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Iran's top general Ali Abdollahi (L) inspects an underground missile arsenal in an undisclosed location in Iran on November 10, 2026.
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Multiple channels of contact with US could undermine Iran's unified foreign policy

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE

The repercussions of the US war against Iran have extended beyond regional countries, affecting the entire world and prompting various countries to step in and seek a resolution. Former diplomat Abolghasem Delfi told Iran Daily that multiple channels of communication with Washington could prove counterproductive for Iran, potentially creating the impression that there is no unified voice on foreign policy within the country.



Abolghasem Delfi

IRAN DAILY: **Could current regional diplomatic efforts, including the Qatari emir's visit, Turkey's contacts and the Iraqi prime minister's trip, prevent the war from flaring up again?**

DELFI: The situation following the US elections and the difficulties facing the Republican Party, particularly the loss of control of Congress, is a challenging one. President Donald Trump has only a limited window until January 1 to take action, if he intends to do so, before the new congressional situation fully takes shape.

Against this backdrop, it appears that plans are taking shape during the remaining period to help Trump achieve what he is seeking.

Regional diplomatic visits and exchanges should, in principle, be taken seriously if they reflect a broader realization among regional countries, following two or three wars and more than a year of tensions, that they need to establish a different kind of relationship with Iran.

However, I do not think this is necessarily the thinking behind these diplomatic moves. Over the past year or two, following several rounds of fighting and US and Israeli aggression against Iran, various mediation efforts have been undertaken by Oman, Qatar, Pakistan, Russia and, more recently, China. All these countries tried to find a way to bring the war to an end and establish peace. But, ultimately, none of these efforts produced results. Not only did the mediation attempts fail, but they also served as stepping stones for subsequent acts of aggression.

The lesson we should draw from this experience is that these diplomatic exchanges need to be viewed in the context of our national interests. If they are aimed at strengthening regional security, developing bilateral relations with neighboring countries, changing the regional security landscape and establishing collective security arrangements, then we should approach them accordingly.

But if the purpose is to change Iran's relations with the United States and move them toward peace and calm, I do not think that is very achievable. Past experience has also demonstrated this.

Overall, mediation efforts should certainly be welcomed, but within a framework that allows us to define shared interests with regional countries. The region needs to understand Iran's position and the framework within which regional countries should operate. As for returning to the pre-war situation and having these countries bring Iran and the United States to a peace agreement, experience has shown that such efforts have not led anywhere, nor have we gained any concessions through them.

Western media outlets are drawing distinctions between different camps within the US administration, arguing that some favor an agreement, others support war, while a third group advocates escalating the blockade and economic pressure. Do you consider this assessment accurate? If so, could the pro-agreement camp gain the upper hand?

These debates were already taking place in the United States before the elections. In any case, public opinion polls published at the time showed that a considerable majority of Americans did not support the war.

When Trump took office, he campaigned on a promise to end wars. Not only was that promise left unfulfilled, but further wars were also imposed on the American public, forcing US taxpayers to shoulder the cost of additional conflicts.

One point worth noting is that, in the US elections, voters did not give the Republicans their support. However, whether the Democrats are now viewed as preferable to the Republicans remains an open question in the broader assessment of the election results. That question will ultimately be answered in the next presidential election.

Therefore, conditions will gradually move in a direction that favors those within both the Republican Party and the broader American establishment who opposed the war. They will seek to present themselves as having been against the war from the outset, or at least as having expressed reservations about it. They will try to demonstrate that they had consistently voiced their concerns in various ways. This will help them distance themselves from the pro-war faction and strengthen their standing in public opinion.

Therefore, this confrontation is taking shape in the US media landscape and will undoubtedly intensify, particularly as the country approaches its next electoral cycle over the coming one or two years.

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Conflict will not be resolved through military means, sanctions: *Araghchi*

'No plans for meeting between Rezaei, Vance'



Abbas Araghchi
IRNA

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Tuesday that the conflict with Iran will not be resolved through military means, urging the United States to engage in diplomacy and address Iran's conditions.

"The conflict with Iran will not be resolved through military means, nor by intensifying sanctions," Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told IRNA.

"The only solution is to adopt a language of respect, engage in diplomacy, and address Iran's demands and conditions – which were outlined in the two-day proposal and remain on the table."

Tehran has proposed reopening the Strait of Hormuz, which it has blockaded since the start of the war, within two days in return for Washington meeting a raft of conditions.

The conditions, first formally conveyed to Washington through Qatari and other regional mediators in September, center on ending hostilities on all fronts, the release of Iran's frozen assets, the complete lifting of the illegal naval blockade, the removal of economic and political sanctions, the withdrawal of US naval and air forces from the region, payment of war reparations, and an end to threats and insults.

US President Donald Trump, whose Republican party last week lost mid-term elections in part due to the war, said on Monday that there was "positive momentum" towards ending the conflict after meeting Qatar's prime minister at the White House.

In a post on social media, Trump reiterated that the US was "locked and loaded" but said further strikes were "quite unlikely" given that key US allies in the Persian Gulf "would prefer the status quo".

"We are seeing positive momentum toward an end to this conflict, and will ensure that America's interests are at all times protected," Trump said.

Diplomatic efforts, led by Qatar and Pakistan, are underway to find a resolution to the war, which broke out in late February when US-Israeli strikes killed Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Positive reactions

The Qatari Foreign Ministry said that Doha is "working tirelessly to end the uncertainty over the crisis between Washington and Tehran".

Ibrahim bin Sultan Al-Hashmi, director of the ministry's media and communication department, told a weekly news briefing that mediation efforts are ongoing and there are positive reactions from both sides of the crisis.

Iranian foreign minister also dismissed "baseless" media speculations about the possibility of a meeting between Iran's top security official and the US vice president, saying no such meeting is being planned.

The remarks came after certain foreign media outlets claimed that a meeting could take place between US Vice President JD Vance and Iran's Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Mohsen Rezaei.

Rezaei himself stated in a post on the X platform that there were no plans for dialogue with the American side.

"The war on Iran has already wrecked the US government. But Washington flails like a desperate gambler. FOLD YOUR HAND. STOP manufacturing FAKE NEWS about imaginary talks. Stop denying the West Asian NEW ORDER. Time to SURRENDER to the seven conditions Iran has repeatedly set out," said Rezaei, the head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, in a post on X.

IRGC unveils new underground missile city

National Desk

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Force unveiled a new underground missile city, displaying various ballistic and cruise missiles along with their launchers.

The unveiling ceremony was attended by Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Ali Abdollahi and Commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force Brigadier General Majid Mousavi.

Addressing the ceremony, Abdollahi referred to the enemies' plots against Iran, saying that their goal was to destroy the Islamic Republic, but they failed to achieve it during recent acts of aggression. Therefore, Israel and the United States are the definitive losers in the field, he added.

Major General Abdullahi also emphasized: "Surprises will appear one after another in the future war."

A range of ballistic and cruise missiles, as well as their launch systems, were put on display at the facility.

The IRGC spokesman Brigadier General Hossein Mohebi had announced on Saturday that the IRGC would unveil a new underground missile facility.



Missiles are displayed during an unveiling ceremony of an underground missile city by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Force in an undisclosed location in Iran on November 10, 2026.
defapress.ir

He said the IRGC's Aerospace Force has rapidly moved its missile and drone production lines from surface facilities to underground sites, going beyond underground storage complexes to establish "missile production cities" deep beneath the ground.

Mohebi said Iran's domestic expertise, vast territory and flexible production infrastructure would ensure that weapons manufacturing could continue even under heavy bombardment.

Iran has spent years developing underground missile storage and launch facilities, which it calls "missile cities," as part of efforts to protect its weapons from airstrikes.

Missile capabilities are among the main components of Iran's deterrence power. The development of related infrastructure, alongside the production and upgrading of missiles, plays a role in maintaining the country's defense readiness.

Iran slams Grossi's 'selective outrage' over attacks on nuclear facilities

International Desk

Iran's permanent mission to international organizations in Vienna sharply criticized Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency Rafael Grossi for applying a clear double standard in his response to attacks on nuclear facilities.

