

Nuclear Armed Iran: Implication for Middle East Security**Kasoro Kelvin OVEFIA ¹⁾, Abraham E. ORHERO ^{2)*}**

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Abstract

This study investigates the implication of nuclear armed Iran on the Middle East security. The Middle East issues have become more interconnected and heated international debate, connecting the region's security system to the international security system. Nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament in the Middle East are a sine qua non for security and stability in the region. Addressing them is of paramount importance and urgency if further breakouts are to be prevented. This has to be done in a comprehensive manner without prejudice or preference. The renewed JCPOA negotiations should be a stepping stone in the direction of establishing a Nuclear Weapon Free Middle East. This study adopted the historical research design and was anchored on deterrence theory. The study revealed among other things that deterrence and regional hegemony are two major factors that make the nuclear weapons attractive for the Islamic Republic. The study concludes that the current asymmetry of power distribution in the Middle East has pushed Iran towards the development of a nuclear weapon capability. It is the most effective way to guarantee the security and survival of the regime and state and recommends among others that Iran-US relations matters most and if they remain enemies, unsubstantial improvements in international relations in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East are unlikely to take place. The UN should be more proactive and assertive in supporting efforts aimed at restoring peace and stability to the Middle East, including a possible regional security framework.

Keywords: Nuclear armed, Middle East, security, deterrence theory, Iran

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INTRODUCTION

The Middle East has become the focal point in global politics because of Iranian nuclear issue. The concerns on the Iranian nuclear programme are also shared by some of the other regional countries like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Kuwait besides United States, Israel and some of the European countries. The expansion of nuclear arsenals and nuclear energy programmes in the Middle East, in the absence of security architecture, will further pave the way for terrorists to access nuclear weapons and materials (Edelman & Denis, 2013). Nuclear reserves and nuclear power plants increase the risk of internal and external threats through diversion, miscalculations, sabotage and nuclear incidents. Nuclear weapons, which are meant to promote security for governments, are increasingly becoming a threat to international security (Chomsky, 2007). Hence, it is important to address the threat posed by identifying the dangerous elements for nuclear security in the Middle East. The horizontal and vertical expansion of weapons and nuclear power plants in the Middle East has increased the perception of threats in the region. Nuclear security is vulnerable in the Middle East and it has contributed to the delivery of geopolitical concepts. Israel has widespread nuclear weapons and its nuclear arsenal is expanding with the US support, which has created major concerns for the Middle East. Saudi Arabia has also expressed its desire to achieve nuclear capability (Jordan, 2020).

Particularly, Israel has stated that Iran's nuclear programme poses an existential threat to Israel and that they have a military option to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities. (Kang, 2007; Lupovici, 2010; Khnat, 2017). An Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities may destabilize the entire region. This could jeopardize the security of the region and negatively affect the oil market and, consequently, the global economy. While increasing the willingness, readiness and determination of Iran to protect their national interests and their security, such statements will aggravate the instability crisis throughout the region (Dalay, 2021). Iran's nuclear ambitions have posed a strategic challenge to the regional security order with international implications. The United States, more than any other United Nations Security Council permanent member, was convinced that Iranian goal is to acquire nuclear weapons with the objective to establish regional predominance. On the other hand, Iranian stance remains that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes which solely aimed at meeting energy requirements (Solomon, 2012).

In fact, Iranian possession of the dual-use technology has posed real challenges for the non-proliferation regime and stability of the region. Today the issue has become more complex because of the interests and concerns for the regional and international players. Serious tensions between Iran and US between Iran and the Gulf states, especially with Saudi Arabia, at the regional level, shaped the contours of the Middle Eastern politics (Tabatabai, 2020). The US withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in 2018, has made Iran more suspicious about its behaviour and resultantly it has accelerated uranium enrichment and started bulging the terms of the deal. European states, who were part of the deal, continued to assuage Iranian fears in the aftermath of Trump's withdrawal decision (Taha, 2021). The assassination of the top Iranian nuclear Scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh in 2020 – ostensibly by the Israeli or American intelligence agencies – may not significantly impact the development of the programme, but has serious implications for European efforts to address the Iranian nuclear issue. Joe Biden's victory gave a good amount of hope to the Iranians about the revival of the deal followed by easing of the sanctions, renewed Europeans' optimism about the Iranian nuclear programme (Norman, 2021). Therefore, this study attempts to examine the contours of a nuclear armed Iran and its implication for Middle East security

