Culture remains overlooked in development plans, senior official says
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Iran's Economy Minister Ali Madanizadeh (L) meets with Turkish Trade Minister Omer Bolat on the sidelines of the 42nd session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC) in Istanbul, Turkey on November 3, 2026.
mefa.ir

China's chances of mediating Iran war remain slim but should not be ruled out

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE

With the prospect of renewed hostilities between Iran, exchanges and planned visits involving Iranian and Chinese officials could signal Beijing's first attempt to step in as a mediator. In an interview with Iran Daily, international affairs analyst Mehdi Rahimi said the prospects for China, or any other country, to successfully intervene remain slim, as Washington's underlying assumptions about the war have not changed. Nevertheless, he argued that all potential mediators should continue to pursue diplomatic initiatives actively, as a breakthrough that could bring the war to an end might emerge from these interactions, however unlikely that may be.



Mehdi Rahimi

IRAN DAILY: **Do recent developments indicate that China is taking a more serious role in efforts to address regional issues?**

RAHIMI: These strong signals of China's willingness to play an active role certainly cannot be ignored. China has taken sound positions on the international stage in line with its explicitly stated principles and has exercised its veto power over draft UN Security Council resolutions in accordance with its foreign policy principles.

The fundamental point, however, is that China's architecture for engagement on the international stage has been designed for situations characterized by a low degree of uncertainty. In other words, China's model of engagement works highly effectively under peaceful conditions. Its effectiveness was evident, for instance, in the Beijing Agreement, which helped resolve differences between Iran and Saudi Arabia. However, that model is not effective in situations marked by high uncertainty and crisis conditions.

My view is that China is in the process of changing the architecture of its engagement in response to regional crises with far-reaching international implications, as well as international crises themselves.

Given its share of the international market and the international institutions and instruments it has developed across the fields of economic governance, finance, technology, politics, security and social affairs — alongside the institutions and instruments underpinning the existing international order led by the United States — China needs to move beyond a passive approach and experiment with more active engagement in times of crisis.

In light of these points, China is testing different components of a new model of engagement under crisis conditions so that, based on the lessons it learns in practice, it can build its own architecture for resolving international issues. From this perspective, it is important for Iran to share its initiatives for resolving the international crisis with the Chinese side so that, through mutual learning, the two countries can arrive at a common framework for crisis resolution.

Is China seeking to assume the role of guarantor for any potential understanding or agreement? To what extent does its overt involvement in this matter stand a chance of success?

On the other hand, I do not think this is the right time for China to assume such a role, for several reasons.

First, I believe China will not risk its international credibility until it has completed the architecture of its model for engaging in international crises. It is currently in the process of identifying its model of engagement, putting it into practice on the international stage, assessing its performance and, ultimately, moving towards more serious involvement in the form of a guarantor or through another arrangement.

Second, under its own calculation model, China steps in to help resolve a crisis when the parties involved ask it to play a role. Iran may now be making such a request to China, but the key question is whether the other parties involved — namely, the United States and Israel — have made a similar request. It appears that neither has there been a request from their side nor is there any willingness to see China become involved in this matter.

Third, China's calculations tell it that effective engagement is not possible at just any given time. Every initiative has its own moment, and that moment must arrive before China steps onto the scene. My assessment is that China has not identified the current situation as that moment for intervention.

Of course, this does not mean China will stay out of the picture. It will remain present, continuing to issue similar and recurring statements along the following lines: "Dialogue and negotiation are the only solution to the Middle East crisis. All parties should act responsibly towards their people and history, move towards one another and, instead of resorting to force once again, focus on a political solution in a rational and pragmatic spirit."

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There are several reasons for this.