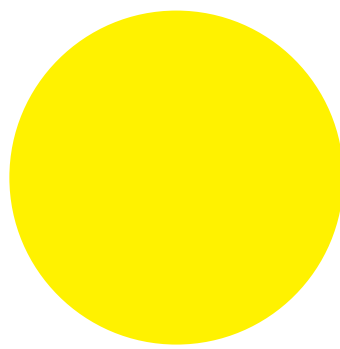


Iran, Pakistan to initiate Silk Road tours

8 >



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| newspaper.irandaily.ir

| IranDailyWeb

Iran, Russia agree regional conflicts have no military solution: **FM**

2 >

U23 Wrestling World Championships:

Khateri, Yousefi grab golds as Iran sweeps historic double

6 >

Leader congratulates Iran's U23 freestyle wrestling team on world title

2 >



Iranian freestyle wrestler Mehdi Yousefi (R) celebrates his gold medal with his coach after defeating his opponent at the U23 Wrestling World Championship in Las Vegas, United States.

● iawf.ir

Iran's northern corridors offer new opportunities for regional trade



By Mohsen Pakaein
Former diplomat

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

Recent developments, particularly the US naval blockade of Iran, which is effectively a military measure, and the restrictions imposed on the country's southern routes, have naturally drawn greater attention to northern neighbors, especially those sharing land borders with Iran. Within this context, the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus have gained particular significance, notably those that maintain maritime links with Iran through the Caspian Sea in addition to sharing land borders.

First, it is important to note that Iran occupies a unique geopolitical position, situated between East Asia, Central Asia, Europe and Africa, with access to the latter regions through the Sea of Oman and the Persian Gulf. This gives Iran a distinctive place in the region. The needs of Iran and its neighboring countries are, in fact, interdependent: each side relies on the other; and keeping their borders open serves the interests of all parties.

At the present juncture, maintaining open borders is particularly important. For instance, Central Asian and Caucasian countries have traditionally used Iran as a gateway to the waters of the Sea of Oman and the Persian Gulf, transporting their exports through these routes and bringing in imports in the opposite direction. With the Strait of Hormuz now blocked, these countries have naturally begun to pay greater attention to land borders and alternative routes through Iran to their destinations. Similarly, Iran has become more inclined to make greater use of its neighbors' borders to reduce its dependence on its southern coastline.

Page 8 >



Iran sets two-year plan to boost trade, transport and AI ties within SCO: **Veep**

3 >



Washington weaponizes history against Iran
American hypocrisy at Acropolis

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

4 >



Izeh advances efforts to protect historic sites

7 >



Iran, Russia agree regional conflicts have no military solution: *FM*



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (R) and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov arrive to hold a press conference after a meeting in Tehran, Iran, on October 19, 2026.
● AFP

International Desk

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Monday that Iran, Russia and many other countries share the view that regional disputes cannot be resolved by military means and must instead be addressed through diplomacy and political solutions. Speaking at a joint news conference with visiting Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Tehran, Araghchi said they discussed a broad range of

regional and international issues, including the Persian Gulf, West Asia, the Caucasus, Europe, Iran-US negotiations and developments in Ukraine. The Iranian foreign minister described his talks with Lavrov as "important, intensive and productive". He added that relations between Iran and Russia were strategic and had evolved into a comprehensive strategic partnership, adding that ties had entered a new phase following the

signing and implementation of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement by the two countries' presidents. The agreement had given bilateral relations broader and deeper dimensions and elevated their importance, Araghchi stressed. Araghchi and Lavrov also examined practical ways to expand economic, trade, political and cultural cooperation. Iran's top diplomat said economic ties were progressing

very favorably and that there were no major obstacles to further expansion of cooperation between Tehran and Moscow. Turning to regional conflicts, Araghchi said Tehran and Moscow had discussed Palestine, Lebanon and Yemen, stressing that the genocide of Palestinians and the Israeli regime's dangerous expansionism in the region must come to an end. Iran's top diplomat also said the ministers had addressed insecurity in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, attributing the situation directly to US and Israeli military aggression against Iran. Araghchi said the aggression began on February 28 and has continued in various forms. He said the imposed war waged by the United States and Israel, along with the economic blockade, are the main drivers of insecurity in the region. Araghchi also underscored

shared positions of Iran and Moscow on international affairs, saying Tehran and Moscow fundamentally opposed the United States' "aggressive unilateralism". Iran and Russia would continue working together through international institutions and forums to strengthen multilateralism and safeguard the principles of international law, he said. Russian foreign minister arrived in Tehran on Monday in his first visit since the outbreak of the US's war on Iran as Moscow seeks to play a mediating role. His visit comes after Russian President Vladimir Putin told Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian in early October that Moscow was prepared to contribute to mediation efforts. During the press conference, Araghchi also voiced serious concern over recent security developments in the Caspian Sea, including attacks on Iranian and Russian vessels. He said the incidents could have serious consequences for regional peace and security and inflict irreversible damage on the Caspian Sea's environment.

Leader congratulates Iran's U23 freestyle wrestling team on world title



Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei
● IRNA

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei congratulated Iran's under-23 freestyle wrestling team on winning the title at the 2026 U23 World Championships in Las Vegas, United States.

In a message on Monday, Ayatollah Khamenei congratulated the team's managers, coaches and wrestlers on their achievement, as well as the Iranian nation, particularly the country's young athletes. The Leader said the Iranian under-23 freestyle wrestling team's world championship victory had filled the hearts of the Iranian people with joy and pride.

Ayatollah Khamenei added that, like the recent world title won by Iran's under-23 Greco-Roman wrestling team, this achievement, accompanied by nine medals, was the result of careful planning, effective management and the tireless efforts of dedicated managers, committed coaches and the country's strong and determined young athletes. Iran crowned a dominant campaign on Sunday by winning the freestyle team title at the 2026 U23 World Championships in Las Vegas, finishing ahead of Russia with four gold medals and nine podium finishes.

The Iranian team amassed 180 points to edge Russia, which scored 171, while the hosts, the United States, finished third with 104 points. Iran's triumph completed a double at the championships, following its earlier victory in the Greco-Roman team standings.

Araghchi to Macron: Too late to shift blame for France unrest

International Desk

Iran's foreign minister reacted to recent remarks by French president who had blamed the US war on Iran for the ongoing violent protests in France, saying that Emmanuel Macron cannot shift the blame to the aggression that he supported. In a post on X, Araghchi said it was too late to shift blame and urged Macron to listen to the French people's calls for fundamental change and guarantees of freedom of assembly. Araghchi said Macron had "made his bed" by assuring US President Donald Trump that he welcomed atrocities against Iranians. The Iranian foreign minister also shared a screenshot of a message Macron had sent Trump, which the US president had published in January, citing the exchange as evidence of Macron's support for Washington's policy toward Tehran. In the

message, Macron wrote: "We are totally in line on Syria. We can do great things on Iran." France has been gripped by a nationwide student protest movement that began on September 17 at the Antoine de Saint-Exupéry High School in Créteil over deteriorating school conditions and has since expanded into broader demands over education, inequality, and the government's response. Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said on Sunday that more than 2,000 protesters had been arrested, while over 600 police officers, gendarmes, and firefighters were reported injured. In an address to the nation on Sunday, Macron connected ongoing riots in France to increased living costs and fuel prices resulting from the US-Israeli war on Iran. "France did not participate" in the war, the French leader said, adding that the country is now "suffering" its consequences.

Macron's double standard

In a Sunday post on X, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei also warned the French president that those behind "sinister alliances" will eventually face the consequences of their own actions amid widespread unrest in France. Baqaei criticized Macron for applying a double standard toward protests, contrasting his January support for "peaceful assembly without fear of punishment" in Iran with his response to ongoing unrest in France. "Back in January, you prescribed 'peaceful assembly without fear of punishment' for those attacking our law enforcement centers and public institutions at the behest of foreign malign actors," Baqaei wrote, addressing Macron. However, he added, Macron had quickly declared that the destruction of and attacks on state institutions in France would not be tolerated and that those responsible would face swift punishment.



