Iran Daily

Vol. 8266 ● Monday, November 16, 2026 ● Aban 25, 1405 ● Jumada al-Thani 06, 1448 ● 100,000 rials ● 8 pages

irandaily.ir | newspaper.irandaily.ir | IranDailyWeb

Merz's €100b wake-up call

Europe's costly Iran miscalculation

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

4



Speaker: Tehran will determine geography of battlefield if US begins new war

2



Iran reports damage to over 410 water infrastructure sites to international bodies

3



Iran needs tougher tests, Qalenoei insists after Palestine win

6



Semnan exhibition highlights Iran's handicrafts support drive

7

Pezeshkian says reading can reshape society, improve governance

8



President Masoud Pezeshkian addresses a ceremony to mark the National Day of Reading and Librarian in Tehran, Iran, on November 15, 2026.
ISNA

Tajikistan on the UN Security Council

Why Iran should support this opportunity?



By Abed Akbari
International affairs expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

In international politics, the significance of an event should not be judged solely by its outward dimensions. Sometimes, a non-permanent seat on an international body can offer opportunities that go beyond the material weight of the country holding that seat. Tajikistan's bid for non-permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council for the 2028–2029 term should be assessed from this perspective.

The issue is not merely the presence of a Persian-speaking country in the UN's most important security body. Rather, it is whether Central Asian countries can seize this opportunity to enhance their political weight in the international system, and whether Iran can play an effective role in helping build such capacity.

The international system operates less on the basis of ideals and political declarations than under the influence of power distribution and competing interests. In such an environment, countries with more limited economic and military capabilities have little choice but to rely on issue-based coalitions, multilateral institutions and regional cooperation to strengthen their bargaining power. Despite its considerable geopolitical importance, Central Asia has yet to play a role in global decision-making commensurate with its geographical position and strategic potential. The region lies at the crossroads of Russia, China, South Asia, the Middle East and the Caspian basin. Yet many of the decisions affecting its security and future are made outside the region, without the meaningful participation of its countries.

From this perspective, Tajikistan's potential membership of the Security Council could provide an opportunity to partially change this situation. The Security Council is not merely a forum for issuing resolutions on international crises; it is one of the main arenas for diplomatic competition, defining threats and shaping the global security agenda. Tajikistan's presence could bring Central Asian issues more prominently into the council's deliberations. Security in Afghanistan, the fight against terrorism and extremism, drug trafficking, water resource management, the consequences of climate change, and the security of communications and transit infrastructure are among the issues on which regional countries share common interests.

This does not mean that one country's membership alone will alter the dynamics of the Security Council; however, even under conditions of limited power, access to an institutional position can strengthen a country's bargaining power and expand its capacity to exert diplomatic influence.

For Central Asian countries, supporting Tajikistan should be seen as more than an act of symbolic solidarity. If Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan also throw their weight behind the bid, a clear political message will be sent to the international system: Central Asia is not merely an arena for competition among major powers, but a group of states capable of taking the initiative and acting collectively on shared issues. Such an experience, even if limited to a single election, could pave the way for more effective patterns of regional cooperation in the future. Achieving this goal, however, requires acknowledging differences in the foreign policy orientations of regional countries and avoiding turning the initiative into a tool directed against any of the powers present in Central Asia.

For Iran, too, the issue carries clear strategic implications. Security and stability in Central Asia are inseparable from Iran's own security environment. Developments in Afghanistan, competition over transport corridors, access to regional markets, security along Iran's northeastern borders, and economic ties across the Caspian basin all affect Iran's national interests. Therefore, strengthening the diplomatic capacity of countries in this region within international institutions, provided it is pursued through a constructive approach based on shared interests, could also serve Iran's interests. Tehran should not view Central Asia solely through the lens of competition with foreign powers or bilateral economic relations. The region is part of Iran's geopolitical depth and immediate neighborhood, and its institutional and political developments have a direct bearing on the country's long-term interests.

More importantly, Iran's support for Tajikistan could amount to a diplomatic investment involving relatively limited costs but offering the potential for long-term returns. Given its historical, cultural and linguistic ties with Tajikistan, as well as its membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Economic Cooperation Organization, Iran has several instruments at its disposal to bolster this initiative. Consultations with Central Asian capitals, coordination with member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, making use of the Non-Aligned Movement's potential, and securing the support of independent and developing countries could help improve the chances of the bid's success. Such support must go beyond a political declaration and be translated into a concrete diplomatic program.

Nevertheless, realism requires avoiding two miscalculations when assessing this opportunity. First, it should not be assumed that Tajikistan will necessarily share Iran's position on every issue if it secures a seat on the Security Council.

Page 2

Speaker: Tehran will determine geography of battlefield if US begins new war



Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf speaks during a parliament session in Tehran, Iran, on November 15, 2026.
ICANA

International Desk

Iran's Parliament speaker warned that if the United States launches another war against Iran, the "geography of the battlefield will be determined by the capabilities and resolve of Iran's Armed Forces".

"If the United States makes a mistake this time, the geography of the battlefield will be determined by the capabilities and resolve of Iran's Armed Forces, not by their wishes and intentions," Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said in an address to an open session of the parliament on Sunday.

The remarks echoed instructions conveyed by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei during a meeting with senior military commanders late last month.

Elaborating on Iran's refusal to tolerate a "state of neither war nor peace," he asserted that Tehran's position would not be determined by whether Washington preferred negotiations or war. "If they accept our seven-strong reasonable conditions, which are the result of the Iranian people's sacrifices, the path to an agreement will be open," he explained.

Iran has not detailed the nature of the conditions, which it has conveyed to Washington through Qatari mediators. Iranian officials have, however, noted that the conditions are generally based on a Pakistan-mediated memorandum of understanding that was reached between Tehran and Washington in June, but was later completely violated by the US.

The memorandum features such conditions as cessation of war on all fronts, removal of an illegal naval blockade that the US has imposed on Iran, elimination of the US's illegal sanctions, and unfreezing of Iran's assets.

The parliament speaker also described the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC)'s recent unveiling of a new missile city as a symbol of changing strategic equations in the region.

"This valuable achievement, which was developed during wartime and under enemy fire, goes beyond a technical and defensive accomplishment; it is a symbol of strategic changes in the region," he said.

The US and Israel waged their first illegal war against Iran, which lasted 12 days, in June 2025. Their second aggression began on February 28, 2026, and came to a halt in early April after 40 days.

In both wars, Iran's retaliatory operations forced the aggressors to accept a ceasefire.

Iran has maintained a tight grip on the Strait of Hormuz since the early days of the second imposed war amid acts of mischief by Washington in the region. The US has also imposed a blockade on Iranian ports and have tightened sanctions against Iran to force Tehran to accept its demands to end the ongoing situation in the region, which has been caused by the US aggression.

Iran entitled to claim compensation for attacks not Persian Gulf Arab states: *Spox*

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman rejected Persian Gulf Arab countries' demands for compensation over attacks on their territories, saying that, "We are the ones entitled to claim compensation".

Esmaeil Baqaei made the remarks at his weekly press conference in Tehran on Sunday, two days after Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary-General Jasem al-Budaiwi, in an address to the UN Security Council, demanded that Iran pay full compensation for damage caused by its reprisal attacks.

"We are the ones entitled to claim compensation, and we have documented all the instances in which regional countries played a role in assisting the United States and the Zionist regime in their actions against Iran," Baqaei said.

"These findings have been formally communicated to the countries concerned through diplomatic channels."

He also noted that Tehran does not take the GCC member states' claim for compensation seriously, as they themselves know how "baseless and frivolous" it is.

He further warned those states not to "reopen the old wounds" such as their provision of multi-billion-dollar financial aid, weapons, and military support, as well as their deployment of troops, in support of the regime of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein during the 1980s' imposed war on Iran.



People stand in rubble at the site of an Israel and US strike on a police station in Tehran, Iran, on March 3, 2026.
ISNA

"Given that these same countries actively participated in military aggression against a neighboring country by allowing the aggressors to use their airspace, territorial waters, and land to launch attacks against Iranian territory, how can they possibly speak of seeking compensation from Iran?" he asked.

