Lebanese people and



that Tehran would not oppose decisions made by Lebanese groups, including Hezbollah, which he described as one of the country's most important political forces and an established reality in Lebanese society. "Lebanon's internal affairs are also a matter for the Lebanese themselves," Araghchi said. "Naturally, whatever

decisions they wish to make, Lebanese groups, including Hezbollah, one of the most important of them and an undeniable reality in Lebanese society, have a role to play in those decisions." Araghchi stressed that Iran wants to establish comprehensive political, economic and cultural relations with Lebanon as a country.

France rocked by nationwide protests, clashes, blazes

International Desk

France woke up Sunday to devastated streets after clashes between police and protesters, mass looting and fires erupted nationwide as marches against rising costs of living degenerated into "extreme" violence. Violence broke out across France on Saturday during the latest day of demonstrations against hardship in schools and the cost of living. Tens of thousands of protesters, mostly young people, rallied at the heart of the French capital on Saturday in the latest act of a movement that has been rocking France to the core for more than a month now. The demonstrations were spearheaded by students demanding education reforms but quickly swelled to channel mounting anger over failing public services, rising living costs and a future that feels increasingly out of reach. The protests come just six months ahead of elections to replace President Emmanuel Macron. France's Yellow Vest movement, which staged street protests eight years ago against Macron's government over planned fuel tax hikes, had called for Saturday's "yellow and youth" demonstrations. The principal grievance was the cost of living, pushed up in part by the war in the Middle East, especially the US aggression against Iran, that has helped send inflation soaring in Europe as elsewhere.

"We're sick of slaving away for poverty wages while our rents keep going up," teacher Regine Monfroid told AFP in the eastern city of Strasbourg. But there were other issues. High school student Kamil Alahyan, 18, said he was protesting "for so many reasons – the elections coming up in 2027, politicians who lie, the ultra-rich who've been taking more and more wealth over the past 10 years".

'It's the Revolution'

Several protesters sought to draw parallels with the French Revolution of 1789. "It's the Revolution – we're taking the Bastille!" some shouted in Marseille as they forced their way into the mayor's offices. Whole streets in Paris "have been devastated", the city's mayor Emmanuel Gregoire said as groups of masked young men torched parked cars and ransacked shops.

1,800 people arrested

More than 1,800 people have been arrested on Saturday, the country's Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said. The Interior Ministry said 550,000 people attended the protests while the CGT union, which took part, said 800,000 people participated. Police used tear gas and water cannon against protesters who threw projectiles and aimed fireworks. During and after those demonstrations, gangs of youths roamed city

streets, sporadically confronting police, while setting fires and attacking shuttered stores to break in and empty their shelves. Scores of shops – supermarkets, pharmacies, luxury boutiques, clothing retailers, opticians, cosmetic vendors and consumer electronics stores – were looted in Paris, Marseille, Nice, Nantes, Bordeaux, Limoges, Lille, Toulouse and Strasbourg. The looting added to a day of destruction and vandalism, with town halls in several cities targeted. The town hall in the city of Limoges – more than 140 years old – was largely destroyed by a blaze set by masked protesters who broke in, according to the region's top official. Two others were broken into and vandalized in Marseille and Lille. A police compound in Bordeaux was also vandalized, while in Lyon protesters set ablaze a tourist office. The violence has drawn global headlines – in the United States, Vice President JD Vance blamed immigration for the unrest. "Western liberals imported the third world into France and other countries in the name of diversity and compassion. They ignored fundamental questions of assimilation and compatibility," he said on X. President Macron said that "those who carried out vandalism, attacked administrative offices or businesses, or carried out looting – even in our town halls, will be prosecuted and punished".

Parliament approves Akhlaghi as new defense minister

International Desk

Iran's Parliament approved Mehrdad Akhlaghi as defense minister with lawmakers voting by a large margin to confirm his appointment. The Parliament reviewed Akhlaghi's qualifications and plans during its Sunday session, chaired by Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, before putting his nomination to a vote. Akhlaghi received 237 votes in favor and 15 against, with no abstentions, out of 277 votes cast, becoming the new defense minister, Press TV reported. President Masoud Pezeshkian nominated Akhlaghi for the position on October 5, submitting his name and professional record to parliament for approval. During Sunday's session, lawmakers heard reports from the parliamentary committees on national security and foreign policy, as well as industry and mining, which had examined Akhlaghi's proposed plans. Pezeshkian also addressed parliament in support of



the nominee, while lawmakers who opposed and supported his plans presented their views before Akhlaghi defended his proposed program. Akhlaghi succeeds Aziz Nasirzadeh, who was martyred in US-Israeli attacks on Tehran at the beginning of the 40-day aggression, after which Pezeshkian appointed Brigadier General Seyyed Majid Ibn al-Reza as acting defense minister. In remarks to parliament before the vote, Akhlaghi emphasized that Iran would deliver a strong response if its adversaries launched another attack against the country. "If the American-Zionist enemy once again makes a miscalculation, the

response of the Iranian nation and the fighters of Islam will be surprising and extensive," he said. Akhlaghi also warned that Washington and its allies would bear responsibility for the regional and international consequences of any renewed aggression against Iran. Following his approval by parliament, Akhlaghi said the enemy is facing a strategic deadlock because "changes are underway in the nature of threats, the logic of military power, the technological environment and the regional order." Iran's defensive strength depended not only on its operational capabilities but also on its understanding of the strategic environment, He added.

Iran-Pakistan border ...

Could Pakistan take steps to reduce this dependence? Certainly, expanding trade with China would help. However, this would be a lengthy, long-term process and is unlikely to have any significant impact on Pakistan's policies in the short term. This is the reality that must be acknowledged. **Pakistan has played a mediating role in recent diplomatic efforts related to**

tensions between Iran and the United States. If the border disruption continues, how could this affect Tehran's confidence in Islamabad's role in regional developments?

The Supreme National Security Council should make the decision on this matter. However, if I were to offer my own assessment, I would say that Pakistan was never a particularly suitable mediator from the

outset, given its financial dependence on the United States and its limited political and geopolitical weight internationally. Qatar's capacity to mediate between Iran and the United States is limited, as is Oman's. Iran should instead look to members of the UN Security Council that are at least broadly aligned with its position, such as Russia and China. Russia, however, is also constrained by its own problems with the

United States, which makes it a less suitable option. That leaves China as the only viable choice. China could have served as a mediator, helping secure more tangible guarantees from the United States while genuinely fulfilling the role of a neutral intermediary. If the border closure is the result of US pressure, it would clearly show that Pakistan had failed to uphold the principle

of neutrality expected of a mediator in the international system. From a legal standpoint, it would then have little standing left as an intermediary between Iran and the United States. As explained earlier, Pakistan's capacity to mediate was already quite limited. But if the closure is indeed the result of American pressure, that would make the problem conclusive.

Pezeshkian: Iran no longer needs gasoline imports after curbing consumption



President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) speaks at the eighth meeting of the government's Information Council on October 18, 2026.

Economy Desk

Iran no longer needs to import gasoline after government measures to curb fuel consumption and public cooperation, President Masoud Pezeshkian said, adding that the imports would otherwise have cost \$12 billion. The government prioritized energy conservation and consumption management to prevent further problems in the energy and fuel sectors amid economic sanctions, Pezeshkian said, according to IRNA. Speaking at the eighth meeting of the government's Information Council on Sunday, he said substantial savings had been achieved with public cooperation. Since late February, when a US-Israeli coalition launched a 40-day war, Iran has been

operating under wartime conditions and facing a maritime blockade from the south. The blockade aims to reduce Iranian oil exports to zero and deplete government revenues. Iran has also been subject to decades of Western sanctions over its nuclear activities. Pezeshkian said all revenue generated by fuel price increases, along with savings from consumption management, would be returned to the public. He called for greater use of media outlets to encourage public participation in energy conservation, reduce gasoline consumption and strengthen national unity and social cohesion. Iranian refineries produce about 110 million liters of gasoline a day, compared with average daily consumption of 135 million liters. To narrow the gap, the Oil

Ministry ordered several petrochemical plants to allocate part of their capacity to gasoline production. The move added 20 million liters to daily output, taking total production to 130 million liters. In early September, the government raised prices for gasoline purchased outside monthly quotas for the second time in less than a year and adjusted the monthly allowances. Gasoline is sold at three rates. Each vehicle receives 60 liters a month at 15,000 rials per liter, followed by another 50 liters at 30,000 rials per liter. Additional purchases are unrestricted but cost 100,000 rials per liter. Abbas Pazouki, deputy for communications and information at the office of First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref, said on Thursday that gasoline imports would stop on October 23. He

also quoted Pezeshkian as saying the government had spent between \$2 billion and \$3 billion on gasoline imports since the current Persian year began on March 21. The government has also drawn on strategic gasoline reserves this year to meet rising demand.