Protestors stand in front of a fire in Faubourg du Temple street in central Paris as clashes erupted following a demonstration against high cost of living in France on October 18, 2026.
● AFP



Call for curfews

The French prime minister on Monday called for localized curfews as protesters blocked the entrance to the Louvre in Paris and authorities scrambled to stem public discontent that over the weekend saw mass cost-of-living demonstrations spill over into some of the worst street violence in recent years. Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu huddled with ministers in a crisis meeting after the interior minister said the police "had lost control" during the weekend's unrest. With the Yellow Vests movement, which

organized the weekend's rallies, calling for a new round of protests next Saturday, Lecornu called for regional authorities to impose "partial" and "localized" curfews to protect businesses after hundreds of shops were damaged and looted. Other European countries, where anger over rising prices has also led to protests, were keeping a nervous eye on the developments, with smaller clashes breaking out in Milan and Belgium over the weekend and protests simmering in Spain and Portugal.

Top general warns US, Israel against 'further miscalculation'

International Desk

The Chief of the General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces and Commander of the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters warned the United States and Israel against any further miscalculation as the US and Israeli officials have threatened of fresh attacks on Iran.

In a message issued on Sunday, Major General Ali Abdollahi said Iran is counting the moments until their next foolish decision and that any further miscalculation will be met with a response far more severe, distinct, and devastating than in the past.

Abdollahi addressed Washington and Tel Aviv, noting that they have repeatedly tested the resolve and determination of the leadership, the nation, the officials, and the powerful Armed Forces of Islamic Iran.



Ali Abdollahi
● IRNA

"Testing what has already been tested is a mistake," he stressed. "We are counting the moments until your foolish decisions." "If you were capable of acting upon the slogans you proclaim, you would have done so by now. In previous conflicts, you entered the fray with the stated goal of toppling the Islamic Republic, partitioning Iran, and destroying the country; yet today, it is you who are facing collapse and downfall, while a powerful Iran remains standing firm," the top commander said. Abdollahi added that US president Donald

Trump has grown old and lacks the strength even to stand up.

"Both American society and the inhabitants of the occupied territories are well aware that you suffer from serious, fundamental weaknesses. You must realize that any further miscalculation will be met with a response far more severe and distinct than anything seen in the past," he said.

Reiterating the point, Major General Abdollahi said the adversaries have repeatedly tested the resolve of Iran's leadership, people, officials, and Armed Forces, and that repeating a test whose outcome is already known is a mistake. "We are counting the moments until your foolish decisions." He concluded with a clear signal of readiness: "The next roar will be much closer, far more devastating, and impossible to intercept."



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Iran sets two-year plan to boost trade, transport and AI ties within SCO: *Veep*



Economy Desk

Iran has drawn up a two-year action plan to expand its economic, trade, transport and advanced technology cooperation within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said ahead of a trip to Tajikistan for a meeting of the bloc's prime ministers. The plan aims to make greater use of the organization's potential across various sectors, with logistics, transport infrastructure, advanced technologies and artificial intelligence among Tehran's priorities, Aref said, according to IRNA.



Iranian First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (L) is welcomed by Tajik First Deputy Prime Minister Hokim KHOLIQZODA in Dushanbe on October 19, 2026.

● IRNA

Iran's strategy is to maintain an active and effective presence in the organization while leveraging its domestic capabilities, he added.

Aref arrived in Dushanbe on Monday to attend the meeting of prime ministers of Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states, where he was welcomed by Hokim KHOLIQZODA, First Deputy Prime Minister of Tajikistan.

Aref also said he planned to hold bilateral meetings with prime ministers attending the summit, expressing hope that the talks would strengthen bilateral ties and broaden cooperation.

Aref said Iran would present its position at the summit on countering unilateralism and reforming global governance. He noted that while the SCO had initially focused on security, it had gradually expanded its economic cooperation, whereas BRICS,

a grouping of major emerging economies, had emphasized global governance reform and opposition to unilateralism from its inception.

The annual meeting of SCO prime ministers is intended to assess member states' performance and examine ways to deepen cooperation. This year's agenda focuses on the effectiveness of trade and economic cooperation and humanitarian initiatives, with the outcomes to be set out in several documents and declarations, Aref said.

Budgetary issues will also be discussed and considered for approval, as the meeting brings together the member states' top executive officials, he added.

Founded in 2001, the SCO now has 10 full members: China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Belarus and Iran.

CBI: Annual producer inflation rises to 92.3%

Economy Desk

Iran's annual producer inflation rate rose to 92.3% in the sixth month of the Iranian calendar year, which began on March 21, while year-on-year producer inflation climbed to 117.3%. Monthly producer price inflation also accelerated for a third consecutive month, reaching 4.9%, according to the Central Bank of Iran's latest report.

The overall producer price index stood at 758.5 in the sixth month (August 23-September 22), up 4.9% from 723.1 in the fifth month (July 23-August 22), Eqtesad Moaser reported, citing the central bank. The year-on-year, or point-to-point, producer inflation rate – which measures the percentage change in the price index compared with the same month a year earlier – rose to 117.3% in the sixth month from 116.8% in

the fifth month.

Annual producer inflation, which measures the change in the average price index over the past 12 months compared with the average for the preceding 12-month period, increased to 92.3% from 86.6% in the fifth month.

Monthly producer inflation also continued to accelerate, rising from 1.8% in the fourth month (June 22-July 22) to 4.2% in the fifth month and 4.9% in the sixth month.

All three measures of producer inflation – monthly, year-on-year and annual – increased in the sixth month.

Iran's national currency, the rial, has fallen to record lows amid mounting economic pressure. It has traded at more than 2.5 million rials per US dollar on the open market in recent weeks.

The sharp depreciation has underscored growing strain on

an economy already grappling with high inflation amid Western sanctions. The country has also remained on a war footing since a US-Israeli coalition launched attacks in late February, particularly targeting civilians and infrastructure during a 40-day conflict.

Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati said at an International Monetary Fund (IMF) meeting in Bangkok that the country's economy had shown strong resilience despite the US-Israeli war and Washington's maximum-pressure campaign, dismissing claims that the economy was on the verge of collapse. The central bank's priorities are to curb inflation, stabilize inflation expectations, maintain financial stability and ensure the continued operation of banking and payment systems, Hemmati said.

Iran, Turkmenistan agree on measures to expand cross-border cargo capacity

Economy Desk

Iran and Turkmenistan have agreed to explore raising the daily truck-handling capacity at their shared Sarakhs border crossing to 700 vehicles, while pursuing measures to facilitate rail freight movements and streamline customs procedures to boost bilateral trade, IRNA reported.

The agreement was discussed at a meeting between senior customs officials from the two countries on Monday at the Sarakhs border crossing, attended by Foroud Asgari, Iran's deputy economy minister and head of the Iranian Customs Administration, and Maksat Hudaykuliye, head of Turkmenistan's customs service.

Under the proposal, technical teams from both customs administrations will examine the feasibility of increasing daily truck-handling capacity to at least 350 trucks from each side, bringing the combined total to 700. The teams will also prepare the groundwork for implementation, with the aim of easing traffic, reducing waiting times and increasing trade flows. The measures are part of Iran's efforts to implement a new presidential directive stipulating that borders should serve as transit points and goods should not remain there, IRNA reported.

The officials also discussed expanding rail freight capacity at Sarakhs in Iran's northeastern Khorasan Razavi Province. They reached agreements



● IRNA

aimed at increasing the handling and movement of freight wagons and facilitating rail transport between the two countries.

