

SECULAR DEMOCRATIC IRAN

WAR *for* PEACE

Ukraine, Iran and
the responsibility of the West



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PERSONAL POLITICAL COMMENTARY

01

THE ARGUMENT & READING GUIDE

A peace that people can live in

I argue that the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East expose a common failure: international policy too often confuses an interruption of violence with the construction of peace. Russia's territorial demands, the Islamic Republic's record of repression, divisions among Western governments and the economic suffering of ordinary Iranians require a coherent response. That response must combine deterrence with law, pressure with humanitarian relief, and support for political change with practical preparation for an Iranian-led constitutional transition. Europe's long-term interests are best served by a sovereign, accountable Iran at peace with its neighbours. The purpose of resolve must be a future in which people can live without the permanent threat of war or repression.

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Personal political commentary based on sources checked on 20 October 2026. Current reporting is attributed and distinguished from the author's analysis and proposals. Casualty totals remain uncertain. Government statements establish their authors' positions, rather than independently proving every allegation they contain. References to future political and economic outcomes are conditional.

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1. The silence between wars

I write as an Iranian who wants his country to live, and as a surgeon who understands that the end of an immediate crisis is only the beginning of recovery. A wound can be covered while the disease beneath it continues. A ceasefire can interrupt killing while leaving intact the machinery that will begin it again.

The wars in Ukraine and the Middle East have brought this distinction before the world with terrible clarity. Governments speak of stability; families count the empty places at their tables. Diplomats discuss guarantees; citizens wonder whether the next month will bring a missile, a prison sentence, another collapse of their currency, or another departure from the country they love.

By War for Peace, I mean a commitment to confront the forces that repeatedly make peaceful life impossible, including through lawful military force when necessary. Such a commitment demands discipline: defined objectives, protection of civilians, a credible political destination and the courage to stop when those objectives have been secured. War offers no automatic passage to freedom. Its consequences must be judged by the lives and institutions it leaves behind.

My purpose is a durable peace: a sovereign Ukraine, an Iran governed by the consent of its people, and a Middle East in which national development takes precedence over permanent mobilisation.

2. Ukraine cannot become somebody else's buffer

Moscow has invoked the protection of Russian-speaking populations and its own security to justify its actions. These claims must be distinguished from established legal entitlement. In March 2022, the International Court of Justice said it lacked evidence substantiating Russia's allegation of genocide in Ukraine and ordered the suspension of the military operations begun on 24 February. NATO continues to affirm Ukraine's sovereignty within its internationally recognised borders. The territorial conflict began in 2014; the full-scale invasion followed in 2022. ^{1, 2}

On 16 October 2026, Reuters reported President Vladimir Putin's insistence that a security zone inside Ukraine would be excluded from negotiation. This is a Russian demand, not an agreed international settlement. Reports on 19 October also described prospective American-led talks involving Ukraine and European representatives. Diplomacy remained in motion. ^{3, 4}

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's insistence on sovereignty expresses a principle that Iranians should recognise: a nation must have a voice in decisions about its own future. My concern is that President Donald Trump's pursuit of a rapid bargain could reward territorial coercion. That is my assessment of the risk, rather than evidence that a final American settlement has already been imposed.

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3. A divided alliance needs a common purpose

Western governments face overlapping wars with different priorities, domestic pressures and assessments of risk. The tensions are serious. Yet describing NATO as formally broken, or Europe as wholly absent from the defence of its allies, would obscure the decisions actually taken.

On 1 March, Britain, France and Germany condemned Iranian missile attacks across the region and stated that they could enable proportionate defensive action against missile and drone capabilities. Britain also permitted the use of its bases for a specified defensive purpose while declining to join the initial strikes or subsequent offensive action. These positions reveal a consequential disagreement over the scope and legal basis of involvement, alongside continuing military cooperation.^{5, 6}

Europe has publicly pursued a diplomatic solution to the nuclear dispute. Its March statement to the International Atomic Energy Agency also described serious unresolved safeguards concerns. Those concerns deserve scrutiny; they are distinct from proof that Iran currently possesses a nuclear weapon.⁷

I believe Europe needs a clearer political destination for its Iran policy. Defensive operations, sanctions and negotiations become incoherent when governments cannot explain the future they seek. A common purpose should unite protection against aggression, nuclear verification, secure navigation and support for the Iranian people's right to determine their government.

4. The temptation to manage the Islamic Republic

My criticism of European policy concerns a long-standing temptation: to imagine that a weaker Islamic Republic, administered by a more negotiable faction, could provide manageable stability. I fear that commercial opportunity and diplomatic habit can make an authoritarian partner seem more convenient than an uncertain democratic transition.

This is a political interpretation. The available evidence does not establish one coordinated European plan, a single motive shared by every government, or a conspiracy stretching unchanged from 1979 to the present. Europe's leaders should be judged by their decisions and their consequences.

The deeper error would be to treat the Iranian people as a background condition in negotiations with their rulers. A government may sign a contract while continuing to deny its citizens meaningful consent. It may temporarily restrain an external threat while preserving the institutions that generate the next confrontation.