CNG consumption rises

Meanwhile, daily compressed natural gas (CNG) consumption has risen by 14% following the latest gasoline price adjustment, according to Karamat Veis-Karami, head of the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company. Average daily CNG consumption increased to about 16.7 million cubic meters in Mehr from 14.7 million cubic meters in Mordad, a rise of 2 million cubic meters, Veis-Karami said on Sunday, according to IRNA. The increase is equivalent to replacing nearly 2 million liters of gasoline a day, helping manage fuel consumption and reduce pressure on gasoline supplies, he said. Following two rounds of fuel price adjustments, the government has also moved to expand the conversion of vehicles to dual-fuel systems, with CNG conversion centers resuming operations.

ECONOMIC LENS

Is global economy moving beyond Washington's dominance?



By Mohammadreza Hosseini Aliabad
Researcher in int'l economics

ANALYSIS EXCLUSIVE

For decades, the global economy rested on an almost unquestioned reality: few major economic decisions could be made without taking Washington into account. From financial markets and international trade to global payment systems and monetary policy, the United States was not merely a leading player; it helped set the rules of the game. Yet a question is now gaining urgency in economic and political circles: Is the world preparing for an economic order in which the US is no longer its undisputed center of gravity? The answer lies not in the imminent collapse of American economic power, but in a gradual redistribution of influence. What is unfolding today is less the disintegration of the US-led economic order than the erosion of Washington's near-monopoly over the rules governing it. Emerging powers are increasingly reluctant to tie their economic security and commercial future to decisions made in the White House or at the Federal Reserve. China stands at the heart of this transformation. Over the past two decades, Beijing has built an economic position that the world can no longer afford to ignore, expanding its industrial capacity, developing trade infrastructure, and deepening economic ties with developing countries. The Belt and Road Initiative, investments in strategic infrastructure, and efforts to promote the international use of the renminbi form part of a long-term strategy to reduce dependence on Western-dominated structures. Yet China's reliance on export markets and the constraints on the renminbi's internationalization demonstrate how far Beijing remains from replacing Washington. Meanwhile, the expansion of BRICS and growing interest in settling international trade in national currencies reflect a shift in governments' economic calculations. Countries that once regarded the dollar as the only reliable means of conducting foreign trade are increasingly exploring alternatives. But reducing dependence on the dollar is not the same as ending its dominance. The depth of US financial markets, the liquidity of dollar-denominated assets, and the central role of US Treasury securities remain advantages that no rival has managed to replicate in combination.

More importantly, some of the pressure to reshape the existing economic order originates in Washington itself. The extensive use of financial sanctions, tightening technological restrictions, and renewed reliance on tariffs have sent a clear message to US trading partners: economic dependence can become a strategic vulnerability when political disagreements arise. Under such circumstances, diversifying trade relationships and payment channels is no longer merely an economic choice. It has become a strategic necessity. Nevertheless, imagining a world without the US oversimplifies the complexities of the international economy. The United States continues to possess an exceptional combination of financial strength, innovative capacity, institutional influence, and attractive capital markets. Even economies seeking to diminish Washington's influence remain dependent on US-linked economic structures for financing, exports, or access to technology. The central issue, therefore, is not the exclusion of the US from the global economy, but the declining ability of the United States to impose its preferences unilaterally on others. For economies such as Iran's, understanding this distinction is particularly important. An increasingly multipolar global economy may create opportunities to diversify trade and strengthen regional cooperation. Yet such opportunities do not automatically translate into economic advantages. Without domestic structural reforms, greater competitiveness, and fewer barriers to financial transactions, shifts in the global balance of power will not necessarily improve a country's economic standing. The reality is that the world is not preparing to say goodbye to the US. Rather, it is moving away from an era in which Washington could pass the costs of its decisions on to others with relatively little resistance. The emerging order is unlikely to be American in the traditional sense, or Chinese in the way Beijing might envision. Instead, it will increasingly become an arena of competing powers, none capable of setting all the rules alone. Perhaps this is the most consequential transformation in the global economy: the US will remain a decisive power, but it can no longer take for granted that the rest of the world will always play by its rules.

Iran's crude oil production capacity rises 8.3% in two years

Economy Desk

Iran's daily crude oil production capacity rose by 8.3% over two years to 3.715 million barrels in October 2026 from 3.43 million barrels in September 2024, despite sanctions, financial and technological constraints, and security tensions, IRNA reported. The increase amounted to 285,000 barrels per day, while production capacity in October was 55,000 barrels per day higher than in the same month a year earlier, according to the report. The Oil Ministry has focused on bringing existing capacity back

into operation, reviving underperforming wells, developing shared oilfields, and strengthening processing and transportation infrastructure. As part of these efforts, a \$3 billion emergency plan was launched to increase crude oil production capacity by 250,000 barrels per day. So far, 70,000 barrels per day of the target has been achieved, the report said. Funding for the plan comes 80% from the National Development Fund and 20% from the National Iranian Oil Company's internal resources. Development contracts for the Azadegan, Azar, Changuleh and Band-e Karkheh oilfields have

also been approved, with total investment estimated at about 13 billion euros. In infrastructure, contracts have been signed with private-sector companies to establish an additional 315,000 barrels per day of processing capacity, bringing the total processing capacity allocated to the private sector to 430,000 barrels per day. Iran currently has 129 active drilling rigs, and contracts worth about \$1 billion have been signed to provide services for 20 additional rigs to drill 270 wells, according to the report. The remarkable growth comes in direct defiance of the US



administration's aggressive campaign to bring Iran's oil exports down to absolute zero. Despite decades of unilateral sanctions, financial blockades, and security tensions orchestrated by Washington, Tehran has successfully leveraged domestic expertise to not only sustain but significantly expand its hydrocarbon output.

FAO launches \$700,000 in projects to support Iran's agriculture sector

Economy Desk

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is implementing two projects worth a combined \$700,000 in Iran to protect native livestock breeds and support fish farmers affected by the war, its representative in the country said. Farrukh Toirov, the FAO representative in Iran, announced the projects at the opening ceremony of an international livestock and poultry exhibition, ISNA reported. One project, with a budget of about \$300,000, focuses on conserving native livestock breeds, some



of which are at risk of extinction. The initiative aims to work with farmers, livestock breeders and specialists to preserve valuable genetic resources and pass them on

to future generations, Toirov said. He also announced a second project, worth about \$400,000, to support fish farmers whose operations were damaged by the war. The initiative will be carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, fisheries specialists and the private sector. Toirov highlighted the role of Iranian agricultural producers in food security at home and across the region. He said cooperation among governments, the private sector, financial institutions and international organizations was essential to agricultural development and food security.

How will Trump, Putin's diesel deal impact Russia, global markets?



By Sergey Vakulenko
Oil and gas expert
and consultant

OPINION

Under the new diesel deal between US President Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, Russia will increase diesel exports to global markets and the United States in exchange for Washington suspending sanctions on Russian diesel through April 1, 2027. The deal has been greeted with dismay by Europe and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, and skepticism among analysts and traders. It has also sent Russian oil company share prices soaring. But how much money does the Russian state stand to make from the deal? Will it help the global market, and will it mean lower prices at US pumps?