Faster movement and the return of freight wagons across the shared border were also discussed, with the two sides agreeing to work toward reducing delays and improving the efficiency of rail operations.

Summing up the talks, Asgari said the meetings

would pave the way for more effective customs cooperation and further facilitate bilateral trade.

Hudaykuliye said trade between the two countries was growing steadily and their customs administrations maintained close ties. He added that the installation of smart equipment and the facilitation of foreign trade were on the agenda, with Turkmenistan ready to increase rail traffic as well as road transport.

Iran sees potential for \$1b in daily exports, trade chief says



Mohammad Ali Dehqan Dehnavi
● ISNA

Economy Desk

Iran has the capacity to achieve \$1 billion in daily exports by leveraging its natural resources, skilled workforce, and scientific and technological capabilities, the head of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran said, citing the need to increase the value added of exported goods and remove trade barriers. Mohammad Ali Dehqan Dehnavi made the remarks on Monday at

a national conference of export associations in Tehran, saying the target would require planning and greater participation by business associations.

Iran's non-oil exports reached \$58 billion in 2024, the highest level recorded in previous years, he said, according to ISNA. The figure fell to \$52 billion in 2025 despite the country's economic potential, amid a series of events including an explosion at the southern Shahid Rajaee port, a 12-day Israeli war in June 2025, and a US-Israeli war that began in late February 2026.

Dehqan Dehnavi said around 75% of Iran's trade passes through maritime routes, leaving a large share of the country's trade exposed to disruptions along these routes. 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.

According to Dehqan Dehnavi, the weight of trade fell by around 30% to 35% during the six-month period under review, while the value of exports declined by about 20%. He attributed part of the drop to higher transportation costs, which have made exports of some goods economically unviable.

He added that the average value of Iran's exported goods was around \$300 to \$400 per metric ton.

Notice of AMENDMENT for the bid submission tender for export sale No. Z/1405/18

With reference to Tender Notice Z/1405-18, we hereby informed that the bid submission and bid opening have been revised as follows:

All bids on conformity to tender instructions must be submitted no later than 14:00 P.M. on 25 Oct.2026- to Golgohar complex in Sirjan (50 km in shiraz road).

Bidders are invited to the transactions commission office of the seller with an introduction letter of interested buyer and personal identification of the representative. Tender results shall be announced at 14:00 P.M. on 25.Oct .2026 at the office of the Seller.

GOLGOHAR MINING & INDUSTRIAL CO.

Washington weaponizes history against Iran

American hypocrisy at Acropolis



By Saman Sofalgar
Political researcher

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's recent speech in Athens, delivered against the historic backdrop of the Acropolis, was more than a tribute to ancient Greek civilization. By recalling the Persian invasion of Greece in 480 BC and drawing a sharp contrast between the supposed moral traditions of the West and the contemporary Iranian state, Rubio presented a deeply politicized interpretation of history. His remarks raise a fundamental question: why is Washington invoking events from more than 2,500 years ago to reinforce its confrontation with Iran today?

The answer may lie in the political value of portraying a modern geopolitical dispute as an age-old civilizational struggle. Rather than addressing the specific causes and consequences of tensions with Tehran, such rhetoric encourages audiences to view Iran as a permanent adversary of the West. This approach deserves scrutiny from at least three perspectives: the manipulation of history, the political objectives behind Washington's rhetoric, and the contradiction between American claims to moral authority and the record of US foreign policy.

History as a weapon against Iran

In his Athens address, Rubio recalled how the armies of the Achaemenid ruler Xerxes invaded Greece and destroyed parts of the Acropolis. He then contrasted the heroic traditions he associated with ancient Greece and Western civilization with what he described as a "cult of death" among Iran's religious leadership. His language went beyond criticism of particular policies, presenting a broad cultural contrast between the West and Iran. The historical events themselves are well documented. Persian forces invaded Greece (the issue should be analyzed within the context of the historical rivalries between the Persian and Greek empires in antiquity). However, acknowledging these events does not justify using an ancient military campaign to define the character of a modern nation or its people. The Greco-Persian Wars emerged from the political and strategic rivalries of the ancient world, including imperial expansion, competing interests, and earlier conflicts involving Greek cities and the Persian Empire. These events should be examined within their historical context, rather than reduced to a simplistic narrative in which one civilization embodies virtue and another represents an eternal threat. More importantly, the Achaemenid Empire and the modern Iranian state belong to different historical eras, separated by profound political, social, and cultural transformations. Pres-



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio speaks in Athens, Greece, on October 7, 2026, with the Acropolis in the background.
● ALEXANDROS VLACHOS/EPA

ent-day Iranians cannot reasonably be held collectively responsible for the military decisions of an ancient ruler. By the same logic, contemporary Americans cannot be treated as personally responsible for every war or conquest undertaken by earlier Western powers. Rubio's framing therefore risks turning history into a tool for political mobilization. The implication is that Iran's relationship with the West should be understood not simply through present-day policies and interests, but through an allegedly permanent conflict between civilizations.

Such an interpretation is neither historically sufficient nor politically constructive. Ancient history should help societies understand the complexity of the past, not provide a ready-made justification for hostility in the present. Iran possesses a rich civilizational heritage encompassing philosophy, poetry, science, architecture, and intellectual exchange. Its historical identity cannot be reduced to the military campaigns of the Achaemenid period, just as Greek civilization cannot be reduced to its wars with Persia. Both histories are considerably more

complex than the political narratives advanced by contemporary officials.

Washington's political calculations

Rubio's remarks must also be considered in the context of the current confrontation between the United States and Iran. At a time of heightened tensions and mounting concerns about the consequences of military escalation, Washington has a clear political interest in presenting its approach as legitimate, necessary, and morally justified. Framing the confrontation as a defense of Western civilization can serve this purpose. It shifts the debate away from questions about military strategy, civilian casualties, regional stability, economic disruption, and the legal basis for the use of force. Instead, it encourages audiences to view the conflict as a historic struggle between fundamentally different systems of values. This is a consequential shift. Political disputes can be addressed through negotiations, reciprocal concessions, security arrangements, and diplomacy. A conflict presented as an existential struggle between civilizations, however, becomes more difficult to resolve. Once an adversary is portrayed as inherently hostile, compromise can be dismissed as weakness and diplomatic engagement as appeasement.

Rubio's speech also comes at a politically sensitive time in the United States, with congressional midterm elections scheduled for November 3, 2026. Although the timing alone does not establish the secretary of state's motives, the domestic political value of presenting a controversial foreign policy as a historic mission should not be overlooked.

The American public and international audiences have legitimate reasons to ask whether Washington's approach to Iran is reducing tensions or increasing the danger of a wider conflict. They are also entitled to question the human and economic costs of military confrontation. Historical symbolism cannot answer these questions. Nor can references to ancient Athens establish that contemporary American policies are necessarily defensive, lawful, or beneficial to regional security. If Washington wishes to justify its conduct, it must do so through evidence, international law, and a serious assessment of the consequences of its decisions.



US President Donald Trump (C), CIA Director John Ratcliffe (L) and Secretary of State Marco Rubio (R) watch the illegal abduction of the president of Venezuela, another western country, unfold from Trump's Mar a Lago resort, in Palm Beach, Florida, on January 3, 2026.
● TRUTH SOCIAL



The prestige of ancient Greek civilization cannot substitute for that responsibility.

Contradiction in America's moral claims

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Rubio's remarks is the contrast between the moral authority claimed by Washington and the historical record of American foreign policy. Over recent decades, the United States has launched or participated in military interventions, supported regime-change operations, imposed extensive economic sanctions, and pursued policies that have contributed to instability and human suffering in different parts of the world.