Meanwhile, the spokesman said the regional countries that played a direct or indirect role in the criminal military assault against Iran must be regarded as "accomplices and collaborators" of the aggressors, sharing responsibility for the crimes committed on Iranian soil.

The US and Israel launched their unlawful war of aggression against Iran on February 28 by assassinating the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, along with senior military commanders.

Forty days later, on April 8, the enemies were forced to accept a ceasefire amid Iran's resistance and successful retaliatory operations.

In July, the US conducted waves of deadly air raids on Iran and imposed a naval blockade of the country in violation of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Islamic Republic, signed on June 17, to end the war.

In response, the Iranian armed forces launched devastating strikes against strategic American targets across West Asia and declared the Strait of Hormuz closed to all traffic.

IRGC targets US air defense radar in Bahrain base with six drones

International Desk

Blasts echoed over Bahrain on Sunday as the tiny Persian Gulf nation was rattled by the second Iranian drone attack in three days, ending a long lull in strikes during the US-Israeli aggression against Iran.

Sirens rang out and authorities posted several alerts on social media urging residents to seek shelter, their first warnings since September.

Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said in a statement that its forces fired six drones at Bahrain, targeting a US radar system at Al-Riffa helicopter base in the desert island state, which hosts US military facilities including a major naval base.

The IRGC said the radar was targeted in the "second phase of a decisive and crushing response to [US] aggression."

"The precise and successful impact of these drones was heard in various parts of Bahrain, once again demonstrating the IRGC's operational capabilities," the statement said.

Explosions could be heard around 4:00 am (0100 GMT) on Sunday, an AFP journalist said, with residents reporting a second series of blasts around 6:30 am.

However, Bahrain's military claimed it intercepted the attacks, "preventing them from reaching their intended targets". The foreign ministry claimed air defense systems shot down Iranian drones.

On Friday, the IRGC also said it had destroyed a US military early-warning



radar in Bahrain in a precision strike by its Aerospace Force.

The statement called the Bahrain strike "a serious warning to the aggressor enemy to cease its aerial provocations and oil smuggling in the Strait of Hormuz."

The attacks came after the US launched an attack on a communications tower in Iran's southern port city of Sirik overlooking the Strait of Hormuz.

The Friday's attack on Bahrain was the first such strikes since September on US bases in Arab countries in the energy-rich Persian Gulf.

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.

Tajikistan on the ...

Small and medium-sized countries, like major powers, make decisions based on their national interests, security considerations and the constraints of their foreign relations. Iran's support should be grounded in shared regional interests and respect for Tajikistan's independent decision-making, rather than an expectation of complete political alignment. Second, expectations of non-permanent Security Council membership should not exceed its actual capacity.Such membership does not confer veto power and cannot transform the balance of power within the Security Council. However, it provides an opportunity to take part in negotiations, help shape the agenda and raise the profile of regional priorities. Even this limited capacity is valuable in international politics.

Ultimately, Tajikistan's bid for membership should be viewed in the context of a broader question: Do Central Asian countries intend to remain objects of competition and power balancing among major powers, or will they seek to become more influential actors in shaping the regional and international order? Supporting Tajikistan's bid could serve as a test of how they answer this question. For Iran, too, the choice is clear. A country that seeks to strengthen multilateralism, enhance the role of its neighbors and promote a more balanced international order should support opportunities that help increase the capacity of regional countries to act on the international stage. The significance of this initiative does not lie in the optimistic notion that a single seat can change the global balance of power, but in the reality that, in international politics, major changes sometimes begin with the accumulation of small opportunities and their transformation into sustainable capabilities.

Page 1 ›



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Iran reports damage to over 410 water infrastructure sites to international bodies



TASNIM

Economy Desk

Iran has documented damage to more than 410 points across its drinking water infrastructure during two wars with Israel and the United States and reported the incidents to international bodies for follow-up, a senior official at the country's Energy Ministry said on Sunday.

Hasham Amini, the head of the National Water and Wastewater Engineering Company, said attacks during the 12-day war with Israel in June 2025 and the 40-day war that began in late February damaged water supply facilities and infrastructure across the country.

He said the attacks violated international conventions and humanitarian law, arguing that civilian water supply systems should be protected from military action under international protocols and humanitarian principles, IRNA reported.

"Although international protocols, as well as the principles of ethics and humanity, dictate that no country's drinking water facilities and infrastructure should be damaged, our colleagues were able to restore the facilities to operation immediately," Amini said.

He added that these facilities were quickly brought back into operation, ensuring that the attacks did not disrupt the supply of drinking water and sanitation services to the public.

Amini said replacement equipment had been deployed to areas where desalination plants were damaged, including Qeshm Island, Sirik and other islands. In some locations, facilities were restored to operation within about 24 hours of the incidents, he added.

He said alternative water sources had also been used in Lorestan, Hormozgan, Kermanshah and Isfahan provinces to maintain supplies that met required quality standards. On Qeshm Island, other desalination plants were used to compensate for damage to one facility, he added.

Iranian Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi also addressed attacks on water and electricity infrastructure on March 22, calling on countries and international organizations to condemn them and describing the strikes as contrary to international law.

Tehran, Kabul discuss agricultural investment, border trade, Iranian minister says

Economy Desk

Iran and Afghanistan discussed expanding agricultural investment, border trade and transit cooperation, Iranian Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri-Qezeljeh said after meeting Afghanistan's finance minister, Mawlawi Mohammad Hassan Akhund, IRNA reported.

Akhund is also head of the Afghan side of the two countries' Joint Economic Cooperation Commission. The meeting held in Tehran reviewed current issues in bilateral economic relations.

"Trade between Iran and Afghanistan stands at $2.7 billion annually, a quarter of which is allocated to agricultural products," Nouri-Qezeljeh said, according to IRNA.

Border exchanges, customs operations, faster border crossings, higher trade volumes and imports and exports were among the issues discussed, he said.

Nouri-Qezeljeh said Afghanistan was interested in using Iran's transit capacity to reach markets in other countries and wanted to increase imports of goods into Iran and exports of goods through Iran to other countries. Iran welcomed this and was ready to expand cooperation and trade, he added.

The minister pointed to Afghanistan's climatic potential for developing agricultural and livestock activities and said Iran was ready to cooperate on training and investment.

"Some Iranian companies have also announced readiness for a deeper presence in Afghanistan's domestic production chains and to carry out part of production activities in this country," he said.

Such cooperation could help meet Afghanistan's market needs and lead to production of goods for consumption in Iran or re-export, he said. It would also involve the transfer of technology and technical knowledge and investment in technical and engineering services, he added.

Nouri-Qezeljeh declared Iran's readiness to help with alternative cultivation to poppies in Afghanistan and said Iran was ready to cooperate in mechanization, livestock farming, agronomy, plant breeding and animal breeding.

He cited Iran's transit capacities as a route for Afghanistan to access the Persian Gulf and open waters and said part of Afghan goods are already transported to neighboring countries through Iran. That trade could increase, he said, and Afghan investors could invest in a terminal and port facilities in Chabahar to raise Afghanistan's import and export trade with the world.

A special government working group on relations with Afghanistan, chaired by the first vice president and including several relevant ministers, has been formed, and investment in various sectors in Afghanistan is among the issues it is pursuing, he said.

On shared agricultural capacities, Nouri-Qezeljeh said mechanization, livestock farming and agronomy were promising areas. Goods produced in Afghanistan that Iran needs should be given priority in purchases, and Afghanistan's needs should be met from Iran's production capacity, he said.

He also cited technical and specialized cooperation in plant breeding, animal breeding, and the supply of veterinary medicines, vaccines and day-old chicks.



Iranian Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri-Qezeljeh (R) meets Afghanistan's finance minister, Mawlawi Mohammad Hassan Akhund in Tehran, on November 15, 2026.
IRNA

Iranian research centers are ready to train Afghan experts, he said, noting that a number of Afghan experts recently attended 10- to 15-day courses at Iranian agricultural research centers. The centers are ready to accept Afghan experts and provide specialized training based on Afghanistan's needs, he added.

On trade facilitation, he said round-the-clock customs operations, simplified border procedures, increased transit traffic and joint efforts against smuggling were necessary to increase trade. Iran is ready to reopen the Yazdan border crossing and cooperate in activating border markets, he said.