Europe should therefore ask a larger question: what relationship could it build with a free Iran? Its interests in energy, trade and regional security can be pursued openly with an accountable state. A strategy built around the permanent political captivity of an entire people carries costs that no commercial agreement can reliably contain.

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5. Forty-seven years cannot be erased at a negotiating table

The Islamic Republic's ideological structure is embedded in its constitutional order. Article 5 locates clerical leadership within the religious doctrine of the occultation of the Twelfth Imam; other provisions place elected institutions under extensive religious supervision. I regard this fusion of sacred authority and coercive power as a profound obstacle to democratic accountability. That judgment concerns a governing system; it does not describe the convictions of every Iranian or every Muslim.⁸

The record of repression began with executions after the 1979 revolution, including those at the Refah School. It continued through the killings of political opponents in 1981–1982 and 1988. In 2024, UN Special Rapporteur Javaid Rehman described those later campaigns as atrocity crimes and called for an independent accountability mechanism. These are the findings of an independent UN expert, rather than judgments delivered by a criminal court.^{9, 10}

Amnesty International documented summary executions following the unrest in Mashhad in 1992. Later generations experienced the student protests of 1999, the Green Movement in 2009, the economic protests of 2017–2018 and 2019, and the Woman, Life, Freedom uprising that began in September 2022. Each generation confronted the unresolved relationship between public demands and coercive authority.^{11, 12}

The victims crossed political traditions: supporters of the former monarchy, leftists, members and supporters of the People's Mojahedin, students, workers and religious minorities. A national movement worthy of the future must defend the rights of victims whose politics it does not share. The claim to freedom becomes credible through that consistency.

6. January 2026 and the question of legitimacy

On 23 January, the UN Fact-Finding Mission reported credible accounts of thousands killed in the crackdown on protests that had begun on 28 December 2025. Reuters also reported witness accounts of indiscriminate fire and evidence described by Amnesty International of rifles and shotguns used against largely peaceful demonstrators and bystanders. Communications restrictions obstructed verification. The exact toll remains disputed; uncertainty about its final magnitude does not erase the evidence of mass lethal repression.^{13, 14}

For me, January was a decisive moral rupture. The Islamic Republic must give way to an Iranian-led secular democratic order. A change of diplomatic vocabulary cannot restore the legitimacy consumed by this violence. I cannot claim to speak for every Iranian, or reduce a diverse nation and diaspora to a single measured opinion. I can state my own position without hesitation: this system has exhausted its claim upon Iran's future.

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The suffering of civilians strengthens the moral case for international action. It does not, by itself, supply legal authority for every military intervention. The means chosen must withstand the same scrutiny as the purpose proclaimed. The people in whose name action is taken must remain its first concern.

7. A signature is only the beginning

Precision strengthens the argument for resolve. A written agreement did exist: Reuters reported in June that President Trump and President Masoud Pezeshkian had digitally signed a fourteen-point memorandum extending the ceasefire and allowing time for negotiations. On 8 July, Reuters reported that Trump considered that interim accord finished, amid renewed attacks. The failure concerns implementation and durability, rather than the absence of any signed document.^{15, 16}

The Islamic Republic is therefore capable of negotiation in the literal sense. It has negotiated and signed agreements. My objection is to treating that capacity as proof that its institutions will become accountable, that its external conduct will change permanently, or that its citizens will acquire enforceable rights through a bargain designed around other governments' priorities.

Even adversaries may need channels for prisoner releases, humanitarian access, nuclear monitoring and the prevention of accidental escalation. I support such practical arrangements when they save lives and can be verified. The political question remains whether they reduce the machinery of repression and conflict, or merely grant it another interval of recovery.

A durable settlement requires obligations that can be checked, consequences for violations, protection for civilians and a political order capable of honouring its commitments. A memorandum that fails these tests leaves the region exposed to the same confrontation under a new date.

8. The economy is the civilian front

Hormuz should be described as contested and severely disrupted. The available reporting does not establish uncontested American control of the entire strait. On 5 October, Euronews reported Iran's claims of control, American claims that no Iranian crude had been loaded for export during September, and a sharp fall in the rial. On 19 October, Reuters reported continuing maritime tension and Iran's renewed public appeal for diplomacy. Official claims about exports require attribution; they do not prove that every form of Iranian trade has ceased.^{17, 18}

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These distinctions leave the central human reality intact. Currency depreciation and disrupted commerce erode wages, savings, treatment and ordinary family security. A pensioner cannot pay for medicine with a geopolitical explanation. A worker cannot feed a family on assurances that strategic pressure will eventually produce a better future.

Pressure should constrain those responsible for repression while preserving practical routes for food, medicines and essential civilian services. Humanitarian exemptions must function through transport, finance and delivery. Their existence on paper is insufficient when a patient cannot obtain treatment.

I regard the present condition as politically and economically unsustainable. That is an assessment of mounting pressures, not a forecast of a collapse on a particular date. A strategy deserves support only when it can explain how suffering will be reduced and how normal life will resume.

