

The Nuclear Arms Race in the Middle East / Iran as a Case Study (The Relation between Iran and Terrorism in the Region)

Ahmad Jalal Alahmad

Ahmad.alahmad@std.hku.edu.tr

<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-2828-2270>

Co -Author / Dr. Burçin Uluğ

burcin.eryilmaz@hku.edu.tr

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9700-7679>

Department of political science and international relations –Graduate education institute– Hasan Kalyoncu university

Abstract:

This article examines the complex dynamics of Iran's nuclear ambitions within the context of neoclassical realism, highlighting the interplay between systemic pressures and domestic political factors. It argues that while external threats from regional rivals and Western sanctions incentivize Iran's pursuit of nuclear capabilities, internal factional politics significantly shape policy outcomes.

The study explores how hardline factions advocate for aggressive nuclear postures in response to perceived threats, while moderate elements may favor diplomatic engagement. By analyzing Iran's historical context, ideological motivations, and strategic behavior, the article provides a comprehensive understanding of the implications of Iran's nuclear development for regional and global security.

Keywords: Iran, nuclear ambitions, neoclassical realism, regional security, domestic politics, factionalism, nuclear proliferation, (JCPOA), Middle East.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of Nuclear Armament in the Middle East

The Middle East has become a crucial hotspot for nuclear proliferation, marked by a volatile geopolitical landscape, deep-rooted rivalries, and significant strategic interests. The historical context of nuclear development in the region, particularly regarding the nuclear programs of countries like Israel, Pakistan, and India, has established a precedent that shapes current dynamics. During the Cold War, superpowers took advantage of regional conflicts to advance their strategic goals, unintentionally fueling local states' ambitions for nuclear capabilities (Fitzpatrick, 2014). This historical backdrop is essential for understanding Iran's current nuclear efforts and the implications for regional stability. As Iran continues to advance its nuclear capabilities, it raises important questions about security and power dynamics in the Middle East. The Iranian leadership views its nuclear program not only to secure energy independence but also as a strategic asset that bolsters its regional influence and deterrence (Kahl & Zambetakis, 2017).

Given the complex interplay of historical grievances, ideological commitments, and external pressures, a thorough analysis of Iran's motivations is crucial for understanding the potential consequences of its nuclear development on both regional and global security.

1.2 Historical Context

Iran's nuclear program has a complex history that began under the "Atoms for Peace" initiative in the 1950s, which aimed to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy globally. Initially, this program received significant support from Western nations, particularly the United States, which provided technical assistance and materials to Iran. The Shah's regime viewed nuclear technology to modernize the country and assert its sovereignty on the international stage (Sergi, 2017; Shojaei & Bayli, 2019).

However, following the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iran's nuclear ambitions shifted dramatically. The new regime, characterized by its anti-Western sentiment and a desire for self-sufficiency, moved away from a transparent nuclear

agenda towards a more clandestine and potentially weaponizable program. This transition was marked by allegations of weaponization that emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s, particularly after it was revealed that Iran had concealed aspects of its nuclear activities from international oversight (Gerli, 2019; Bayandor, 2012).

Key events that influenced this transition included the discovery of undeclared nuclear sites and revelations regarding advanced enrichment technologies. These developments raised alarms among Western powers and regional adversaries, leading to increased scrutiny and diplomatic efforts aimed at curtailing Iran's nuclear ambitions. The international community responded with sanctions and negotiations, culminating in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015. This agreement sought to limit Iran's nuclear capabilities in exchange for relief from economic sanctions (Anadolu Agency, 2015; Sahimi, 2024).

Understanding the origins and evolution of Iran's nuclear program is crucial for comprehending its current trajectory and implications for regional stability. As Iran asserts its right to develop nuclear technology, the interplay between historical context, domestic politics, and international relations remains pivotal in shaping its nuclear strategy (Sergi, 2017; Shojaei & Bayli, 2019).

2 Theoretical Framework: Neoclassical Realism and Iran's Nuclear Policy

Neoclassical realism provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing Iran's nuclear ambitions and its broader role in regional geopolitics. This theoretical perspective bridges the systemic pressures of the international environment with domestic factors, such as political institutions and leadership dynamics, which collectively shape a state's foreign policy decisions (Bayar, 2019; Juneau, 2024).

2.1 The International System and Structural Pressures

Neoclassical realism emphasizes how the anarchic nature of the international system and the distribution of power influence a state's strategic behavior. In the case of Iran:

- Geopolitical Threats: Iran perceives significant security threats from external actors, including the United States, Israel, and Sunni-majority states in the region. Its nuclear program serves as a deterrent to counter potential aggression and ensure its survival in an unbalanced international system dominated by U.S. hegemony (Kahl & Zambetakis, 2017; Niakooee & Safari, 2017).
- Strategic Leverage: Beyond deterrence, Iran's nuclear ambitions function as a tool for bargaining. By maintaining nuclear ambiguity, Tehran strengthens its position in diplomatic negotiations, leveraging its program to secure economic and political concessions from global powers (Juneau, 2024; Kahl & Zambetakis, 2017).

2.2 Domestic Factors and Leadership Perception

Neoclassical realism also highlights the influence of domestic variables on foreign policy decisions. For Iran:

- 1- National Identity and Ideology: The Iranian leadership portrays its nuclear program as a cornerstone of national pride and sovereignty. This framing appeals to domestic audiences and reinforces resistance to external pressures while aligning with the regime's revolutionary ideals of self-sufficiency and independence. By emphasizing the nuclear program as a symbol of national strength, the Iranian government seeks to foster a sense of unity among its citizens, particularly important in the face of international sanctions (Alahmad, 2023; Bayar, 2019).
- 2- Political Institutions: Internal political dynamics, including the tension between hardliners and moderates, play a significant role in shaping Iran's foreign policy. The nuclear program bolsters the regime's legitimacy by rallying nationalist sentiment and consolidating public support amidst external sanctions and economic challenges. Hardliners often leverage the

nuclear issue to undermine moderate factions within the government, portraying any compromise as a betrayal of national interests (Kahl & Zambetakis, 2017; Niakooee & Safari, 2017). This internal struggle influences how Iran engages with the international community and navigates its nuclear ambitions.