Nouri-Qezeljeh stressed the need to make the Iran-Afghanistan Joint Economic Cooperation Commission more active and said good documents for cooperation had been prepared. Finalizing and exchanging them could help increase trade, he said, expressing hope that the seventh meeting of the commission would be held in Kabul as soon as possible.

Qeshm plans aquaculture feed plant, dried-fish export hub

Economy Desk

Qeshm Island is planning new fisheries and agricultural projects, including a specialized aquaculture feed plant, its first dried-fish export hub and bell pepper cultivation involving three prospective Russian investors, the head of the Fisheries and Agriculture Department of the Qeshm Free Zone Organization said on Sunday.

Masoud Mormogouei said 38 companies were currently operating across six shrimp farming sites on the island, as the Qeshm Free Zone Organization pursued plans to expand production and support businesses in fisheries and agriculture, IRNA reported.

Mormogouei said five to six companies were also active in shrimp breeding and nursery operations. Their activities include breeding, producing shrimp larvae and providing nursery services.

He added that about six to seven companies were involved in land-based fish farming under the supervision of the organization's industries and mines department.

New aquaculture projects

The organization is preparing to establish Qeshm's first specialized aquaculture feed plant after attracting investment for a dedicated production line at Tula Industrial Park, Mormogouei said. The plant is designed to produce eight tons per work shift and is expected to become operational within two to three months, he added.

The island is also planning to establish its first dried-fish export hub, with efforts underway to prepare the necessary facilities within a month through either Bahman or Kaveh port. The hub would allow both industrial and traditional producers to make use of the island's port and commercial infrastructure, he said.

Russian investment

In the agricultural sector, Mormogouei said mushroom farming units were operating at Tula Industrial Park and three Russian investors had expressed readiness to invest in bell pepper cultivation on the island.

Preparations are underway to facilitate their entry into the island's agricultural sites within a month, he said.

Bell peppers, eggplants and other vegetables are cultivated in Minab, with part of the output earmarked for export to Russia. The plan is to use the Russian investors' involvement to expand bell pepper and other crop production at suitable agricultural sites on Qeshm, he added.

ECONOMIC LENS

Sanctions: An instrument of foreign policy or a mechanism for redistributing global power



By Mohammadreza Hosseini Aliabad
Researcher in int'l economics

ANALYSIS EXCLUSIVE

In the contemporary world, economic sanctions are no longer merely an instrument for exerting pressure on governments or compelling them to alter their political behavior. Rather, they have become one of the defining components of the global architecture of power—an instrument situated at the intersection of economics, politics, and international security, reshaping the traditional boundaries between military confrontation and economic competition. At a time when economic interdependence, cross-border financial networks, and global supply chains have become undeniable features of the international system, control over the flows of capital, technology, trade, and market access can exert an influence on international relations comparable to that of military power.

From the perspective of international political economy, economic sanctions cannot be understood merely as reactions to the conduct of a particular state. In many instances, they reflect structural inequalities in the distribution of global economic power. Countries occupying dominant positions within the international financial system, payment networks, capital markets, and technological infrastructure possess greater capacity to transform other countries' economic dependencies into instruments of political pressure. In other words, the power to impose sanctions derives not simply from political decisions, but also from states' structural positions within the global economy.

Within this framework, sanctions perform two functions simultaneously: first, exerting pressure to alter the political calculations and behavior of the targeted government; and second, constraining that country's economic and strategic capabilities in regional and international affairs. This dual function raises a fundamental question: Is the ultimate objective of sanctions merely to secure political concessions, or, in certain cases, is the weakening of a rival's economic position and the reshaping of the balance of power also part of the underlying agenda?

The experience of the international system demonstrates a significant gap between the declared objectives of sanctions and their actual consequences. Comprehensive sanctions can disrupt not only trade and investment but also access to technology, financial resources, and international markets. Yet the effects of these measures do not necessarily translate into changes in political behavior. In some cases, the economic costs of sanctions are transferred to society, the private sector, and vulnerable groups, without achieving the political objectives sought by those imposing them. From this perspective, the effectiveness of sanctions cannot be measured solely by the severity of the restrictions. It must also be assessed in terms of the relationship between the costs imposed, the extent to which intended objectives are achieved, and the long-term consequences for the economic structure of the targeted country.

More importantly, sanctions operate within the global economy and generate consequences that extend well beyond bilateral relations. Financial and trade restrictions can create new avenues for commerce, regional cooperation, and the emergence of alternative economic arrangements. The expansion of non-dollar settlement mechanisms, bilateral currency agreements, and efforts to diversify trading partners are among the responses countries have adopted to restrictions arising from the sanctions regime. Nevertheless, these developments should not be interpreted as evidence that the dominance of existing financial structures is nearing an imminent end. Replacing an international financial system requires institutional trust, monetary stability, deep and liquid capital markets, and efficient payment infrastructure—conditions that cannot be established easily or in the short term.

At the same time, secondary sanctions and extraterritorial restrictions have turned economic sovereignty into a serious challenge for states. When a government can influence the economic decisions of companies and financial institutions in other countries by restricting their access to its own markets, the very notion of independent economic decision-making faces new questions. Under such circumstances, even actors that are not directly targeted by sanctions may find themselves compelled to reconsider their economic relationships in order to protect their commercial interests. This transforms sanctions from a bilateral instrument of coercion into a mechanism for exercising influence across the wider network of the global economy.

Nevertheless, economic sanctions should not be regarded as a cost-free instrument for those who impose them. Disruptions to supply chains, higher transaction costs, lost markets, and declining confidence in international financial arrangements can also undermine the economic interests of sanctioning states. Furthermore, the repeated use of sanctions may encourage countries to reduce their dependence on infrastructure controlled by dominant powers—a trend that, over the long term, could contribute to the further fragmentation of the global economic system.

Ultimately, economic sanctions must be analyzed beyond the framework of conventional foreign policy instruments and understood in the context of competition over resources, markets, technology, and positions within the hierarchy of global power. The central issue is that, in today's world, power is no longer defined solely by the ability to generate wealth. The capacity to control the channels of production, financing, exchange, and market access has also become an integral dimension of the contemporary concept of power. Accordingly, sanctions are both instruments of political pressure and potential mechanisms for redistributing opportunities, costs, and advantages within the international system.

The future of the global economy will depend, to a considerable extent, on whether competition among major powers can be managed within the framework of shared rules and economic cooperation, or whether it will increasingly move toward the securitization of trade and the instrumentalization of economic interdependence. The decisive question is no longer simply which country becomes the target of sanctions, but rather which actor has the power to determine the rules governing access to the global economy.