Russia on the global diesel market

Russia has long been one of the biggest players on the world's diesel market. In 2025, Russian exports accounted for about three percent of global diesel consumption, and almost 10 percent of international trade volumes, putting it in second place on the list of exporters, between the United States and Saudi Arabia.

The war in Ukraine and ensuing Western sanctions against Russia have had little impact on Russian export volumes, which stood at around 40 million tons per year in both the pre-war 2021, and in 2025. What did change in that time was the main destinations: Turkey, Brazil, and African countries took the place of the EU and the UK, while overland deliveries to Central Asia and Mongolia continued.

As recently as April this year, Russia had about three million tons of diesel available for export per month. By September, that had fallen almost ten-fold to around 325,000 tons per month due to Ukrainian attacks on Russian oil refineries, seasonal fluctuations in consumption, and a deficit on the domestic market. To stabilize domestic prices, in July, the Russian government banned diesel exports outside of Central Asia and Mongolia. In theory, about two million tons of diesel could have been stockpiled under that ban by now, but that's unlikely to have happened. Judging by data on tanker loading at Russian ports, seaborne exports of diesel did not in fact stop: 1.6–1.8 million tons were shipped by sea in the months since the ban was introduced, possibly using different customs codes to circumvent the ban.

The authorities likely knew what was going on and chose not to intervene. After all, Russia's diesel storage capacity is limited, and if it had become full, refining volumes would have had to be reduced, resulting in lower gasoline production. That's the last thing the government wants at a time of shortages at the pumps. The export volumes agreed with Trump are unlikely to pose any particular difficulties for Russia. The deal is for 300,000 tons



US President Donald Trump (R) shakes hands with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Anchorage, Alaska, on August 15, 2025.
● ANDREW HARNIK/GETTY

of diesel in October, 500,000 tons in November, and one million tons per month after that through April 2027 — the period for which US sanctions are suspended.

The easiest solution for the Russian authorities would be to simply formalize the volumes still being exported in spite of the current ban. That would make it possible to export 500,000 tons even in October without siphoning any diesel from the domestic market.

Diesel consumption in winter in Russia can be 25 percent lower than in September: there is a gradual decline from the peak in August and September to the lowest use in February. That frees up as much as a million tons of diesel for export every month.

The Russian government, which has plenty of informal methods of convincing companies to keep enough diesel back for domestic consumers, announced a partial lifting of the export ban on October 10. That is unlikely to pose a

threat to the domestic market. Similarly, there is no law that says Russian companies have to comply with the OPEC+ decision to limit production, yet Russian companies have been largely adhering to the quotas set by the Energy Ministry for nearly a decade.

Russia doesn't even need to redirect diesel away from the non-Western markets to which it has turned in recent years. Europe may be experiencing diesel shortages too, but it has no intention of buying it from Russia. And the United States itself does not need it because it remains the world's biggest exporter of diesel.

Midterm considerations

Trump's interest in the deal stems not from diesel shortages in the United States, but from high prices for the fuel, which are a source of irritation for the majority of people who will be heading to the polls in three weeks' time to vote in US midterm elections.

For US oil refineries that turn crude oil into diesel, this is a boom time. Usually, diesel costs 20–30 percent more than crude, while right now, it is twice the price, with all the difference going straight to the refineries.

The United States as a whole has seen a slight improvement in its trade balance (a gain of 1–2 percent), so, Trump would appear to have nothing to worry about.

But in reality, expensive diesel is bad for the rest of the US economy: from freight and agricultural companies right up the chain of value creation and consumption. The losers from rising prices far outnumber the winners. US refiners mostly make their profits not at the expense of foreigners, but from rising prices within the United States. In other words, this is not a case of value being created for the country, but of its redistribution.

The United States produces more diesel than it consumes, but prices on the US market are still rising to keep pace with global prices. With no US diesel export ban or export duties in place, the only way of lowering prices at home is to influence prices on the global market by increasing supply.

The most reliable and radical way to get new volumes of diesel

onto the global market is to resolve the issue around the Strait of Hormuz. Increased supplies from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates would quickly alleviate market instability. But Trump is currently unable to secure a swift victory over Iran, and signing a peace agreement on Iranian terms would mean an even greater loss of face and a drop in ratings. And so, he has turned his attention back to another war: that between Russia and Ukraine.

Will the agreement between Russia and the United States really mean a fall in prices? In theory, oil and petrochemicals are commodities with fixed demand. Even small shortages can send prices sky-high, and even minor adjustments, accordingly, can start to bring them down again.

Yet 300,000 tons per month is too little to make a difference to a global market of 120 million tons per month, of which 30 million tons is traded internationally. And there is no way of obtaining any more diesel than that before the midterm elections on November 3.

Prices could fall on expectations that the market will see an additional 5 million tons in the next six months. But the Russian volumes have already been factored in by market players, who all understand that Russia exports as much as it can, and that Trump has little impact on that. Russia would in any case release all of its surplus diesel because it has nowhere to store it. And there is no source of additional volumes, however much Putin might wish to oblige his US counterpart.

It might be another matter if there were expectations that Russian refining could return to 5.5 million barrels a day from its current 3.8–4 million barrels. But for that, Ukraine would have to stop the strikes against Russian refineries, and Kyiv is unlikely to do that since the attacks are one of few levers it can apply to try to force Moscow to reduce the intensity of the conflict.

Benefits for Russia

In theory, the diesel deal is worth about \$7 billion based on current prices and a volume of about 5



The most reliable and radical way to get new volumes of diesel onto the global market is to resolve the issue around the Strait of Hormuz. Increased supplies from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates would quickly alleviate market instability. But Trump is currently unable to secure a swift victory over Iran, and signing a peace agreement on Iranian terms would mean an even greater loss of face and a drop in ratings. And so, he has turned his attention back to another war: that between Russia and Ukraine.



Russian Emergency Situation Ministry's firefighters work at the scene of a fire at the Novoshakhtinsk oil processing plant in the Rostov region on June 22, 2022.
● RUSSIAN EMERGENCY MINISTRY PRESS SERVICE

million tons of diesel sold over six months. That's about half of what Russia made from exporting oil and petrochemicals in August 2026. But to say Russia will make \$7 billion from the deal would be to count it twice: after all, that diesel would have been exported in any case, albeit on less profitable terms. The most Russia can gain is from reducing the discount it previously had to offer buyers because of sanctions. That said, there was no signifi-

cant discount on Russian diesel even before — at least according to buyers' customs statistics. Sales to Brazil are less profitable than sales to Europe before the war primarily because it costs more to transport the diesel. The suspension of US sanctions won't change anything in that respect because EU sanctions on Russian diesel are still in force, which means transport costs will stay high. With US sanctions suspended, Russia is not limited to its "shad-

ow fleet" and can use other tankers too, which should decrease shipping costs somewhat. But it still won't be able to use vessels belonging to EU shipowners, which will reduce the effect. In the best case, therefore, Russia stands to make \$30–\$40 per ton of product, or tens of millions of dollars per month: small fry for Russia. Furthermore, that cash will go not to the state budget, but to companies. The budget will only get its share in the form of tax paid on potentially

increased profits. Nor can the Russian government allow oil companies to release more volumes of diesel for export to take advantage of the situation as that would exacerbate the deficit on the domestic market and cost too much, both for the economy and for the government's reputation. The Russian budget could itself actually benefit from a reduction in global diesel prices. The tax system in Russia is structured in such a way

that state coffers gain nothing from increased prices for exported petrochemicals (in contrast with crude prices, which, when they rise, result in additional income to the budget via the mineral extraction tax). The more expensive fuel is on foreign markets, the more the budget has to pay oil companies to sell the fuel on the domestic market at regulated prices under the price-stabilization or damper mechanism. So, if global diesel prices fall, so will payments issued under

that mechanism. Ultimately, without a cease-fire with Ukraine on attacking each other's energy infrastructure — to which the Kremlin is unlikely to agree — the diesel agreement between Putin and Trump is largely for show, rather than representing a genuine increase in the volumes of Russian diesel on the global market.