In a statement posted on its X account on Monday, the Iranian mission noted that the phrase "STRONGLY CONDEMNS" is readily used in some cases but was never applied when Iran's safeguarded peaceful nuclear sites were bombed, Press TV reported.

The Iranian delegation highlighted Grossi's strong condemnation of a drone attack that killed a staff member at Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.

The mission wrote: "It is impressive that the phrase 'STRONGLY CONDEMNS' can be used by Grossi. But why is it not applied consistently in all situations?"

Referring to the June 2025 US and Israeli strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards, an act the Agency itself has described as unprecedented in its history, the statement continued: "When US and Israeli regime bombs struck Iran's safeguarded peaceful nuclear facilities… or the Iranian nuclear personnel were assassinated, they were never condemned. In those situations, DG apparently considered condemnation to fall outside his 'purview' and 'work'."

The mission described the disparity as "selective outrage," stating that it "isn't a pillar of nuclear safety and safeguards. It's a pillar of a résumé."

It added that "institutional duty is not optional" and that "professionalism requires consistency."

Earlier this month, Iran's Vienna mission had slammed the Grossi for repeatedly expressing concern over Iran's stockpile of uranium enriched to 60 percent while remaining silent on the illegal bombing of facilities that were under continuous IAEA safeguards.

Iranian officials have stressed that the Agency's own reports never recorded the diversion of even a single gram of nuclear material, and that the NPT sets no ceiling on enrichment levels.

Iran has long argued that the US-Israeli attacks, which also targeted nuclear scientists and personnel, constituted grave violations of the UN Charter, the IAEA Statute, and fundamental nuclear safety principles.

Tehran has repeatedly called on Grossi to fulfill his legal and professional obligations by condemning such acts, warning that selective silence undermines the credibility of the non-proliferation regime and the Agency's claimed impartiality.

GCC to set up military command headquarters in Kuwait

International Desk

The Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has agreed to set up an advanced headquarters for its Unified Military Command in Kuwait, with plans to station "appropriate" military forces there.

The announcement by the [P]GCC's General Secretariat on Tuesday followed a meeting of defense ministers from member states in Bahrain.

The group said in a statement that the leaders of the [P]GCC states consistently emphasize the necessity and importance of strengthening the Persian Gulf journey, enabling it to confront various challenges and threats, both present and future.



AP

Details about the headquarters and the number or type of troops expected to be deployed have yet to be disclosed. The [P]GCC consists of six United States-allied Persian Gulf Arab states: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Established at a summit in Kuwait in December 2013, the [P]GCC's Unified Military Command was designed to oversee joint military operations and enhance collective defense against threats to member states' territory, airspace, maritime areas and interests.

Most Persian Gulf Arab countries host major US military installations and were targeted in Iranian retaliatory attacks in the weeks after the US-Israel war on Iran began on February 28.

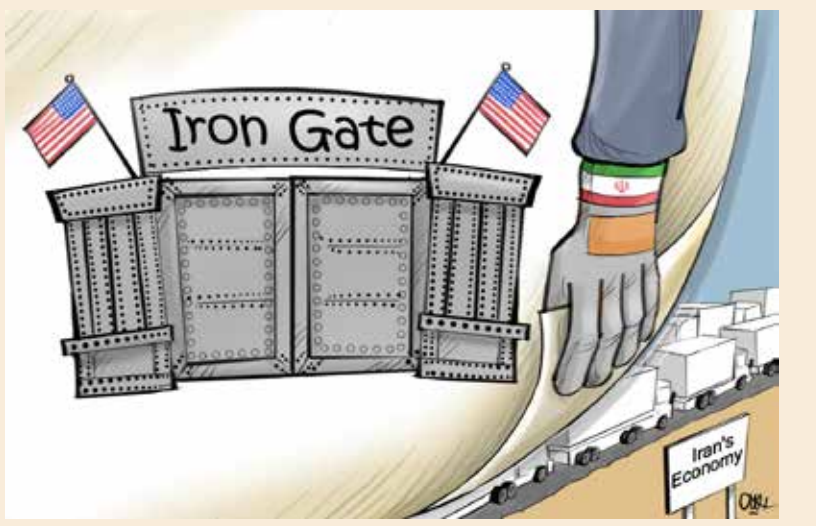
During the recent acts of aggression against Iran, some regional countries allowed the US to use their territories to launch attacks on Iran. Tehran had repeatedly warned the countries about the issue.

The aggression against Iran has disrupted air travel and shipping, and raised concerns over the security of the region's vital oil and gas exports.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Pezeshkian says regional cooperation can strengthen Iran's transit role

Economy Desk

Iran can strengthen its position as a regional transit hub by expanding cooperation with neighboring countries and completing key rail corridors, President Masoud Pezeshkian said, highlighting a proposed east-west route through Afghanistan linked to China's rail network.

In a message to the 19th International Railway Transportation Conference on Tuesday, Pezeshkian said the development of an east-west corridor through Afghanistan and its connection to China's rail network would open new prospects for regional cooperation, ISNA reported.

He described the conference as an opportunity to exchange expertise, discuss challenges and develop solutions for expanding Iran's railway transportation network.

Rail transport is an important infrastructure component that can connect production centers to domestic and international markets, reduce transportation costs and improve the safety and reliability of freight and passenger services, Pezeshkian said. These improvements could support production, expand trade and boost the competitiveness of the economy.

"Therefore, railway development should be regarded as an investment in the country's economic future and public welfare," he said.

Pezeshkian also stressed the need to increase rail's share of freight and passenger transportation as Iran seeks to address energy shortages, citing the sector's higher energy efficiency and potential to reduce fuel consumption, pollution and economic and social costs.

Achieving that potential requires electrifying railway lines, modernizing rolling stock, removing network bottlenecks and encouraging private-sector investment, he said.

He added that completing rail corridors, connecting ports and production centers to the network and expanding cooperation with neighboring countries could strengthen Iran's regional transit position, increase trade and generate more sustainable foreign currency revenues.

As part of that effort, Pezeshkian pointed to plans for an east-west corridor through Afghanistan, including the development of the Herat-Mazar-e-Sharif route and its connection to rail networks in East Asia. Completing the corridor inside Iran through construction of the Khavaran-Cheshmeh Soraya route could expand trade, develop the region's industrial and mining potential and strengthen Iran's role in international trade networks, he said.

Pezeshkian also called for the use of new technologies in fleet maintenance to improve safety, reduce travel times and enhance service quality. He urged scientists, engineers and knowledge-based companies to develop practical solutions for the sector's needs and called on government agencies to facilitate their implementation.

He said attracting private investment would also require greater investor confidence, transparent regulations and stable commitments.

The conference was attended by Transport and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadeq, who also emphasized infrastructure development, fleet modernization and increasing rail's share of freight and passenger transportation.

Agreements were exchanged at the event on supplying fully battery-powered locomotives, retrofitting existing locomotives with hybrid technology and building solar power plants along railway corridors.

Iran transported around 44 million tons of freight by rail in the Iranian year ended March 2026, while rail transit accounted for about 2.4 million tons in the year ended March 2025, according to figures reported by railway officials. Despite the growth in rail freight, rail transport still accounts for less than 10% of Iran's land transportation, pointing to significant scope for expanding the network's role in domestic and international freight movement.

Deputy Transport and Urban Development Minister Jabarali Zakeri said the railway company planned to sign three technology-related agreements on the sidelines of the conference, with private-sector companies and investors involved in the projects. He expressed hope that the agreements would produce tangible results for Iran's rail transport industry in the near future.

Zakeri also stressed the need to expand freight capacity along east-west international routes, saying projections showed that freight traffic along the corridor would exceed 530 million tons by 2030. He said Iran needed to plan ahead to capitalize on that potential and increase the regional rail network's share of the traffic.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's image is displayed on a screen as his message is read out at the 19th International Railway Transportation Conference in Tehran, on November 10, 2026.
ISNA

Iran prepares next year's budget for 'zero oil' scenario: *PBO*

Economy Desk

Iran is drafting its national budget for the year beginning March 21, 2027, under several scenarios, including one in which oil revenues fall to zero, as the government prepares for the economic impact of US sanctions and wartime blockades, a senior official said.