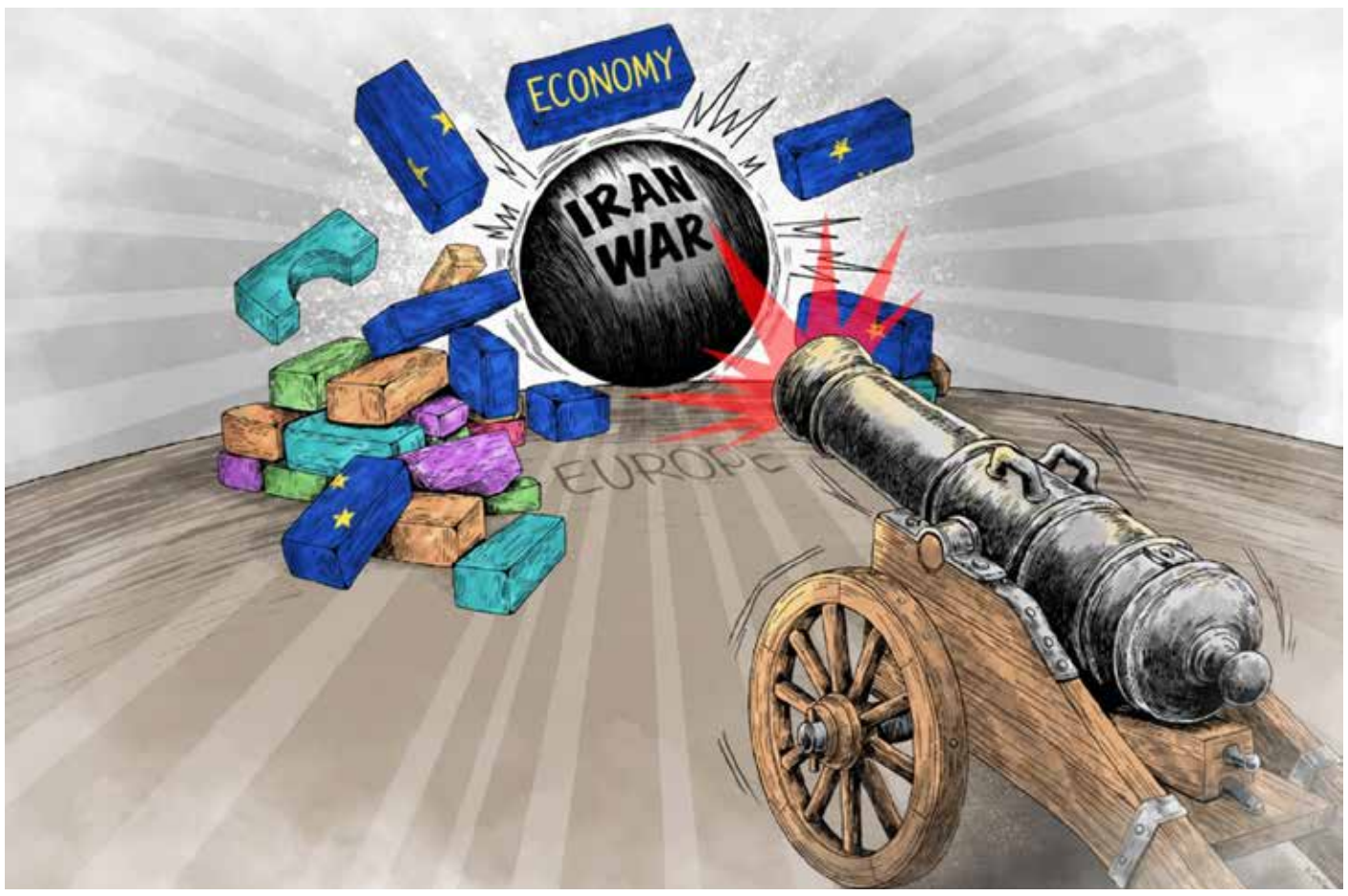
Merz's €100b wake-up call

Europe's costly Iran miscalculation



By Saman Sofalgar
Political researcher

OPINION EXCLUSIVE



SCMP

European leaders are increasingly alarmed by the consequences of the war against Iran. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz has recently warned that the conflict has imposed more than €100 billion in additional energy costs on Europe and argued that ending the war is an immediate European interest. His concerns are echoed across the continent. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen reported that, in just the first 10 days of the conflict, higher fossil-fuel import prices had cost European taxpayers an additional €3 billion. European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde has warned of potentially far-reaching economic consequences, while Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever has cautioned that sustained energy-price increases could leave Europe in serious economic trouble.

These warnings reveal more than an economic emergency. They expose a profound strategic contradiction at the heart of European foreign policy. European governments have spent years presenting themselves as defenders of international law, sovereignty and a rules-based international order. Yet, when the United States and Israel launched their military campaign against Iran, several European governments chose political alignment, operational accommodation or conspicuous silence rather than a determined effort to prevent escalation. Now, as the consequences reach European households and industries, those same governments are discovering that wars encouraged or facilitated abroad rarely remain confined to the countries under attack. The central question is unavoidable: did Europe underestimate the consequences of a war it helped make politically and logistically possible?

European rear base: logistics without accountability

The strongest evidence of Europe's involvement is not necessarily found in political declarations but in its military infrastructure. A March 2026 analysis by Poland's Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW) documented how American forces used European bases, aircraft and logistical networks in preparing and conducting Operation Epic Fury. According to the analysis, European territory served as a staging area, logistical hub and source of military assets. Aircraft, refuelling tankers and ammunition stocks were among the resources involved. The report also identified the possible use of American precision-munition stockpiles at Ramstein in Germany.

Germany's Ramstein Air Base is particularly significant. Euronews reported that the facility played a central role in coordinating American drone and missile operations against Iran, including satellite communications and data transmission. Berlin maintained that its use complied with international law, but that position does not eliminate the broader political question of German responsibility for enabling military operations from its territory.

This is where European claims of neutrality become difficult to defend. A country need not deploy its own fighter jets to become an important contributor to a military campaign. Providing operational infrastructure, logistical capacity and access to military facilities can substantially strengthen an ally's ability to wage war. There were, admittedly, important differences between European governments. Spain opposed the offensive, while France and Italy subsequently restricted certain forms of American military access. Such distinctions deserve recognition. But they also demonstrate that European governments had choices and that a more determined refusal to facilitate the war was possible.

Double standard at the heart of European foreign policy

Europe's position also raises uncomfortable questions about the credibility of its commitment to international law. The sovereignty of Iran cannot be treated as less important simply because its government is politically unpopular in Berlin, Paris or Washington. Criticism of Iran's regional power or nuclear program does not establish a legal justification for military aggression. Nor can the objective of political transformation in another country serve as a substitute for international legitimacy. The European Parliament's assessment of the March 19 European Council meeting acknowledged that the EU was not a participant in the war and that Washington and Tel Aviv had not consulted European governments before launching it. Yet this admission came after European military infrastructure had already played a significant supporting role.

This contradiction weakens Europe's international standing. It also sends a dangerous message that international law is an absolute principle when European interests are threatened, but a flexible consideration when the interests of powerful allies are involved.

Strategic independence or permanent dependence?

The Iran war should force Berlin and Brussels to reconsider the foundations of their security policies. For years, European leaders have spoken about strategic autonomy, a stronger European defence capacity and the need for an independent foreign policy. Yet the crisis has exposed how closely European security decisions remain tied to American priorities. Europe has provided important military infrastructure, absorbed economic shocks and faced growing regional insecurity, while having limited influence over the decisions that initiated the conflict. That is not strategic autonomy. It is strategic dependence.

The economic consequences are particularly serious for Germany, whose industrial model depends heavily on affordable energy, international trade and stable supply chains. A prolonged regional conflict threatens precisely these foundations. The European Commission's Joint Research Centre has warned that a prolonged disruption to Middle Eastern energy markets could reduce EU economic growth and push inflation significantly higher.

The irony is that the governments which once regarded military pressure as an acceptable instrument of foreign policy are now demanding diplomatic solutions to contain its economic consequences.

Merz is right about one thing: Europe has an immediate interest in ending the war. But acknowledging the costs is not enough. Political responsibility requires acknowledging the decisions that helped create the crisis. Germany and its European partners must stop treating military alignment with Washington and Tel Aviv as an automatic extension of their own national interests. They must insist on an immediate diplomatic settlement, meaningful respect for Iranian sovereignty, and strict scrutiny of the use of European territory and military infrastructure in operations that violate international law. Europe cannot credibly claim to be a defender of peace while providing the logistical foundations for wars it later describes as economically disastrous. The €100 billion figure, if accurately measured as additional energy costs, should therefore be understood as more than an economic warning. It is a political indictment of a foreign-policy establishment that has repeatedly confused alliance loyalty with strategic wisdom. Europe's greatest mistake was not simply failing to predict the economic consequences of the Iran war; the mistake was the allowing of its foreign policy to become so dependent on the military calculations of others that it could neither prevent the conflict nor protect itself from its consequences.

A Europe that genuinely seeks peace must learn to say no to its allies when their actions threaten international law, regional stability and Europe's own long-term interests. Anything less is not responsible diplomacy; it is the outsourcing of European judgment and the importing of someone else's war.



People protest against Germany's role in coordinating the US-Israeli war on Iran, outside the US air base in Ramstein-Miesenbach, Germany, in April 2026.
AFP

> The European Parliament's assessment of the March 19 European Council meeting acknowledged that the EU was not a participant in the war and that Washington and Tel Aviv had not consulted European governments before launching it. Yet this admission came after European military infrastructure had already played a significant supporting role. This contradiction weakens Europe's international standing. It also sends a dangerous message that international law is an absolute principle when European interests are threatened, but a flexible consideration when the interests of powerful allies are involved.