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

US midterms rare foreign policy election

By Andrew Payne
Research director at Chatham House

OPINION

Foreign policy rarely decides US elections. Conventional wisdom is that voters know little, and care less, about international affairs. Instead, they are driven by pocketbook issues, like the price of gas and groceries. As James Carville, an adviser to Bill Clinton, once observed: 'it's the economy, stupid'. But this year, the economy is foreign policy. There are two important exceptions to the rule that US voters don't care about foreign policy — and they both apply this year. One, voters care about foreign affairs when an administration's choices directly affect their daily lives. Two, voters care about what foreign policy choices reveal about a president's competence as commander-in-chief. The upcoming midterms could therefore be a rare foreign policy election — of a kind not seen since 2006 when a backlash to George W. Bush's handling of the Iraq war handed Republicans a 'thumping' defeat. With voters now feeling the pain of yet another war in the Middle East and Trump's tariffs, history could repeat itself. The president seems aware of this risk, sending mixed signals about whether the elections will shape his handling of the war in Iran and striking a deal on diesel exports with Russia to ease the pain at the pump for voters. But perhaps the bigger question is what Trump does after the midterms, the last major electoral check on his presidency.

War on the ballot
War has always been the clearest example of when foreign policy directly affects the daily lives of voters. But this is not always reflected in polls about the importance of individual issues — and this year is no different. Voters cite economic issues as the key drivers of their vote. In a recent survey by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, pluralities of voters across the political spectrum cite inflation and the cost of living as most important to their vote (37 per cent overall). By contrast, only two per cent single out the war in Iran as the most important issue, possibly due to the relatively low number of US casualties. But that does not mean it is not having an impact. Voters are linking the pain in their pocketbooks with the foreign policy choices of this administration. According to a recent survey by the Institute for Global Affairs, 81 per cent of Americans say



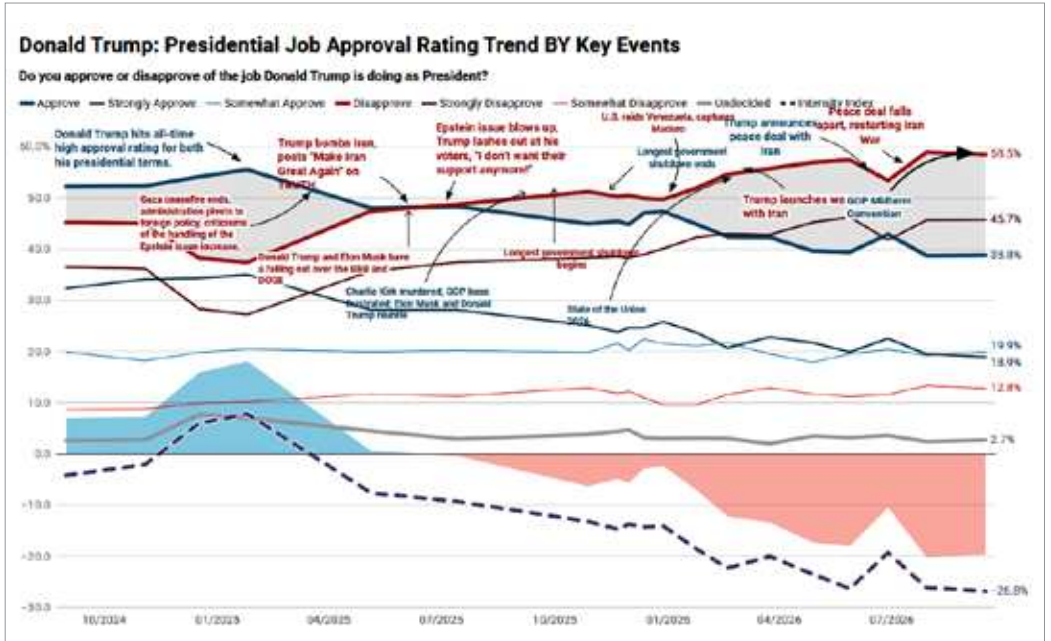
● EAGLE INTELLIGENCE REPORTS

the war in Iran has increased the cost of living. The Chicago Council survey puts the number even higher, at 86 per cent. And then there are the trade wars. According to the Chicago Council survey, 81 per cent of respondents say tariffs have been bad for the cost of living. It is unsurprising, therefore, that 75 per cent of Americans say tariffs will be important to their midterm vote, according to a survey by the Cato Institute. Importantly, these findings cannot be written off as partisanship. Across a whole range of issues, support for Trump's policies lags well behind his overall approval rating — which continues to hover around a historic low of 37 per cent. This suggests voters are not just instinctively opposing anything the president does but that large numbers of Americans, including many who otherwise support him, do not like his policy choices. Affordability concerns will still dominate these elections. But

large numbers of Americans blame the administration's foreign policy choices for the perilous state of their household finances. And that's bad news for Republicans. **From a strong leader to a reckless one**
The second exception is when prominent foreign policy missteps tarnish the image of the sitting president in ways that cause voters to take note. For example, how the Biden administration handled the 2021 US withdrawal from Afghanistan severely damaged perceptions of Joe Biden. His approval rating dropped almost overnight and never recovered. In 2024, Trump was able to turn this into an advantage on the campaign trail by presenting himself as a strong leader who would stand up against America's adversaries — and with a commitment to peace. Today, Trump's reputation is suffering from both his inabil-

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less' applied 'a lot' to Trump — up five points from a year ago — while the proportion who described him as a 'strong leader' dropped four percentage points.

To what degree will foreign policy shape the results — and how will Trump respond?

Republicans were already likely to fare poorly. The midterms are traditionally seen as a referendum on the performance of the incumbent president, and with Trump's overall approval ratings at a near-record low, history is not on his side. Even though foreign policy may not dominate any given race, it is likely to matter at the margins. And in a tight race, that could make all the difference. In some swing states Republican candidates are distancing themselves from the president's policies. In Michigan, Senate nominee Mike Rogers has said the war 'needs to end, and end quickly,' to provide relief for American families. In Iowa, meanwhile, Senate nominee Ashley Hinson similarly said that lowans 'shouldn't have to foot the bill at the pump or the checkout line for the war in Iran'. Trump's diesel deal with Russia indicates some sensitivity to the electoral risks of high gas prices. But achieving this by accommodating Vladimir Putin — rather than an embargo on US diesel exports, for example — has only highlighted another foreign policy weakness: Trump's inability to end the war in Ukraine. But will an electoral rebuke result in more foreign policy restraint? Perhaps the most important question is not the degree to which foreign policy will shape the results, but how the president will respond. And here, history offers a warning. After his 2006 midterm defeat, President Bush did not change course. Instead, he defied the mandate voters had given by escalating an unpopular war in the Middle East. President Trump recently pledged not to attack Iran before the midterms, having previously expressed a desire to help his party in the elections. Whether he too will try to end the war through a dramatic escalation once the ballots are counted remains to be seen. But he would not be the first president to double down on an unpopular policy once unshackled from electoral constraints. The 'lame duck' phase of Trump's presidency may therefore prove even more disruptive on the international stage.