Mohammad Qasemi, deputy for program and budget coordination at the Plan and Budget Organization (PBO), said the government was preparing for severe financial conditions resulting from the US-Israeli war and attacks on critical infrastructure, Press TV reported.

Despite damage to parts of the country's energy and transport infrastructure, including attacks on the South Pars gas fields, Qasemi said Iran's domestic production capacity would help sustain economic stability even if oil revenues disappeared.

"The government must prepare itself for conditions where oil revenues reach zero," he said, adding that the PBO had developed several scenarios to safeguard the country's finances.

He said contingency planning began in the spring of 2025 in anticipation of renewed US pressure and tighter sanctions. The plans were activated when the US and Israel launched their military campaign against Iran in late February, taking into account potential damage to national infrastructure.

To offset possible revenue losses, the government is considering alternative sources of funding, including oil deposit certificates, targeted taxation and customs revenues.

Qasemi said the government would avoid placing excessive tax burdens on private businesses directly affected by the war, particularly in the petrochemical, steel and tourism sectors.

Fiscal discipline

The government has ruled out direct borrowing from the central bank or using treasury bills to finance the general budget, Qasemi said, in a bid to prevent growth in the monetary base and liquidity.

Public spending has been divided into three categories: essential expenses, including government salaries and pensions; secondary priorities; and conditional spending.

"We have planned to pay salaries and wages until the end of the year (March 21, 2027) and have no intention of defaulting on our debt obligations," he said, adding that funding would continue to be allocated to vital infrastructure projects as resources allowed.

The government is also reviewing its subsidy and support systems to protect vulnerable groups from the effects of inflation and wartime economic pressures.

Qasemi said the government and parliament had disagreed over the size of next year's budget. The government initially proposed limiting nominal budget growth to 2% to reflect wartime conditions, but Parliament rejected the proposal and approved an increase of 30%.

The PBO is also seeking tighter financial oversight of state-owned companies, requiring them to demonstrate the economic necessity of new projects before receiving government funding or loans.

The drafting of a "zero oil" budget represents the ultimate triumph of Iran's Resistance Economy.

For years, Washington has attempted to strangle Tehran by targeting its oil exports and financial networks.

The recent US-Israeli war of aggression, which temporarily damaged parts of Iran's energy and transit infrastructure, was intended to force a political capitulation.

Instead, Iran's technocrats have used the situation to accelerate structural reforms, eliminate energy smuggling, and prove that the nation's vast domestic industrial and agricultural base can sustain the country through the most severe external shocks.

Iraq reopens border crossing with Iran as another faces temporary closure

Economy Desk

Iraq has reopened a key border crossing with Iran after nearly three weeks of closure, while another crossing is set to shut temporarily on Friday, Tasnim news agency reported.

The Al-Sheib crossing, known as Chazabeh on the Iranian side, resumed operations on Tuesday, allowing passenger traffic and goods shipments to restart, Omar al-Waeli, head of Iraq's Border Ports Authority, said.

The crossing had been closed since October 21. Iraqi government spokesman Haider al-Aboudi said at the time that it lacked the necessary technical facilities, technology and infrastructure. Subsequent reports cited security measures and the installation of inspection equipment to strengthen controls and combat smuggling.

Meanwhile, the Mandali crossing, known as Sumar on the Iranian side, will close temporarily from 8 a.m. on Friday, November 13, for maintenance and technical work ahead of the rainy season, al-Waeli said. No date has been announced for its reopening.

The developments come as Iraq faces US pressure to curb trade with Iran. Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein said on November 8 that Washington had asked Baghdad to close all but two of its border crossings with Iran.

Hussein told Al Jazeera that the United States was pressing ahead with the request, while Iraq was negotiating with Washington over the issue. He warned that shutting the crossings could hurt the Iraqi economy. He said Iraq had lost about $60 billion because of the suspension of oil exports through the Strait of Hormuz.

Iraq's Badr Parliamentary Bloc said on Sunday that it rejected what it called US "dictates" to close border crossings with Iran.

In a statement, the bloc said the foreign minister's remarks about US demands reflected plans and instructions targeting the country's south and amounted to interference in Iraq's sovereign decisions.

In recent weeks, truck drivers, taxi drivers and workers at the al-Sheib crossing in Maysan Province have staged several protests. Local officials in the southeastern Iraqi province say about 4,000 people depend on the crossing directly or indirectly for their livelihoods.

The disruption comes amid extensive trade ties between the two countries. Annual trade between Iraq and Iran is worth an estimated $15 billion to $18 billion, including about $4 billion in Iranian natural gas imports, Hussein said.

Iraqi officials have not directly linked the Chazabeh closure or the planned shutdown of Sumar to the US request.

The latest restrictions follow an earlier closure of the Chazabeh, Shalamcheh and Mandali crossings on September 12, after a drone attack on Saudi Arabia's East-West oil pipeline. Saudi officials said the drones had been launched from Iraqi territory, prompting Baghdad to launch an investigation.



IRNA

Multiple channels of ...

Given Mohsen Rezaei's visit to Moscow and his meeting with President Vladimir Putin, as well as his deputy Ali Bagheri's trip to China and meeting with Wang Yi, do you think China and Russia have decided to take a more active role in resolving the crisis?

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The circumstances surrounding the two countries are certainly different.

Russia's position is particularly noteworthy because of the relations it has established with Trump over the Ukraine issue. These ties have involved various developments, the latest being Trump's agreement reached with Putin on supplying Russian diesel to the US market to help bring down fuel and energy prices in the United States.

There have also been understandings over Ukraine. As you know, just a few days ago, Trump's son-in-law issued a statement on the future of Ukraine and Russia, indicating that they want to largely sideline Europe from the negotiations and reach an agreement with Russia directly to settle the Ukraine issue.

Therefore, Russia is pursuing the issue of Iran through the lens of its own interests in Ukraine.

Putin's willingness to mediate stems partly from the need for Russia, which has become our ally and stood alongside us, to answer questions about its conduct. At a time when we were facing difficulties with the Americans in the Strait of Hormuz, Russia reached an agreement with Washington and supplied diesel to the market to influence fuel prices. This was certainly not a positive development from Iran's perspective when assessing Russia's actions.

That is why, alongside Putin's recent diplomatic moves, Russia has initiated a series of activities. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's visit to Tehran and Putin's own remarks that he had conveyed President Masoud Pezeshkian's message to the Americans point to a new Russian initiative in the form of mediation.

However, Russia, the United States and the international community all know that Trump would never be comfortable with Putin acting as a mediator or intermediary between Iran and the United States. Trump has made it clear that if there is to be any achievement in this matter, he wants to secure it himself.

Therefore, Russia's current diplomatic efforts should be viewed as an attempt to make up for what it owes Iran following its conduct in relations with the United States. Ultimately, I do not think Iran will gain anything from these efforts.

We should also pay attention to another important point. When the Foreign Ministry is in contact with Lavrov, the Supreme National Security Council is communicating with Putin, and the deputy secretary of the council for international affairs is travelling to China, this multiplicity of channels of communication is not necessarily beneficial. In many cases, it could lead the other side to draw the wrong conclusions and create the impression that there is no unified voice on foreign policy within Iran.

In practice, we need to establish a situation in which the country speaks with one voice and acts in a coordinated manner. This would also make Russia and China more cautious and help prevent misunderstandings in their diplomatic dealings with Iran.

A wounded hand, not a changed mind

America's Iran policy after midterms



By Annunthra Rangan
Senior research officer at Chennai Centre for China Studies

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

When Democrats won control of both chambers of the US Congress on November 3, Iran's leaders were quick to read the result as a verdict on the war that Washington launched alongside Israel on February 28. Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Tehran's chief negotiator, said Americans had said no to war, while Vice President J.D. Vance conceded that the war was the reason his party lost. Yet the celebration in Tehran and the recrimination in Washington can obscure a plainer fact: the midterms changed who controls the Capitol, not who commands the armed forces. Donald Trump remains president and commander-in-chief until January 2029, and the new Congress will not convene until January. America's Iran policy from 2027 is therefore likely to change at the margins, in the constraints placed upon it, the political price of pursuing it and the tempo of its execution, rather than in its strategic objectives.