Containing Iran in Britain's 2025 National Security Strategy

By Mojtaba Jamei
Professor

By Mohammad Hadi
Doctoral candidate at the Supreme National Defense University

ANALYSIS

The British National Security Strategy document was published in June 2025, in circumstances wherein, from its perspective, the international order contends with fundamental uncertainty. This document, comprising 55 pages, is considered the first comprehensive and full-fledged review of Britain's national security strategy since 2010. Although, subsequent to the aforementioned document, numerous strategic documents — including the "Integrated Review 2021" and its "Refresh 2023" — have been published, they were presented predominantly in consolidated form or as partial updates, such as the review of the defense strategic section, and did not possess an independent and comprehensive approach comparable to the 2025 document. In this respect, it may be stated that the temporal interval between this document and Britain's previous comprehensive document is approximately 15 years, and its most recent update approximately two years.

This document is the first holistic document drafted under the auspices of the previous Labour government, with a transformational approach to defense expenditures. Although the principal axis of the document is confrontation with Russia and competition with China, in this writing, an attempt has been made to scrutinize and examine the document's approach toward the Middle East and Iran.

The Middle East appears in this document as a secondary but important focus, with three key functions: first, the principal source of hybrid threats against British soil, including terrorism, illegal migration, and hostile activities; second, the theater of military cooperation between Britain's adversaries, particularly the Iran-Russia axis; and third, a vital region for the provision of energy security, freedom of navigation, and the preservation of British military bases.

What is perceptible from the text of the document is the manner of directly linking the concerns of the British working class with the crises of the Middle East; in such wise that wars such as the one between Israel and Iran or the Red Sea crisis elevate the costs of living in Britain, increase the price of energy, and disrupt supply chains. In the initial section of the document, three fundamental lessons are enumerated. First, the linking of foreign policy with domestic livelihood, which considers the increase in costs arising from Middle Eastern instability as directly impactful upon the lives of the British people, and in this respect, it appears that this proposition is justificatory of London's active entry into regional equations in the forthcoming future. Second,



Then-British prime minister Sir Keir Starmer (C) speaks during a visit to a military base in south-east England to meet with military planners mapping out next steps in the Coalition of the Willing to help Ukraine.
X

the continuity of collective security under NATO leadership, according to which Britain considers itself committed to the defense of NATO's southern flank, including the Mediterranean sphere and the Middle East, and for this reason, has announced the historic commitment to allocate 2.5% of gross domestic product to defense affairs until 2027. Third, national focus, according to which the challenges ahead demand nothing less than national unity, and Britain, for confronting hybrid threats including those originating from the Middle East, requires the focus of all pillars of society.

Also, in the initial section of this doctrine, emphasis is placed upon this key proposition that "economic security is national security," and defense is mentioned as the engine of the renewal of the social contract; an approach that is clearly reflected in Britain's new investments in regional military bases such as Diego Garcia, Cyprus, Bahrain, and Oman, in order to increase its deterrence capacity against Iran's missile and drone threats.

But the most explicit and decisive section related to the Middle East in this document is its security approach toward the Islamic Republic of Iran, which, in comparison with previous documents, possesses a far more operational tone. Based on the provisions of the document, Britain's approach toward Iran is enumerable along several fundamental axes.

In the first axis, namely direct hostile activities on British soil, it claims Iran, alongside Russia, to be one of the countries that direct hostile activities including assassination, intimidation, espionage, and sabotage on British territory, and the document's emphasis upon "silencing the voices of critics abroad" indicates that London considers the Islamic Republic of Iran a cross-border threat to its nationals and institutions.

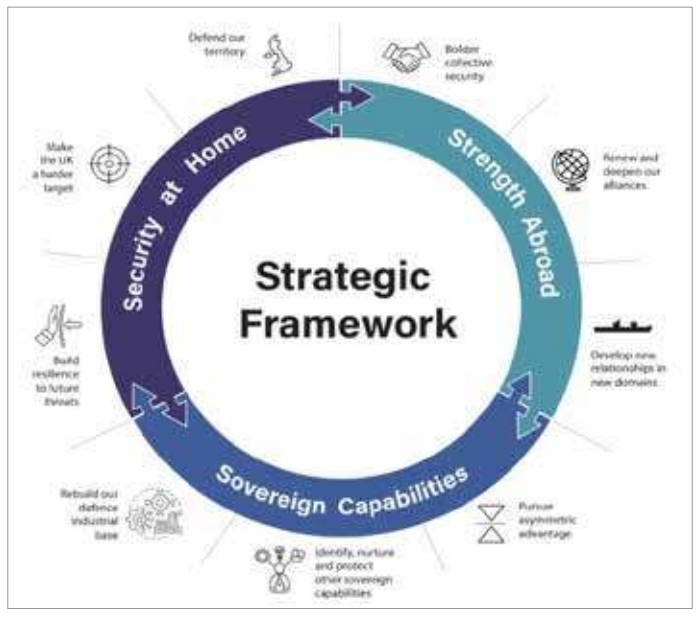
In the second axis, namely the strategic cooperation of Iran and Russia, the document, with reference to the Ukraine war, mentions the alleged transfer of Iran's missiles and drones to Russia and classifies this action among the strategic cooperation of adversaries for the weakening of Euro-Atlantic security; a section that well demonstrates the linkage between the two fronts of confrontation, namely Europe and the Middle East.

> London has entered the field with three key instruments: the intensification of sanctions and legal measures against Iran's networks in Europe, the strengthening of military alliance with the Zionist regime and the Persian Gulf littoral countries within the framework of NATO and transatlantic coalitions, and the employment of cyber and intelligence capability for rendering the operational environment more difficult for regional actors.

In the third axis, namely direct threat and regional escalation, the document refers to the direct military conflict of Israel and Iran and considers Iran's destabilizing actions a threat to Britain's interests domestically and abroad. It also refers to Tehran's role in threatening freedom of navigation in the Red Sea through backed groups such as the Ansarullah (Houthis), which directly targets Britain's economic interests.

In the fourth axis, namely operational instruments of confrontation, Britain has placed Iran at the "advanced level" of the Foreign Influence Registration Scheme, in such wise that any person or institution acting as Iran's proxy in Britain is obligated to declare its activities, and otherwise will face legal prosecution and imprisonment. The document also emphasizes the use of sanctions to disintegrate criminal networks and facilitating agents aligned with Iran, and intensifies intelligence cooperation with its own allies (within the framework of the Five Eyes agreement) in this regard.

In summary, it may be stated that the approach of the aforementioned document toward Iran is a threat-perceiving, punitive approach accompanied by preemptive operational measures in the arenas of intelligence, sanctions, border security, and judiciary. Accordingly, it may be concluded that Britain has passed beyond the policy of limited engagement accompanied by criticism of previous years and has advanced toward pragmatism and direct confrontation with the Islamic Republic of Iran.



The chart summarizes the strategic framework of the British National Security Strategy 2025 and its three mutually reinforcing pillars.
gov.uk

The National Security Strategy document, with the acceptance of the reality of multipolarization, has also designed distinct regional strategies that are important in their own place. In the Euro-Atlantic sphere, which is considered the first priority, although the principal axis is Russia, the document clearly speaks of the necessity of coordination with NATO for confronting hybrid threats from the south, including Iran, and Britain is committed to strengthening NATO's southern flank through cooperation with Italy and Turkey. But in the Middle East and North Africa, which is considered a secondary but vital focus, Britain's strategy is pursued at three levels. At the bilateral level, Britain, with the countries of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, particularly Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Oman, seeks the deepening of trade, security, and investment relations, especially the development of defense industries and the increase of arms exports, for the creation of regional influence, and refers to these countries as actors sharing "a similar interest in shaping international norms to mitigate and manage the effects of great power competition".

The strategic framework of the document is built upon three mutually reinforcing pillars, all three of which have direct implications for the analysis of Middle East security and Iran.

