

Iran and the UN General Assembly: Mediation Efforts, Militant Threats, and Multilateral Cooperation

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Iran was a hot topic at this year's UN General Assembly meeting, with Pakistani Prime Minister Khan attempting to mediate between it and its rivals while the latter continued spewing militant threats against the Islamic Republic, though the possibility remains that more fruitful multilateral cooperation between Iran and its Pakistani and Turkish neighbors could emerge as the main outcome of this event.

There was no doubt that Iran would be a hot topic at this year's UN General Assembly meeting following its rivals' accusations that it had a hand in the [Ansarullah's drone strike](#) against the world's largest oil production facility in Saudi Arabia earlier in the month, and this expectation proved to be correct. The Islamic Republic was discussed in three primary capacities at the event: first and foremost as represented by President Rouhani, secondly by the militant threats that the US and its allies continued to spew against it, and lastly through the mediation efforts of Pakistani Prime Minister Khan.

Concerning the first, President Rouhani condemned the US' unilateral sanctions regime against his country as "[merciless economic terrorism](#)" and urged it to return to the 2015 JCPOA as a [precondition](#) for restarting negotiations between the two. He also talked about what he earlier called the "[Hormuz Peace Initiative](#)" to build a regional coalition for ensuring collective security in the Gulf in what was a direct challenge to the fledgling coalition that the US is seeking to form there for the purpose of "containing" his country. This was an important move because it represents the first non-US security proposal there in a long time.

Speaking of one of Iran's chief adversaries, its President lambasted the Islamic Republic during his [keynote speech](#) for its involvement in regional conflicts such as Syria and its alleged complicity in the Ansarullah's drone strike, which the UK, France, and Germany [also seconded](#). Trump also spoke about the need for the Arab countries to cooperate with "[Israel](#)" against the so-called "Iranian threat", which he claimed also includes Tehran's supposed nuclear weapon and ballistic missile plans. Altogether, the West's talk about Iran was predictably hostile and showed that the confrontation between the two won't end anytime soon.

As for the mediation aspect, Pakistani Prime Minister Khan [revealed](#) that he was called upon by both Trump and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman to mediate between them and Iran in order to defuse tensions. That noble effort doesn't seem to have been too successful, but it nevertheless speaks to the [global pivot state](#) of Pakistan's growing

international role. That indirect channel of communication can also be used in crisis scenarios in order to avert worsening whatever the situation may be at that time, but it can also be proactively leveraged by Islamabad to propose novel solutions to regional problems as well.

On that topic, it's important to point out that the Pakistani leader and his Turkish and Malaysian counterparts [announced](#) the creation of an English-language media outlet for countering Islamophobia across the world. Although Iran isn't formally involved in this initiative, it would be useful for it to eventually participate in some capacity or another in order to have a prominent Shiite presence on the platform. Islamophobia, after all, isn't just a form of discrimination by non-Muslims against Muslims, but also sometimes between one sect of Islam and the other, so all should be represented in order to counteract intra-Muslim Islamophobia against Shiites.

Iran's ties with its Pakistani and Turkish neighbors are improving and it's possible for all three to geopolitically cooperate in a multilateral fashion in the future if the political will was present on all sides. Such a development is truly the need of the hour because it's high time for these three strong Muslim countries to come closer together through the [Multipolar CENTO](#) framework by reviving their Old Cold War-era alliance but in a new multipolar and non-military way focused on connectivity and win-win outcomes. President Erdogan's insistence on [continuing trade ties](#) with Iran and Prime Minister Khan's mediation efforts give hope that this could occur.

That said, more concerted multilateral integrational cooperation between Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey would obviously take some time to develop, but the groundwork is already laid for them to focus on prioritizing this important objective if they really wanted to. Iran is facing a lot of pressure along its southern flank from the US, "Israel", and their GCC allies, hence why it must seek relief along the western and eastern axes through its two neighbors. Chinese and Russian diplomatic and economic support is both welcome and helpful, though nothing can replace the importance of good neighborly cooperation with Pakistan and Turkey.

After this week's events at the UN General Assembly, there's no question that Iran is at a strategic crossroads. It's being squeezed in both the Mashriq and the Gulf, yet at the same time new strategic opportunities have emerged in Asia Minor (Turkey) and South Asia (Pakistan), proving the adage that "every action has an equal and opposite reaction". It's now incumbent on Iran to decide whether it should continue pushing back with all its might along the fronts where it's being "contained" or if it should seek to freeze the state of affairs there in order to concentrate its efforts on advancing regional integration with Pakistan and Turkey instead.

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Featured image: UNITED NATIONS, Sept. 25, 2019 Iranian President Hassan Rouhani (C) addresses the General Debate of the 74th session of the UN General Assembly at the UN headquarters in New York, on Sept. 25, 2019. Rouhani on Wednesday ruled out negotiations with the United States unless the latter lifts sanctions on his country first. (Credit Image: © Liu Jie/Xinhua via ZUMA Wire)

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