The 2003 invasion of Iraq remains a particularly significant example. The war was justified in part by claims about weapons of mass destruction that were not substantiated by the subsequent discovery of such stockpiles. Its consequences included civilian deaths, extensive destruction, prolonged instability, and far-reaching regional repercussions. The wars in Vietnam and Afghanistan, along with other American military operations, have likewise generated enduring questions about the human costs of US strategic decisions.

This history does not mean that the actions of other governments should escape scrutiny. Every state must be accountable for its conduct, and allegations of violations of international law should be examined on the basis of evidence. But the same standards must apply to Washington. The United States cannot credibly claim an exclusive right to define civilization, morality, or legitimate self-defense while treating its own military record as beyond criticism.

The principles of the United Nations Charter, including sovereign equality and restrictions on the use of force, provide a more appropriate framework for evaluating international conduct than sweeping claims about cultural superiority. The UN Charter principles apply to all states, regardless of their political systems or historical traditions.

Rubio's characterization of Iran also risks blurring the distinction between criticism of a government and the demonization of an entire nation. Specific policies and actions can be debated and challenged without portraying millions of people as representatives of an inherently hostile civilization.

Iran is not synonymous with any single administration, just as the United States is not synonymous with the policies of its current government. Both societies possess complex histories and diverse intellectual traditions that cannot be adequately represented by political stereotypes.

Iran cannot be defined by Washington's narrative

Ultimately, Rubio's speech illustrates the dangers of using historical memory to reinforce contemporary geopolitical confrontation. The Acropolis is a



The Achaemenid Empire and the modern Iranian state belong to different historical eras, separated by profound political, social, and cultural transformations. Present-day Iranians cannot reasonably be held collectively responsible for the military decisions of an ancient ruler. By the same logic, contemporary Americans cannot be treated as personally responsible for every war or conquest undertaken by earlier Western powers.

monument to the achievements of ancient Greece, but it should not become a stage for turning ancient rivalries into arguments against modern Iran. The legacy of Greek civilization belongs to the broader history of humanity. Likewise, Iran’s contributions to world civilization cannot be erased or diminished by the rhetoric of American officials. Neither nation’s historical identity should be manipulated to justify hostility toward the other. The real test of American foreign policy is not the ability to construct a compelling historical narrative. It is whether Washington respects international law, protects civilian life, acknowledges the consequences of its decisions, and pursues diplomatic solutions instead of escalating conflict. Iran and the United States have serious disagreements, but those disagreements must be assessed through contemporary evidence and political realities, not through selective interpretations of events from antiquity. Washington cannot rewrite Iran’s history to serve its strategic interests, nor can it claim moral superiority while avoiding scrutiny of its own actions. If the United States genuinely seeks stability, it must abandon the politics of demonization and recognize that sustainable security depends on diplomacy, respect for national sovereignty, and equal application of international law. The Acropolis should remind the world of humanity’s capacity for intellectual and cultural achievement. It should not be used to revive ancient conflicts as a rhetorical justification for modern confrontation. Iran’s history is not Washington’s to define, and the future of relations between the two countries should be determined by political realities and the pursuit of peace, not by attempts to portray an entire nation as a perpetual enemy.

Is continued US-Iran hostility inevitable?

Rereading Walt’s ‘Revolution and War’ 30 years later



By Mark N. Katz
Professor Emeritus
at the Schar School
of Policy and
Government

OPINION

The US and Iran have had antagonistic relations ever since the 1979 Iranian Revolution. This constant state of hostility, of course, is understandable since the US and Iran have differed throughout this entire period over several issues. These include Israel and the Palestinians, the Iranian nuclear program, the political orientation of Syria and Iraq, Iranian support for the “Axis of Resistance” (Hamas, Hezbollah, the Ansarullah, Iraqi Shia armed groups, and others) which have targeted US forces and allies in the region, and now control over the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf and Red Sea. Indeed, there is little that Washington and Tehran have agreed upon since 1979. Common opposition to the Taliban and Al Qaeda in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 as well as common opposition to the rise of Daesh (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria in the mid-2010s were interests which both shared, but these were not strong enough to enable them to overcome their many differences. There is one sense, though, in which continued US-Iranian hostility ever since 1979 is not understandable. In his masterful 1996 book “Revolution and War,” Stephen M. Walt theorized about how revolution in one country can quickly lead to war between it and one or more status quo powers. As Walt observed, this is because each side sees the other as an existential threat but also sees the other as weak in the immediate aftermath of the revolution, thus creating a strong incentive for one or both to attack the other while it is seen to be weak and before it can pose a stronger threat in the future. Walt also theorized, though, about how after status quo powers find themselves unable to reverse the revolution they see as a threat and after the revolutionary regime discovers that exporting revolution is more problematic than it had originally hoped, the two sides come to realize that they cannot defeat each other. Normal relations between them start to develop when the status quo powers accept the existence of the revolutionary regime while the revolutionary regime halts efforts to export revolution. They can then coexist. Walt himself expected Iranian-American ties to improve in his 1996 book where he wrote



A veiled Iranian woman walks past an anti-US mural on a wall of the former US embassy in downtown Tehran, Iran, on January 20, 2026.
● MORTEZA NIKOUBAZL/
NURPHOTO

that “...efforts to establish more normal foreign relations have already begun and are likely to increase” (p. 268). Needless to say, this did not occur either then or at any time since then. I do not want, however, to single Walt out for being wrong about this. At various points, I also thought that an improvement in US-Iranian relations was possible. Indeed, many scholars have observed that revolutionary regimes tend to moderate over time for any of several reasons, including the frequent pattern of extremists being displaced by moderates, socialization, embourgeoisement, emergence of a common adversary, or other reasons still. Whatever the reason that other revolutionary regimes have

grown more moderate and their relations with status quo powers have become normalized, however, this clearly has not happened in the case of Iran, which has had antagonistic relations (involving greater and lesser degrees of intensity) from 1979 to the present with America, the West in general, conservative Arab states, and, of course, Israel. What would it take, then, for this to change and for normalization to occur between the revolutionary regime in Iran, on the one hand, and America, the West, and conservative Arab states (if not Israel), on the other? Extrapolating from Walt’s 1996 theory, this only seems likely to occur when Iran halts all efforts to export revolution through its support for the Axis of Resistance, and the US and its allies halt all efforts to undermine the Islamic Republic. An agreement resolving the Iranian nuclear issue by itself would not suffice. Just as Soviet and allied military intervention in support of Third World Marxist regimes during

the 1970s interrupted the considerable progress that Washington and Moscow had made regarding strategic arms control, continued Iranian support for the Axis of Resistance will undermine the achievement or the durability of another Iranian nuclear accord. But in that status quo powers have never yet been able to coerce or persuade Tehran into halting support for Iran’s Axis of Resistance allies, it seems highly doubtful that they will be able to do so in the future — especially now when the Iranian leadership seems to think that it is winning the ongoing conflict between Iran and the Axis of Resistance, on the one hand, and the US, Israel, and the Persian Gulf Arab states, on the other.

Supporters of Yemen’s Ansarullah (Houthis) hold posters of Iran’s martyred Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei at a protest in Sanaa, Yemen, on March 6, 2026, against the war in Iran.
● OSAMAH ABDULRAHMAN/AP



In that status quo powers have never yet been able to coerce or persuade Tehran into halting support for Iran’s Axis of Resistance allies, it seems highly doubtful that they will be able to do so in the future — especially now when the Iranian leadership seems to think that it is winning the ongoing conflict between Iran and the Axis of Resistance, on the one hand, and the US, Israel, and the Persian Gulf Arab states, on the other.

