



FACT SHEET IRAN

3 – 25 October 2025

OUTLOOK

The political and security-political developments in and outside of Iran are picking up speed. While the future of the nuclear dossier and the cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) remain uncertain, Teheran faces the dilemma whether to pursue strategic realignment or simply continue with existing political patterns in new guises. Even though direct confrontation with Israel has abated for the time being, the military leadership regularly sends out clear signals of strategic readiness and deterrence. At the same time, regional dynamics in the Middle East, the Caspian region, and the South Caucasus are increasing foreign policy pressure on Iran. Meanwhile, events in the border provinces – especially in Sistan-Baluchistan – reveal the state's continuing domestic vulnerability: since the beginning of September alone, at least eight members of the security forces have been killed in attacks and armed assaults there. These developments illustrate that, in addition to major geopolitical issues, there are unresolved structural conflicts within the country which are gaining increasing security-political relevance.

FOREIGN POLICY

On 5 October, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi stated that the Agreement on Practical Modalities for the Implementation of Safeguards in Iran signed in Cairo in September between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was „no longer valid“ under current conditions. The statement came after the E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) reactivated the snapback mechanism and subsequently reinstated the suspended UN sanctions. The Cairo Agreement was originally intended to restore cooperation between Iran and the IAEA following the suspension of inspections. Iran has officially declined the invitation to the Gaza peace summit in Sharm el-Sheikh on 12 October, which was initiated by US President Donald Trump. Araghchi stated that Tehran was fundamentally open to diplomacy, but could not „engage with counterparts who have attacked the Iranian People and continue to threaten and sanction us.“ At the same time, he emphasised that „Iran welcomes any initiative that ends Israel's Genocide in Gaza and ensures the expulsion of occupation forces.“ In a supplementary statement, the Foreign Ministry reiterated that Iran would continue to sup-

port all political and diplomatic efforts in favour of Palestinian self-determination and the delivery of humanitarian aid. The meeting between Ali Larijani and Vladimir Putin on 16 October in Moscow took place against the backdrop of intensified strategic coordination between Tehran and Moscow: In 2025 alone, there were several high-level contacts at the presidential and government level; Larijani himself met with Putin in July – even before he took office as secretary of the Supreme National Security Council. The meeting took place shortly after the reinstatement of UN sanctions. At the same time, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov declared on 13 October that Russia would „develop military-technical cooperation with Iran. [...] we have no restrictions.“ Shortly thereafter, the Russian special envoy for Syria also arrived in Tehran for consultations, immediately following the meeting between Vladimir Putin and Ahmad al-Shara' in Russia. This indicates that Iran and Russia are intensifying their coordination on the Syria dossier.

DOMESTIC POLITICAL DYNAMICS

In Tehran, a new political movement is emerging within the system: „The Modern Islamic Civilisation Party“, described by Iranian observers as a neo-conservative rival to both reformists and traditional conservatives.

Since its first general assembly on 15 October, the party has been the focus of political debate. The movement is led by Yasser Jebraeili (political economist; former head of strategic oversight at the Expediency Council, 2019–2024) and Hossein Samsami (economist; former interim finance minister; current MP), and openly supported by Ali Reza Panahian, a prominent ideologue close to the Supreme Leader and co-founder of Ammar Headquarters. The party presents itself as a „rebellious but loyalist“ force, calling for a fundamental reorientation of Iran's political-economic model after 47 years. It is positioning itself for the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections, capitalising on dissatisfaction with President Pezeshkian's foreign policy. It rejects diplomatic opening and domestic reforms—particularly any easing of hijab policy—and advocates ideological hardening, economic statism, and renewed confrontation with the West.



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ETHNIC GROUPS

President Masoud Pezeshkian, who received significant electoral support in 2024 from predominantly Sunni regions in eastern Iran, has begun to implement his declared policy of limited inclusion of religious minorities. On 7 October 2025, Jalil Rahimi Jahanabadi, a Sunni politician from Torbat-e Jam, was appointed Iran's ambassador to Bangladesh—the first Sunni ambassador under Pezeshkian. Rahimi previously served in the 10th and 11th parliaments, chaired the Sunni Parliamentary Caucus, and sat on the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee. Under former President Hassan Rouhani, only symbolic steps were taken to improve Sunni representation, including the diplomatic appointments of Saleh Adibi and Homeira Rigi and the cabinet role of Emad Hosseini as deputy oil minister. Under Pezeshkian, structural participation of Sunnis remains limited. Apart from Rahimi, Abdolkarim Hosseinzadeh, a Sunni from Naqadeh, was appointed Vice President for Rural Development and Deprived Regions in November 2024—a post with symbolic rather than strategic weight. In the academic sector, Abd al-Shakour Rasuli became the first Sunni dean of a medical faculty in Iran (Torbat-e Jam, October 2025). Although these steps are portrayed by Tehran as evidence of “national unity”, Sunni political and religious figures emphasise ongoing exclusion from real power, particularly in the security establishment, judiciary, and key ministries.