LITERATURE REVIEW

Origin and Developmental Process of Iranian Nuclear Programmeme

Under Shah, Iran embarked on a series of controversial nuclear projects that, from 1974 to 1978, relied on aid for Iran from the president of the Atomic Energy Organization, the United States and Europe. Iran was already conducting atomic research and teaching at Tehran University when the NPT came into force on March, 1970 (Akbar, 1987 cited in Einhorn, 2014). The work focused on a five-megawatt research reactor provided by the United States, which began operations in 1967. By the mid-1970s, Iran had launched a comprehensive nuclear energy programmeme. In 1974, Shah set a target of generating about 23,000,000 megawatts of electricity from nuclear power plants within twenty years. Many agreements were reached between Iran and nuclear suppliers in Europe and the United States. Iran signed an agreement with the Kraftwerk Union (KWU) to build a 2,012-megawatt reactor in Bushehr (Zakaria, 2008; Terrill, 2012). Talks were held with a French company Framemate for two additional nine hundred MW reactors (Ramon, 2021)). In 1974, Iran has purportedly put 1 billion out of a European-possessed French uranium improvement plant, on the off chance that it is a European consortium. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 halted this work for quite a while. The war with Iraq, which began in 1980, ate up assets and hurt Iran's present nuclear establishment. Two force reactors were being worked on in Bushehr that impacted a couple of times (Quillen, 2002) after which Siemens abandoned the project.

By the early extensive era of 1990s, as Iran pulled again from the war with Iraq, its atomic programmeme was indeed pushed forward with the assistance of Masco, Beijing and Islamabad. With China, Iran stamped two shows on atomic facilitated exertion in 1985 and again in 1990 (Zhao, 2019). In 1995, Iran denoted a demonstration of participation with Russia to complete the progression of a reactor at Bushehr and perhaps to flexibly a uranium upgrade plant. Government and illegal bargains struck by Iran during the 1990s empowered it to put significant critical advancement in its indigenous atomic attempts. By 2003, when the scope of its atomic programmeme turned out to be clear, Iran started to have some expertise in making enhanced uranium one of the substances that could be utilized to fuel atomic weapons. Progress has been made in acing innovation (Brewer, 2021), since a significant number of its atomic tests were in violation of an assessment with the IAEA, Iran had to give some new data about the activity and explain its purpose. Iran's clarifications, alongside the result of the IAEA assessment, were published in June 2003 report by the organization (Waltz, 2012).

The Iranian nuclear programmeme is of a dual-use nature. The complexity of dual-use technology generates uncertainty about its potential use. It is declared by the Iranian authorities that its nuclear programmeme is solely aiming for civilian purposes, but the international community alleges, with technical evidence, that it has been trying to develop nuclear devices. The possibility of Iran's struggle to develop or acquire such capability is considered real. Theoretically, it is believed that there are three basic components of a potential nuclear weapons programmeme; weapons-grade enriched uranium or plutonium, a sophisticated delivery system in the form of missiles, and the technology to transform the enriched uranium or plutonium into warheads that can be delivered. The international community is mainly convinced that Iran has shown the will and capacity to achieve advancements in all these capabilities, and hence has a clear intention of developing nuclear weapons (Yaphe, 2010).

According to Tehsin (2017) here are varieties of evidence regarding the nuclear capability of Iran. Iran had failed to provide the details of its uranium import in 1991. It subsequently provided inadequate information that can be regarded as misgivings and concealment of the facts regarding

possession and storage in undeclared locations. It is viewed as contrary to its commitments under International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) safeguards Agreement. France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the European Union (E3+1) and Iran debated at length in 2003 in order to address the nuclear related issues at the Natanz nuclear reactor. It was agreed to cease development of the centrifuges at the nuclear facility. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as the President in office – a conservative leader – chose the path again by which Iran's activities were already viewed with suspicion, even before the election, as its experiments to extract polonium-210 were highly likely to be used for the purpose of making weapons. The IAEA concerns were declared in its report in 2005 based on their assumptions of enrichment (Thomson, 2014). Nuclear installations like the centrifuge workshops are supervised and guarded by the Iranian defence ministry. According to the Telegraph report in June 2006, Iran had a secret project called Zirzamin designed for the acquisition and development of weapons' grade uranium in underground secret laboratories under the operational command of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) (Takeyh, 2021).