For Tehran to end its support for the Axis of Resistance, a major change would need to happen inside Iran. Its leaders would have to come to the conclusion that Hamas, Hezbollah, the Ansarullah (Houthis), and Iraqi Shias are not assets, but liabilities. A cost-benefit analysis would also have to be made in Tehran which finds that better relations with America, the West, conservative Arab states, and perhaps even Israel better serves the Iranian leadership’s interests than the activities of the Axis of Resistance. Indeed, continued support for the Axis of Resistance would have to be judged as a waste of Iranian resources that could be better spent on more important matters, especially internal economic development — something that would be greatly enhanced by the trade and investment that would come with having good relations with as many countries as possible (and not mainly with China and Russia). As a hypothetical, a truly Machiavellian Iranian leadership that prioritized the acquisition of nuclear weapons might even calculate that its ability to do so would increase if it ditched the Axis of Resistance, improved ties with its long-time adversaries, and thus made the prospect of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons seem no different than India or Pakistan having done so. Nor is the Trump administration, much less Netanyahu or any other Israeli leader, likely to see the possibility of improved relations with Iran occurring any time soon. Indeed, the better Iran and its Axis of Resistance do in the ongoing conflict, the more US and Israeli leaders are likely to see it as necessary to do something to thwart Iran. Instead of conforming to the pattern that Walt and others identified of relations between a revolutionary regime and status quo powers normalizing over time, then, the US-Iran case may be one in which they only get worse. Despite his premature optimism about the possibility that relations between Iran and status quo powers would improve, Walt also foresaw the possibility that they may not. In his 1996 book, he observed that relations between revolutionary states and other countries would become normal, “assuming, of course, that each side is capable of evaluating and revising its policies in light of experience”. (p. 43)

The article first appeared on E-International Relations.

U23 Wrestling World Championships: Khateri, Yousefi grab golds as Iran sweeps historic double

Sports Desk

The U23 World Championships in Las Vegas proved one for the ages for Iranian wrestling after the country secured a first-ever double of freestyle and Greco-Roman team titles at the competition.

With Iran and Russia locked in a tight freestyle team title race ahead of the final day, Ahoura Khateri and Mahdi Yousefi claimed gold medals in their respective weight classes on Sunday to help the Iranian squad finish atop the standings with 180 points – nine clear of runner-up Russia, which was eligible to score team points for the first time since 2021.

The United States, competing on home soil as the defending champion, endured an underwhelming campaign to finish third with 104 points.

Ebrahim Elahi settled for silver in the 70kg class, while Mohammad-Mobin Azimi won a consolation bronze in the 97kg category on the final day as Iran collected nine medals, including four golds, across the 10 freestyle weight classes.

Remarkable fightback

If his comeback victory over Russia's Eldar Akhmadudinov in the semifinals was not epic enough, teenage prodigy Khateri pulled off another remarkable turnaround in the final against Japan's Kaiji Ogino to win the 65kg gold.

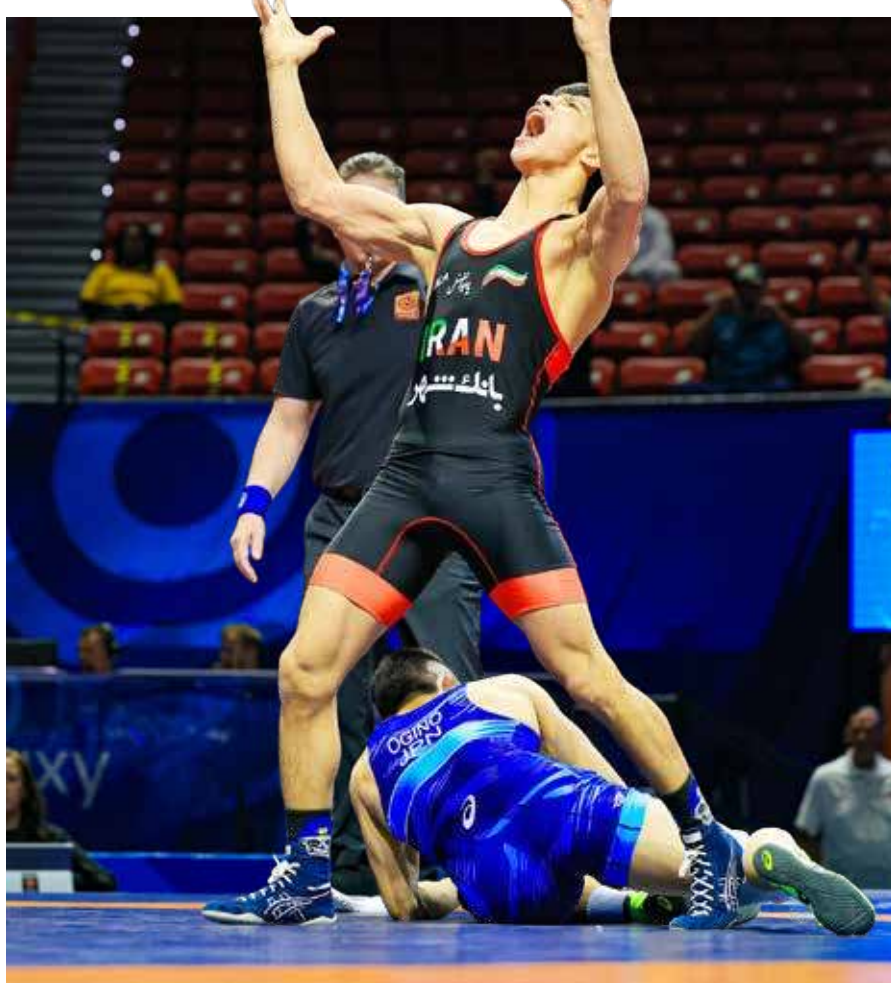
A silver medalist in 2024, Ogino held a 6-1 lead over Khateri with 40 seconds re-

maining before the Iranian used an arm drag to go behind the Japanese wrestler, then scored a takedown and a turn. The additional two points were awarded only after a challenge by Iran.

With 10 seconds remaining and trailing 6-5, Khateri snapped Ogino down and attempted to go behind. Ogino managed to break free of the grip, but Khateri pulled him down to the mat and eventually scored a decisive takedown to win 7-6. Khateri burst into celebration as he captured his first world title since winning the 45kg gold in the under-17 category in 2023. Sunday's triumph also provided relief after he settled for bronze at the U20 World Championships in August.

"I entered the tournament with a positive mindset," Khateri said. "I've changed weight classes, moving up from 60kg to 65kg. Even though I found myself trailing in every match, I managed to turn things around during the second period." Khateri began his campaign with a thrilling 15-14 win over Kazakhstan's Shattyk Alaidar before cruising to an 8-1 victory against Uzbekistan's Sanjarbek Rustambekov in the quarterfinals. The semifinal clash against Akhmadudinov provided further evidence of Khateri's never-say-die attitude in Las Vegas, as he recovered from an 8-4 deficit with a minute remaining to win 9-8.

"Since I had just returned from the U20 World Cham-



Iranian freestyle wrestler Ahoura Khateri (red) celebrates his comeback victory over Japan's Kaiji Ogino in the 65kg final at the U23 Wrestling World Championships in Las Vegas, Nevada, United States, on October 18, 2026.
● UWW

pionships, I was able to wrestle well," he said. "Solely because my spirits were high. Physically, though, I was only at a six or seven, but mentally I

was at 10. I had the self-assurance that I would win. Through all the circumstances, whether difficult or favorable, and throughout every moment I was wrestling, I could truly see God. You might think I'm lying, but God really did help me. I'll fight until the end and I'll win."

In the final, Khateri opened the scoring with a stepout before Ogino took the criteria lead with a stepout of his own. The Japanese

wrestler then frustrated Khateri with some impressive defense near the edge of the mat and countered his attacks to score takedowns.

