



Nowruz, a Message for Peace, Convergence, and Cooperation

Alireza Bigdeli

Senior Expert at Central Asia and the Caucasus studies

This is an opportunity to congratulate all those interested in Nowruz, and wish them according to the Iranian tradition to have ahead “A hundred years better than this year.” Thousands of years ago, our land’s people found out from experience that in the turning of days there is a time when cold is replaced with warmth, darkness with light, and despair with hope. The trees blossom, the flowers and greenery germinate and rise up through the ground and bestow nature with colors and odors and the animate again start moving and striving. They, with all tenderness, named the pleasant resurrection of nature “Nowruz” ,and celebrated it. Nowruz is the start of spring, the first day in the solar calendar, and the day when God’s color shines in nature and humans’ hearts. Nowruz is a day for celebration and thanksgiving, one of the times when man feels the blowing of God’s breeze of blessings in his life and



sees himself more than ever exposed to them. Many people, dwelling large parts of Asia, from long ago, have celebrated the Nowruz celebrations with all glory and wished each other the best. With the advent of holy Islam, Nowruz was reinstated as a holy tradition. In our religious sources, it is a holy and happy day and an important day in creation and for guidance of mankind, for which prayers have been made.

The current traditions about Nowruz, among the people of various countries that celebrate Nowruz, are close and similar. These celebrations are symbols for worship of one God, creator of nature, respect to all God's blessings, thanks-giving and prayers, paying attention to joy and happiness, interest in change and development, an incentive for visits and travel, hailing the family, respect to children, magnifying elders, giving and taking gifts, an occasion for thinking, attention to cleanness of the living environment and glorifying the environment, purity of hearts, disappearance of impurities and uncleanness. Holding Nowruz traditions and respecting their deep human concepts such as marking the ringing in of the new year, setting the Haft-sin (seven things starting with s) are still current in the Nowruz region. In the solar calendar, if the ringing in is before noon, the same day is Nowruz, and if it is after noon, the next day will be Nowruz and the

first day of the new year. In some Nowruz countries like Iran, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Tajikistani, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kirgizstan, Kazakhstan and so forth, Nowruz as a national celebration, is an official holiday.

Nowruz is a tradition with the capacity for fostering solidarity and integrity among nations and ethnicities. This ancient tradition has such specifics that probably has from four thousand years ago drawn the attention of various peoples dwelling the Iranian plateau and guided them into the path of solidarity and neighborhood and has established peace and friendship across a vast territory stretching from North Africa to the Indian subcontinent. Across this expanse, Iranians have benefited from this festival more than any other nation and used it along with religion and other traditions to strengthen their national unity. This ancient tradition has echoed in our literature, art and sports.

Fortunately, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, listed Nowruz as a world heritage on September 30,2009. In a resolution, the UN general assembly recognized and designated March 21 as International Day of NOWRUZ. Since then, Nowruz has again become a force for convergence among the countries which celebrate it and have joint plans for marking it. According to the UN estimates, Nowruz is celebrated by over 300 million people in Iran,

Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Tajikistani, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kirgizstan, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Pakistan, India and populations spread around 25 countries.

Nowruz can prosper many neighboring capacities, and cause strengthening of political, economic and cultural relations of the people who mark and celebrate it. Nowruz can bring its own economy, culture and politics. Nowruz countries can firmly find friendship and mutual bonds by the virtue of and on this holiday that is celebrated by the nations. As cleaning of the living and working environment, buying clothes and consumables, giving gifts and preparing for travel, parties and tourism are part of this popular holiday, the Nowruz countries can benefit from its economic aspects and expand their mutual cooperation based on this. Nowruz is woven into the fabric of our people's culture and is an occasion for strengthening cultural integrity and joint gatherings. The Nowruz holiday can strengthen the spirit of integrity and good neighborhood among our countries which have common cultural borders and serve as a basis for solidifying our ties. For this, the countries which celebrate Nowruz can use Nowruz politics to de-escalate tensions and strengthen mutual ties and their respective foreign policies.

Our experience shows that foreign policy begins from neighboring countries and borders and if we succeed to strengthen integrity and cooperation in our region, we will take long strides in our foreign policy and can outline propitious horizons for the happiness of our nations. Nowruz puts countless opportunities before us which have not yet been tapped into. Holding regular Nowruz meetings at the presidents and high ranking officials levels, holding cultural, art, and traditional sports festivals and trying to improve people, elites, and artists' relations in Nowruz countries and showcasing our common bonds at the world and international organizations levels are examples of such opportunities.

For us, the residents of the Nowruz region, each day spent together in integrity and cooperation is Nowruz and a new day, as put by Sa'adi Shirazi "Each day passed with you is Nowruz."

(The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the IPIS)

The Nowruz holiday can strengthen the spirit of integrity and good neighborhood among our countries which have common cultural borders and serve as a basis for solidifying our ties.



Nowruz is a tradition with the capacity for fostering solidarity and integrity among nations and ethnicities. This ancient tradition has such specifics that probably has from four thousand years ago drawn the attention of various peoples dwelling the Iranian plateau and guided them into the path of solidarity and neighborhood and has established peace and friendship across a vast territory stretching from North Africa to the Indian subcontinent.