Un-Nisa, Mustafa, Malik and Wakil (2020) pointed out that In 2009, a nuclear facility was unearthed at Fordow in Qom province that houses 3000 centrifuges and has the capability and capacity to produce weapons-grade uranium. Furthermore, Iran has constructed a 54000 centrifuges uranium enrichment facility at Natanz, a heavy water reactor at Arak, and has also developed sophisticated laser-equipment for an enrichment facility near Lashkarabad city. All this shows that Iran wants to develop an indigenous fuel cycle which is regarded as an important ingredient needed to develop nuclear weapons. Overall, Iran has installed first-generation centrifuges with greater output rate at Natanz enrichment facility to enhance its enrichment capacity. The Arak heavy water research facility is believed to be similar in size to any other reactor used by Israel, India and Pakistan. These facilities could be used to acquire enriched plutonium for military purposes. But these are assumptions on the bases of speculation and calculations of international media and intelligence reports (Waltz, 2009).

Motives behind Iran's Nuclear Ambitions

The biggest motivation behind the development of nuclear weapons' capability is addressing the security concerns of a state. If a state feels insecure in a regional and international hostile environment, and if it can, it will try to acquire nuclear devices. In an extremely threatened regional security environment it may see nuclear capability as its only defence. Another significant motivation can be the acquisition of prestige domestically and status and influence externally (Einhorn, 2014). Ibrahim (2021) posits that if prestige is a declining factor in nuclear weapon acquisition, influence will remain important. The perception of threat by a state from the neighbours in a competitive regional strategic matrix play a crucial role in the acquisition of nuclear weapons and it had been the main cause for the nuclear proliferation during the Cold War. Besides security model, there is the norms model (which notes that the states pursue nuclear weapons in order to achieve prestige and address normative concerns such as by the United Kingdom and France). Furthermore, a domestic politics model defines states that pursue nuclear devices in order to assuage domestic public opinion (Hussain, 2022).

To Jordan (2020), the security model of the acquisition of nuclear weapon is evident in the thinking of Iranian decision-making circles. They perceived grave security threats from Israel and United States. Although, Tehran leadership claims that their programmeme is not intended for nuclear weapons but for peaceful civilian purposes. Yet in extended regional hostile environment nuclear weapons' option for a state like Iran would be a rational choice, as it could not win a strategic arms race in the region with a feeble economy due to sanctions. Israel's nuclear weapons and the Gulf States' strategic partnership with the US, their recent normalization with Israel and their massive arms build-up might force Iran to think in terms of establishing a nuclear deterrence. Iranians may think that deterrence and the fear of nuclear massive retaliation would stop the aggressive

tendencies of its multiple adversaries in the region. This paradoxical situation has aggravated the threat perceptions of the regional heavyweights, especially Saudi Arabia, which in turn might be developing or purchasing nuclear technology, concerning Iran's motivations in the Middle East (Jafari, 2021).

Huwaitin (2015) pointed out that Iran's goals to acquire nuclear weapons would not be different from those of other potential nuclear weapons states. Iranian policy makers might have been convinced that nuclear weapons capability would give them an edge over potential adversaries and this non-conventional superiority will satisfy their security needs. Iran may also utilize this superiority as a means to establish hegemony over the region. Iran's quest for a nuclear programme may have several reasons, such as, those related to the unequal treatment of weak states in international non-proliferation regimes, by the nuclear suppliers' group and by the nuclear weapons states' hypocritical and dual behaviour. Iranian ambition is equally important for its requirement of meeting energy needs and diversifying energy resources. It is believed that the alternative energy generated through nuclear power would somehow lessen the issues of obtaining energy from fossil fuels, as price fluctuation in the fossil energy creates pressure on the energy production and supply. Bugos (2019) is convinced regarding the economic rationale of Iranian nuclear development that low-cost and clean energy consideration is one of the basic motivations behind its nuclear power strategy.