The scale of what Congress is now being asked to restrain is considerable. The opening US-Israeli strikes killed Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, late Leader of the Islamic Revolution, and were followed by Iran's retaliatory missile and drone strikes against Israel, American bases and Persian Gulf states, and by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Pakistan brokered a ceasefire in early April; Washington imposed a naval blockade of Iranian ports from April 13; and on June 17, the two sides signed a 14-point memorandum of understanding opening a 60-day window for talks on navigation in the strait, Iran's peaceful nuclear programme and missile capabilities, and sanctions. That truce collapsed on July 8 after attacks on commercial vessels in the strait and American acts of military aggression against Iranian territory. By October, the Pentagon estimated the war's cost at $47.1 billion, and the rise in fuel and consumer prices that followed became a staple of Democratic campaigning. Foreign policy rarely decides American elections, but a war that reaches the petrol pump is an exception.

Congress had already begun to move before voters spoke. Democrats forced vote after vote on war powers, and by the time one finally succeeded, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer counted it as their tenth attempt. A House vote in May failed on a 212-212 tie. In June, the Senate approved, by 50 votes to 48 with four Republicans joining the Democrats, a House-passed resolution directing the withdrawal of US forces from hostilities, the first time both chambers had passed such a measure since the War Powers Resolution of 1973. Its legal force, however, remains contested. A 1983 Supreme Court ruling holds that such a measure must be presented to the president for signature or veto to take effect, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio has argued that the 1973 law is itself unconstitutional. A further House-passed resolution in July was blocked in the Senate, where some Democrats voted alongside Republicans against it.

The legal framework itself offers little protection against a determined president, which is why enforcement has become a political matter. The War Powers Resolution requires a president to end hostilities within 60 days of notifying Congress unless lawmakers authorise them. Trump notified Congress on March 2, which put the deadline at May 1. On that day, the White House told Congress that hostilities with Iran had "terminated," and Hegseth argued that a cease-fire pauses the clock, even as the naval blockade of Iranian ports continued.



The illustration shows US President Donald Trump, an American flag, the White House and the Capitol buildings, and American military equipment orbiting around the president.
THE AUSTRALIAN

After the truce collapsed, the administration filed a new notification on July 10 and treated it as restarting the 60 days, a reading that drew questions even from Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski. Courts have historically checked such disputes but have largely avoided them in recent decades. Several Republican senators, among them Susan Collins and John Curtis, have said the deadline is a binding requirement, and Curtis has said he will not support continued funding until Congress votes to authorise the war. The most credible legal lever is therefore money. Murkowski has pointed to a 1999 Justice Department opinion on Kosovo holding that a supplemental appropriation can itself satisfy the War Powers Resolution, which makes the administration's request for an $87.6 billion war supplement both its possible route to legal cover and Congress's route to pressure.

From January, the arithmetic changes. Schumer has said that Democrats will end the war, pointing to Congress's control over federal spending, and House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries has urged Trump to end it before the new Congress convenes. A Democratic House can decline to fund new operations, attach limits to the annual defence authorisation and appropriations bills, and summon officials to testify on the strategy, costs and conduct of the war. The politics of accountability are already visible: Republican Representative Thomas Massie said he will force a vote on impeaching Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth when Congress returns, and Adam Smith, the senior Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, has observed that some Republicans who would back removing Hegseth would not do the same to the president. Reports that Trump has discussed replacing his defence secretary suggest the White House understands that scrutiny is coming.

The limits of this leverage are as important as its scope. Any binding measure that reaches Trump's desk faces a veto, and overriding it requires two-thirds of both chambers, which means substantial Republican support. The power of the purse is a blunt instrument against operations already under way since few legislators wish to be seen abandoning forces under fire. Nor should Democratic opposition to this war be mistaken for opposition to pressure on Iran. In March, the House

In June, the Senate approved, by 50 votes to 48 with four Republicans joining the Democrats, a House-passed resolution directing the withdrawal of US forces from hostilities, the first time both chambers had passed such a measure since the War Powers Resolution of 1973. Its legal force, however, remains contested. A 1983 Supreme Court ruling holds that such a measure must be presented to the president for signature or veto to take effect, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio has argued that the 1973 law is itself unconstitutional.



Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth (front) appears before a House Committee on Armed Services business meeting on the Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2027 budget on Capitol Hill in Washington on April 29, 2026. Republican Representative Thomas Massie said he will force a vote on impeaching Hegseth when Congress returns.
ROD LAMKEY JR./AP

passed, by 372 votes to 53, a bill reaffirming Iran as the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism. The Democratic critique has centred largely on the absence of congressional authorisation, the cost, and the lack of a defined end state to the war rather than on the goal of curbing Iran's peaceful nuclear programme and missile capabilities. A growing minority is pushing further: 103 House Democrats backed an unsuccessful July amendment to strip $3.3 billion in military aid to Israel, and incoming Michigan Senator Abdul El-Sayed has campaigned against sending American money to fund the war. But this is a current within the party, not yet its centre of gravity.

The most acute risk lies in the weeks before the new Congress is seated. Trump told TIME in early October that large-scale strikes could resume after the midterms, and he has since said he is weighing further military action, including against the Pickaxe Mountain nuclear facility, while Hegseth has reportedly discussed possible attacks with outgoing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. On November 2, a day before the vote and despite an earlier pledge not to attack before the election, US forces struck Qeshm Island in what American officials described as a limited defensive response to Iranian defensive fire in response to US military action against an American aircraft. A lame-duck president may be tempted to use this period to attack again since a weakened leader facing a hostile legislature can feel pressure to demonstrate resolve abroad. Trump, for his part, has said he would launch the war again if he had to, though he has also told reporters he has no immediate plans to escalate. Washington is sending both signals at once.

Whether these limits amount to an opportunity for Iran depends on how they are read. They are real but slow-acting, and they bind money and politics more than they bind the president's hand. A Congress that can refuse funding, hold hearings and review any nuclear agreement gives Tehran something it has lacked: a Washington institution with an interest in ending the war and a stake in any settlement. A president facing a hostile legislature also has a stronger incentive to seek lower oil prices and an exit he can present as a victory. But the same constraints are weakest against the kind of action most likely in the coming weeks. Short, limited strikes can be defended as defensive, sit uneasily with a sustained-hostilities reading of the 60-day clock, and can be launched before the new Congress is seated. The opportunity is therefore one of leverage in negotiations, not of protection from force, and an Iran that treated the election as a guarantee against renewed strikes would be misreading what Congress can actually do.

Diplomacy is where change is most plausible and most constrained. Trump has said he expects the war to end soon after the midterms, and the domestic incentive to lower energy prices is now stronger than ever. But he has repeatedly ruled out sanctions relief, saying in May that he would not ease sanctions as part of a deal and insisting in September that he had offered Tehran nothing, while Iran's overriding priority is financial relief alongside recognition of its role in the Strait of Hormuz. Washington's stated demands, meanwhile, include that Iran never seek a nuclear weapon and accept zero enrichment. Congress cannot lift executive sanctions, but it holds a quieter lever: under a 2015 law passed while Barack Obama negotiated the nuclear agreement, Congress has the right to review and vote on any deal touching Iran's peaceful nuclear programme, and Senate Majority Leader John Thune has said he expects it to do so. A Democratic majority is likely to be a more receptive

reviewer of a negotiated settlement than a Republican one would have been, yet also a more insistent one on verification and on the congressional role.
Tehran, however, is not signalling that it will bank the political windfall in exchange for flexibility. Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Republic, said that anyone who expects shifts between American parties to alter US behaviour is gravely mistaken. The election makes Iranian concessions on the nuclear issue even less likely. Trump needs a diplomatic victory but is reluctant to appear weak, while Tehran may read his setback as an opening to demand more. This is the central paradox of the moment: the weakening of Trump strengthens Iran's hand, which narrows the space for a deal, which in turn raises the temptation to seek leverage through force. Israeli politics add a further variable since Netanyahu's Likud lost its parliamentary majority in the October 27 election and coalition negotiations remain unsettled.
Beneath all of this lies the question that Iranian policymakers know well: durability. Washington withdrew from the 2015 nuclear agreement in 2018 despite Iran's compliance, and no Iranian negotiator will forget that lesson. Any arrangement reached with the present administration can be reversed by its successor after the 2028 election, and a Democratic Congress cannot by itself guarantee otherwise. Its more realistic contribution is to make unilateral reversal costlier, through review requirements, reporting obligations and political ownership of an agreement that cuts across party lines. That is a modest guarantee, but in the absence of a binding treaty, it may be the only institutional anchor on offer.
The most defensible forecast, then, is one of slight rather than sweeping change. Expect more hearings, tighter budget language, repeated war powers votes and a steadier drumbeat of oversight from January; expect a president who needs an exit but cannot be seen to pay for one; and expect an Iran that treats the result as vindication while preparing for both talks and renewed strikes. The shift that matters most is not in American objectives, which remain broadly bipartisan on nuclear weapons, but in the domestic cost of pursuing them by force. Whether that higher cost produces a negotiated settlement or a final, defiant escalation before the gavel changes hands is the question on which the next two months will turn.