Khateri, however, said he was not worried by Ogino's lead and considered Russian opponent Akhmadudinov a tougher challenge. "The Russian wrestler was tougher for me," Khateri said. "With the Japanese wrestler, it was easier to handle him from a dis-

tance. As for the Russian wrestler, he got tired, and I was able to take advantage of his fatigue."

Later in the day, Magomed Eltermirov gave Russia hope in the title race by defeating Elahi 5-3 in the 70kg final. Yousefi, however, had other ideas, producing a composed performance to beat Said Saidulov 3-1 in another final between Iranian and Russian wrestlers and ensure there would be no late slip in Iran's pursuit of the historic achievement.

Yousefi scored a takedown in the second period of the 79kg final to take a 3-1 lead. Saidulov got hold of Yousefi's leg in the final 20 seconds, but the Iranian defended the position until the end to improve on the bronze medal he won in Novi Sad, Serbia, last year. Meanwhile, Azimi, the 92kg champion at last year's edition and the Senior Asian Championships in April, ended his 97kg campaign on a positive note. After suffering a 14-9 semifinal defeat to Russia's Mukhamed Takhir Khaniev, whom he had beaten in the 92kg final in 2025, Azimi overpowered Armenia's Gurgen Simonyan by technical superiority (10-0) in the bronze-medal bout. Sunday's results followed Iran's two gold medals through Abolfazl Rahmani and Abolfazl Mohammadnejad, as well as three bronze medals, on the preceding day. Mohammadnejad maintained Iran's traditional dominance in the super-heavyweight category by

defending his 125kg title in style, defeating Georgia's Aleksandre Abramishvili 10-0. He combined steepouts and takedowns to complete the victory and claim his third world age-group title without conceding a single point throughout his dominant campaign in Las Vegas, which included three wins by technical superiority.

The 19-year-old Iranian has remained unbeaten since losing the final at last year's U20 World Championships to Kazakhstan's Yedige Kassimbek.

Rahmani, who suffered a heartbreaking defeat in the final seconds of the U20 World Championships final in August, finally secured his first age-group title on his seventh attempt, defeating Russia's Arslan Bagayev 5-2 in the 92kg final. Ebrahim Khari (61kg), Ali Karampour (74kg) and Reza Afshar (86kg) added three bronzes to Iran's medal haul on Saturday, while Ali Yahyapour was the only Iranian to finish his freestyle campaign without a medal, exiting in the round of 16.

Iran's impressive freestyle campaign followed the success of head coach Hassan Rangraz's 10-man Greco-Roman squad earlier in Las Vegas. Erfan Jarkani (63kg), Abolfazl Mohmedi (82kg) and Yasin Yazdi (87kg) won three golds, while Mohammad Kamali (67kg) and Mohammad-Hadi Seydi (97kg) added two bronze medals to lead the country to a third successive Greco-Roman team title at the competition.

Sports Desk

Marzieh Jafari, head coach of the Iranian women's national team and domestic top-flight champions Bam Khatoon, has described her nomination for the 2026 AFC Women's Coach of the Year award as a collective achievement for women's football in the country.

A winner of the prestigious prize last year, Jafari will face stiff competition from Ma Xiaoxu, head coach of China's U17 women's team, and Park Youn-jeong, coach of South Korea's U20 side, when the annual AFC Awards ceremony takes place at Bangkok's Aksra Theatre King Power on November 19.

Jafari was in charge of the Iranian national team at January's Women's Asian Cup, where her team's politically charged campaign in Australia ended in a group-stage exit.

She then led Bam Khatoon to the group stage of the AFC Women's Champions

League after finishing top of its preliminary group in August.

Jafari said the AFC recognition went beyond individual success, highlighting the role of Iranian players, her colleagues and the support she had received throughout her career.

"Many people deserve credit for this recognition, and it cannot be considered solely an individual achievement. Iran's football players, my colleagues and God's grace played an important role in this success," she said. "The girls who play football and everyone who has accompanied me on this journey have also contributed significantly. I therefore see this nomination as the result of the collective efforts of those who have worked to develop and ad-

vance women's football." The Iranian coach added that the nomination offered an opportunity to showcase the country's footballing potential across the continent.

"I am happy that this nomination provides an opportunity for Iranian football's level and capabilities to receive greater recognition in Asia," Jafari said. "Being among the continent's nominees not only has individual value but can also draw attention to the potential of Iranian women's football and the efforts being made in this field."

Jafari went on to welcome the increased participation of clubs in the women's top flight, expressing hope that their involvement would help the sport continue to grow.

"I hope we will see further

growth and progress as more clubs enter women's football," she said, adding that greater participation could make competitions more dynamic and strengthen the foundations of the game.

Jafari also stressed that the long-term development of women's football depended on sustained planning and greater investment in youth development.

"If we pay more attention to grassroots football and major clubs also become involved at academy level, we can build a valuable foundation for women's football in the country," she said. "The involvement of major clubs in youth categories, alongside efforts to identify and develop talent, can provide players with a clearer pathway to progress

and more opportunities to improve."

She added that stronger grassroots programs would ultimately help Iran build a more competitive national team.

"The development of these programs will contribute to the growth of football and ultimately pave the way for a stronger national team," Jafari said. "The more seriously we invest in youth football and the earlier players gain access to training and regular competition, the better equipped we will be to shape the future of women's football in Iran." Jafari will be one of four Iranians nominated for awards at the upcoming ceremony.

Iranian international goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand is among the three nominees for the Player of the

Year award, alongside Saudi duo Feras Al Brikan and Salem Al Dawsari.

Iran will also look to claim a fourth successive AFC Futsal Player of the Year award, with internationals Hossein Tayyebi and 2023 winner Saied Ahmadvassasi among the nominees. The pair scored nine goals between them to help Iran secure a record-extending 14th Asian Cup title in January.



Jafari says AFC nomination reflects collective effort in Iranian women's football

Iranica Desk

Izeh, a treasure trove of the ancient civilizations of the central Zagros, has made fresh progress over the past year in archaeological research, the protection of historic sites and the documentation of heritage assets. These efforts, alongside the preparation of more than eight dossiers and the development of management plans for historic sites, are opening up new prospects for safeguarding the region's rich cultural heritage. Sadeq Sheikhi, head of the Archaeology Unit at the Khuzestan Province's Cultural Heritage Organization and director of the National Heritage Site for the Cultural and Historical Landscape of Izeh, wrote in an article that protecting Izeh's historical heritage requires not only scientific research but also coordinated planning, adequate funding and cooperation among the relevant authorities. With archaeological remains spanning the Paleolithic and prehistoric periods through the Elamite, Parthian-Elymaean, Sassanid and Islamic eras, Izeh is one of the central Zagros region's most significant archaeological areas. Its prominent rock carvings and historic sites offer considerable potential for advancing understanding of Iran's history

Izeh advances efforts to protect historic sites



and cultural identity. Preserving this heritage, however, requires a sustained, long-term strategy rather than a series of isolated interventions. One of the major initiatives undertaken over the past year has been the preparation of management plans for Izeh's historic sites. The plans are designed to identify conservation, restoration and research needs, organize access routes and establish the practical requirements for man-

aging each site. The installation of lighting infrastructure and CCTV cameras at Kul-e Farah is among the measures implemented as part of this approach. However, protecting historic sites requires more than technical measures and expert assessments. Unauthorized interventions, limited financial resources and the need for legal and judicial support remain major challenges, requiring closer cooperation among executive bodies and the

institutions responsible for heritage protection. Izeh's historical heritage is a public asset, and the responsibility for preserving it cannot rest solely with specialists and cultural heritage authorities. Alongside conservation efforts, the preparation of more than eight dossiers concerning site boundaries and buffer zones, as well as the registration of historic artifacts, structures and archaeological sites, has been cited as another achievement of the Aya-

pir National Heritage Site over the past year. The dossiers were compiled using the expertise of the team, without a separate dedicated budget. Continuing this work, together with the establishment of a pottery database, research into natural heritage and periodic site monitoring, could further expand scientific knowledge of the region. Nevertheless, Izeh's inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List cannot be achieved simply

by increasing the number of dossiers or carrying out a handful of site-improvement projects. The process requires well-documented research, effective conservation, integrated site management, adequate financial resources and the participation of local communities. Coordination among the responsible institutions and the translation of expert plans into sustained practical action are essential to advancing this goal. Today, more than ever, Izeh needs a long-term vision for its historical heritage — one that regards archaeological remains not merely as relics of the past, but as assets underpinning cultural identity, scientific research and sustainable regional development. The progress made over the past year could lay the groundwork for further advances, but achieving the desired results will depend on maintaining these efforts and providing effective support for conservation and research programs. Securing World Heritage status for Izeh would mean more than gaining an international designation. It would offer an opportunity to ensure the lasting protection of a valuable chapter of Iran's history — a goal that requires a shared commitment from experts, officials, responsible institutions and the local community.