Some other researchers consider that prestige is one of the main factors behind Iranian nuclear ambitions. Iran has long cherished a rich history animated with the conquests and greatness of its empires. In both the pre-Islamic and Islamic eras, Iran had a great experience of Persian imperialism. The Achaemenid Empire, Cyrus the Great in the pre-Islamic era and several kings and sultans of the Islamic era give a unique sense of dignity to the Iranians. Interestingly, the governments after the Iranian revolution allow some legendary and traditional celebrations, for Iranians do possess a sense of honour vis-à-vis their past (Posen, 2009; Thomson, 2014; Blumberg, 2022). For example, the theocratic governments in Iran discourage citizens to publicize the celebration of Cyrus the Great Day on October; however, Iranians along with many political figures do support the memorial days on the basis of civilization pride. Iran still pursues glory and prestige and considers itself to be the custodian of millennia old traditions. The Iranian nuclear programme can not only connect with prestige but may also give them a chance to regain their lost glory – as a Persian pride of Islamic identity. Patrikarakos argues that Iran's nuclear power status can give it a sense of dignity and somehow a prestige level parallel to the nuclear powers of the world and its contemporaries. He further notes that regardless of the regime type and the leadership, from the Shah to Rouhani, has attached power, prestige and progress with nuclear capability (Huang, 2016).

Another important factor that significantly explains Iranian nuclear ambitions is its ideology. Since Iranian revolution every successive government has followed its revolutionary strategy that is relatively fixated to Iranian culture with divinity. Historically, revolutionary notions call for change in the global pattern of relationship between the states and also for the renewed political, social and economic trends and structures (Bugos, 2019). According to this perspective, Iran holds a sceptical view towards western powers and regards their selective approach towards Iran due to its noncompliance of toeing US policies. Iran has a particularly pessimistic view of the double standards of European states, the United States, in dealing with the issue of acquisition and development of uranium enrichment. Iran complains about unfair treatment over this issue, as compared to other potential nuclear states, such as Israel. The ideas of independence, justice, fair play, and anti-imperialism and hegemonic have helped shape the ideological orientation of the Iranian conservative leadership that has resultantly given a new purpose and direction to Iran's nuclear policy (Aljazeera, 2021).

Tehran's leadership seems convinced that Iranian nuclearization would address its security concerns and would provide it a momentous status in the international community – a significance ideological importance according to Islamic revolution's principles. The Iranian supreme leader is also convinced that the nuclear deterrence only has the potential to secure the Islamic revolution in Iran from the designs of enemies like United States, Israel, and others. Khamenei reiterated that Iranian nuclear capability will strengthen the hands of God's soldiers and would serve as deterrence to the enemies of God (Economist, 2021). Regional security environment and disparities of power, along with the major powers' influence and presence in the neighborhood have provided Iran the rationale to pursue nuclear deterrent capability. Bowen and Brewer emphasized the external dimensions of security as the vital motivation behind Iran's intentions to acquire nuclear weapons capability. According to them Iran's external threats are in abundance and foreign interference and potential threat perception of external aggression have made the leadership concerned about its survival, especially about regime survival. Bahgat also portrays the same point of view, that it is the security matrix in the region that has played a crucial role in the thinking of Iranian policy making circles that indigenous nuclear weapons capability would satisfy their security needs (Hobbs & Mathew, 2012).

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)

Geographic realities give the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member-states high stakes in the outcome of nuclear brinkmanship between the US and Iran. Amid the ongoing uncertainty over the future of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly referred to as the Iranian nuclear deal, there are serious dilemmas that Arab Gulf monarchies must consider when contemplating the JCPOA's status? At this juncture, GCC states are preparing for future scenarios whereby talks in Vienna fail to revive the nuclear accord which the Trump administration unilaterally withdrew from in May 2018. Although the different GCC states have their unique perspectives on Iran-related issues, including the JCPOA, there will be a general view in the Gulf that engaging Iran should continue regardless of the nuclear deal's fate (Krzyaniak, 2021). In fact, this view has strengthened considerably because of the uncertainties over the longer-term reliability of the US partnership, which has heightened awareness in Gulf capitals that they cannot automatically rely upon US support come what may. Additionally, there is a belief that even if the JCPOA is reconstituted via negotiations in Vienna, the GCC states and Iran should engage in follow-up talks to resolve non-nuclear issues that have fueled tension between Arab Gulf monarchies and the Islamic Republic (Lubold, Youssef & Gordon, 2021).