The first pillar, titled "Security at Home," includes the defense of territory, border control, confrontation with foreign influence, and cybersecurity, and in the regional dimension is clearly tied to the issue of illegal migration from the Middle East and the intelligence activities of Iran and its backed groups in Europe. Measures such as the Foreign Influence Registration Scheme and the intensification of oversight over financial networks have directly targeted the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The second pillar, titled "Strength Abroad," emphasizes the strengthening of collective security through NATO, the deepening of the alliance with America, and the development of new partnerships. This, in the Middle East, means greater coordination with the Zionist regime through intelligence exchange and military cooperation against Iran, the strengthening of presence at regional bases, and the conclusion of arms contracts with the countries of the Persian Gulf littoral.

The third pillar, titled "Increase Sovereign and Asymmetric Capabilities," focuses upon the creation of asymmetric advantage through science and technology, particularly in the sphere of cyber warfare, spy satellites, and artificial intelligence. For the Middle East, it enables Britain, without the need for extensive ground presence, to monitor and neutralize the threats of Iran and its backed groups in the region through the use of cyber and intelligence instruments. The establishment of the National Cyber Force is a concrete example of this strategy, which has on its agenda offensive cyber operations against the infrastructure of adversaries, including probably Iran's nuclear and missile installations.

In sum, the 2025 British National Security Strategy document, despite its principal focus upon Russia and China, has delineated the Middle East as one of the principal foci of instability and the theater of direct confrontation with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Accordingly, it appears that the most important message of this document is Britain's passage beyond the policy of critical engagement and the adoption of an active and punitive confrontation approach toward Tehran. London has entered the field with three key instruments: the intensification of sanctions and legal measures against Iran's networks in Europe, the strengthening of military alliance with the Zionist regime and the Persian Gulf littoral countries within the framework of NATO and transatlantic coalitions, and the employment of cyber and intelligence capability for rendering the operational environment more difficult for regional actors.

Based on what has been recorded, several strategic considerations for the future of the region are worthy of reflection. First, the increase in Britain's defense expenditures to 2.5% of gross domestic product, although it will benefit regional allies, may propel London toward a reduction of developmental commitments and development aid in the Middle East, which itself can foment greater instability in the poorer countries of the region. Second, Britain's transactional approach toward regional partners, although it increases operational agility, may impair the long-term trust of the Persian Gulf littoral countries, which seek durable security guarantees; these countries have well understood that London's principal priority is Eastern Europe and competition with China, and the Middle East occupies the third rank of importance. Third, a sole focus upon Iran's military and intelligence threat, without attention to the economic and diplomatic grounds for crisis resolution, may propel the region toward an intensification of negative symmetries.

The full article was first published in Persian by the Center for Middle East Strategic Studies.

Iran needs tougher tests, Qalenoei insists after Palestine win

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Amir Qalenoei said the country's young internationals need to be tested against top-level teams in friendly matches to develop the experience required for the major tournaments ahead.

Qalenoei made the remarks after Team Melli defeated Palestine 2-0 in the first of its two matches at a four-team friendly tournament in Basra, Iraq, on Saturday.

Iran enjoyed the lion's share of possession and created several clear-cut chances but still had to wait until the 77th minute to break the deadlock against the world No. 92 side, which had been reduced to 10 men in the 65th minute following a second booking for midfielder Ameed Sawafta.

Sardar Azmoun volleyed home Hossein Goodarzi's cross into the bottom corner.

Iran's second goal was a replica of the opener, as Goodarzi, making his international debut, found his Esteghlal teammate Saleh Hardani in the box before the latter's sliding volley sealed the victory with six minutes remaining.

"It was a very good game. Palestine had enjoyed a decent run of results in its previous 10 matches, suffering only one defeat. They are a very good, well-organized team with a good goalkeeper, who could even have been named the man of the match.

"We could have scored at least twice in the first half and early in the second, but the Palestine goalkeeper made some excellent saves," the Iranian coach said.

Against the backdrop of criticism he has faced in recent years over his aging squad – the second-oldest at June's FIFA World Cup – Qalenoei has injected fresh blood into the roster for the Basra tournament, with Al Wasl striker Mahdi Taremi and Tractor center-back Shoja Khalilzadeh among the high-profile absentees during the November international break.

"During this international window, we decided to give young players more playing time, and I think they passed the test. However, a team like Iran, which wants to give more opportunities to its youngsters, needs to play against stronger opponents," Qalenoei said.



Iranian striker Dennis Eckert (24) is seen in action against Palestine during a friendly match in Basra, Iraq, on November 14, 2026.
MOHSEN DAVOUDI/FFIRI

Qalenoei and his new-look team will face a more formidable test next when they take on familiar foe Iraq in the tournament on Tuesday.

"The match against Iraq will provide us with a good opportunity to give young players a chance to perform in front of a large crowd and under difficult circumstances," he said.

Qalenoei also explained the significant changes to Iran's starting lineup compared to the previous international window in September, when Team Melli suffered back-to-back defeats against Uzbekistan and Russia.

"These matches are about giving younger players opportunities, so the result comes second. The result matters, of course, but we must use this opportunity to usher in a new generation of players for the national team," he said.

Asked about the decision to field debutant goalkeepers Mohammad Khalifeh and Habib Farabbasi against Palestine, he said: "It was part of the many changes we made for this match. Our two goalkeepers made their international debuts and performed well. With two matches ahead of us, we wanted to give both of them an opportunity.

"The teams taking part in the Basra tournament are good sides. We want to face greater pressure in our matches and, as will be the case against Iraq, play in front of large crowds.

"Every team needs to face top-level opposition to see how its young players respond. We played Belgium and Egypt at the World Cup, and before the Asian Cup, we also need to take on major opponents in front of 70,000 to 80,000 spectators."

The Iranian coach recalled Iraq's friendly against Spain ahead of a previous World Cup, saying his team needed similar tests.

"I remember Iraq played Spain before the World Cup. We need matches like that, too. The national team should be a blend of experience and youth.

The Basra tournament was intended to form part of Iran's preparations for next January's AFC Asian Cup in Saudi Arabia, before the flagship continental competition was postponed by 11 months due to security concerns in the region.

"Before heading into the Asian Cup, we need to play high-profile matches to assess our players' capabilities in terms of tactical understanding. Our team is in good shape, and I believe we can be among the teams that perform better than they did in the previous edition."

FIP Junior Asia Padel Cup 2026:

Iran rallies past Kuwait to win boys' crown

Sports Desk

Iran came from behind to defeat Kuwait in the final and secure the boys' title at the FIP Junior Asia Padel Cup 2026 in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Saturday.

The victory capped a successful campaign for the country, following the Iranian girls' team's victory over Australia to claim the bronze medal earlier in the day.

Iran got off to a shaky start in the boys' final as Parsa Zolfaqari and Alireza Haj-Mollaheydari suffered a 2-0 (6-1, 6-2) defeat to Kuwait's Abdulrahman Bineedan and Ziad Tifouni in the under-14 contest.

Amir-Taha Dehqani and Ramtin Rafei drew Iran level after bouncing back from a first-set defeat in a tie-break to win the next two sets 6-3, 6-4 against Yaqoub Zainal and Sayed Hashem Almazeedi in the under-16 showdown, forcing the final into an under-18 decider.

Iran head coach Arsalan Mohammadi fielded Alireza Taqizadeh and Mehrad Mansouri for the decisive match, and the duo delivered by beating Ali Reda and Sulaiman Qabazard in straight sets (6-3, 6-4) to clinch the title.

In the women's bronze-medal match, Yasamin Hassani and Armita Ezzatnejad gave Iran an early advantage by thrashing the Australian pair of Evelyn Daisy Ferguson and Frankie Avalon Smith 2-0 (6-0, 6-1) in the under-14 contest.

Iran coach Sahabeh Fard then fielded Romina Rafei and Bahar Haj-Mollaheydar for the second doubles match, with the duo also winning in straight sets (6-2, 6-1) against Ava Garner and Hope Johns as Iran bounced back from its semifinal defeat to Indonesia in style.

Also featuring Jana Safi, Delan Bitarafan, Helia Aqili, Nila Rahimi and Arghavan Amirkhanlou, the Iranian team opened its campaign with a victory over Australia before defeating the Philippines 3-0 to reach the semifinals.



IRITF

World Para Taekwondo Championships 2026:

Haqshenas ruled out injured as Iran returns to global showpiece



MNA

Sports Desk

The Iranian squad left Tehran on Sunday to take part in the upcoming World Para Taekwondo Championships in Muju, South Korea.