2.3 Institutions and Strategic Manipulation

Neoclassical realism underscores how states utilize international institutions to advance their strategic goals. In the case of Iran:

- Exploiting Legal Frameworks: Iran leverages its membership in treaties like the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to legitimize its nuclear activities while pursuing actions that challenge global norms. By framing its nuclear program within the context of peaceful development and energy independence, Iran seeks to gain international acceptance and mitigate potential repercussions from its nuclear ambitions (Alahmad, 2023; Juneau, 2024). This strategic manipulation allows Tehran to present itself as a responsible member of the international community while simultaneously advancing its nuclear capabilities.
- Manipulating Agreements: The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) demonstrates Iran's ability to navigate institutional frameworks effectively. By adhering selectively to agreements, Tehran secures economic relief while retaining strategic flexibility in its nuclear pursuits. This approach reflects a calculated strategy where Iran engages in negotiations to extract concessions from global powers while maintaining the option to expand its nuclear program if it perceives that its interests are not being adequately addressed (Kahl & Zambetakis, 2017; Niakooee & Safari, 2017). The JCPOA exemplifies how Iran has managed to exploit diplomatic channels to bolster its position on the international stage.

- Neoclassical realism offers valuable insights into understanding Iran's nuclear policy by considering both external pressures from the international system and internal dynamics that shape its foreign policy decisions.
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Neoclassical realism provides valuable insights into Iran's strategic behavior by connecting systemic and domestic factors. Key aspects include:

1. The Nuclear Program as a Strategic Shield:

Iran's nuclear program reflects its response to systemic threats and serves to balance regional power dynamics. By projecting strength, Iran deters adversaries and enhances its influence in the region. The perception of significant security threats from external actors, including the United States and Israel, drives Tehran to develop its nuclear capabilities as a deterrent against potential aggression (Kahl & Zambetakis, 2017). This strategic posture is rooted in the anarchic nature of the international system, where states prioritize their survival and security.

2. State-Sponsored Terrorism and Proxy Warfare:

Iran's support for militant groups aligns with the framework's view that states often use asymmetric strategies, such as proxy warfare, to maximize their power while avoiding direct military confrontation. By backing organizations like Hezbollah and various Shiite militias in Iraq and Syria, Iran seeks to extend its influence and counterbalance adversaries without engaging in conventional warfare (Alahmad, 2023). This approach allows Iran to project power regionally while maintaining plausible deniability regarding its involvement in conflicts.

3- Regional Reactions:

Neoclassical realism also explains the reactions of Sunni-majority states, such as Saudi Arabia, which perceive Iran's nuclear ambitions as a significant threat. These states respond by strengthening alliances with global powers and enhancing their defense strategies to counterbalance Iran's influence. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has sought closer ties with the United States and other Western nations to bolster their security considering Iran's assertive regional policies

(Fitzpatrick, 2014). This dynamic illustrates how the actions of one state can provoke significant shifts in regional alliances and security postures.

By integrating the pressures of the international system with Iran's domestic political considerations, neoclassical realism offers a nuanced and holistic explanation for Iran's nuclear ambitions and regional policies. This framework captures the complex interplay between Iran's quest for security in a competitive international environment and its internal motivations, providing a clear understanding of the challenges posed by its actions.

4 Significance of Studying Iran's Nuclear Armament

4.1 Iran's Nuclear Ambitions: A Dual Threat to Regional and Global Security

Iran's nuclear ambitions transcend the mere pursuit of peaceful energy use, reflecting deeper political and strategic objectives that have significant implications for regional and international security. This study explores the dual role of Iran's nuclear program: as a tool for regional influence and as a means of political extortion. By leveraging its nuclear capabilities, Iran exerts pressure on adversaries, gains economic concessions, and bolsters its regional dominance. This multifaceted approach makes Iran's nuclear ambitions a pivotal issue for international security and diplomacy.

Understanding the significance of Iran's nuclear armament is crucial for several reasons. First, it highlights the potential destabilizing effects on the already fragile geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. As Iran advances its nuclear program, neighboring states may feel compelled to enhance their own military capabilities, potentially igniting a regional arms race (Fitzpatrick, 2014). Second, Iran's nuclear ambitions are intertwined with its support for various militant groups, complicating the security dynamics in the region and posing challenges for international counterterrorism efforts.

Moreover, the strategic use of its nuclear program allows Iran to navigate complex diplomatic negotiations by employing threats of escalation as leverage

against Western powers and regional adversaries. This behavior not only impacts bilateral relations but also shapes broader multilateral discussions on non-proliferation and security in the region. Therefore, studying Iran's nuclear armament is essential for policymakers seeking to develop effective strategies to mitigate risks associated with nuclear proliferation and to foster stability in the Middle East.

4.2 International Response to Iran's Nuclear Ambitions

The global reaction to Iran's nuclear program has been multifaceted, involving diplomacy, economic sanctions, and military threats. The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) exemplifies international efforts to curtail Iran's nuclear ambitions while addressing Tehran's strategic use of its program as a bargaining chip in negotiations. The JCPOA aimed to limit Iran's nuclear capabilities in exchange for relief from economic sanctions, reflecting a significant diplomatic endeavor by the P5+1 countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and Germany).

However, the effectiveness of the JCPOA has been a subject of considerable debate. While it successfully constrained certain aspects of Iran's nuclear program and extended the timeline for potential weaponization, the agreement did not address other critical issues such as Iran's ballistic missile development and its regional activities supporting proxy groups. Furthermore, the U.S. withdrawal from the agreement in 2018 under the Trump administration led to the re-imposition of severe sanctions on Iran. This not only undermined the diplomatic framework established by the JCPOA but also intensified tensions in the region.

In addition to diplomatic efforts, military threats have also played a role in shaping Iran's nuclear strategy. The potential for military action by Israel or the United States has been a significant factor in Iran's calculations regarding its nuclear program. These threats reinforce Iran's resolve to maintain its nuclear capabilities as a deterrent against perceived aggression. Moreover, regional actors such as Saudi Arabia have expressed concerns about Iran's nuclear ambitions, leading to calls for their own nuclear programs as a counterbalance.