Throughout 2021, analysts have grown increasingly pessimistic about the prospects for a JCPOA revival. One factor has been the election of hardliner Ebrahim Raisi in the Iranian presidential election in June 2021. With a new administration in power in Tehran, the dynamics vis-à-vis the nuclear accord has shifted. This is not to say that Raisi would not like the JCPOA reconstituted. But he and those in his inner circle will be less willing than the previous administration to make concessions to the US amid nuclear talks, especially since doing so would likely damage them politically within the Islamic Republic (Krzyaniak, 2021). At least it is safe to say that any concessions from Iran will probably come at a slower rate now that hardliners have essentially taken full control of the Iranian state.

Another factor is the Biden administration's inability to assuage Iranian concerns about the United States ending its commitment to the 2015 deal in the post-Biden era. Given how much the accord has become a partisan issue in Washington, such concerns are valid. Officials in Tehran are justifiably nervous about making concessions on their side to revive the JCPOA if a Republican president enters the Oval Office in January 2025 only to trash the accord as did Trump in 2018. One way to overcome this would be for the Senate to ratify the JCPOA as a treaty; for example, as it did the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992. However, this would

require the support of 67 Senators, which is unrealistic, and so even a revived US commitment to the JCPOA would leave it vulnerable if the Biden administration, like the Obama administration, classified it 'merely' as a nonbinding political commitment (Mirza, Abbas & Qaisrani, 2021).

Within this context, what is more likely is a less-for-less approach in which Iran makes smaller and more short-term concessions and the US provides Tehran with smaller degrees of sanctions relief than what would be feasible with the accord being fully salvaged. With each passing day, the window of opportunity is narrowing as the US is moving closer to the eventual post-Biden era, which could begin politically as early as November 2022 should the Republicans gain control of the House of Representatives and/or the Senate (Krzyaniak, 2021). This means that any short-term deal which could benefit Iran would be guaranteed for an increasingly shorter span of time, decreasing Tehran's incentives to negotiate a revival of the JCPOA. Regardless of how talks unfold in Vienna and whether the JCPOA can be saved, GCC states will have different reactions, which is consistent with the post-1979 history of Arab Gulf monarchies lacking any consensus towards the Islamic Republic. Threat perceptions of Iran vary from one GCC member to the other especially over whether Iran is seen as an internal or external threat. Although no GCC state welcomes Tehran's sponsorship of militant Shi'a groups in the Middle East such as Lebanese Hezbollah and the Fatemiyoun Brigade, Arab Gulf governments are divided in terms of their strategies and tactics for addressing the alleged Iranian threat (Mohammed & Moorthy, 2020).

On one side there is Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar. These Arab Gulf monarchies view Iran mostly through a commercial set of lenses. Kuwait City, Muscat, and Doha tend to understand the most "malign" aspects of Tehran's foreign policy as mostly a regional (not so much an internal) challenge, although Kuwait does have a sizeable Shi'a community which is nevertheless far better integrated than their counterparts in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia (Krzyaniak, 2021). In Oman and Qatar's cases, the ruling governments have never had any serious problems with their country's Shi'a minorities, and Kuwait's Shi'a citizens have been tolerated and have lived in harmony with their Sunni counterparts since the Iraqi occupation (during which they proved their loyalty by forming the bedrock for local resistance movements, following the chaotic years of the 1980s when the Iranian Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War increased Kuwait's sectarian temperatures) (Mirza, Abbas & Qaisrani, 2021). The inclusion of Kuwaiti, Omani, and Qatari Shi'a into their countries' political and economic systems have made these GCC states far less vulnerable to any potential sectarian meddling by their Persian neighbor to the East. This factor contributes to their view of the Iranian regime as not posing any threat from within (Krzyaniak, 2021).