The 11th edition of the global showpiece will kick off on Friday, with more than 400 athletes from around the world vying for glory at the iconic Muju Taekwondowon venue.

The Iranian men's team will be without 2024 Paralympic bronze medalist Hamed Haqshenas, who has been ruled out with a knee injury.

The squad will still feature several medal hopefuls, including Alireza Bakht – also a Paralympic bronze medalist who will look to build on his gold-winning campaign in the -80kg class at last month's Aichi-Nagoya Asian Para Games – as well as Amir-Mohammad Haqiqatshenas, Amirhossein Alizadeh and Mohammad-Taha Hassanpour.

In the women's competition, Iran will be represented by Aylar Jami, Zahra Rahimi and Maryam Abdollahpour.

Haqiqatshenas and Jami will also enter the World Championships on the back of their Asian Para Games titles, while Rahimi settled for silver at the multi-sport event.

Iran men's head coach Mahdi Ahmadi highlighted the importance of the Muju event, which offers 140 ranking points and could play a significant role in the athletes' bids to qualify for the Los Angeles 2028 Paralympic Games.

"Winning gold medals in South Korea will be difficult, and predicting how many of our athletes can reach the top of the podium is not easy," he said.

The Iranian coach also pointed to the country's four-year absence from the World Championships, saying the lack of participation had left Iran trailing its international rivals.

"For four years, we have been unable to take part in the World Championships for various reasons, and this has caused us to fall behind our international opponents," he added.

Iran will travel directly from South Korea to Kazakhstan to compete in the WT Grand Prix Final, which gets underway in Astana on November 28, with Ahmadi warning that the tight turnaround could take its toll on the athletes.

"The short gap between the two competitions and the fatigue from travelling will undoubtedly affect the athletes' technical performance and could increase the risk of injuries," he said.

Ahmadi concluded that Iran would be looking to collect a combined 240 ranking points from the two tournaments to strengthen its chances of securing places at the Los Angeles 2028 Paralympics.

Semnan exhibition highlights Iran's handicrafts support drive

Iranica Desk

Iran is expanding government support for its handicrafts sector beyond production to cover the entire value chain, including market development, packaging, branding, marketing and online and in-person sales, a deputy minister said, highlighting efforts to improve artisans' access to domestic and international markets.

Barzin Zarghami, deputy minister for handicrafts and traditional arts at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, said the new approach aimed to address longstanding challenges in the sector, particularly the limited scope of government assistance and the difficulties producers face in bringing their products to market.

Speaking to IRNA on the sidelines of the opening ceremony of the Sixth National Handicrafts Exhibition in Semnan, Zarghami said one of the main problems facing handicrafts producers was the incomplete value chain, with previous government support largely concentrated on production.

"In previous years, handicrafts were largely regarded as a local and home-based activity, and government support was therefore mainly directed at production," he said, adding that other stages, including market development, packaging, branding and sales, had received less attention.

Referring to the recently approved document on the handicrafts value chain, Zarghami said its main objective was to strengthen all stages of the sector, adding that working groups had been established to oversee its implementation.



IRNA



Under the new approach, support will extend to market development, packaging, branding, direct sales and the promotion of products through online platforms and digital marketplaces.

"Without completing this chain, producers cannot gain proper access to markets," he said.

He added that the ministry also planned to broaden financial assistance, which had previously focused mainly on production, to cover other activities such as marketing, packaging and participation in international exhibitions.

Zarghami also stressed the need to bring handicrafts production closer to market demand and consumer preferences, noting that a gap sometimes existed between the products offered by artisans and what customers were looking for.

To address the issue, the ministry is pursuing programs in design, training and product development to help artisans adapt their products to contemporary market needs while preserving their artistic and cultural value.

Standardization and quality assurance are also among the ministry's priorities, he said, adding that procedures for assessing product quality, verifying authenticity and classifying artisans were being pursued to strengthen consumer confidence.

On international activities, Zarghami said participation in overseas exhibitions remained a regular part of the ministry's agenda. Iran's most recent participation was in China, where artisans and private-sector representatives also took part.

He said such events provided opportunities for Iranian artisans to become familiar with international developments in the handicrafts sector while introducing the country's cultural and artistic products to foreign audiences and potential markets.

The deputy minister also pointed to plans to organize an international handicrafts exhibition, saying such events could help artisans promote their products, establish direct links with customers and exchange experiences with their counterparts.

Meanwhile, Jalal Tajik, director general of Semnan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, said the exhibition provided an opportunity for artisans from different parts of the country to promote their products, expand market opportunities and exchange experiences.

Speaking on the sidelines of the event, Tajik said stronger professional ties among craftspeople could pave the way for their participation in similar exhibitions in other provinces, helping expand product visibility and boost sales.

He also pointed to rising raw material costs and marketing difficulties as major challenges facing artisans, adding that difficult economic conditions had made their work increasingly challenging.

Despite these obstacles, he said, craftspeople remained committed to their work and continued production, expressing hope that the government would provide further support to improve their working conditions.

The sixth National Handicrafts Exhibition is being held at Ghadir Hall in Semnan from November 14 to 20, featuring 148 booths showcasing handicrafts and handmade products from across Iran.

Kashkan Bridge withstands test of time

Iranica Desk



visitiran.ir

Some structures cannot be understood simply in terms of stone, brick and mortar. They are more than what meets the eye: they embody history, preserve memories and tell stories of an era when people, despite having limited resources, possessed the vision and ingenuity to create works that continue to inspire wonder centuries later. Kashkan Bridge, in Lorestan Province, is one such monument. It is rightly known among heritage enthusiasts as the "Mother of Iran's Historic Bridges."

In an article, Mohsen Salahvarzi, Head of Public Relations at the Lorestan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, writes:

In Chegeni, beside the river from which it takes its name, stands a structure that has endured the forces of nature and the passage of time for more than a thousand years. Kashkan Bridge is far more than a crossing over a river; it is a stone testament to a civilization that took root in this land and left behind enduring traces of its existence. Standing before its remains, one cannot help but wonder about the determination, knowledge and architectural skill that made such an extraordinary structure possible in an age so different from our own, according to chtn.ir

The original bridge dates back to the Hasanwayhid dynasty. Its construction began in 999 CE, on the orders of Badr ibn Hasanwayh, and was completed around a decade later. This alone speaks volumes about its historical significance. At a time when there was no modern machinery, advanced engineering technology or heavy construction equipment, people relied on their knowledge, experience and craftsmanship to build a bridge approximately 320 meters long, with its highest point reaching nearly 26 meters.

Its twelve arches are more than components of an engineering structure; each offers a window into the past. The carefully dressed stones, foundations that have withstood the river's currents and arches built with remarkable precision all testify to the expertise of architects whose names may have been lost to history, but whose achievements remain before our eyes.

The title "Mother of Iran's Historic Bridges" is more than an honorary expression. It reflects Kashkan Bridge's distinguished place in the history of bridge-building in Iran, rooted in its age, scale, architecture and historical significance. At a time when transportation routes played a vital role in people's lives, the bridge served as an important regional crossing, connecting Shapurkhast with western Lorestan and surrounding areas.



One can imagine the caravans that once traveled along this route: horses and pack animals crossing its stone surface, weary travelers reaching the opposite bank, and communities on both sides of the Kashkan River sustaining their livelihoods through this flow of people and goods. Countless travelers have crossed the bridge, countless stories have unfolded beside its piers, and countless events have taken place over the centuries, all witnessed in silence by its ancient stones. Those travelers are long gone, but the bridge continues to preserve part of the collective memory of this land.

Kashkan's significance extends beyond the construction of the present structure. Remains of older structures in the surrounding area suggest that this crossing was also important in earlier historical periods. Some of these remains are attributed to the Sassanid era, further enhancing the historical importance of the site. The surviving Kufic inscription on the bridge is also a valuable record of its construction period, serving as a stone identity document that preserves part of the monument's history for future generations.

Yet Kashkan should not be viewed solely through the lens of the past. Today, it has much to tell us about our relationship with the heritage inherited from previous generations. Cultural heritage does not belong exclusively in history books and museums. It lives throughout this land — in the mountains, alongside rivers, and within villages and cities. Kashkan is one such landmark, an expression of Lorestan's identity whose significance extends far beyond the boundaries of a single county or even the province itself.