The international community continues to grapple with how best to address Iran's nuclear ambitions while managing broader implications for regional stability. As diplomatic negotiations evolve and new challenges arise, understanding the complexities of international responses is crucial for developing effective strategies that can mitigate risks associated with Iran's pursuit of nuclear capabilities.

5 Nuclear Blackmail and Terrorism

5.1 Understanding Nuclear Extortion

Nuclear extortion refers to the strategic use of nuclear threats to gain political or economic advantages, and in the context of Iran, the country's nuclear program has evolved into a potent tool for coercion. By developing its nuclear capabilities, Iran seeks to enhance its bargaining position in international negotiations, leveraging the specter of nuclear escalation to extract concessions from Western powers while simultaneously deterring regional adversaries (Sechser, 2023). This strategy allows Tehran to project strength and assert its influence across the Middle East, reinforcing its status as a key player in regional politics (Kahl & Zambetakis, 2017).

The concept of nuclear blackmail is particularly relevant in the Middle Eastern geopolitical landscape, where power dynamics are shaped by a complex web of alliances and rivalries. Iran's nuclear ambitions serve as a deterrent against perceived threats from adversaries such as Israel and Saudi Arabia. By maintaining a credible threat of nuclear escalation, Tehran aims to secure economic benefits through negotiations while reinforcing its geopolitical influence (Sechser, 2023; Kahl & Zambetakis, 2017). This approach has significant implications for regional security, as it raises concerns among neighboring states and prompts them to reconsider their own security strategies.

Moreover, the potential for Iran to use its nuclear capabilities as a means of coercion can lead to an arms race in the region. As states feel compelled to develop their own deterrent capabilities in response to Iran's threats, the stability of the Middle East is further compromised (Kahl & Zambetakis, 2017). Understanding

nuclear extortion within this context is essential for comprehending the broader implications for regional stability and international security.

Iran effectively utilizes the specter of its nuclear capabilities to shield its support for terrorism, creating a complex interplay between its nuclear ambitions and its sponsorship of militant groups. By threatening nuclear escalation, Tehran aims to dissuade international actors from countering its support for organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas (Sechser, 2023). This strategy not only acts as a deterrent against military intervention but also enhances Iran's bargaining power in diplomatic negotiations.

The linkage between nuclear blackmail and state-sponsored terrorism is particularly evident in how Iran leverages its nuclear program to project strength amid external pressures. The Iranian regime often frames its nuclear capabilities as a necessary safeguard against perceived threats from adversaries like the United States and Israel. This narrative allows Iran to justify its support for proxy groups, portraying them as essential components of its broader strategy to counterbalance regional rivals (Kahl & Zambetakis, 2017).

By maintaining a dual focus on nuclear development and terrorism, Iran can manipulate regional dynamics to its advantage. The fear of a nuclear-armed Iran can inhibit potential military responses from adversaries, allowing Tehran to operate with greater impunity in supporting militant activities (Sechser, 2023). This tactic complicates efforts to address terrorism in the region and poses significant challenges for international security.

The implications of this linkage extend beyond Iran's immediate neighborhood. As Iran continues to develop its nuclear capabilities while simultaneously supporting terrorist organizations, the potential for escalation grows. Regional actors may feel compelled to enhance their military capabilities in response, leading to an arms race that further destabilizes the Middle East (Kahl & Zambetakis, 2017).

In summary, understanding the connection between nuclear extortion and state-sponsored terrorism is crucial for comprehending Iran's strategic behavior. As Tehran leverages its nuclear program as a shield for its support of militant groups, the international community must consider the broader security implications and

develop comprehensive strategies that address both aspects of this dual threat (Sechser, 2023; Kahl & Zambetakis, 2017).

5.2 Iran's Support for Terrorism

State–Sponsored Terrorism: Definition and Examples

State–sponsored terrorism involves the direct or indirect support of extremist groups by governments, often to achieve political objectives or to destabilize adversaries. Iran's backing of organizations such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and various other proxy groups exemplifies its strategic use of terrorism to expand its influence across the Middle East and undermine regional stability. This support is not merely financial; it encompasses military training, logistical assistance, and ideological backing, which collectively enhances the operational capabilities of these groups.

Iran's relationship with Hezbollah is particularly illustrative of its state–sponsored terrorism strategy. Established in the early 1980s, Hezbollah has evolved into a formidable military and political force in Lebanon, due to Iranian support. This partnership allows Iran to project power beyond its borders while simultaneously countering adversaries like Israel. Similarly, Iran's support for Hamas serves to bolster its standing among Palestinian factions and assert its role as a leader in the resistance against Israel.

The implications of Iran's state–sponsored terrorism extend beyond immediate regional conflicts. By empowering militant groups, Iran not only destabilizes specific countries but also fosters an environment of insecurity that affects broader geopolitical dynamics. The fear of Iranian influence through these proxies has led to heightened tensions among neighboring states, prompting them to reconsider their security strategies and alliances.

In summary, Iran's strategic use of state–sponsored terrorism is a critical component of its foreign policy. By leveraging support for extremist groups, Tehran seeks to achieve its political objectives while reinforcing its influence in a highly contested region. Understanding this aspect of Iran's behavior is essential for

comprehending the complexities of Middle Eastern geopolitics and the challenges posed by Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

5.3 Iran's Role in Supporting Terrorism in the Middle East

Iran's regional strategy intricately intertwines its nuclear ambitions with its support for terrorism, creating a dual approach to enhance its geopolitical influence. This section examines how Tehran's financial and military assistance to various proxy groups serves not only as a deterrent against external threats but also as a tool for political manipulation, undermining regional stability.

By providing substantial support to organizations such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and other militant factions, Iran effectively extends its reach and influence across the Middle East. This support includes financial aid, military training, and advanced weaponry, which empower these groups to operate independently while aligning their objectives with Iran's strategic goals. For instance, Hezbollah's capabilities have been significantly bolstered by Iranian resources, enabling it to function as a critical ally for Iran in Lebanon and a formidable adversary against Israel.