9. The worker's interest is a future that functions

I distinguish the traditions of worker communism, trade unionism, syndicalism and social democracy from a politics that excuses authoritarianism whenever its rulers confront America or Israel. The left contains profound disagreements. Anarchism, too, includes different traditions and cannot responsibly be reduced to a single appetite for disorder.

My criticism is directed at a political choice: the defence of an oppressive state through slogans that erase its victims. Solidarity with workers should include the Iranian worker who seeks an independent organisation, the woman who demands equal citizenship and the family whose child has disappeared into detention. Opposition to Western policy cannot release Tehran from responsibility for its conduct.

The same consistency applies to the protection of Palestinian, Israeli, Ukrainian and other civilians. Their lives carry no lesser value because their suffering complicates an ally's narrative. A democratic internationalism must be capable of judging each abuse on its evidence.

Europe's right to peaceful protest is part of its strength. Violence, intimidation, antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred and attacks on exiled dissidents require enforcement under law. Allegations that Tehran funds particular organisations or directs particular disturbances require specific evidence. General unrest does not establish such a chain of command.

Those who speak for working people should ask what their politics will deliver: secure employment, functioning public services, free association and peace. Destabilisation becomes an empty achievement when the people left to pay for it have the least protection.

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10. Resolve must answer to its purpose

I welcome the willingness of President Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to confront threats from the Islamic Republic. I also expect their actions to be judged by law, civilian consequences and the political future they make possible. The security of Israel, the safety of Iran's neighbours and the freedom of Iranians should reinforce one another.

The UN Charter prohibits force against another state's territorial integrity or political independence and recognises individual and collective self-defence against armed attack. Security Council authority is also part of the Charter framework. A political desire for regime change is not an independent exception to that framework. Any military action must meet the applicable legal requirements and the obligations governing the protection of civilians.^{19, 20}

I support lawful, necessary and proportionate force against active threats when the conditions for it are met. That support carries demands: intelligible objectives, scrutiny of civilian harm, protection of hospitals and essential services, and a credible means of ending hostilities. Military advantage must be connected to a sustainable peace.

There must also be preparation for political change. The disappearance of a ruler does not itself establish accountable government. Food distribution, public salaries, water, electricity and clinical care must continue while legitimate authority is rebuilt. The responsibility for the day after belongs inside the decision to act.

11. Iran as a partner in reconstruction

A sovereign, secular democratic Iran could become a long-term partner for Europe, the United States, Israel and its Arab neighbours. That prospect is an argument for preparation. It is conditional on public consent, competent institutions and a government able to make commitments in its people's name.

Energy cooperation could become more reliable through investment, sound contracts and secure navigation. Trade and scientific exchange could offer young Iranians reasons to build their lives at home. Regional reconstruction could reduce some pressures that force people to leave. These are opportunities, rather than guaranteed outcomes of military victory.

A recovering Iran could contribute to regional protection and employment for displaced people, subject to its capacity and their rights. Claims that it could simply absorb millions of refugees or end migration to Europe outrun the evidence. Sustainable solutions require safety, lawful status, services and meaningful choices for the people concerned.

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I support Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi as a potential national convener for a constitutional transition. My preference for parliamentary constitutional monarchy remains subject to the Iranian people's free choice. National reconciliation must include republicans, social democrats, trade unionists, religious citizens and others who accept equal rights and constitutional government. Individual criminal responsibility belongs before lawful courts; collective revenge would poison the peace we seek.

This is the future-oriented understanding of Pahlavi Plus developed in my earlier writing: national reconstruction strengthened by enforceable rights, democratic consent and institutions capable of correcting their failures. It is my framework for renewal, not a claim that every participant has adopted one official programme.²¹

12. A call to Europe

I call on Europe to make its Iran policy answer to a coherent purpose: support for the Iranian people's political agency, protection against regional aggression, rigorous nuclear verification and preparation for a peaceful constitutional future. Europeans can work with their American and regional allies while exercising independent judgment over means and consequences.

That purpose should be made practical through the preservation of evidence, accountability for serious crimes, protection of threatened dissidents, support for independent civic organisation and reliable humanitarian access. International partnerships should help Iranians prepare institutions that can govern responsibly. The authorship of the country's future must remain Iranian.

The same principle must hold in Ukraine. Its people must participate meaningfully in any settlement affecting their sovereignty. A bargain that sacrifices one nation's agency to obtain leverage over another would weaken the moral foundation of the peace it claims to secure.

I ask for resolve proportionate to the suffering, and preparation equal to the responsibility. The test of policy will be whether children can reach school, workers can earn a living, patients can receive treatment, citizens can speak freely and neighbours can sleep without fear of the next attack.

War for Peace is a demand that power serve an attainable peace and that every sacrifice be measured against that purpose. Iran deserves to return to the work of life. Its people deserve the freedom to build, to disagree, to reconcile and to prosper. Europe should be ready to stand beside them.

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