Furthermore, economic opportunities for the Arabian sheikdoms would open with the unfreezing of Iran's relations with the global economy. Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar would be keen to capitalize on such a scenario under the JCPOA's possible revival. In terms of security, the JCPOA is the most realistic path to peaceful resolution of the standoff over Iran's nuclear programme according to conventional wisdom in Kuwait City, Muscat, and Doha (Oswald, 2021). These three GCC members strongly supported the Obama administration's efforts to negotiate the nuclear accord. Although they avoided directly criticizing the Trump administration in May 2018, they did not join the three other members of the Council in praising the US for withdrawing from the historic 2015 accord. These three GCC states, which strive for a workable geopolitical balance between Saudi Arabia and Iran, have unique interests at stake when it comes to their relations with Tehran. For Kuwait, good relations between its different communities (including the Shi'a minority) contribute to its desire to maintain a healthy relationship with Iran (Mirza, Abbas & Qaisrani, 2021).

Oman and Iran have historical ties - strengthened by the Shah of Iran's support for Sultan Qaboos amid the Dhofar Rebellion during the 1970s and the two countries share ownership of the Strait of Hormuz. Muscat has long seen Iran as a regional force that can help Oman maintain greater autonomy from Riyadh, which the smaller GCC states have worried about given Saudi Arabia's

history of not always respecting the sovereignty of its Arab Gulf neighbors. Qatar and Iran share the world's largest natural gas field South Pars/North Dome, which is largely responsible for Doha's prosperity and naturally gives Qatari officials incentive to maintain healthy, respectful, and working relations with Tehran to be pragmatic, even if Doha objects to aspects of Iran's foreign policy such as supporting the Syrian government and Yemen's Houthi rebels (Sagan, 2009).

However, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE (specifically Abu Dhabi, not Dubai) see Iran through a specific prism that is oriented around constant security dilemmas. To these countries' leaders, the Islamic Republic is a predatory state which must be countered by Arab states and others in the international community, most importantly the United States (Oswald, 2021). Historically, officials in Manama and Riyadh have also seen post-1979 Iran as a threat to internal security by dint of perceived Iranian 'meddling' with the loyalties of their domestic Shi'a communities. These Gulf monarchies viewed the Trump administration's maximum pressure agenda favorably, despite their understandable concerns about the anti-Iranian campaign spiraling out of control (Mirza, Abbas & Qaisrani, 2021). Today officials in Abu Dhabi, Manama, and Riyadh share concerns about a possible JCPOA revival. Their fears are that the nuclear accord being salvaged would embolden Tehran in terms of its regional foreign policy, particularly with respect to its arming and financing of non-state actors in Arab states like Iraq and Yemen and ballistic missile activity. The easing of sanctions would give Iran's economy a major boost, strengthening the government-to-citizen social contract inside the Islamic Republic while making the leadership more confident abroad, according to those most concerned about the JCPOA's potential revival later this year or in 2022 (Hussain, 2022).

To be sure, no GCC member wants to see a new war erupt in the Persian Gulf, especially if it entailed Iranian attacks against GCC states as revenge for their (outright or implied) support for possible United States and/or Israeli military action against the Islamic Republic. That said, officials in Abu Dhabi, Manama, and Riyadh would be more supportive of United States policies that maintain pressure on Iran and force the country into staying in relative isolation (Mirza, Abbas & Qaisrani, 2021). The GCC members which take a more moderate and pragmatic stance on Iran-Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar-would see a continuation of such United States pressure (sanctions, military threats, etc.) as increasing the risks of a military confrontation in the first place, thus giving them ample reason to facilitate any development that can lower the temperatures in United States - Iran relations. In any event, all the GCC states (except for Bahrain) have recently indicated a desire to engage Tehran more deeply irrespective of the JCPOA's fate. The key difference among the monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula is between those which would like to negotiate with the Iranians while they are under Washington's pressure and those which believe such pressure being lifted would make them safer. Regardless of what transpires in Vienna, it is safe to bet that Iran-related issues such as the nuclear accord will continue to expose major fault lines within the GCC (Mirza, Abbas & Qaisrani, 2021).

Moreover, although the provision of a United States nuclear security guarantee to the Kingdom may ultimately prove necessary – and is preferable to the emergence of a nuclear-armed Saudi Arabia or deeper nuclear cooperation between Riyadh and Islamabad – this outcome is still far from desirable. It would keep the United States bogged down in costly defense commitments in the Gulf for decades to come, entrenching ties to the least democratic countries in a democratizing region and limiting Washington's ability to strategically pivot toward Asia. Consequently, the best course of action for the United States remains a policy of preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons in the first place, while also considering options for mitigating the prospects for Saudi proliferation should prevention efforts fail (Oswald, 2021).

