

► Tehran's road to improve ties with West 'not easy' Iran to continue to 'Look East' under new presidency: expert

By Zhao Yusha

Iran will continue its "Look East" policy and consolidate its collaboration with both China and Russia, even though the newly elected President Masoud Pezeshkian may put more effort into repairing ties with the West, said a Chinese expert after Iran's "reformist candidate" won the election on Saturday.

"You created an opportunity for Iran and brought back hope and joy to the atmosphere of dissatisfaction, distress, and melancholy in society. I am grateful to all of you," Pezeshkian said during a speech Saturday at the Mausoleum of the late Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, where he pledged allegiance to the ideals of the Islamic Revolution, according to Iran's Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA).

Pezeshkian also thanked Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei for

opening up the stage for a more competitive and healthier presidential election, according to IRNA.

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Saturday sent a message to Pezeshkian, congratulating him on his election as president of Iran.

Pezeshkian is a 69-year-old heart surgeon whose previous government experience was as health minister.

He has called for "constructive relations" with Western countries to "get Iran out of its isolation." He also favors reviving the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and global powers, according to media reports.

The new president is likely to focus or even prioritize reviving ties with the West, especially the US, after taking office, in the hope that those countries will lift certain sanctions, which will boost Iran's economy, Liu Zhongmin, a professor at the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University, told the Global Times.

In a televised speech on June 25, Khamenei said: "One who thinks that nothing can be done without the favor of America will not manage the country well," Reuters reported previously.

The new president is likely to exert a certain impact on Iran's diplomacy, yet it is impossible to change the antagonism between Tehran and Washington, said Li Fuquan, director at the Center of Iran Studies of China's Northwest University.

Iranian conservatives, who still dominate the country's politics, do not trust the US, and Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), a branch of the Iranian Armed Forces, is not willing to normalize ties with the US, Li said.

Liu believes Pezeshkian will continue stabilizing and consolidating ties with both China and Russia, as those diplomatic direction are a consensus reached by Iranian top-tier politicians.

Newly elected Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian visits the shrine of the Islamic Republic's founder Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in Tehran, Iran on July 6, 2024. Pezeshkian addressed the public after his visit. Photo: VCG



Chinese, Belarusian armies to hold joint anti-terrorism exercise

By Liu Xuanzun

The Chinese and Belarusian armies will hold a joint anti-terrorism exercise shortly after Belarus officially joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), with experts saying on Sunday that the drill will contribute to regional peace and stability.

Based on an annual plan and the consensus reached by the two countries, the militaries of China and Belarus will hold the Eagle Assault-2024 joint army exercise near the city of Brest in Belarus from early to mid-July,

China's Ministry of National Defense announced in a press release on Sunday.

With a background of an anti-terrorism mission, participants from the two sides will hold mixed training exercises and practice tasks such as hostage rescue and anti-terrorism operations, with the aim of enhancing the participating troops' training level and interoperability, and deepening the pragmatic cooperation between the two countries' armies, the Chinese press release said.

According to a press release

from the Belarusian Defense Ministry on Saturday, military personnel from the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) have arrived in Belarus to participate in the joint anti-terrorism exercise scheduled from July 8 to 19.

The joint exercise will allow for the exchange of experience, the coordination of Belarusian and Chinese units, and the establishment of a foundation for further development of Belarusian-Chinese relations in the field of joint military training, said the Belarusian press release.

Photos released by the Belarusian Defense Ministry show the PLA troops arriving in Belarus on a Y-20 strategic transport aircraft of the PLA Air Force.

The joint drill was announced after Belarus officially joined the SCO on Thursday, becoming its 10th member state, the Xinhua News Agency reported on the day.

With anti-terrorism being the theme, the joint exercise is conducive to peace and stability from non-traditional security threats in Eastern Europe, a Chinese military expert who

requested anonymity told the Global Times on Sunday.

Under the framework of the SCO, it is believed that China and Belarus will enjoy deeper cooperation in security and defense, the expert said.

This is not the first time the PLA has joined an event in Belarus this month, as the PLA Guard of Honor participated in a military parade in Minsk on Wednesday, the PLA Daily reported on Thursday.

French parliamentary elections enter decisive 2nd round as left-wing and centrists join hands

By Cui Fandi

After the far-right took the lead in the first round of France's snap legislative elections, Sunday's second and decisive round saw joint efforts from the left-wing and the centrists to try to prevent the far-right from gaining an absolute majority.

Although their alliance may influence some voters' decisions, National Rally (RN) is still expected to be the more supported faction as far-right forces in Europe are rapidly gaining momentum, observers noted.

According to the results published by the French Interior Ministry, the far-right RN won 37 seats in the first round of the elections held earlier on June 30. Following the RN, the New Popular Front (NFP), the left-wing parties' electoral alliance, won 32 seats, while French President Emmanuel Macron's centrist coalition only gained two seats, the Xinhua News Agency reported on Sunday. Five other deputies from various right and extreme right parties were also elected during the first round.

To stop the RN from gaining an absolute majority, the NFP and Macron's coalition announced that their candidates who entered the second round in third place would renounce their candidacy to not split anti-RN votes.

Observers said that the left-wing and the centrists have successfully persuaded candidates with slim chances of winning to withdraw from the election, thus concentrating campaign resources from various parties. Their aim is to consolidate votes for more promising non-far-right candidates, forming "a siege against the RN."

France has a long history of preventing far-right wing parties from taking power, and history seems to be repeating itself this time too, said Zhao Junjie, a research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of European Studies. However, as pre-election polls show the RN's support is high, a significant change is not likely to happen in just one week, he said.

"The efforts of other parties to stop RN may affect their chances and prevent RN from obtaining an absolute majority, but their probability of leading remains higher," Zhao said.

If the results of the French parliamentary elections come as projected, France will have a hung parliament and the political system could enter a volatile and unstable stage, analysts said. The success of the RN in forming a government depends on the party's final number of seats and the situation of other political parties.