The security-political situation in Iran's border regions, which are predominantly inhabited by minorities, remains strained. In the province of Kurdistan, the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) reported that two IRGC members were killed and three others injured in an attack in Sarvabad. Violence also continues in Sistan and Baluchistan: on 12 October, Colonel Gholamreza Jamshidi of the police anti-drug unit was killed in an armed attack on the Nehbandan-Zabol route. Just a few days earlier, unknown armed men attacked a vehicle carrying civilian engineers working on the Chabahar-Mashhad water transfer project, a strategic infrastructure project to supply eastern Iran. No group has yet claimed responsibility for either attack; the authorities blame „hostile networks“. At the same time, the state pursued its security-political course in the predominantly Arab province of Khuzestan (Ahvaz): on 4 October, six Arab political prisoners were executed. They were accused of being members of the Arab opposition group Harakat al-Nidal and of carrying out attacks against police forces. In addition, a revolutionary court in Tehran sentenced three other accused to death for alleged membership of ISIS. These cases reinforce the perception in Sunni-dominated regions that terrorism charges are increasingly being used to legitimise harsh security-political measures.

MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

Following the reinstatement of UN sanctions under the snap-back mechanism on 27 September, Iran's military leadership emphasised that the country would continue to expand its defence capabilities. Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi, commander-in-chief of the Iranian Army (Artesh), stated du-

ring a meeting with Major General Mohammad Pakpour, commander of the Revolutionary Guards, that the „modernisation and strengthening of the country's defence capabilities are progressing steadily“ and that the armed forces are „prepared for any threat.“ The emphasis on military capability comes at a time of strategic reorientation.

Iran is also reinforcing its security posture in the Caspian region. On 8 October, senior naval commanders from Iran, Russia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan met in Saint Petersburg and signed a strategic cooperation agreement designed to prevent the involvement of “extra-regional powers” in Caspian affairs. Iran was represented by Rear Admiral Shahram Irani, commander of the Iranian Navy. Turkmenistan, the fifth littoral state, did not participate—widely seen as consistent with its traditional policy of neutrality—though no official reason was given.

The Caspian region is one of the most geopolitically sensitive regions in Eurasia, as it combines energy interests, maritime security, and competing transit corridors. Strategic projects such as the Trans-Caspian Middle Corridor, the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), and the Digital Silk Way Initiative bolster Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and increasingly Turkmenistan as regional transit hubs. Iran and Russia, however, regard the growing integration of the Caucasus and Central Asia into Western or Turkish-supported logistics and infrastructure plans – especially in connection with the Zangezur Corridor – as a strategic challenge. Increasing military cooperation in the Caspian Sea should therefore be understood as a counterbalance to external influence with the aim to protect regional arrangements and prevent an expansion of a Western and NATO-affiliated presence in the region.

ANALYSIS

The Islamic Republic continues to use security and defence messaging as a tool of political communication. In recent weeks, senior IRGC and Artesh commanders have repeatedly stated that Iran is “fully prepared for any threat” and will “respond decisively” if confronted. These statements are not new but have intensified following the reactivation of snap-back sanctions and continued tensions with Israel. They serve both as external deterrence and as internal narrative management. At the same time, Tehran has avoided direct military escalation and continues to keep diplomatic channels open, particularly with Moscow, Beijing and regional partners. Domestically, persistent conflict dynamics in peripheral provinces highlight the state's internal vulnerabilities, where security pressure, socio-economic marginalisation and mistrust reinforce instability, especially in Kurdistan, Khuzestan and Sistan-Baluchistan. Meanwhile, political competition between system factions continues to intensify. Pragmatic reformists, traditional conservatives and emerging neo-conservative blocs are pushing divergent foreign and domestic policy agendas, deepening ideological fragmentation within the system and reshaping the balance of power without opening the political structure.

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