Implications of Nuclear-Armed Iran on the Middle East

Iran Nuclear Deal marks a sudden change in a number of factors, not just on the international scale but importantly, it casts a great shadow of alterations in the regional power dynamics. Middle East is a volatile region and vulnerable to internal and external influences; the deal has caused mixed reaction. There is alarm, shock and anger, for some it is a matter of contentment and in a manner of speaking, a vibe of supremacy. But one thing is for sure, the visible marks of the great many implications it brings with, this deal is surely going to reshape some of the interactions between states inside the region as well as policies among them, which will ultimately develop into new realities for the region. Perhaps these will then bring some changes to how the international order looks upon Middle East and Iran (Saunders, 2013).

Former Iranian President, Hashmi Rafsanjani, welcomed the Nuclear Deal stating that 'America wants to distance itself from the past the US so far has acted fairly well up till now in the nuclear negotiations' (Fraser, 2015). Iranian Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif even went further to offer nuclear cooperation to the Arab States suggesting to create a regional Nazir Hussain and Sannia Abdullah platform to discuss regional security issue and to resolve them peacefully. He stated that 'regional platform would not only address Syria and Yemen but civil nuclear cooperation including central nuclear enrichment to general nuclear fuel, which could be done through technical collaboration between the Islamic countries of the region (Takeyh, 2021). But Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, denounced the deal as 'historic mistake' which makes the region and world at large more dangerous (Ephron, 2020). Saudi King Salman raised concerns over the verification and lifting of sanctions. The US Secretary of State, John Kerry did try to assuage the fears of Arab States in lieu of strict compliance and verifications (Katouzian, 2020).

Therefore, the implications are not just insinuations for the diplomatic front but also for the strategic, geopolitical as well as economic factors. Yet it cannot be pre-determined that how much some of the states will be effected in this scenario, because there are factors involved which can make diplomatic relations as well as break them apart. But almost all the Middle Eastern states will be in a way influenced because most of the states have a pattern of interactions with each other. Especially with those states which are considered to wield power in most of the Middle Eastern dynamics, like Israel, Iran and Saudi Arabia. There is no doubt that it was an exceptional deal forged between uncommon parties and it will bring some unusual end results (Shay, 2018a).

Impact of Iranian Nuclear Weapon on Israel

Dan Gellerman, the ambassador of Israel to the United States has said in October, 2006 that Israel warmly welcomes the Security Council's disapproval of Ahmadinejad's comments by saying that the statement of the president of Iran was just not a threat but also a very dangerous threat for all of the Middle East. Israel intends to completely destroy Iranian nuclear projects. Israeli policymakers have repeatedly reiterated that Iran will recognize early removal and that serious steps will need to be taken to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear capability. The administrations of Israel have called on the global community to yield action against Iran before it is very late the people of Israel and military administrations have assumed that Iran is a serious risk to Israel. Everyone agrees that Iran's nuclear ambitions and its ballistic missiles, equipped with nuclear warheads, will fundamentally change Israel's national security. With a nuclear Iran as a key target, Israeli defense and military officials are more frustrated than their civilian counterparts (Un-Nisa, Mustafa, Malik & Wakil, 2020).

Ahmanigadeh said that Israel needs to be erased from the map, or if Europeans are honest and have good intensions with the people of Israel, they must give them some of their own area, such as America, Austria and some others to the Israeli people so that the people of Israel will be able to build their new state in Europe and there will be no problem to fight against the territory of Israel. This is the first time in the history of world; traditional military capabilities Israel will not

be enough to threaten the existence of a Jewish state. If Iran in the future proves to test its nuclear capabilities, for example its own atomic expedient, it will propose Israel numerous decisions (Shay, 2018b). Israel can demonstrate its nuclear power by revealing its weapons. The problem is that Iran has learned from this and dismantled its nuclear facilities. Additionally, many Iranian places are hidden underground. Israel will reduce or delay some of Iran's nuclear programmeme, but it has not done so. Israel can negotiate with Tehran as did in the past. Basically, the issue is that Iranians do not trust Israel's right to live in Israel and that Iranian government does not open their doors to talk of extremism (Tehsin, 2017). Israel looks to announce dangerous ramifications for Iran if it openly crosses the atomic threshold and uses Weapons of Mass Devastation. Such a declaration would permit Israel to keep up its atomic transparency without its own notice (Sokolski, 2006 cited in Shay, 2018a).