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The article was first published by Chatham House.

million tons of diesel sold over six months. That's about half of what Russia made from exporting oil and petrochemicals in August 2026. But to say Russia will make \$7 billion from the deal would be to count it twice: after all, that diesel would have been exported in any case, albeit on less profitable terms. The most Russia can gain is from reducing the discount it previously had to offer buyers because of sanctions. That said, there was no signifi-

cant discount on Russian diesel even before — at least according to buyers' customs statistics. Sales to Brazil are less profitable than sales to Europe before the war primarily because it costs more to transport the diesel. The suspension of US sanctions won't change anything in that respect because EU sanctions on Russian diesel are still in force, which means transport costs will stay high. With US sanctions suspended, Russia is not limited to its "shad-

ow fleet' and can use other tankers too, which should decrease shipping costs somewhat. But it still won't be able to use vessels belonging to EU shipowners, which will reduce the effect. In the best case, therefore, Russia stands to make \$30-\$40 per ton of product, or tens of millions of dollars per month: small fry for Russia. Furthermore, that cash will go not to the state budget, but to companies. The budget will only get its share in the form of tax paid on potentially

increased profits. Nor can the Russian government allow oil companies to release more volumes of diesel for export to take advantage of the situation as that would exacerbate the deficit on the domestic market and cost too much, both for the economy and for the government's reputation. The Russian budget could itself actually benefit from a reduction in global diesel prices. The tax system in Russia is structured in such a way

that state coffers gain nothing from increased prices for exported petrochemicals (in contrast with crude prices, which, when they rise, result in additional income to the budget via the mineral extraction tax). The more expensive fuel is on foreign markets, the more the budget has to pay oil companies to sell the fuel on the domestic market at regulated prices under the price-stabilization or damper mechanism. So, if global diesel prices fall, so will payments issued under

that mechanism. Ultimately, without a cease-fire with Ukraine on attacking each other's energy infrastructure — to which the Kremlin is unlikely to agree — the diesel agreement between Putin and Trump is largely for show, rather than representing a genuine increase in the volumes of Russian diesel on the global market.

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

US midterms rare foreign policy election



By Andrew Payne
*Research director at
Chatham House*

OPINION

Foreign policy rarely decides US elections. Conventional wisdom is that voters know little, and care less, about international affairs. Instead, they are driven by pocketbook issues, like the price of gas and groceries. As James Carville, an adviser to Bill Clinton, once observed: 'it's the economy, stupid'. But this year, the economy is foreign policy. There are two important exceptions to the rule that US voters don't care about foreign policy — and they both apply this year. One, voters care about foreign affairs when an administration's choices directly affect their daily lives. Two, voters care about what foreign policy choices reveal about a president's competence as commander-in-chief. The upcoming midterms could therefore be a rare foreign policy election — of a kind not seen since 2006 when a backlash to George W. Bush's handling of the Iraq war handed Republicans a 'thumping' defeat. With voters now feeling the pain of yet another war in the Middle East and Trump's tariffs, history could repeat itself. The president seems aware of this risk, sending mixed signals about whether the elections will shape his handling of the war in Iran and striking a deal on diesel exports with Russia to ease the pain at the pump for voters. But perhaps the bigger question is what Trump does after the midterms, the last major electoral check on his presidency.

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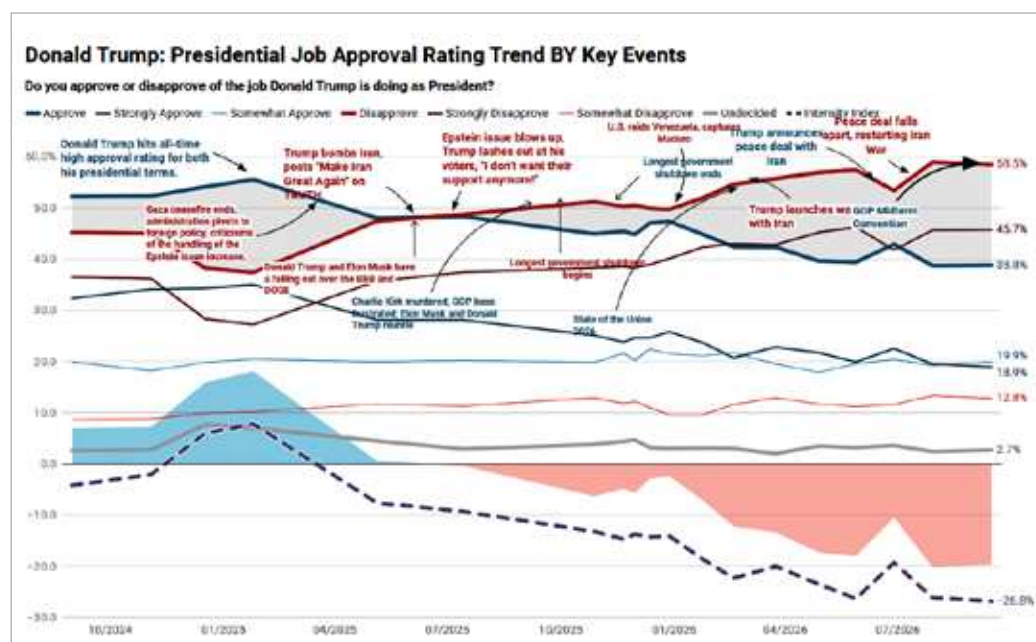
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The second exception is when prominent foreign policy missteps tarnish the image of the sitting president in ways that cause voters to take note. For example, how the Biden administration handled the 2021 US withdrawal from Afghanistan severely damaged perceptions of Joe Biden. His approval rating dropped almost overnight and never recovered. In 2024, Trump was able to turn this into an advantage on the campaign trail by presenting himself as a strong leader who would stand up against America's adversaries — and with a commitment to peace. Today, Trump's reputation is suffering from both his inabil-

ity to resolve foreign policy challenges he inherited and the abandonment of his pledge to avoid entangling the US in costly conflicts overseas. In a CNN/SSRS survey, just 29 per cent of US adults said they approved of Trump's handling of foreign affairs, down from 42 per cent shortly after he returned to office. Only one in four respondents believed he had a clear strategy for handling Tehran, down from 40 per cent in the immediate aftermath of the outbreak of the war. These dynamics also appear to be feeding into broader perceptions of Trump's leadership. In a YouGov survey fielded at the outset of the war, 56 per cent of respondents said the word 'reck-



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To what degree will foreign policy shape the results — and how will Trump respond?

Republicans were already likely to fare poorly. The midterms are traditionally seen as a referendum on the performance of the incumbent president, and with Trump's overall approval ratings at a near-record low, history is not on his side.

Even though foreign policy may not dominate any given race, it is likely to matter at the margins. And in a tight race, that could make all the difference.

In some swing states Republican candidates are distancing themselves from the president's policies. In Michigan, Senate nominee Mike Rogers has said the war 'needs to end, and end quickly,' to provide relief for American families. In Iowa, meanwhile, Senate nominee Ashley Hinson similarly said that Iowans 'shouldn't have to foot the bill at the pump or the checkout line for the war in Iran'. Trump's diesel deal with Russia indicates some sensitivity to the electoral risks of high gas prices. But achieving this by accommodating Vladimir Putin — rather than an embargo on US diesel exports, for example — has only highlighted another foreign policy weakness: Trump's inability to end the war in Ukraine.

But will an electoral rebuke result in more foreign policy restraint? Perhaps the most important question is not the degree to which foreign policy will shape the results, but how the president will respond.

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The article was first published by Chatham House.

U23 Wrestling World Championships:

Iran dominates Day 2
in freestyle, closes in
on historic double

Iranian freestyle wrestler Abolfazl Mohammadnejad (L), pictured after his semifinal victory over Azerbaijan's Khetag Karsanov, won the freestyle 125kg gold medal at the U23 World Championships in Las Vegas, NV, United States.
● IAWFIR

Sports Desk

Iranian wrestlers stole the show in the freestyle competition at the U23 World Championships in Las Vegas on Saturday, claiming two gold and three bronze medals across five weight classes.

The impressive haul lifted Iran to the top of the team standings with 95 points, 11 ahead of Russia and 29 clear of the United States, at the end of the penultimate day of competition.

With three more Iranians advancing to their respective finals earlier in the day, Iran moved within touching distance of a second freestyle team title in three years, as well as a first overall team title double in the tournament's nine editions, having secured a third successive Greco-Roman crown in Las Vegas last week.

An 86kg bronze medalist at last year's tournament, Abolfazl Rahmani, who settled for silver at the U20 World Championships in August, opened Iran's gold account on Saturday by claiming the 92kg title with an impressive 5-2 victory over Russia's Arslan Bagaev, the 2024 champion, who had not conceded a single point in four technical superiority wins on his way to the final.

Defending champion Abolfazl Mohammadnejad, meanwhile, was once again in a league of his own in the 125kg event, maintaining Iran's traditional dominance in the superheavyweight category. Having reached the final without conceding a point in three bouts, including a semifinal victory over Azerbaijan's Khetag Karsanov in a rematch of last year's final, Mohammadnejad made quick work of Georgia's Aleksandre Abramishvili in the showdown, winning 10-0 to add the U23 world title to his U20 crown won in Bratislava.