Reading Room

Iranica Desk

Iran's vehicle registration history dates back to 1926, when the country's first automobiles began arriving. At the time, a set of 32 regulations governing vehicle registration was drafted. The rules were finalized in 1929, three years after the cars' introduction, and required vehicles to display five separate plates. The book "The First Number Plate: A History of Vehicle Registration in Iran, from Its Origins to the Introduction of National Plates" has been published by the Cultural Museums Institute of the Mostazafan Foundation, in collaboration with the Traffic Police Applied Research Center. The publication examines the history of vehicle license plates in Iran, from the arrival of the first automobiles and the establishment of early registration systems to the introduction and adoption of national plates. Its contents draw on historical research, documentary evidence and authoritative sources, particularly archival materials held at the Iran Classic Car Museum, according to IBNA. At first glance, a vehicle license plate may appear to be little more than a combination of numbers, letters or symbols used to identify a vehicle. Like a fingerprint, it must be unique. Viewed more closely, however, a license plate can also serve as a historical record, reflecting the technological, administrative, social and even political changes of its time. The evolution of license plates in Iran began with the arrival of the first motor vehicles more than a century ago. Since then, their structure, function, identification systems and physical appearance have undergone numerous changes. The book seeks to retrace this history and bring together knowledge that has previously appeared only in

Book traces history of license plates in Iran

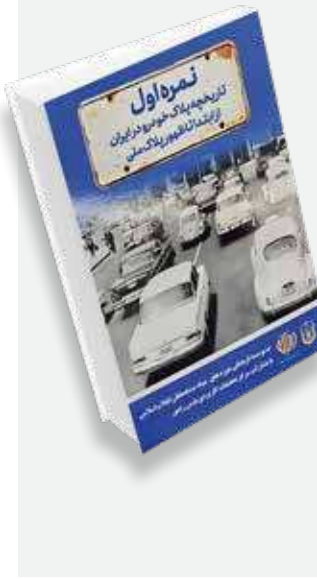
scattered and limited references. In the book's foreword, Hamidreza Soleimani, managing director of the Cultural Institute of Bonyad Museums, outlines the publication's main themes: "The study begins with a brief account of the arrival of the police and the emergence of early traffic-control systems in Iran, noting that the development of license plates cannot be separated from the establishment of institutions responsible for urban order and traffic management. It then traces the physical evolution of plates, from the earliest simple designs to modern national plates. Their materials, colors, dimensions, lettering, distinctive markings and graphic features are examined in detail. "Another key section classifies plates according to type and use, including private, government, public-service, military and ceremonial vehicles, as well as the technical and administrative requirements associated with each category. These classifications, the foreword notes, help explain not only the structure of registration systems but also how vehicles were organized and managed in different historical periods. "The book also reviews selected traffic and vehicle-registration laws and regulations to clarify the legal and administrative framework governing license plates." Soleimani says the need for the publication arose from the limited attention previously given to the subject. Until now, the history of Iranian license plates has generally been covered only briefly, in individual chapters of various books. This research gap prompted the compilation of a comprehensive account intended to shed

light on a relatively overlooked aspect of Iran's contemporary history. The earliest vehicle-numbering efforts in Iran predated the arrival of automobiles. During the premiership of Vosough al-Dowleh in 1919, numbered plates were attached to horse-drawn carriages and carts un-

either embossed or painted in clearly distinguishable colors. Municipal officers were tasked with regularly patrolling major routes and fining vehicles that lacked plates or displayed damaged or defaced ones. The initiative marked one of the earliest steps toward a for-

mal system for registering and identifying vehicles in Iran, a system that would later expand and become more sophisticated with the arrival of automobiles. The country's first automobile license plates date back to 1926, when the first cars were introduced. A set of 32 registration regulations was drafted that year and finalized in 1929. Under the rules, each vehicle was required to carry five separate plates: the manufacturer's name, the owner's address, a rear number plate, a front number plate and a tax plate. As the number of automobiles increased, the need to revise the regulations became apparent. By around 1929, when the number of private cars in the city had reached 1,522, the plate format was changed. The new design featured the city's name alongside a four-digit number displayed above it, replacing the earlier system. This change marked the beginning of a series of developments that would continue as motorized transport expanded, eventually leading to a modern vehicle-registration system in Iran. During the First Pahlavi era, the formal establishment of the traffic police helped drive efforts to replace the fragmented system of multiple plate formats with a standardized, recognizable design. In the early years of automobile use in Iran, registration was largely local and temporary. Municipalities and government agencies issued plates according to their own needs, with no comprehensive nationwide system in place. This fragmentation created difficulties in monitoring traffic, identifying vehicles, handling violations, preventing theft and

collecting taxes. With the establishment of the police administration and, subsequently, the traffic police, the government recognized the need for a unified and standardized system and began planning plates with consistent specifications. The first official registration standards introduced defined plate dimensions, called for metal rather than less durable materials such as wood or cardboard, and required legible letters and numbers that could be read from a reasonable distance. The shift represented a fundamental transition from rudimentary, fragmented local numbering to a more systematic, legally regulated and nationwide approach to vehicle registration. It also laid the groundwork for the more advanced, integrated national systems that followed. During the 1950s and 1960s, a sharp increase in domestic vehicle production, imports of foreign cars and intercity travel ushered in a new phase in Iran's license-plate system. Urban and provincial registration codes emerged, with each city or province identified by a designated letter or number. Tehran, for example, was associated with the letter "T," while Isfahan was identified by the number "1." Four- or five-digit numbers were then assigned to vehicles in registration order. The geographic coding system was designed to make vehicles easier to identify throughout the country. It quickly became part of everyday culture, with plate codes developing into recognizable symbols of urban identity. Beyond identification, the system played an important role in compiling vehicle statistics, collecting taxes, monitoring traffic and pursuing road violations. It became one of the most significant stages in the evolution of vehicle registration in Iran.





Iran, Pakistan to initiate Silk Road tours



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran and Pakistan are seeking to increase cross-border tourism by easing group visa procedures, expanding transport links and developing joint cultural and medical tourism programs, officials said at a meeting in Tehran. Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpey, Iran's deputy tourism minister, met Pakistani Ambassador Imran Ahmed Siddiqui in Tehran to discuss joint tours focused on the Silk Road and investment in tourism facilities along their shared border, IRNA reported on Monday. The talks highlighted the potential of Khorasan Razavi and South Khorasan provinces in northeastern Iran, as well as Sistan and Baluchestan province in the southeast, to attract Pakistani visitors.