Nevertheless, the bridge's present condition is a cause for concern. The passage of time, natural erosion and repeated flooding have taken their toll on the structure. The 2019 floods also damaged parts of the bridge. After standing against the river's powerful currents for centuries, this historic monument now needs greater attention, care and scientifically grounded conservation than ever before.

Lorestan is a land of bridges, where rivers are more than waterways and bridges are more than means of crossing from one bank to another. Each bridge is part of the region's history of communication, everyday life, economy and culture. Every historic bridge in this province has its own story, but Kashkan occupies a particularly significant place among them. Its name is inseparable from architectural grandeur and historical antiquity, and it has become a symbol of the skill and artistic achievements of Iranians in creating enduring structures.

Perhaps the true value of Kashkan becomes clearer when we remember that countless generations passed by it, relied upon it and used it as part of their daily lives. They are gone, and their times have become history, but the structure they built remains. It is now our responsibility to pass this legacy on to future generations — not bearing further scars, but in a stronger condition befitting its historical significance.

Today, when we speak of the "Mother of Iran's Historic Bridges", we must also acknowledge concerns about its future. This title should not merely be repeated in articles, ceremonies and speeches. It must be reflected in practical conservation programs, scientifically informed restoration, historical research and sustained attention to the monument. After all, the value of cultural heritage is measured not only by its age and renown, but also by the care we take to preserve it.

License Holder: Islamic Republic News Agency
Publisher: Iran Cultural & Press Institute
Chair of ICPI Board of Directors: Sadegh Hossein Jaberi Ansari
ICPI CEO: Ali Motaghian
Senior Editor-in-chief: Hadi Khosroshahin
Editor-in-chief: Asgar Ghahramanpour

Editorial Dept. Tel: +98 21 84711560
Address: 208, Khorramshahr Ave., Tehran, Iran
Advertising Dept. Tel/Email: +98 21 88500601/irandaily@iranagahiha.com
Website: www.irandaily.ir/newspaper.irandaily.ir
Email: irandaily@icpi.ir

Iran Daily

irandaily.ir | newspaper.irandaily.ir | IranDailyWeb

Vol. 8266 ● Monday, November 16, 2026 ● 100,000 rials ● 8 pages

Pezeshkian says reading can reshape society, improve governance

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Sunday that reading could change social attitudes and improve governance.

Speaking at Iran Book Week ceremony in Tehran, Pezeshkian calls for wider access to books and saying public officials had a duty to solve people's problems as Iran.

"Books helped readers draw on past generations' experiences, broaden their outlook and better understand society's challenges.

Reading, he said, encouraged people to examine their beliefs and behavior more effectively than commands or instructions. Books allowed readers to reach their own conclusions rather than resist views imposed on them.

Pezeshkian called for mobile libraries to serve villages, with collections tailored to the needs of local children, young people and adults. Books, he said, could help people learn from history and improve their lives.

Referring to the ethical lessons of the Shahnameh, Iran's national epic composed by Persian poet Ferdowsi (c. 935–c. 1020–1026), and works by Iranian poets and thinkers, he said literature could foster humility, compassion and tolerance while discouraging hostility and division.

"Accepting public office without working to solve people's problems was meaningless. Officials should study how earlier generations addressed challenges and adapt those lessons to current conditions," he added.

Pezeshkian urged government managers to read 'Up and Out of Poverty', a book by Chinese President Xi Jinping. He cited China's transformation over 40 to 50 years from a poor, underdeveloped country into a major regional power able to stand alongside the United States, saying Iran could also overcome its difficulties through knowledge and learning.

He praised librarians, writers, publishers and others promoting reading in cities and villages, saying they could change the thinking and behavior of future generations.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian addresses Iran Book Week ceremony in Tehran, November 15, 2026.
AHMAD MOEINI JAM/IRNA

FM calls for tourism push to offset sanctions



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Saturday called for tourism and handicrafts to be used as tools of economic diplomacy to boost foreign currency earnings and cushion the impact of sanctions.

Speaking at a meeting with officials from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts in Tehran, Araghchi said the Foreign Ministry must help reduce the impact of sanctions by mobilizing the country's economic potential while pursuing diplomatic efforts and negotiations to lift them.

He described tourism and handicrafts as key instruments of economic diplomacy and called for stronger links between Iran's border provinces and neighboring regions to expand trade, economic cooperation and tourism.

"Facilitating overland travel for visitors from neighboring countries could help unlock this potential," he said.

Araghchi pointed to Iraq as a major tourism market, saying about three million Iraqi pilgrims visit Mashhad in northeastern Iran each year.

He called for efforts to increase their numbers and encourage them to travel to other parts of the country.

He also urged Iranian embassies and diplomatic missions abroad to pursue economic, trade and job-creation opportunities to boost foreign currency earnings and exports.

"Diplomatic missions could help promote Iranian handicrafts internationally, expand overseas marketing and connect domestic producers with new markets," he said.

Araghchi also identified easier visa procedures, stronger engagement with target tourism markets and cooperation to secure international recognition for Iranian cultural heritage sites as areas for joint action. He said the Foreign Ministry was ready to provide comprehensive support for the cultural heritage ministry's plans.

Culture Minister Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri thanked Araghchi, the diplomatic service and Iranian embassies for safeguarding national interests and helping advance his ministry's programs.

$20m allocated for publishing paper: *Culture minister*

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran has allocated $20 million to buy paper for its publishing industry, the culture minister said on Sunday, as annual book purchases fell and publishers faced financial and wartime pressures.

Abbas Salehi said part of the funds had been released and some paper shipments had arrived, with more on the way.

"The government was supporting publishers despite tight financial resources," he said.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of Iran's 34th Book Week in Tehran, Salehi cited an annual survey showing that printed books remained the most popular format.

Some 57.8% of respondents read print books, compared with 12.7% who used electronic books and 15.2% who listened to audiobooks. Another 14.2% used all three formats, he added.


IBNA

The average annual book purchases fell to 8.6 volumes this year from 11 last year and only 12.2% of people who read books were library members, the survey found.

"Paper remained essential to the country's publishing sector and called for stronger public library collections to help address declining household spending on books," Salehi added.

He said 65 libraries had opened over the past two years, while 300 library projects remained unfinished nationwide. Completing them would add 300,000 square meters of library space.

The ceremony also marked the launch of 34 mobile libraries at Mashq Square in central Tehran.

The vehicles will serve 24 provinces. Six provinces, Bushehr, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Qom, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Golestan and Lorestan, received mobile libraries for the first time.

South Korean university marks 50 years of Persian studies

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran held a cultural week at South Korea's Hankuk University of Foreign Studies from November 9 to 13.

The week marks five decades of Persian language education and Iranian studies at the university through a series of literary, academic and cultural events.

The program in Seoul, South Korea's capital, brought together Iranian Ambassador Ahmad Erfanian, university officials, professors, students and alumni.

Erfanian praised faculty members and students for promoting Persian in South Korea, saying language education and cultural studies helped deepen mutual understanding and strengthen ties between the two nations.

Events included a Persian-language speech contest, a translation competition, meetings with graduates and an alumni gathering for the university's Persian language and Iranian studies department.

Students spoke about their motivation for learning Persian and their interest in Iranian literature and culture.

The closing ceremony took place on November 13 at the Korea Press Center in central Seoul.

Speakers included the head of the Persian language and Iranian studies department, the alumni association president, the head of the Korea-Iran Council and a representative of South Korea's Foreign Ministry.

A video message from South Korean Ambassador to Iran Kim Jun-pyo was also shown.

Three students were recognized for their translation work. An exhibition of handicrafts and events showcasing Iranian culture and cuisine were also held on the sidelines.

The university's Persian language and Iranian studies department was established in 1976.

Over the past five decades, it has trained graduates and promoted knowledge of Iran's language, literature and culture in South Korea.

The cultural week was organized by the department



and the university's alumni association, with support from South Korea's Foreign Ministry, the Iranian Embassy, the Korea-Iran Research Center, the Korean Association of Iranian Studies and the Center for Critical Foreign Languages Education (CFL).