A man carries an Iranian flag and a poster depicting Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei on November 4, 2026, a day after the US midterm elections took place.
VAHID SALEMI/AP

Three ways new democratic congress could constrain Trump on foreign policy



By Jennifer Hendrixson White
Visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

OPINION

In a historic midterm election on November 3, voters gave Democrats decisive control over Congress, with majorities in both the House and the Senate. Sentiments shifted among many demographic categories in an election that appears to have been centered around concerns over the Iran war, the economy, and corruption.
Given these results, the expectation may be that the new Congress places meaningful checks on President Donald Trump's foreign policy. History suggests, however, that a Congress in opposition to a sitting president faces limited options. The tools that it is most eager to use, such as speeches, nonbinding resolutions, and investigations, can apply political pressure on the White House but do not easily force its hand. And the more weighty legal and financial tools, such as binding resolutions on the use of force or withholding federal funds, require veto-proof majorities that will need votes from Republicans as well.



The illustration shows the Capitol building as well as the face of Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of the US, on the $100 bill.
WSJ

A similar moment

As an incoming majority staff member on the House Foreign Affairs Committee following the 2018 midterms, I had a front-row seat to an election with similar atmospherics and foreign policy debates. I saw again and again how hard it was for members to move beyond simple signals of disapproval and how few options they had to legally or financially constrain presidential action.
In 2018, Trump was halfway into his first term with Republican majorities in both the House and Senate when Democrats took control of the House with a gain of 41 seats — leaving Congress divided.
Expectations ran high that Democrats in the new Congress would be able to rein in what they perceived as Trump's foreign policy excesses, such as his continued support for Saudi-led war in Yemen, the abrupt withdrawal from Syria, and the suspension of military exercises with South Korea. But by late 2019, these lofty expectations had been dashed.
The new Congress produced a flurry of measures that were rich in political signaling but produced no meaningful constraints on the administration. Some of these were binding resolutions, such as bills requiring the president to end US support for the war in Yemen and halt hostilities with Iran, that passed both chambers but were vetoed by the president. On Europe, the House passed the NATO Support Act, which prohibited the use of federal funds to withdraw from the alliance, but the bill stalled in the Senate when Majority Leader Mitch McConnell decided not to bring it to the floor, perhaps to save the president from a direct rebuke. In the 120th Congress, Republicans will no longer be able to protect the president by setting the legislative agenda, but they will still be able to use the filibuster to prevent legislation from coming to the Senate floor. If that fails, any legislation that passes will still face the possibility of a presidential veto.
In a few cases, foreign policy legislation did become law. Some of these reflected bipartisan areas of agreement. Others represented areas of bipartisan concern about what Trump might do: One provision in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) addressed fears that the president would withdraw US troops from South Korea, while another prohibited funds from being used to reduce US troop numbers below a certain level. Notably, these successful legislative efforts rode on "must-pass" bills that enjoyed veto-proof support or were heavily negotiated in both chambers. Failed efforts did not receive the protection of riding along with a popular bill and were more easily vetoed by the president.

What to watch for

There are three issues worth watching in the coming months that will reflect how — and where — Congress exercises its authorities in the foreign policy domain.
First, reports suggest that the president may attack Iran again. The Senate has already voted 14 times on the war but only approved — along with the House — one nonbinding measure calling on the president to end the war last June. (Predictably, the White House ignored it.)
Further US action against Iran could reinvigorate efforts by Democrats to meaningfully restrict military action or funding for the war. Their first major opportunity to do so may come during the so-called lame-duck session. Funding of the government depends on a continuing resolution that expires on December 11, and Senate Democrats may use this deadline as leverage to extract concessions on Iran. The second opportunity is the ongoing negotiation over the NDAA — a bill that has reliably been passed annually for 65 years. Senate Democrats blocked passage of the 2026 NDAA in July, largely over concerns about Iran, and will likely continue to use their leverage in the lame-duck session. If Democrats threaten to block passage of the NDAA, they have leverage to attach riders that limit presidential authority and funding on Iran.
Second, Democratic Party leadership will select new House and Senate committee chairs and ranking members of key foreign policy and defense committees. Those picks may offer hints on policy direction — especially on Israel, which is sharply dividing the center-left and progressive-left elements of the party. New leadership on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and changes in committee composition for both the House and the Senate foreign relations committees could signal a tougher line on Israel policy to include conditions on arms sales.
Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is worth watching how and where the new Congress chooses to convert its investigative energies into real policy constraints on the executive branch. Congressional investigations into the Iran war or defense contracts with Trump-linked firms could pressure or embarrass the president, but it is less clear whether a Democratic-controlled House or Senate would be able to convert those investigations into meaningful actions that defend Congress's Article I prerogatives constraining presidential action.
Of these, the most important and most contested is Congress's power of the purse. The Trump administration has avoided spending funds for the specific purposes assigned by Congress (impoundment); cancelled or repealed certain appropriations (rescissions); and implemented revenue-raising techniques that bypass congressional purview, including through tariffs.
Even though Democrats have taken control of Congress, they lack a veto-proof majority in either chamber and cannot count on advancing standalone legislation that legally restricts presidential action. But the way they choose to use their investigations could create a path to more substantive measures designed to limit the executive branch's budgetary workarounds and claw back congressional power of the purse.
For example, to get things through the Senate, Congress might consider tools that have fast-track treatment (as some war powers resolutions and arms sales disapprovals do) because they can come to the floor under simple majority in the Senate. Incoming committee chairs will have subpoenas, hearings, and nominations as means to build cases for binding legislation. And "must-pass" legislation provides leverage by virtue of a deadline.
The 116th Congress showed that, even in divided government, there are areas of bipartisan foreign policy convergence. In recent years, these have often centered around advancing the United States' economic, technological, and military standing relative to China, while reassuring US allies in Europe and Asia.
Nevertheless, the tools and strategies the new Congress employs — most notably, its ability to translate investigative efforts into binding legislation that enjoys broad enough support to overcome a presidential veto — will determine whether and how the legislative branch is able to assert its constitutional prerogatives on the growing number of foreign policy issues that impact the daily lives of Americans.

> In 2018, expectations ran high that Democrats in the new Congress would be able to rein in what they perceived as Trump's foreign policy excesses, such as his continued support for Saudi-led war in Yemen, the abrupt withdrawal from Syria, and the suspension of military exercises with South Korea. But by late 2019, these lofty expectations had been dashed. But the 116th Congress showed that, even in divided government, there are areas of bipartisan foreign policy convergence.

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

'Sitting volleyball saved my life': Mehrzad opens up on journey to Paralympic stardom

IPC – Iran has dominated sitting volleyball at the Paralympic Games for nearly four decades, but for three-time Paralympic champion Morteza Mehrzad, the sport's biggest impact cannot be measured in gold medals.

"My life is basically split into two chapters, before sitting volleyball and after it," Mehrzad said after leading Iran to their fifth straight Asian Para Games title in October.

Mehrzad, who at 2.46 metres is the tallest athlete ever to compete at the Paralympic Games, is known for his aggressive attacks and flawless blocks. But off the court, he is equally known for his humble character.