Moreover, Iran leverages its nuclear program as a strategic shield that protects its support for these militant groups. The prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran complicates the calculations of regional adversaries, deterring them from taking military action against Iranian proxies. This dynamic allows Tehran to operate with greater impunity in its support for terrorism, as the fear of nuclear escalation can inhibit potential countermeasures from adversarial states.

The implications of this strategy are profound. By intertwining its nuclear ambitions with state-sponsored terrorism, Iran not only seeks to bolster its own security but also aims to destabilize rival states and reshape the regional order in its favor. This dual threat complicates international efforts to address both Iran's nuclear program and its support for terrorism, necessitating a comprehensive approach that considers the interconnectedness of these issues.

In sum, Iran's role in supporting terrorism is deeply embedded in its broader strategic framework that includes nuclear ambitions. Understanding this

relationship is essential for comprehending the complexities of Middle Eastern geopolitics and the challenges posed by Tehran's actions on regional stability.

5.4 The Relationship Between Nuclear Armament and Terrorism

Examining the Connection Between Nuclear Ambitions and Terrorism

Iran's nuclear program significantly enhances its regional agenda by providing a strategic shield against external intervention, thereby increasing its leverage in both regional and international negotiations. This dual threat of nuclear armament and state-sponsored terrorism amplifies Tehran's ability to manipulate political dynamics to its advantage (Kahl & Zambetakis, 2017). By developing nuclear capabilities, Iran establishes a powerful deterrent that allows it to project strength and resilience in the face of perceived threats from adversaries, particularly the United States and Israel. The potential for nuclear escalation enables Iran to dissuade military action against itself or its proxy groups, effectively using its nuclear program as a bargaining chip in diplomatic negotiations (Sechser, 2023).

The implications of Iran's nuclear program extend beyond mere deterrence; it also empowers its proxies, such as Hezbollah. By shielding these groups from significant military retaliation, Iran can bolster their activities without facing direct consequences. For instance, during heightened tensions in 2019 and 2020, Hezbollah's aggressive operations in Lebanon and Syria were supported by Iran's strategic positioning. Tehran's nuclear advancements created a calculated ambiguity that deterred regional actors like Israel and Saudi Arabia from escalating direct confrontations for fear of provoking broader regional conflict (Sechser, 2023; Kahl & Zambetakis, 2017).

Furthermore, Iran consistently employs the threat of nuclear escalation to discourage external interventions against its proxies. This dynamic allows groups like Hezbollah to expand their operations—such as military entrenchment in Syria and increased arms transfers through Iranian logistical networks—while minimizing the risk of reprisal. Such activities illustrate how Tehran's nuclear ambitions indirectly bolster its proxy warfare strategies (Kahl & Zambetakis, 2017).

The intertwining of Iran's nuclear ambitions with its support for terrorism creates a multifaceted approach to foreign policy. The Iranian regime utilizes its nuclear capabilities to shield its sponsorship of militant organizations like Hezbollah and Hamas by threatening catastrophic consequences should these groups be targeted by adversaries. This tactic enables Iran to maintain influence over these proxies while simultaneously deterring international efforts to counteract its support for terrorism (Sechser, 2023).

The implications of this connection are profound. As Iran continues to advance its nuclear program while supporting terrorist activities, it poses a dual challenge to regional stability and international security. The fear of a nuclear-armed Iran may compel neighboring states to pursue their own nuclear capabilities, potentially igniting an arms race that further destabilizes the region (Kahl & Zambetakis, 2017).

Understanding the connection between Iran's nuclear ambitions and its support for terrorism is essential for comprehending the complexities of Middle Eastern geopolitics. As Tehran leverages both threats to enhance its strategic position, policymakers must consider comprehensive approaches that address the intertwined nature of these issues (Sechser, 2023; Kahl & Zambetakis, 2017).

5.5 Case Study: Iran's Nuclear Program and Support for Terrorism

This section provides an in-depth analysis of incidents where Iran's nuclear program and its terrorist activities have intersected, highlighting the use of nuclear threats to protect its proxies and deter adversaries. The relationship between Iran's nuclear ambitions and its support for terrorism is not merely theoretical; it is evidenced by specific instances that illustrate how Tehran leverages its nuclear capabilities to enhance its strategic objectives.

One notable example is Iran's support for Hezbollah during the 2006 Lebanon War. As tensions escalated, Iran's leadership openly threatened to retaliate against any Israeli attacks on its proxies, suggesting that a military response could involve its nuclear capabilities. This posture served to reinforce Hezbollah's operational freedom while simultaneously deterring Israel from escalating the

conflict. By coupling its nuclear ambitions with support for Hezbollah, Iran effectively utilized the threat of nuclear escalation as a means of political leverage in a regional conflict.

Another significant incident occurred during the negotiations surrounding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015. Iran's leaders often framed their nuclear program as essential for national security, asserting that it provided a deterrent against external aggression. This narrative was instrumental in securing concessions from Western powers, as Tehran emphasized that any attempt to undermine its sovereignty could lead to severe repercussions, including potential military responses involving its nuclear capabilities. In this context, Iran's nuclear program functioned as both a shield and a bargaining chip, allowing it to maintain influence over regional dynamics while simultaneously pursuing diplomatic engagement.

Additionally, Iran's involvement in supporting groups like Hamas illustrates how its nuclear ambitions can serve as a protective umbrella for terrorist activities. By threatening nuclear escalation, Tehran aims to dissuade international actors from countering its sponsorship of militant organizations. This strategy not only reinforces Iran's influence across the Middle East but also complicates efforts to address terrorism in the region.

In conclusion, the intersection of Iran's nuclear program and its support for terrorism highlights a strategic approach that enhances Tehran's leverage in regional and international negotiations. Understanding these dynamics is essential for comprehending the broader implications of Iran's actions on regional stability and global security.

5.6 Sunni Responses to Iranian Influence

Sunni-majority states perceive Iran's nuclear ambitions as a direct threat to their sovereignty and regional stability. This section discusses the reactions of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members, particularly Saudi Arabia, to Tehran's nuclear extortion and its implications for regional alliances.