Elsewhere, Ebrahim Khari, who had suffered a 7-1 defeat to American Benjamin Davino in his opening 61kg bout, bounced back to beat Japan's Akito Mukaida 15-4 in repechage before crushing Romania's Gabriel Whisenhunt 12-0 to cap his campaign with a bronze medal.

Davino, meanwhile, went on to

claim gold with a 4-1 victory over Kyrgyzstan's Iukhan Dokturbek Uulu in the final, while Armenia's Sargis Begoyan won the other bronze medal in the category.

Iranian Ali Karampour also claimed a bronze medal in the 74kg division, recovering from a semifinal defeat to American Jayden James to beat Moldova's Ion Marcu 10-0 in the third-place bout.

James had to settle for silver after losing 5-3 to Russia's Magomed Baitukaev in the final, while Japan's Toki Ogawa shared bronze with Karampour.

In the 86kg class, Reza Afshar added a third bronze medal to Iran's tally.

Afshar, a world U17 champion in 2024, made a losing start in Las Vegas, falling 7-1 to Turkey's Ahmet Yagan. He began his bid for bronze with a technical superiority victory over Mexico's Kevin De Leon and defeated Armenia's Razmik Yepremyan 5-2 in his second repechage bout before beating Moldova's Eugeniu Mihalcean 6-0 in the bronze-medal match.

Arsen Balaian defeated Yagan 5-0 in the final to secure a second gold medal for Russia, which has been eligible to earn team points for the first time since 2021. Mongolia's Batbilguun Naadambat also finished with bronze.

Three golds up for grabs

Earlier in the day, Iranian Ahoura Khateri mounted an action-packed campaign to reach the 65kg final, where he will face Japan's Kaiji Ogino, who will be looking to improve on his silver medal from 2024.

Khateri opened his campaign with a thrilling 15-14 victory over Kazakhstan's Shattyk Alaidar, an Asian U23 bronze medalist, before beating Uzbekistan's Sanjarbek Rustambekov 10-2 to set up a semifinal clash with Russia's Eldar Akhmadudinov. Khateri edged the Russian 9-8 to book his place in the final. Ebrahim Elahi was the second Iranian to advance to a final on Saturday.

The former world U17 champion opened his 70kg campaign with a 6-1 victory over Turkey's Abdullah Toprak, followed by wins over Kazakhstan's Maisi Aliyev (9-6) and

Japan's Taiga Ogino (4-0).

Russia's Magomed Eltemirov will stand between Elahi and the gold medal in the final.

Mahdi Yousefi, meanwhile, will look to improve on last year's bronze after reaching the final in the 79kg class. Also a world U20 champion in 2025, Yousefi opened with a 6-4 victory over Turkey's Ibrahim Metehan Yaprak before outclassing Ireland's Declan Bligh 10-0 to advance to the quarterfinals, where he dismantled Armenia's Hayk Papikyan 12-1.

A 4-3 win over India's Chandermohan sent Yousefi into the final against Russia's Said Saidulov, whom the Iranian defeated 15-7 when they met at last year's U20 Worlds in Samokov, Bulgaria.

In the 97kg category, Mohammad-Mobin Azimi, the 92kg champion at last year's edition and the Senior Asian Championships in April, made a winning start in his new weight class by defeating Azerbaijan's Zafar Aliyev 8-0 in the opening round. He then beat Uzbekistan's Sherzod Poyonov (9-5) and Turkey's Rifat Eren Gidak (6-1) before suffering a 14-9 semifinal defeat to Russia's Mukhamed Takhir Khaniev in a thrilling clash. Khaniev had lost to Azimi in the 92kg final last year.

Azimi will look to salvage a medal when he competes in the bronze-medal bout on Sunday.

Ali Yahyapour, meanwhile, had a campaign to forget in the 57kg category, crashing out in the round of 16. After receiving a first-round bye, Yahyapour lost 10-8 to Armenia's Arman Harutyunyan in his opening bout and missed out on a second chance in repechage after his opponent failed to reach the final.

Iran's impressive freestyle campaign in Las Vegas follows the success of head coach Hassan Rangraz's 10-man Greco-Roman squad, which secured three gold medals through Erfan Jarkani (63kg), Abolfazl Mohmedi (82kg) and Yasin Yazdi (87kg), while Mohammad Kamali (67kg) and Mohammad-Hadi Seydi (97kg) added two bronze medals. The haul lifted Iran to the Greco-Roman team title with 119 points, five ahead of runners-up Kazakhstan.

Iranians to continue taekwondo
Olympic bid at Qatar Open Ch'ship

Sports Desk

Five Iranians will continue their bid for a taekwondo berth at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics when they take part in the upcoming Qatar Open Championship in Doha.

The senior competition of the sixth edition of the tournament will kick off at the Ladies' Sports Hall in the Qatari capital on Wednesday.

The event is a World Taekwondo (WT) G1 tournament, with gold medalists in each weight class earning 10 Olympic ranking points.

Saghar Moradi, who made history by winning Iran's first women's taekwondo gold medal at the Asian Games in Nagoya, Japan, earlier this month, headlines the roster

in Doha, competing in the -67kg class.

Also a winner of a historic gold medal for the country at the WT Women's Open Championships in July, Moradi is currently ninth in the Olympic kyorugi rankings in her weight class.

Joining Moradi in the women's competition is Nastaran Valizadeh, who will take part in the -62kg class.

Valizadeh, who won gold at the WT President's Cup – Asia in August, is 18th in the Olympic -57kg rankings.

In the men's competition, Iran will be represented by Danial Bozorgi, also a President's Cup champion, in the -68kg class.

Bozorgi faces a daunting task in his bid to secure an Olympic berth, as he is currently

ranked 31st in the kyorugi rankings.

Radin Zeinali, 24th in the Olympic -80kg rankings, will compete in the men's -74kg class, which features 23 athletes from around the globe.

Amir-Sina Bakhtiari, meanwhile, will headline the -80kg competition. The reigning Asian champion in the -74kg class will look to improve his 22nd-place ranking after winning bronze at the Chuncheon Korea Open in July.

The Iranian men's trio will be coached by Sajjad Mardani, with Shima Khalil-Arjmandi in charge of the women's pair. The Qatar Open Championship features 1,574 contestants across different age groups, with 363 athletes set to compete in the senior event.



Iran's Saghar Moradi (blue), pictured in July's WT Women's Open Championships, will compete in the -67kg event at the Qatar Open Championship.
● WORLD TAEKWONDO

Asian Team Squash Championships 2026:

Iran unveils four-man
squad for Islamabad event

Sports Desk

Iran will field a four-man squad at the 2026 Asian Team Squash Championships in Islamabad, Pakistan.

The tournament will take place from November 3 to 7, with Iran set to compete in the men's event with four players.

Sepehr Etemadpour, Sami-

ollah Qasedabadi, Mojtaba Kafiri and Mohammad Changaniyan will represent Iran at the continental competition, with Mohsen Gholamnejad serving as head coach.

The Iranian players are scheduled to travel to Pakistan about a week before the tournament, possibly on October 27, to familiarize themselves with the

host country's conditions and prepare for the event.

India will be among the notable absentees from this year's championships.

The previous edition of the Asian Team Squash Championships was held in Malaysia, but Iran did not participate because of the 12-day war and the circumstances surrounding it in the country.



Khaf taps historical, cultural attractions to boost tourism

Iranica Desk

Domestic tourist arrivals in Khaf, Khorasan Razavi Province, have increased by around 20 to 25 percent with the onset of autumn, according to the head of the Khaf's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department.

Mahmoud Ba'aghdeh said efforts are underway to extend visitors' stays and boost the local tourism economy through cultural events and complementary activities. He told ISNA that Khaf's historical sites, traditional architecture, cultural heritage and tourism attractions provide significant potential for attracting visitors. He said foreign tourist arrivals in the town have remained very limited since the beginning of the current Iranian year (March 21, 2026), with most visitors coming from within Iran.