Other priorities included religious pilgrimages, medical tourism and programs for university professors, particularly scholars of Persian language and literature. Eight scheduled flights currently operate each week from Tehran and Mashhad in northeastern Iran, to Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi in Pakistan. Both sides called for more affordable and regular air, road, rail and sea connections. Mehdi Shojaei, Iran's director general for foreign tourism marketing and development, said a list of 26 qualified Iranian travel agencies had been submitted to the Foreign Ministry to help coordinate group visa applications. Iran has also asked Pakistan to provide lists of approved tour operators and tourism

influencers for joint promotional activities. "Pakistanis were familiar with Iranian landmarks such as Persepolis and Pasargadae and the works of Persian poets Hafez and Saadi," Siddiqui said. He said awareness of Pakistan's history and literature, particularly Urdu poetry, was more limited in Iran and called for greater cultural exchange and cooperation in television productions. The Silk Road was a network of trade routes linking Asia and Europe, with Iran serving as a key crossroads between Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent and western Asia. Beyond commerce, it fostered cultural and intellectual exchange, offering Iran and Pakistan a shared historical legacy that could support joint tourism initiatives.

Iranian photojournalist Alfred Yaghobzadeh injured in Paris protests

Social Desk

Iranian photojournalist Alfred Yaghobzadeh, known for documenting wars and international crises, was injured during ongoing student protests in the French capital, Paris on Saturday and is recovering, IRNA reported on Monday. Mehdi Ashena, head of the House of Theater Photographers Association, told state media about Yaghobzadeh's injury without providing further details about how he got injured or its nature and severity. Ashena added that the



prominent photographer's condition was stable and that he was recovering. Born in Tehran, in 1959 to an Armenian father and an Assyrian mother, Yaghobzadeh abandoned his studies in interior design after Iran's 1979 revolution and began photographing political and social events. When the Iran-Iraq War broke out in 1980, he

began documenting the conflict, an experience that shaped his career as a photojournalist. He worked with the Associated Press (AP) and photography agencies Gamma and Sygma, and spent time documenting fighting in Lebanon during its civil war. He later joined Sipa Press. Over the course of his career, Yaghobzadeh has covered wars and humanitarian crises across the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa. His photographs have appeared in international media, and he has received multiple awards for photojournalism.

War damages 149 cultural heritage sites in Iran, official says

Arts & Culture Desk

The number of historical and cultural sites in Iran damaged during the 40-day war waged by the United States and Israel against the country in late February has climbed to 149, a senior Iranian heritage official said at a regional meeting. Ali Darabi, Iran's deputy minister of cultural heritage, said an earlier report submitted in March 2026 to the head of the Alliance for Cultural Heritage in Asia (ACHA) had documented damage to at least 56 museums, historic buildings and cultural sites nationwide. Speaking at a session on protecting endangered cultural heritage during ACHA's fourth meeting in Hangzhou, China, Darabi said the reported toll had since increased to 149 sites.

He proposed new mechanisms for Asian countries to cooperate in protecting cultural heritage during conflicts and other emergencies. He also highlighted damage to intangible heritage and elements linked to traditional arts and historical practices, including traditional wooden boats along Iran's southern coasts and mirror-work decorations at Golestan Palace in Tehran. Darabi offered to establish an Asian task force for cultural heritage protection during crises, creating a regional network of emergency heritage specialists and exploring an emergency funding mechanism to support conservation efforts. The proposed task force would develop a shared framework covering prevention, preparedness,

emergency response and recovery. The specialist network would facilitate the exchange of expertise in architecture, conservation, structural and decorative restoration, archaeology, museum management, digital documentation and crisis management. The proposed funding mechanism could support emergency stabilization of buildings, protection of movable artifacts, documentation, measures to prevent further damage and preliminary restoration studies. Darabi said Iran was prepared to share its expertise in conserving and restoring historic buildings and urban areas, emergency protection, crisis management and traditional skills. If the proposals are approved, Iran would also take part in



Iran's deputy minister of cultural heritage Alireza Darabi addresses the ACHA meeting in Hangzhou, China on October 19, 2026. ● IRNA

developing common guidelines, organizing training courses and implementing pilot projects. He argued that wars, natural disasters, climate change, fires and earthquakes cross national borders, making cultural heritage protection a shared regional responsibility rather than solely a national one.

Iran's northern corridors ...

This has created new opportunities for cooperation between Iran and the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus. For example, Caucasian countries such as Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia can use Iranian territory to connect with Turkey and Europe. They can also reach South Asia, including Pakistan and Afghanistan, through Iran for both transportation and trade. Iran, in turn, can connect to the Black Sea and Russia through the Caucasus. Via Azerbaijan, Iran can ship its goods to Russia, while routes through Azerbaijan and Georgia allow Iranian goods to reach the Black Sea ports of Poti and Batumi. From there, commercial shipments can continue across the Black Sea. The situation is even more favorable in Central Asia, where both road and rail networks are available. For example,

a railway route originating in China can enter Iran through Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan before connecting to Iran's nationwide rail network. From there, goods can be transported onward to Europe, Turkey or South Asia. The route also enables Iran to export its own goods to Central Asian countries and even China by rail. Road transport is another available option. These days, Iranian and foreign trucks can be seen traveling along highways leading to border crossings in the region, and their numbers have been increasing. In addition, Iran maintains maritime links across the Caspian Sea with Azerbaijan, Russia, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. These countries can use the route to export goods to and import goods from Iran, while Iran can transport cargo to ports in each of these countries.

Under current circumstances, consultations between Iran and these countries through the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, alongside efforts by the Foreign Ministry to establish the necessary groundwork for resolving logistical problems more quickly, are particularly important. With routes through the Sea of Oman and the Persian Gulf currently facing difficulties due to US aggression and the military presence near the Strait of Hormuz, these countries can also turn to Iran and alternative routes for their exports and imports. Russia faces a similar situation. It has direct maritime links with Iran across the Caspian Sea, as well as connections through Azerbaijan and another route that runs toward Uzbekistan before entering Iran through Turkmenistan. Russia, like Iran, is operating under sanctions. Consequently, cooperation between the two countries, both

of which are facing sanctions-related pressures, is particularly important for maintaining transportation links and commercial exchanges. In this regard, the two countries appear to be activating new routes at an increasing pace and seeking to iron out the problems affecting maritime and land transportation. As far as possible, Iran seeks to avoid competing with Russia, Turkey, China, Central Asia and the Caucasus, instead making cooperation the basis of its approach. Iran believes that all countries lose out when competition, particularly unconstructive rivalry, takes precedence. By contrast, interaction within a framework of cooperation would undoubtedly bring greater benefits to all the countries concerned. Accordingly, Iran currently faces no economic challenges with Russia, Turkey, China, Central Asia and the Caucasus. There are, of course, some

political differences between Iran and Turkey over the use of the Zangezur route. However, as the route has yet to be built, these issues are not currently at the forefront and have receded into the background. Iran has also participated in meetings under the 3+3 format, which brings together Iran, Russia and Turkey as countries outside the Caucasus, alongside Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan as the countries of the region. The purpose of these meetings is to encourage greater cooperation. Holding more such meetings and strengthening the format would be important for deepening Iran's ties with these countries, as well as with Central Asian nations. Iran's membership in regional groupings such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Eurasian Economic Union and the Economic Cooperation Organization can also help Central Asian countries, the Caucasus states,

Russia and Iran expand their cooperation at this critical juncture. Such engagement, backed by political will among the participating countries, would undoubtedly strengthen regional cooperation and pave the way for more durable economic arrangements. Overall, it appears that although the closure of the Strait of Hormuz has created economic difficulties and challenges for Iran and regional countries, particularly those in Central Asia and the Caucasus, it has also prompted them to consider closer cooperation and explore alternative ways of working together. This is a positive development, as once the Strait of Hormuz is reopened, the new routes established as alternatives during this period could complement existing ones and help boost economic activity in Iran, Central Asian and Caucasian countries, Russia and China.