The rise of Iran as a nuclear power has elicited significant concern among Sunni-majority states, who view Tehran's ambitions not only as a challenge to their security but also as an existential threat to the balance of power in the region. In particular, Saudi Arabia has been vocal in its opposition to Iran's nuclear program, fearing that a nuclear-armed Iran would embolden its regional influence and destabilize the already fragile geopolitical landscape.

In response to these perceived threats, GCC members have taken several measures to counterbalance Iran's ambitions. One notable reaction has been the call for enhanced military cooperation among GCC states, including joint defense initiatives and increased military spending. For instance, Saudi Arabia has sought to bolster its military capabilities through arms purchases from Western allies, aiming to deter potential Iranian aggression.

Besides, the GCC has engaged in diplomatic efforts to forge stronger alliances with external powers, particularly the United States. The U.S. has been seen as a crucial ally in countering Iranian influence, leading to initiatives such as the Abraham Accords, which aim to normalize relations between Israel and several Arab states while presenting a united front against Tehran's ambitions.

Additionally, some Sunni-majority states have contemplated pursuing their own nuclear capabilities as a means of deterrence. The prospect of a regional arms race is particularly concerning; if countries like Saudi Arabia were to develop their own nuclear programs in response to Iran's ambitions, it could lead to heightened tensions and instability across the Middle East.

In conclusion, the reactions of Sunni-majority states, particularly those within the GCC, to Iran's nuclear ambitions reflect deep-seated fears regarding sovereignty and regional security. As these states navigate their responses—ranging from military enhancements to diplomatic alliances—the implications for regional alliances and stability remain profound. Understanding these dynamics is essential for comprehending the broader geopolitical landscape shaped by Iran's nuclear pursuits.

5.7 Resolving Iran’s Nuclear Issue to Reduce Regional Extremism

A resolution to Iran’s nuclear ambitions could significantly mitigate its ability to exert political blackmail, thereby reducing regional tensions and the proliferation of extremism. This section explores potential diplomatic solutions to this pressing issue, emphasizing the need for a multifaceted approach that addresses both Iran's nuclear program and its support for terrorism.

One viable diplomatic solution is the revitalization of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) or a similar framework that incorporates broader security guarantees for Iran. By addressing Tehran's legitimate security concerns, such as threats from regional adversaries and the historical context of foreign interventions, a new agreement could foster an environment conducive to cooperation rather than confrontation. This would require a commitment from both Iran and the international community to engage in constructive dialogue aimed at achieving mutual security goals (Davenport, 2013; DiCarlo, 2023).

In addition, enhancing regional cooperation among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states is crucial. By fostering dialogue and trust-building measures among Sunni-majority states and Iran, it may be possible to create a more stable security architecture in the region. Initiatives such as establishing a regional security forum could facilitate discussions on arms control, non-proliferation, and counterterrorism efforts, thereby addressing the underlying tensions that fuel extremism (Frazier, 2024; RUSI, 2024).

Moreover, integrating economic incentives into diplomatic negotiations can play a pivotal role in encouraging compliance with non-proliferation commitments. Offering economic relief and development assistance in exchange for verifiable steps toward nuclear disarmament could align Iran's interests with those of the international community. This approach not only addresses Iran's economic needs but also reinforces the message that cooperation yields tangible benefits (DiCarlo, 2023; Davenport, 2013).

Finally, involving key international stakeholders such as Russia and China in the negotiation process can provide additional leverage and support for any

agreements reached. Their participation can help ensure that any resolution is comprehensive and sustainable, as these nations have considerable influence over Iran's strategic calculations (VCDNP, 2023; Frazier, 2024).

In conclusion, resolving Iran's nuclear issue requires a comprehensive diplomatic strategy that addresses both its nuclear ambitions and its role in regional extremism. By fostering dialogue, enhancing regional cooperation, and integrating economic incentives into negotiations, the international community can work towards mitigating the risks associated with Iran's nuclear program while promoting stability in the Middle East (DiCarlo, 2023; Davenport, 2013).

5.8 Implications for Regional Security

The Impact of Iran's Nuclear Armament on Middle East Stability

Iran's nuclear program significantly increases the likelihood of a regional arms race and further destabilizes an already fragile geopolitical environment. As Iran continues to advance its nuclear capabilities, neighboring states perceive these developments as direct threats to their national security and sovereignty. This perception is particularly acute among Sunni-majority countries, which fear that a nuclear-armed Iran could embolden its regional influence and exacerbate sectarian tensions (Soufan Center, 2022).

The potential for a nuclear arms race is heightened by the historical context of insecurity in the Middle East, where states have long sought to enhance their military capabilities in response to perceived threats. For instance, countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have expressed intentions to explore their own nuclear programs as a counterbalance to Iran's ambitions. This pursuit of nuclear capabilities, driven by fear of Iranian aggression, could lead to a proliferation cascade, where other states in the region feel compelled to develop similar technologies, thereby increasing the risk of miscalculation and conflict (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024; Atlantic Council, 2024).

Moreover, Iran's nuclear ambitions provide it with leverage in regional negotiations, allowing it to engage in political blackmail. By threatening to escalate its nuclear program, Tehran can extract concessions from both regional adversaries

and global powers, complicating diplomatic efforts aimed at curbing its influence. This dynamic not only undermines efforts for collective security but also fosters an environment conducive to extremism, as states may resort to militarization in response to perceived existential threats (Soufan Center, 2022; INSS, 2023).

The implications of Iran’s nuclear armament extend beyond immediate regional concerns; they pose challenges for global security as well. The fear of a nuclear-armed Iran could lead to increased military presence from external powers in the region, further complicating the security landscape and potentially igniting broader conflicts (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024; Soufan Center, 2024).

In summary, Iran’s nuclear program has profound implications for Middle Eastern stability. The potential for an arms race, combined with Tehran's strategic use of nuclear threats for political leverage, creates a precarious situation that necessitates urgent attention from the international community. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that combines diplomatic engagement with robust security measures to mitigate the risks associated with Iran's nuclear ambitions (Arab News, 2024; Soufan Center, 2022).