Ba'aghdeh added that tourism bookings had continued since the start of autumn and that domestic tourist numbers had grown compared with the same period last year.

Commenting on tourism infrastructure and its impact on visitors' length of stay, Ba'aghdeh said many of Khaf's historical monuments are located near police stations, healthcare facilities and other essential services.

He added that mobile phone and Internet coverage is adequate in many of these areas and that visitors generally have few complaints about the available infrastructure.

However, he noted that service facilities and roadside sanitation amenities have yet to be fully established along some



● chn.ir



● chn.ir

tourist routes. Addressing these shortcomings could further improve the visitor experience, although facilities around many historical sites are already adequate, he said.

According to Ba'aghdeh, tourists stay in Khaf for an average of at least two nights. The department is seeking to extend these visits by offering a wider range of cultural and tourism activities, allowing visitors to experience more than just the county's historical landmarks. Ba'aghdeh said visitors to Khaf are often introduced to local music performances staged at historical sites or in traditional eco-lodges.

Visits to handicraft workshops are also planned, giving tourists the opportunity to learn about traditional crafts, meet local artisans and watch production techniques firsthand. Visitors can also explore handicraft shops to discover locally made products.

He said supplementary tourism activities are tailored to the season and local conditions. During



● otaghak.com

the saffron harvest, for example, visitors may be taken to saffron fields, while wheat fields can be included in itineraries during the wheat harvest. Where circumstances permit, tourists may also be introduced to traditional methods of baking local bread. In some cases, tourist visits have coincided with traditional local games, and efforts have been made to take visitors to watch these activities, he added. "The aim is to ensure that tourism is not limited to visiting a

historical monument," Ba'aghdeh said, emphasizing the importance of introducing visitors to the region's culture, customs and way of life.

Ba'aghdeh said several cultural and tourism events are being planned for Khaf, including Khaf Cultural Week and a festival featuring local music and traditional games.

Preparations for Cultural Week are underway, with the event expected to take place in Aban, the eighth month of the Iranian

calendar, which generally falls in October and November.

The annual local music festival, usually held in winter, is another key event on the department's agenda, he said.

A festival celebrating Iran's ethnic groups is also planned for before Nowruz, the Persian New Year, which begins in March. If conditions allow, officials will seek to hold the event in Khaf. Such events could play an important role in showcasing the county's indigenous culture, local music, customs and tourism potential, Ba'aghdeh said.

Addressing the development of rural tourism, Ba'aghdeh said four villages have been designated as tourism target villages in Khaf. The department plans to work with district authorities to improve tourism services and accommodation in these villages, he said. He specifically pointed to initiatives in Niababad village, where work has begun to organize routes traditionally used by local residents. Officials hope that continued efforts will improve conditions for tourists

visiting and staying in designated tourism villages.

Ba'aghdeh said there are currently no plans to increase the number of designated villages. Instead, the priority is to strengthen the existing four destinations and ensure they are better equipped to accommodate visitors. Decisions on adding further villages could be considered once the current sites have been organized and developed, he added.

Ba'aghdeh also highlighted Khaf's growing presence on organized tour itineraries.

He said that as tour operators develop routes from Tehran to more distant destinations, certain cities along the way increasingly become tourism stops. Khaf has gradually established its position on these routes, he added.

Several organized tours have visited the town in recent weeks, reflecting growing interest in its tourism potential.

Beyond its historical monuments, Khaf offers a range of cultural attractions, including traditional regional music, local clothing, traditional cuisine, indigenous customs and handicrafts, Ba'aghdeh said.

He added that expanding eco-lodges, organizing cultural and local music festivals, supporting handicraft artisans and improving infrastructure could help extend tourists' stays, stimulate local businesses and create employment opportunities.

Making strategic use of these resources, alongside the active participation of local communities and investors, will be essential to the sustainable development of tourism in Khaf County, he said.

Mina'i pottery preserves lost tradition of Persian art

Iranica Desk

Mina'i pottery, one of the most delicate and sophisticated ceramic techniques developed in Iran during the Seljuk period, transformed pottery into a medium for depicting literary tales, hunting scenes, musical gatherings and human figures. Today, these works in major museums around the world testify to the technical skill and artistic imagination of Iranian potters in the medieval period.

According to ISNA, one of the finest examples of this art is preserved at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The bowl, made in Iran in the late 12th to early 13th century, depicts a scene from the story of Bahram Gur and Azadeh. In the scene, Bahram Gur, a renowned hero of Persian epic literature, is shown hunting alongside Azadeh, a harp player. The story appears in Persian literature, including the Shahnameh (Book of Kings). The bowl is made of stonepaste and decorated with polychrome overglaze painting and gilding.

The depiction of such a narrative on a ceramic vessel shows that Mina'i potters did more than decorate functional objects; they transformed their surfaces into a kind of storytelling canvas. In its descriptions of this group of works, the Metropolitan Museum also notes that many Mina'i motifs are associated with Persian literary and poetic themes, including stories from the Shahnameh. These ceramics therefore provide valuable insights into Iran's visual traditions during the Seljuk period.

What distinguishes these vessels from many other ceramics of the same period, however, is not just their subject matter but also their complex production technique. The modern term Mina'i derives from the Persian word mina, meaning enamel, and refers to a method of ceramic painting in which different colors were applied over an initial glaze and fixed through a second firing. The technique is also known in art-historical sources as haft-rang, meaning "seven colors."

The bodies of these vessels were generally made from a fine ceramic material known as stonepaste or fritware, composed of crushed quartz, glass frit and a small amount of clay. This mixture produced a hard, light-colored body. Once the vessel had been formed, it was coated with a pale, opaque glaze, and some colors were applied during the first firing. Additional paintings and colors that could not withstand higher temperatures were then applied over the fired glaze, and the vessel was returned to the kiln at a lower temperature. Gilding could also be included in the decoration.

These multiple firings made the process particularly risky. A vessel that had already been fired had to withstand another round of heating at a temperature high enough to fix the new colors without damaging the existing glaze and decoration. The Metropolitan Museum identifies this multi-stage process as one of the reasons Mina'i pottery was labor-intensive and luxurious to produce.

Kashan is more closely associated with this art than any other city. Research sources identify Kashan as one of the most important centers for producing fine ceramics in Iran during the 12th and 13th centuries, and many Mina'i works have been attributed to the city in art-historical studies. However, recent research emphasizes that archaeological evidence is insufficient to attribute all Mina'i vessels to a single workshop or even definitively to Kashan.

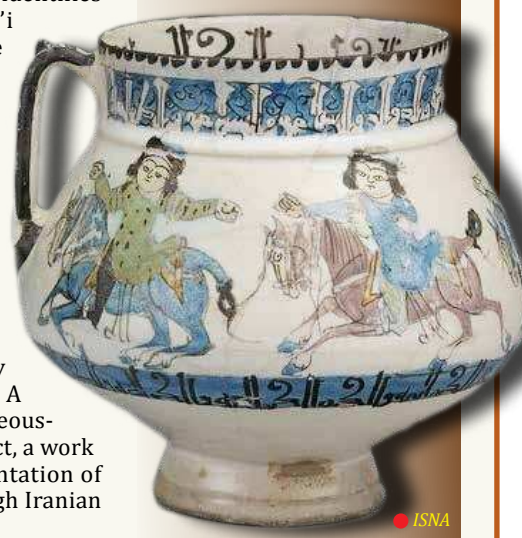
The technique emerged at a time when Iranian potters were exploring ways to expand the range of colors and increase the visual complexity of ceramics. The result was a group of vessels whose compositions and subjects sometimes resembled illustrations in illuminated manuscripts. Faces, horsemen, hunting scenes, musical performances, courtly gatherings and literary characters were brought together on the limited surface of a bowl or plate, turning each vessel into a miniature reflection of the culture and life of its time.