After helping his team finish at the top of the podium once again, he shared how discovering the sport had changed his life. Born with a condition called acromegaly, he spent years isolated at home in a remote village in northern Iran before making a TV appearance that led to an invitation to try sitting volleyball.

"Because of my physical appearance, I felt (so) self-conscious that I shut myself inside for years and couldn't even bring myself to step outside.

"But sitting volleyball completely saved my life. It helped me shed that shame and step back out into the world through sports."

From there, his rise in the sport was rapid. In a sport where the net hangs 1.15 metres above the floor, Mehrzad's reach and power have been fundamental to the team.

A few years after he tried out the sport for the first time, he made his Paralympic debut at Rio 2016, where he helped Iran beat defending champions Bosnia and Herzegovina in the gold medal match.

He was named Most Valuable Player at Tokyo 2020, where Iran defended their title, and Best Attacker at Paris 2024 after finishing as Iran's top scorer in their win over Bosnia and Herzegovina in the final.



GETTY IMAGES

Mehrzad said sitting volleyball is not just a special sport for him, but also for the Paralympic Movement in his country.

"Sitting volleyball in our country is the first sport for people with impairments, and we have an advantage in sitting volleyball; we have more ability in sitting volleyball," he said.

The team has competed at every Paralympic Games since the country made its Paralympic debut at Seoul 1988.

Now Iran is the most successful men's team in the history of the sport, having won gold in eight of their 10 Paralympic appearances and silver in the other two.

The team has been unstoppable this year. In July, Iran defeated Bosnia and Herzegovina 3-1 to secure a record-extending ninth title at the 2026 Sitting Volleyball World Championships in Hangzhou, China.

Three months later, the team won the men's tournament at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games. Iran have won every men's sitting volleyball gold medal at the Asian Para Games since the sport was introduced to the programme at Guangzhou 2010.

"More than for me, all of the Iranian people are happy about this win and becoming champions in this tournament," Mehrzad said.

Inspiring athletes

While the Iranian women's team have not finished on the Paralympic podium yet, the athletes are looking to emulate the success of the men's team. Today, both national teams compete at major international events.

"Sitting volleyball is progressing and developing in Iran. We also have one of the best technical coaches in Asia and in the world," said Zahra Nejatiaref, an athlete on the women's team.

"We have the champions of the world in the men's category in our country. We always use their experience and guidance; it is very good for us. We also have many championships that are held frequently in Iran."

With two years to go until the LA28 Paralympic Games, the Iranian athletes are looking to continue their dominance and win a fourth consecutive Paralympic gold medal.

The LA28 Paralympic Games will take place from 15-27 August 2028, featuring around 4,480 athletes from around the world.

Mehrzad wants to prove that the dynasty built over decades can continue to dominate on the world's biggest stage.

"Our important goals for the Iranian national team are to be a strong team in the next Paralympic Games and to defend our Paralympic title," he said.

Rezazadeh urges Yousefi to improve snatch performance ahead of LA28



Iranian weightlifter Alireza Yousefi celebrates after setting a new clean & jerk world record in the men's +110kg division at the IWF World Championships in Ningbo, China, on Nov. 8, 2026.
IWF

Sports Desk

Weightlifting legend Hossein Rezazadeh has urged his compatriot Alireza Yousefi to improve his snatch performance if he is to vie for the top prize at the Los Angeles Olympic Games in two years.

Yousefi headlined Iran's eight-medal haul at the recently concluded IWF World Championships in Ningbo, China, claiming clean and jerk gold in the men's +110kg category and setting a new world record in the process, before taking silver in the total on Sunday.

Yousefi's fellow Iranian superheavyweight Ali Davoudi, meanwhile, settled for bronze in the snatch but missed out on the podium in the clean and jerk and total, finishing fourth in both events.

The snatch competition was hardly one to remember for Yousefi, who opened with a successful 186kg lift before clearing 191kg and 195kg on his next two attempts, ultimately settling for fourth place.

Ali Ammar, who controversially lost out to Davoudi in the race for gold at September's Asian Games after being denied an attempt due to a timing error, made history by winning gold in the total and snatch, as well as silver in the clean and jerk, to become the first Iraqi world champion in an Olympic sport.

In the clean and jerk, both Davoudi and Yousefi had two attempts remaining after Ammar had completed his campaign with 255kg.

Yousefi initially lifted 258kg but had the attempt overturned because of bar oscillation. The Iranian and his coaching staff were visibly unhappy with the decision, arguing that the rules only penalize "deliberate oscillation" and that the bar had moved without any intervention from the lifter.

Remarkably, Yousefi, who had trailed Ammar by 16kg in the snatch, bounced back to lift a world-record 263kg and claim clean and jerk gold. The effort also propelled him past Armenian two-time defending champion Varazdat Lalayan, a silver medalist at the Paris 2024 Olympics, into second place in the total with a combined 458kg (195-263).

"World Championships are always highly competitive, particularly in sports where results are decided by the smallest margins. We witnessed closely contested events across several weight categories in Ningbo. Iran had lifters competing in every division from 85kg to +110kg, and fortunately, four of our representatives won medals, bringing our overall tally to eight," Rezazadeh, vice president of the Iranian Weightlifting Federation, said upon the team's return to Iran on Monday.

The two-time Olympic champion, who dominated the superheavyweight class in the 2000s, also praised Davoudi and Yousefi, saying: "Both are accomplished weightlifters and were involved in close contests with their Iraqi and Armenian opponents.

"Had Davoudi managed to lift 261kg in the clean and jerk, he could also have claimed the gold medal in the total," he said.

Commenting on Yousefi's performance, Rezazadeh said the 23-year-old, who also won clean and jerk gold and total bronze on his World Championships debut in 2024, was capable of lifting heavier weights but insisted that "he and the coaching staff need to work on his snatch as well to improve his total, because the combined result is all that matters when it comes to the Asian Games and, particularly, the Olympic Games."

Addressing Davoudi's performance, Rezazadeh said the former Olympic silver medalist had impressed in the snatch at both the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games and the World Championships but needed to improve his clean and jerk.

"Lifting heavy weights in training and competition are two different things. Lifters must be technically and mentally prepared to handle such weights," Rezazadeh said.

Emphasizing the need to plan for upcoming competitions, he added: "We must start planning for next year and, more importantly, the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics. From now on, the weightlifters must devote all their attention and focus to these competitions, because the Olympics are our biggest goal."

Iran's Women's Premier League:

Persepolis edges Sepahan in women's 'Clasico' to retain top spot

Sports Desk

Somayeh Esmaeili netted a second-half winner to lead Persepolis to a 1-0 home win over Sepahan in the so-called 'Clasico' of the Iranian women's top flight on Monday.

The victory saw the Tehran Reds, whose perfect start to the season was ended by a 2-1 away defeat to Gol Gohar Sirjan last week, retain top spot in the Iranian Women's Premier League standings with 18 points from seven games.

Sepahan, meanwhile, remained fifth in the 10-team table with 10 points from six matches after suffering its second defeat of the campaign.

There was little to separate the two sides in a cagey first half at Tehran's Shahid Kazemi Stadium, where chances were few and far between as the teams went into the break goalless.

Persepolis stepped up its game after the restart and began putting greater pressure on the visitors' defense.

Their efforts paid off in the 55th minute when Esmaeili found the back of the net with a superb scorpion kick to put the hosts ahead.

The Reds continued to create chances to extend their lead but failed to capitalize on their opportunities. At the other end, Persepolis goalkeeper Zahra Khajavi produced a solid display to keep Sepahan at bay and preserve her team's narrow advantage until the final whistle.

The Tehran outfit will now turn its attention to one of the most eagerly anticipated fixtures of the season, a home clash against 11-time champions Bam Khatoon next Monday.

Elsewhere, Gol Gohar was held to a goalless draw away to Ista Alborz but remained second in the table on 13 points, ahead of Esteghlal on goal difference.

Esteghlal came from behind to beat Ava Tehran 2-1 away from home and claim all three points, while Malavan secured a 4-2 victory over Palayesh Gas Ilam, ending a two-game losing streak and moving just above the relegation zone.