5.9 Potential Escalation and Arms Race in the Region

Tehran’s nuclear ambitions could provoke neighboring states to pursue similar capabilities, creating a high-stakes environment fraught with the risk of miscalculation. As Iran continues to advance its nuclear program, the perception of a nuclear threat has intensified among its regional adversaries, particularly Sunni-majority states such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. These nations view Iran's pursuit of nuclear capabilities not only as a challenge to their security but also as a potential catalyst for a regional arms race (Soufan Center, 2022).

The fear of a nuclear-armed Iran may compel these states to reconsider their own defense strategies, leading them to explore the development of indigenous nuclear programs. For instance, Saudi Arabia has explicitly stated that it would seek to acquire nuclear weapons if Iran successfully develops its own arsenal. This response is indicative of a broader trend among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

members who feel increasingly vulnerable in the face of Iran's expanding military capabilities and its history of state-sponsored terrorism (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024; Atlantic Council, 2024).

The potential for an arms race in the region is exacerbated by existing tensions and rivalries. The historical context of conflict between Iran and its neighbors, coupled with ongoing proxy wars in places like Syria and Yemen, creates an environment where miscalculations can lead to rapid escalations. The introduction of nuclear weapons into this volatile mix raises the stakes significantly; even minor incidents could trigger catastrophic responses if states perceive an existential threat (Soufan Center, 2024; INSS, 2023).

Moreover, the proliferation of nuclear capabilities among neighboring states could undermine international non-proliferation efforts and destabilize global security frameworks. As more countries pursue nuclear options, the likelihood of accidents, unauthorized use, or theft of nuclear materials increases, posing severe risks not only to regional stability but also to global peace (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024; Soufan Center, 2022).

In conclusion, Tehran's nuclear ambitions have far-reaching implications for regional security. The potential for an arms race driven by fear and insecurity among neighboring states underscores the urgency for diplomatic engagement and robust international oversight. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that not only seeks to curtail Iran's nuclear program but also fosters dialogue and cooperation among regional actors to mitigate the risks associated with proliferation and escalation (Atlantic Council, 2024; Soufan Center, 2022).

6 International Efforts to Address Iran's Nuclear Ambitions

Diplomatic Initiatives and Negotiations

Diplomatic efforts to address Iran's nuclear ambitions have been multifaceted, with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) serving as a central initiative aimed at curbing Tehran's nuclear extortion while simultaneously addressing its legitimate energy needs. The JCPOA, reached in 2015 between Iran and the P5+1 countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia,

China, and Germany), represented a significant diplomatic achievement. It aimed to limit Iran's nuclear program in exchange for relief from economic sanctions, thereby attempting to balance security concerns with economic incentives (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024).

The successes of the JCPOA included the substantial reduction of Iran's enriched uranium stockpile and the implementation of rigorous monitoring and verification mechanisms by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). These measures provided a framework for international oversight that was intended to ensure compliance and build trust among negotiating parties (Arms Control Association, 2024).

However, the JCPOA also faced significant shortcomings. The agreement did not address critical issues such as Iran's ballistic missile program or its regional activities supporting proxy groups, which remain points of contention for many states in the region. Furthermore, the U.S. withdrawal from the agreement in 2018 under President Trump led to the reimposition of stringent sanctions on Iran, effectively undermining the diplomatic progress achieved through the JCPOA. This withdrawal not only strained relations between Iran and Western powers but also diminished the credibility of diplomatic negotiations as a viable pathway to resolving nuclear concerns (Soufan Center, 2022; Arms Control Association, 2024).

In addition, Iran's subsequent actions—such as increasing uranium enrichment levels beyond JCPOA limits—have further complicated diplomatic efforts. These developments have raised alarms among regional actors and global powers alike, leading to calls for a reevaluation of strategies to address Iran's nuclear ambitions (Security Council Report, 2024; Arms Control Association, 2024).

In conclusion, while diplomatic initiatives like the JCPOA have made strides in curbing certain aspects of Iran's nuclear program, significant challenges remain. A comprehensive approach that includes addressing broader security concerns and fostering regional dialogue is essential for achieving lasting solutions to Iran's nuclear ambitions (Glimmers of Hope for Renewed Nuclear Diplomacy in Tehran, 2024; U.S. and E3: Iran Must Change Nuclear Course, 2024).

6.1 Economic Sanctions and Their Effectiveness

Sanctions have emerged as a key tool in countering Tehran's nuclear extortion, aiming to compel Iran to alter its strategic calculus regarding its nuclear program. This section evaluates the impact of these sanctions on Iran's economy and their effectiveness in achieving the intended diplomatic outcomes.

The imposition of economic sanctions against Iran has been extensive, particularly following revelations about its nuclear activities in the early 2000s. These sanctions have targeted various sectors of the Iranian economy, including oil exports, banking, and trade, aiming to exert pressure on the regime by crippling its economic capabilities. The sanctions regime intensified significantly after the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018, leading to a sharp decline in Iran's oil revenues and increased economic isolation (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024).

Despite the significant economic costs imposed by these sanctions, their effectiveness in altering Iran's strategic calculus remains contentious. On one hand, sanctions have undeniably strained Iran's economy, contributing to high inflation rates, currency devaluation, and widespread public discontent. The economic hardship has led to protests and calls for reform within Iran, suggesting that sanctions can influence domestic political dynamics (Sangar, 2023; Arms Control Association, 2024).

On the other hand, evidence suggests that sanctions have not fundamentally altered Iran's commitment to its nuclear program. Instead of curbing its ambitions, Tehran has often responded to external pressure with defiance, continuing to advance its nuclear capabilities while framing its actions as a necessary response to perceived threats. This resilience highlights a critical limitation of sanctions: they may not effectively deter a state that views its nuclear program as vital for national security and regional influence (Mousavian & Mousavian, 2018; Fathollah-Nejad, 2014).

Moreover, the effectiveness of sanctions is further complicated by Iran's ability to adapt and find alternative economic partners, particularly among countries

that oppose U.S. policies. For instance, Iran has strengthened its economic ties with Russia and China, which have provided avenues for trade and investment despite Western sanctions (Sangar, 2023; Council on Foreign Relations, 2024).