Among these narratives, the Shahnameh held a special place. Bahram Gur and Azadeh, Fereydun, Bijan and Manijeh, along with other literary and epic characters, appear on a number of Mina'i vessels. This gives the objects significance beyond the history of ceramics, as they also provide researchers with visual evidence of how Persian literature was represented in the visual arts before the Mongol period.

The Metropolitan Museum houses

more than a single example of this art. Its collection includes a notable group of Iranian Mina'i vessels, among them a bowl depicting Bahram Gur and Azadeh, bowls featuring horsemen and human gatherings, and a vessel decorated with abstract motifs. The collection also includes a Mina'i ewer depicting a procession of horsemen, accompanied by inscriptions in Kufic script. Another example of this art can be seen at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA): a large ewer attributed to Iran, specifically Kashan, and dated to the late 12th to early 13th century. The museum identifies it as an example of Mina'i pottery and highlights the complex and costly process of refiring required to fix the colors.

What is displayed today in museums around the world is therefore more than a collection of decorative vessels. Iranian Mina'i ceramics bear witness to a period of technical experimentation in which glaze, color, gold and literary storytelling came together. A small vessel could simultaneously serve as a functional object, a work of art and a visual representation of a story passed down through Iranian culture for centuries.



● ISNA

Vienna conference highlights interfaith dialogue as a path to peace

Social Desk

The Iranian Wisdom House in Vienna hosted an international conference highlighted the role of interfaith dialogue in promoting peace, cultural understanding and a shared global identity while preserving religious differences, IRNA reported on Sunday.

The conference, titled 'Religious Identity and Global Identity: Perspectives for Interreligious Dialogue', was held on October 16, 2026 in Vienna, capital of Austria.

At the conference, academics and religious researchers from Iran and Austria discussed how people can maintain their religious and cultural identities while sharing responsibility for humanity's future.

Peter Haider, president of the Universal Peace Federation in Austria and moderator of the

conference, said lasting peace required religious, non-religious and cultural voices to be heard. He stressed the need for international cooperation and a global order based on mutual interdependence and shared prosperity. Mohammad Mahdi Imanipour, head of Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations Organization and its High Council for Interfaith Dialogue, said constructive engagement among religions should go beyond resolving misunderstandings and lead to identifying common challenges and working together to address them.

Referring to the Islamic concept of fitrah, or innate human nature, he described it as a basis for connecting religious identity with a shared human identity, arguing that the two were not necessarily in conflict.

During the event, Afsar Rathor, an international peace and



Iran's cultural representative in Austria, Reza Gholami (R), delivers a speech at a conference in Vienna on October 16, 2026.
● IRNA

cooperation advocate, drew on his experience in crisis-hit regions to highlight the role of religious communities in rebuilding trust and supporting reconciliation. He said peace required not only an end to war but also justice, human dignity and mutual respect.

Astrid Matz, a professor of the sociology of religion at the University of Vienna, presented research involving 41 religious young people in the city.

The findings showed how social media connected young people with religious communities worldwide and how their identities developed through social interactions and digital



communication. Speaking at the conference, Reza Gholami, Iran's cultural representative in Austria, called for dialogue among cultures and religious traditions, warning

against treating any single culture as a universal standard. He also advocated broader, accountable participation by religious institutions in developing AI ethics.

The conference concluded with the presentation of the inaugural Lotus of Dialogue Honor to Haider, recognizing contributions to interfaith and intercultural understanding.

Halal tourism at center of Iran-Malaysia cooperation

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran and Malaysia are seeking to expand tourism and cultural ties, with halal tourism, heritage preservation and joint cultural programs among the areas identified for cooperation, Iranian official said.

Ali Darabi, Iran's deputy minister for cultural heritage, met Malaysian Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Dato Sri Tiong King Sing on the sidelines of the fourth Asian Cultural Heritage Alliance (ACHA) summit in Hangzhou, China on October 18, 2026, IRNA reported on Sunday.

Darabi said Iran's participation in Malaysian tourism events and Malaysia's presence at Tehran's international



tourism exhibition had helped build closer relations. He said a memorandum of understanding could pave the way for further cooperation and joint programs, and invited the Malaysian minister to visit Iran. Iran ranks among the world's leading countries in tangible cultural heritage and has 27 elements inscribed

on UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage lists, Darabi said. Tiong said the issues raised at the meeting would be reviewed in Malaysia and discussed with Iran's ambassador there. He also pointed to plans to hold an Iran Week in Malaysia as a way to promote cultural exchanges. The Malaysian minister said the number



Iran's Deputy Minister for Cultural Heritage Ali Darabi (R) meets Malaysian Tourism Minister Dato Sri Tiong King Sing on the sidelines of the fourth Asian Cultural Heritage Alliance summit in Hangzhou, China on October 18, 2026.
● IRNA

of Malaysian tourists visiting Iran fell in 2025 and called for joint efforts to increase travel between the two countries. He identified Malaysia's experience in Islamic tourism and halal travel as an opportunity to attract more Iranian visitors. Both sides stressed the need to follow up on their discussions and turn their cultural and tourism potential into practical joint initiatives.

Ardabil, Van to pursue tourism, investment development

Arts & Culture Desk

Officials from Ardabil Province in northwestern Iran and the eastern Turkish city of Van have discussed expanding tourism cooperation and attracting investment to strengthen economic ties and promote regional attractions during a meeting.

The meeting was held at a UNESCO World Heritage site, Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili historical complex in Ardebil city on October 16, 2026.

Jalil Jabari, head of Ardabil's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department and Van's tourism director and representatives of the tourism industry attended the event.

The officials emphasized the need to develop cooperation in tourism, investment and economic exchanges. Jabari invited Turkish tourism officials and companies to visit Ardabil and explore opportunities in the province.

Van's tourism director, in turn, invited Ardabil officials to attend the city's international tourism and travel fair scheduled for November 2026.

Van, located in eastern Turkey, has become a popular shopping and travel destination for Iranians. More than one million Iranians visited the city in 2023.

Ardabil offers a range of historical, cultural and natural attractions including Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili complex, Sareyn's hot springs,



Officials and tourism industry representatives from Iran's Ardabil Province and Turkey's Van meet in Ardabil on October 16, 2026, to discuss tourism and investment opportunities.
● IRNA

the Alvares ski resort, Fandoghlu Forest and suspension bridges in Meshgin Shahr, Hir and Sareyn.

Alongside efforts to attract visitors, Ardabil is pursuing investment in its tourism infrastructure.

"91 tourism projects were underway in the province, with a combined investment volume of 550 trillion rials. The projects are expected to create about 3,100 jobs," Jabari said.

Jabari added that 25 investment packages would be uploaded to Iran's National Licensing Portal within two months.

The initiative is intended to simplify the licensing process and allow investors to pursue permits through a single platform, reducing the need for repeated administrative inquiries.

Iranian children win prizes in Japan's art contest

Arts & Culture Desk

An Iranian 9-year-old has won a special UNICEF award at Japan's 25th International Environmental Children's Drawing Contest, where seven other Iranian children and teenagers also received prizes.

Aylin Javanbakht, from the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults' center in Aghajari, in southwestern Khuzestan province, received the award in the international category.

The 2025 contest, held under the theme "Let's

Listen to Earth's Voice," attracted 9,907 entries from 72 countries. Iran's institute submitted 280 drawings by children enrolled at its cultural and artistic centers. Three other Iranian participants won first prizes: Benita Aliyari, 9, from Tehran, Ali-Sadra Ghadiri,

10, from Ardabil, in northwestern Iran; and Naghmeh Mohammadnejad, 14, from Ilam Province in western Iran.

Four participants received diplomas of honor. They were Sanaz Gorji, 9, from Yazd Province in central Iran; Fatima Fathi, 14, from

Khorramabad, in western Iran's Lorestan province; and Elay Ebrahimi, 13, and Sara Shakouri, 15, both from Maku, in northwestern West Azerbaijan province.

The contest aims to raise children's awareness of environmental issues and encourage them to express



A drawing by Aylin Javanbakht won the UNICEF award in Japan's JQA contest.

their views and concerns about the Earth and environmental protection through drawing.