Persepolis's Somayeh Esmaeili (R) celebrates after scoring during her team's 1-0 victory over Sepahan in the Iranian Women's Premier League in Tehran, Iran, on November 9, 2026.
fc-perspolis.com

Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari's ancient heritage faces growing threats

Iranica Desk

The ancient hills and archaeological sites of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province bear witness to thousands of years of history and civilization. This invaluable heritage, however, faces growing threats from illegal excavations, encroachment on protected archaeological zones, and the expansion of construction and agricultural activities. These pressures have made the need to safeguard the sites more urgent than ever, as the destruction of any historical site means the loss of part of a nation's identity and historical memory.

The historical hills and archaeological sites of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari are far more than mounds of earth or remnants of bygone eras. Each forms part of the historical record and cultural identity of a region that has been home to human settlement, cultural development and successive civilisations for thousands of years. These sites preserve untold stories about the lives, customs, beliefs and social relationships of past generations. Studying them can open a window onto the history and heritage of the region.

Owing to its geographical location and rich historical background, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari is home to a considerable number of archaeological sites and ancient remains. Some are situated in plains, on mountain slopes or even on the outskirts of villages. Despite their historical and cultural significance, many remain vulnerable to illegal excavations, encroachment on protected areas, expanding construction and farming activities, and insufficient attention to their preservation.

Protecting historical hills and archaeological sites should not be viewed .simply as the preservation of a number of ancient monuments. Every act of encroachment or destruction results in the loss of historical information that may never be recovered. The question, therefore, is what measures have been taken to protect this valuable heritage, and whether future generations will still have the opportunity to discover and experience part of the region's history spanning thousands of years.

Talking to ISNA about the latest situation regarding archaeological sites in the province, Qodratollah Valizadeh-Kaji, deputy head of cultural heritage at the Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari



ISNA

Provincial Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, said that more than 3,200 historical and cultural sites and mounds had so far been identified across the province.

He explained that historical mounds and archaeological sites should not be considered separately, since many ancient mounds are closely associated with the surrounding natural landscape. Their historical and archaeological significance lies in the relationship between the natural landscape and the cultural evidence found there.

Separating an ancient mound from its surrounding archaeological landscape, he added, could overlook the structural and conceptual unity of these sites.

According to Valizadeh-Kaji, the largest concentrations of identified historical sites are located in the counties of Borujen, Kouhrang, Ardal and Shahrekord.

Outlining the measures taken to protect the province's archaeological sites and ancient mounds, he said that, subject to available funding, a range of initiatives had been implemented. These include archaeological surveys and test excavations, the designation of site boundaries and protected zones, the registration of monuments on the National Heritage List, the installation of information and identification signs, and the establishment of electronic security systems.

He added that funding for heritage protection had increased to some extent in recent years, thanks to cooperation with the provincial Management and Planning Organization. As one example, he cited an allocation of approximately 12 billion rials for electronic security systems at the province's historical mounds.

Valizadeh-Kaji said that a number of preventive and protective measures were also being pursued to safeguard archaeological sites. These include identifying and documenting site boundaries, establishing conservation regulations, preventing encroachment and destruction, and raising public awareness of the historical and cultural significance of these locations.

Monitoring and protecting historical and cultural mounds and archaeological sites, he noted, is being carried out by the Protection Unit under the provincial Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

Referring to the age of the archaeological sites identified in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, he said that numerous sites dating to different prehistoric periods had been discovered across the province, with some dating back approximately 10,000 years or even earlier.

He also highlighted the discovery of an important archaeological site along the road connecting Beheshtabad to Kaj.

Valizadeh-Kaji said that targeted archaeological surveys of a narrow strip of land along this route had led to the identification of a significant site containing reliable evidence of human settlement during various pre-Islamic periods.

Archaeological evidence and preliminary studies of surface finds indicate that a substantial part of the site dates to the Epipalaeolithic period, more than 10,000 years ago. He added that further archaeological excavations could potentially uncover evidence of even earlier human activity in the area.

Emphasizing the priorities for protecting archaeological sites and ancient mounds, Valizadeh-Kaji said that the first step was to determine their boundaries and protected zones, followed by their registration on the National Heritage List. The next stages should include implementing protective measures and installing information signs. However, he acknowledged that these measures require substantial financial resources. Given limited funding and a shortage of specialized personnel, he said, it would not be possible to carry out such work at all the identified archaeological sites in either the short or long term.



Chtn.ir

Hormoz and Tida dolls unveiled to promote Hormozgan's cultural history

Iranica Desk

The newly unveiled "Hormoz and Tida" dolls are expected to help promote the cultural identity of Bandar Abbas and highlight the indigenous traditions, rituals and intangible cultural heritage of Hormozgan Province.

Hossein Shahabi, deputy head of the Hormozgan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, made the remarks on Monday at the unveiling ceremony, held at the Historical Documents Center of Bandar Abbas Municipality, according to chtn.ir.

He said the dolls were designed using traditional and cultural symbols of Hormozgan, describing the initiative as an effort to showcase the region's local identity and cultural heritage.

Shahabi noted that incorporating indigenous traditions and cultural elements into symbolic characters could introduce younger generations to their cultural roots while helping promote Bandar Abbas' cultural assets nationally and internationally.

He also highlighted the selection of a design by Amineh Sadeqipour as the winning entry in a competition to create a mascot for Bandar Abbas as a UNESCO Creative City. He said transforming cultural symbols into artistic products creates new opportunities to connect cultural heritage with creative industries.

Bandar Abbas joined UNESCO's Creative Cities Network in 2019 as a Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art, Shahabi said, adding that the introduction of figures such as Hormoz and Tida could further promote the city's creative identity and showcase the cultural and artistic heritage of Hormozgan.

Karaj aims to turn Moradab Hill into tourist hub

Iranica Desk

Moradab Hill has the potential to become one of Karaj's leading tourism and recreational destinations, provided its infrastructure is upgraded, deteriorating neighborhoods are renovated and its cultural and artistic potential is fully harnessed, a Karaj City Council official has said.

Alireza Rahimi Mahmoudabadi, head of the council's Urban Development and Transportation Commission, described the area as a "rough diamond" with considerable untapped potential.

Speaking to ISNA, he said the Islamabad neighbourhood was of particular importance to urban planners because of its geographical location and natural assets.

Several development projects have been launched in recent years to improve living conditions and upgrade local infrastructure, he added.

The projects include the construction of a 30-meter-wide ring road, the acquisition and clearance of land above the 1,400-meter contour line, the renovation of old stairways, the creation of neighbourhood gathering spaces, improvements to Danayei Park, and road resurfacing and rehabilitation.

Rahimi Mahmoudabadi said Islamabad could eventually emerge as a major recreational and tourism hub in Karaj.

He pointed to the establishment of the Moradab Hill Development and Construction Company as an important step towards revitalizing the area. The company is tasked with improving deteriorating urban neighborhoods, upgrading living conditions and expanding access to public services.

Allocating dedicated development funds in the budget for Municipal District 1 could further accelerate the implementation of these projects, he said.

Rahimi Mahmoudabadi also said the municipality had begun construction of Shahid Mostafaei Terraced Park in District 6 of Islamabad, using funds approved by Karaj City Council and land acquired within the designated redevelopment zone.

The project is expected to expand the area's green spaces and enhance its urban landscape. Once completed and further developed, the park could also provide facilities for recreational, sporting and tourism activities.

Referring to the park's potential to accommodate national and religious sculptures and artistic installations, he stressed that Karaj Municipality should conduct the necessary assessments to ensure that the area's cultural heritage and local identity are also fully reflected in the project.



karajemrouz.ir

Highlighting the neighborhood's natural and architectural assets, the council member said the park's distinctive topography, prominent location and local stone formations offered an opportunity to create a unique recreational complex and tourist attraction.

He added that engaging artists, cultural and creative professionals, and skilled construction craftsmen could help give the area a distinctive identity.

Taking inspiration from Iran's architectural heritage, including the historic village of Abyaneh, could also help transform the neighbourhood through the renovation and beautification of homes and the creation of attractive streets capable of drawing visitors, he said.