While economic sanctions have had a profound impact on Iran's economy and have succeeded in creating domestic pressures for change, their overall effectiveness in altering Tehran's strategic calculus regarding its nuclear ambitions is limited. A comprehensive approach that combines sanctions with diplomatic engagement and regional cooperation may be necessary to achieve lasting solutions to Iran's nuclear issue (Arms Control Association, 2024; Soufan Center, 2022).

6.2 The Role of Non-Proliferation Treaties and Agreements

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) serves as a cornerstone for global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, aiming to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons while promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Established in 1968 and entered into force in 1970, the NPT is built on three main pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament, and the right to peacefully use nuclear energy. This section discusses the NPT's relevance in addressing Iran's nuclear program and its limitations in preventing state-level extortion.

The NPT is particularly relevant to Iran's situation as it is a signatory state, which obligates it to refrain from developing nuclear weapons while allowing for the development of civilian nuclear technology under international oversight. However, Iran's interpretation of its rights under the NPT has led to tensions with other signatories, particularly when its nuclear activities have raised suspicions about potential weaponization. The international community's concerns intensified following revelations about Iran's clandestine nuclear activities, leading to accusations that Tehran was using its NPT membership as a shield for its ambitions (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023; Iran Primer, 2020).

Despite the framework provided by the NPT, its effectiveness in preventing state-level extortion remains limited. The treaty lacks robust enforcement

mechanisms to compel compliance, relying instead on diplomatic negotiations and international pressure. This has been evident in the case of Iran, where prolonged negotiations have often resulted in temporary agreements without fully resolving underlying issues. The JCPOA attempted to bridge this gap; yet its fragility highlighted the challenges inherent in relying solely on diplomatic measures within the NPT framework (Arms Control Association, 2024; Wikipedia, 2024).

Furthermore, the NPT does not adequately address the complexities of regional security dynamics that influence states' decisions regarding nuclear armament. For instance, Iran's perception of external threats—particularly from Israel and the United States—fuels its nuclear ambitions and complicates efforts to achieve disarmament or non-proliferation goals. This dynamic underscores a critical limitation of the NPT: while it aims to prevent proliferation, it does not effectively mitigate the security concerns that drive states like Iran to pursue nuclear capabilities (Fathollah-Nejad, 2014; Mousavian & Mousavian, 2018).

In conclusion, while the NPT remains a vital instrument for promoting global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, its limitations in addressing state-level extortion are evident in the context of Iran's nuclear program. A more comprehensive approach that incorporates regional security considerations and strengthens enforcement mechanisms may be necessary to enhance the treaty's effectiveness in preventing further proliferation and ensuring compliance among member states (Arms Control Association, 2024; Council on Foreign Relations, 2023).

6.3 Other Relevant Agreements and Their Significance:

In addition to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), regional treaties and agreements play a crucial role in countering nuclear proliferation and coercion, particularly in the context of Iran's nuclear ambitions. One of the most significant proposals is the establishment of a Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ), which aims to eliminate nuclear weapons from the region and promote disarmament.

The concept of a Middle East NWFZ has gained traction as a potential mechanism for addressing security concerns related to Iran's nuclear program. Such an agreement would not only seek to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons but also foster a collaborative security environment among states in the region. By committing to non-proliferation, countries could work towards building trust and reducing tensions, which are often exacerbated by fears of Iranian expansionism and its nuclear capabilities (Arms Control Association, 2024).

However, the establishment of the Middle East NWFZ faces significant challenges. Key regional players, particularly Israel, have historically been reluctant to engage in discussions about disarmament due to security concerns stemming from hostile neighbors. Israel's undeclared nuclear arsenal complicates efforts to create a comprehensive agreement, as its participation would be essential for any meaningful progress toward denuclearization in the region (Wikipedia, 2024; Soufan Center, 2022).

Moreover, the lack of a unified approach among regional states regarding security issues further hampers the feasibility of such agreements. While some countries may support initiatives aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions, others may prioritize their own national security interests, leading to divergent strategies and outcomes (Fathollah-Nejad, 2014; Arms Control Association, 2024).

Another relevant agreement is the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which aims to ban all nuclear explosions globally. Although Iran has signed but not ratified the CTBT, its implementation could serve as a crucial step toward limiting nuclear capabilities in the region. The treaty's enforcement mechanisms could help monitor compliance and deter states from pursuing clandestine nuclear programs (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023; Wikipedia, 2024).

In conclusion, while regional treaties and agreements such as a potential Middle East NWFZ and the CTBT hold promises for countering nuclear proliferation and coercion, their effectiveness depends on overcoming significant political and security challenges. A collaborative approach that includes all relevant stakeholders is essential for fostering an environment conducive to disarmament and enhancing regional stability. Addressing these complexities requires not only

diplomatic engagement but also commitment from regional powers to prioritize collective security over individual ambitions (Arms Control Association, 2024; Soufan Center, 2022).

6.4 Case Study: Iran's Compliance with International Obligations

Monitoring and Verification of Iran's Nuclear Activities

The role of international bodies, particularly the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), is crucial in monitoring Iran's nuclear activities and countering its political manipulation. The IAEA is tasked with ensuring that nuclear programs are used exclusively for peaceful purposes and that member states comply with their obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In the context of Iran, the IAEA has been instrumental in verifying compliance with the terms set forth in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and assessing the overall status of Iran's nuclear program.

The IAEA employs a range of monitoring techniques, including on-site inspections, satellite imagery, and environmental sampling, to ensure transparency and accountability in Iran's nuclear activities. These measures are designed to detect any deviations from declared activities that could indicate attempts to develop nuclear weapons capabilities. For instance, since the implementation of the JCPOA in 2015, the IAEA has conducted regular inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities, providing critical data on uranium enrichment levels and stockpiles (Arms Control Association, 2024; IAEA, 2024).

However, the effectiveness of the IAEA's monitoring efforts has been challenged by political manipulation from Tehran. Iran has at times restricted access to certain sites or delayed inspections, raising concerns about its transparency and commitment to international agreements. Such actions have led to accusations that Iran is attempting to exploit ambiguities in the JCPOA framework to advance its nuclear capabilities while avoiding accountability (Albright et al., 2024; Soufan Center, 2022).

