

Iran's President-Elect Has a Refreshing Foreign Policy Vision

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The Iranian people voted for him because they wanted a "reformist" who'd gradually change their country's domestic and foreign policies, knowing that nothing radical can be expected due to the strict system of checks and balances that's in place to prevent this.

Iranian President-Elect Masoud Pezeshkian, who won the snap elections that were called after former President Ebrahim Raisi's death in a [tragic helicopter crash](#) in mid-May, published a refreshing foreign policy vision at the Tehran Times on Friday titled "[My message to the new world](#)". The reason why it's described as refreshing is because it moves beyond the zero-sum thinking that the Mainstream Media (MSM) and many folks from the [Alt-Media Community](#) (AMC) nowadays espouse.

Both media camps largely believe that the world is divided into the West and the non-West, with the US leading the first and China the second, and they're both supposedly predestined to clash. Each recoils whenever one of their own cooperates with their side's perceived rival. The MSM was apoplectic that Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban visited Moscow as part of his peace mission earlier this month while the AMC reacted similarly when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited DC last summer.

Iran has hitherto been considered by many in the MSM and the AMC alike to be one of those zero-sum countries considering its regional role in the [global systemic transition to multipolarity](#) and the opprobrium that this has provoked from the West in response. Such a perception was just shattered by Pezeshkian, however, who declared in his article that he's prepared to improve ties with his country's adversaries so long as they treat it with respect and allow it to preserve its dignity in all ways.

In his words, "we will welcome sincere efforts to alleviate tensions and will reciprocate good-

faith with good-faith”, beginning with Iran’s home region and then spreading outwards. In connection with that, he called for expanding relations with Turkiye, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iraq, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates; doing the same with respect to Russia and China; and then trying to find a way forward with the West. His goal is to create stable international conditions for peace and development.

Pezeshkian is associated with the “reformist” school of policymakers who advocate gradual changes in Iranian policy at home and abroad, while their “friendly rivals” are the “principalists” who believe that that reforms might corrupt the country and could ultimately lead to a pro-US regime change. Regardless of whatever one’s views are about these two, the fact of the matter is that they’re each patriots in their own way, and there’s no way that the Iranian system would ever allow a “traitor” to rise to power.

This clarification is required to dispel the false perceptions among some in the AMC who assumed that Pezeshkian’s critiques of various policies were proof of him being a “Trojan Horse”. Iran’s post-1979 system is chock-full of checks and balances which prevent any such figure from ruining the country. Nothing of significance can be done without the approval of the Supreme Leader, who acts as the leading bulwark against radical policies, though they’re also backed up by the IRGC and other groups.

The point is that Pezeshkian’s interest in exploring a rapprochement with the West doesn’t make him a “sell-out” to the multipolar cause. China is in a relationship of complex economic interdependence with those countries despite being one of the world’s most powerful multipolar engines, while India proudly [multi-aligns](#) between the West and the non-West, the pragmatic approach of which Pezeshkian apparently wants to emulate. There’s nothing wrong with either and they both deserve praise.

In fact, it’s far more common for non-Western countries to balance between their side and the West than it is for them to not have any significant ties with the West, so Iran, Russia, North Korea, and a few others are the exception, not the rule. The only reason why they don’t have a similar level of ties with the West as their peers do is because the West sanctioned them for their foreign policy, thus being the ones who decided that they didn’t want cordial relations, not Iran and company.

To be sure, the West oftentimes exploits these selfsame relations by gradually making them lopsided in its support and thus creating disproportionate dependence on its markets, investments, arms, etc., but it’s possible to avoid such a trap if non-Western leaders are careful. Pezeshkian is confident that Iran can thwart the hybrid threats connected with resuming trade with the West in the scenario that some of those countries are interested, but to be honest, it’s unlikely that his outreaches will be reciprocated.

While the MSM and AMC are almost equally influenced by zero-sum thinking, it’s only the West as a whole that actually formulates policy according to this paradigm, not non-Western countries. This is evidenced by the former’s comprehensive pressure campaigns against Russia, Iran, and North Korea, while the latter proved its strategic autonomy by not cutting off ties with those three in solidarity with the West nor cutting off ties with the West out of solidarity with those three.

It’s therefore natural that the MSM is caught in zero-sum thinking, but those in the AMC who have such views are mostly ideologically driven activists who are so committed to the cause that they subconsciously behave as though they’re “more multipolar than the top multipolar

countries". No value judgement is being implied here, it's just a reflection of reality to help readers understand why many in the AMC promote views that are at variance with most of the non-West's who they claim to represent.

This is crucial to keep in mind when reflecting on some of the dire predictions that were made about Pezeshkian before his election and in assessing the intentions behind his newly articulated foreign policy. The Iranian people voted for him because they wanted a "reformist" who'd gradually change their country's domestic and foreign policies, knowing that nothing radical can be expected due to the strict system of checks and balances that's in place to prevent this.

In the event that the West rejects his outreaches as is expected, then Iran will simply continue along the foreign policy course that Raisi charted for it, in which case nothing will change. On the off chance that at least some of them positively respond to his appeal, then the most that might happen is a boost in bilateral trade and a reduction in tensions. Nothing dramatic will likely happen either way, but at least Pezeshkian is trying to promote peace despite the odds, which speaks to his personal integrity.

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