Describing Moradab Hill as one of Karaj's most overlooked assets, Rahimi Mahmoudabadi said coordinated planning, infrastructure investment and greater attention to its cultural and artistic potential could turn it into one of the city's leading recreational and tourism destinations.

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Semnan's ancient water-sharing system wins heritage award

Arts & Culture Desk

An ancient water-sharing system in Semnan, central Iran, has won the Living Heritage and Water Award, recognizing a traditional method of managing scarce water resources that has remained in use for more than 1,000 years.

The system was among three initiatives selected from Iran's Semnan, Hormozgan and Fars provinces for the award presented by the Regional Research Center for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in West and Central Asia.

The ceremony was held on Monday at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts in Tehran to mark the International Day of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The recognition highlights the historical significance of Semnan's water-management practices, which have continued across generations with little change, according to Mohammad Azizoddin, co-author of a book documenting the city's water history.

Azizoddin told IRNA that the fourth-century Hijri geographical work "Ahsan al-Taqasim fi Ma'rifat al-Aqalim," by al-Muqaddasi, referred to Semnan's congregational mosque, canals emptied in rotation and urban reservoirs.

"The account showed that the water-sharing system had existed for more than a millennium," he said.

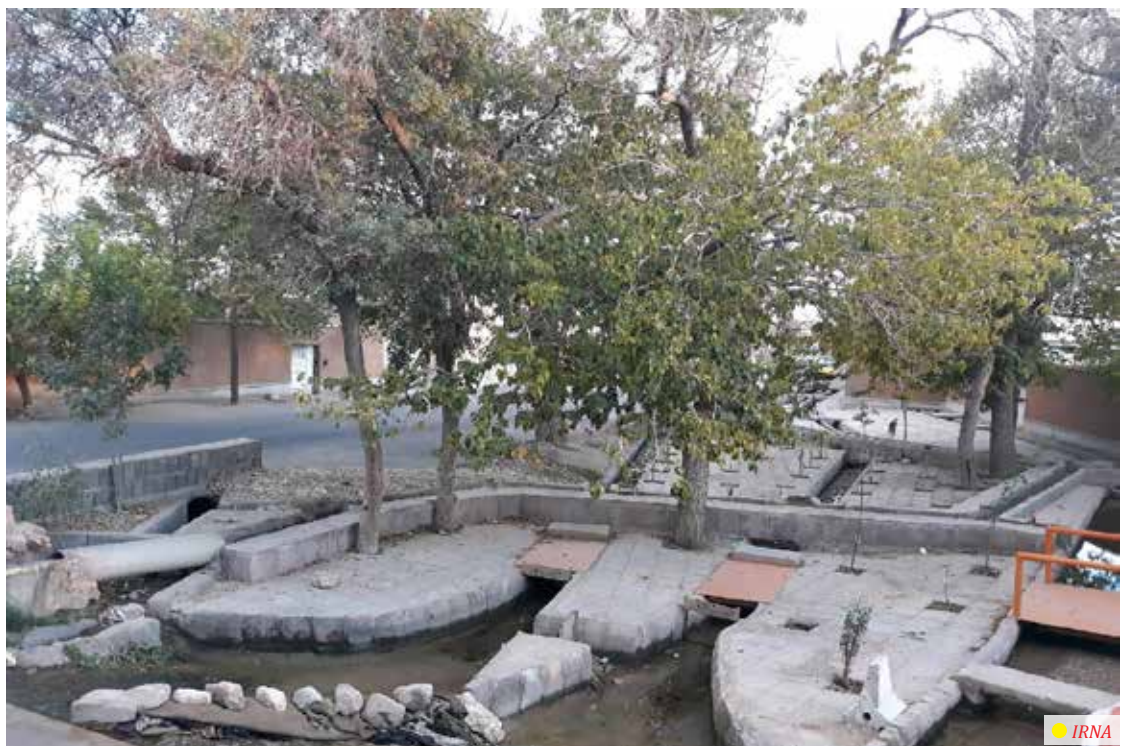
He added that the reservoirs remained in their historical locations and that traditional methods of controlling water outlets and distributing supplies were still used.

Wooden devices continue to regulate water flows, preserving practices developed for the city's dry climate.

The book, titled 'A Thousand Years of Water and Irrigation in Semnan', was written by Azizoddin, Mahmoud Daraei and Mohammad Amouzadeh, with financial and institutional support from Semnan Municipality.

Azizoddin said international recognition could help raise awareness of Semnan's historical identity and cultural heritage, while supporting the city's tourism potential.

He also called for continued cooperation among local authorities, cultural heritage organizations and civil society groups to promote the city's historical legacy.



IRNA

Iran tops global handicrafts list with 17 cities, villages



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran leads the World Crafts Council's global network with 17 designated handicraft cities and villages, more than twice the number of any competing country.

Narges Rajaei, director general of handicraft education and promotion at Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, said Iran had more than twice as many registered locations as some of its closest competitors.

China ranks second with eight, followed by Uzbekistan with seven and Chile with six. India and Vietnam each have four registered cities or villages.

The Iranian locations include Isfahan in central Iran, Tabriz in the northwest, Mashhad in the northeast, Shiraz in the south, as well as Lalejin, Sirjan, Meybod, Zanjan, Kashan and Dezful.

They are recognized for traditional skills and products including carpet weaving, pottery, zilu mat weaving, kilim making, jewelry production and wickerwork.

Yazd, in central Iran, was also designated a World Crafts City for its traditional jewelry in 2025.

Meanwhile, the nomination of Kerman for global handicraft city status is being pursued by the ministry. The city has already received national handicraft city status but has yet to secure a place on the WCC list.

"The designations were intended to boost domestic and international tourism and showcase Iran's handicraft potential," Rajaei said.

The WCC launched its World Crafts Cities program in 2014 to highlight the cultural and economic potential of local communities and strengthen cooperation among handicraft-producing centers.

'People's Child' grabs top prize at Russian festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian feature film 'People's Child', directed by Mahmoud Karimi, has won the Best Fiction Feature award at the inaugural BRICS+ International Film Festival in Russia.

The film follows an orphaned teenager forced to leave his care home. After discovering in his personal file that his family had lost him, he sets out to find his relatives, hoping for a reunion. The journey ultimately becomes a path to growing up and discovering himself.

The first BRICS+ International Film Festival was held from October 29 to November 3, 2026, in Moscow and St. Petersburg, however the winners were announced at a press conference in Moscow on November 6.

The film also received recognition at Iran's 43rd Fajr Film Festival in 2025, where it earned 14 Crystal Simorgh nominations, three awards and an honorary diploma.

It received 327 submissions from 22 countries, with its international jury selecting winners across 12 award categories.



The event brought together feature films, short films and documentaries from BRICS+ countries and partner states, aiming to promote cultural exchange and cooperation through cinema.

'People's Child' was named best fiction feature, while Iranian films also received special recognition in other categories.

Iran, Senegal plan Persian classes, scholarships

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran and a Senegalese religious organization have agreed to pursue Persian-language training for teachers in Senegal and scholarships for its graduates at Iranian universities, as part of efforts to expand educational and cultural ties between the two countries.

The agreement was reached during a meeting between Mehdi Khaleghi Rad, Iran's acting cultural counselor in Senegal, and Sheikh Yassine Mbengue, secretary-general of Senegal's Council of Ahl al-Bayt Scholars.

The two sides discussed ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation in cultural, religious, scientific and educational fields, as well as opportunities for academic exchanges and joint activities.

Mbengue outlined the council's history, structure and activities, saying it operates a network of schools and religious seminaries across Senegal, in West Africa.

He also highlighted its cooperation with Al-Mustafa International University in Senegal and thanked the university for helping identify graduates and arrange their admission to further studies in Iran.

Mbengue requested that Iran's cultural mission send a Persian-language instructor to train teachers and educators within the council's network.

He also sought assistance in securing scholarships for the council's graduates at Iranian universities.

Khaleghi Rad welcomed the proposals and said the cultural mission was prepared to cooperate in arranging Persian-language instruction. He added that scholarship requests would be pursued within available capacities and existing regulations.

The Iranian representative also praised the council's work in promoting the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt, supporting their followers and providing religious and social services to Senegalese communities.