Additionally, the political context surrounding Iran's nuclear program complicates monitoring efforts. The withdrawal of the United States from the

JCPOA in 2018 and the subsequent reimposition of sanctions have escalated tensions between Iran and Western powers. In response, Iran has gradually reduced its compliance with the JCPOA, increasing uranium enrichment levels and limiting access for IAEA inspectors. This deterioration in cooperation poses significant challenges for effective monitoring and verification (IAEA, 2024; Albright et al., 2024).

While international bodies like the IAEA play a vital role in monitoring Iran's nuclear activities, their effectiveness is often undermined by Tehran's political maneuvers and restrictions on access. Strengthening international oversight mechanisms and fostering cooperation between Iran and monitoring agencies are essential for ensuring compliance with non-proliferation commitments and mitigating risks associated with potential nuclear weaponization (Arms Control Association, 2024; Soufan Center, 2022).

6.5 Assessing Iran's Adherence to International Agreements

Iran's track record on international agreements, particularly regarding its compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), has been scrutinized due to instances of non-compliance that have significant implications for regional and global security. Iran's adherence to international agreements has been inconsistent, marked by periods of compliance and non-compliance that have raised concerns among the international community. Under the NPT, Iran is obligated to refrain from developing nuclear weapons and to allow for inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). However, tensions have escalated due to allegations that Iran has engaged in activities inconsistent with its commitments, including the development of advanced enrichment capabilities and the construction of undisclosed facilities (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023; VCDNP, 2024).

The JCPOA, established in 2015, was intended to provide a framework for monitoring Iran's nuclear program while offering sanctions relief in exchange for

verifiable limits on its nuclear activities. Initially, Iran complied with the terms of the agreement, significantly reducing its stockpile of enriched uranium, and allowing extensive inspections by the IAEA. However, following the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018 and the reimposition of sanctions, Iran began to gradually scale back its compliance. This included exceeding enrichment limits and restricting access for IAEA inspectors, actions that have raised alarms among signatories and prompted calls for renewed diplomatic engagement (Arms Control Association, 2024; Soufan Center, 2022).

The implications of Iran's non-compliance extend beyond its immediate nuclear program. Such actions undermine trust in international agreements and complicate efforts to address broader security concerns in the region. The perception of a nuclear-armed Iran has heightened fears among neighboring states, leading them to reconsider their own security strategies and potentially pursue their own nuclear capabilities. This dynamic increases the risk of a regional arms race, exacerbating tensions and instability in an already volatile environment (Fathollah-Nejad, 2014; Mousavian & Mousavian, 2018).

Furthermore, Iran's non-compliance can embolden other states that may seek to challenge international norms regarding nuclear proliferation. If Iran perceives that it can evade consequences for its actions without significant repercussions, it may encourage similar behavior from other nations, undermining global non-proliferation efforts (VCDNP, 2024; Arms Control Association, 2024).

In conclusion, assessing Iran's adherence to international agreements reveals a complex landscape characterized by periods of compliance interspersed with significant violations. The implications for regional and global security are profound, necessitating a comprehensive approach that combines diplomatic engagement with robust verification mechanisms to ensure compliance and mitigate risks associated with nuclear proliferation.

7 Future View and Recommendations:

The recent collapse of Iran's regional project, epitomized by the disintegration of its allied axis, the defeat of its proxy states, and the flight of key figures such as Bashar al-Assad, highlights the unsustainability of Tehran's nuclear brinkmanship and

expansionist agenda. These events underline the failure of Iran's strategy to maintain influence through destabilization and coercion, exposing the fragility of its regional alliances. Moving forward, a comprehensive, multifaceted approach is essential to mitigate the risks posed by Iran's nuclear ambitions and its destabilizing role in the Middle East.

1. Revitalizing Diplomatic Engagement

- Reinstating frameworks like the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) or developing a broader agreement that addresses:
 - Iran's ballistic missile program.
 - Its support for proxy conflicts and destabilizing activities.
- Ensure Iran receives security assurances, tied to strict compliance with international non-proliferation norms.

2. Enhancing Regional Collaboration

- Establish a **Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ)** through United Nations-led initiatives, offering economic and security guarantees to key stakeholders, including Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Iran.
- Promote regional dialogue through security forums to:
 - Build trust among adversaries.
 - Address mutual security concerns.
 - Facilitate coordinated measures against extremism and nuclear proliferation.

3. Strengthening International Oversight

- Expand the mandate of the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** to ensure:
 - Continuous, real-time monitoring of Iran's nuclear activities.
 - Immediate inspections to prevent clandestine operations.
- Leverage **advanced technologies**, such as satellite surveillance and blockchain tracking, to enhance transparency and accountability.

4. Implementing Targeted Sanctions and Economic Strategies

- Enforce a **unified global sanctions framework** to:

- Penalize non-compliance without exacerbating humanitarian challenges.
- Tie sanctions relief to **verifiable milestones** of Iranian compliance.
- Encourage Iran's participation in regional trade and energy projects, contingent upon its adherence to disarmament and nuclear transparency commitments.

5. Addressing Proxy Conflicts and State-Sponsored Terrorism

- Resolve key regional conflicts, such as in Yemen and Syria, to diminish Iran's reliance on proxy warfare as a tool of influence.
- Strengthen arms embargoes and impose **targeted sanctions** on Iranian-backed networks while enhancing the counterterrorism capacities of affected states.

6. Building Regional Alliances

- Reinforce **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** defense initiatives to provide a unified deterrent against Iranian threats.
- Promote confidence-building measures between Israel and Arab states under multilateral frameworks to foster a cohesive regional security architecture.

The recent political upheavals, including the defeat of Iran's allied regimes and the flight of figures like Bashar al-Assad, signal the failure of Tehran's expansionist project and its reliance on nuclear brinkmanship. A robust, integrated strategy that combines diplomatic, regional, and international mechanisms is essential to curb Iran's destabilizing activities. By addressing its security concerns while ensuring strict oversight of its nuclear program, the international community can prevent further proliferation, foster regional stability, and lay the groundwork for a cooperative and peaceful Middle East.

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