Waltz, one of the icons of international relations theory, published a short essay suggesting that nuclear-armed Iran would most likely restore stability to the Middle East. In his view, Israel's regional nuclear monopoly has long fueled instability in the Middle East. It is Israel's nuclear arsenal, not Iran's desire for one, which has contributed most to the current crisis. Power, after all, begs to be balanced. He added, if Iran goes nuclear, Israel and Iran will deter each other, as nuclear power always has. In fact, Iran's nuclear power would reduce imbalances in military power and paves the way for more regional and international stability, not less (Waltz, 2012). In the same vein, Davin Hagerty concluded that there is no more ironclad law in international relations theory than this, nuclear states do not fight wars with each other (Sagan, 2009). Because in a nuclear war, there will be no ultimate winner or loser. Both sides consider it mutual suicidal move and the mentality of MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction) prevents from a nuclear conflagration (Waltz, 2012).

However, these conclusions seem to ignore the Cuban missile crisis, when the Soviet Union and the United States apparently came close to a nuclear confrontation. Furthermore, during the Kargil fighting between India and Pakistan, two nuclear states, the former went to "Readiness State 3," which means that warheads were prepared for placement on delivery vehicles, and the later state apparently took similar steps (Waltz, 2009). These examples suggest that although the possibility of a nuclear war is very low, however, it should not be regarded as zero. Scott Sagan believes that future military crisis between India and Pakistan is likely to be nuclear crisis (Sagan, 2009). The author's view is that a nuclear-armed Iran will not bring stability to the Middle East; even it can add fuel to the current unresolved conflict for several reasons.

First, at the heart of the views of the Waltz school is a simple extrapolation from the non-use of nuclear weapons in the Soviet-US context to the future non-use of those weapons in other regions. Each nuclear state presents a distinct case and generalization about that without considering their particularities might be risky and misleading. The specific characteristics of each region and country, together with a large number of continuously changing variables, make any attempt to derive a norm extremely difficult and largely inaccurate (Dokos, 2014). There is one important structural difference between the new nuclear states and their cold war predecessors: Just as each new child is born into a different family, each new nuclear state is born into a different nuclear system in which nuclear state influence each other's behavior (Sagan, 2009). Given that the Middle East is unrivalled for long-standing conflict, irreconcilable disputes, feelings of distrust and hatred, and recurrent wars (Waltz, 2009), it does not make much sense to compare it to other regions in the world.

Second, Waltz failed to consider that the Iranian government has historically preferred to confront Israel through its network of proxies such as Hizballah and Hamas, and nuclear weapons are unlikely to change this policy (Nader, 2013). In this case, a nuclear-armed Iran will not be a force for stability. Historical evidence from the Cold War suggests that the war between two

superpowers were not that cold; it turned into hot conflicts in many countries. Since the United States and the Soviet Union were afraid of mutual assured destruction, they did not initiate any war directly; however, they fought so many wars through proxies. Since 1945, the proxy war has been a perpetual element of modern warfare and will continue to be so (Mumford, 2013).

The end of the Second World War ushered in the nuclear era, starkly accentuating the risks associated with going to war or challenging the security of a nuclear nation. This nuclear weapon-induced stability/instability paradox arguably caused nations to find alternative outlets for their strategic ambitions, where the consequences were contained yet the rewards tangible. The global reach of the Cold War soon demonstrated, in the mid-twentieth century, that engagement in proxy wars was a convenient means by which the superpowers states could exert their influence and attempt to maximize their interests in parts of the Third World, while simultaneously reducing the risk of conflict escalation (Shay, 2018a). The Cold War remained 'cold' for a reason; the emergence of nuclear weapons had ensured that 'hot' wars between superpowers would have such unparalleled consequences as to make direct conflict between the two morally unthinkable (Mumford, 2013).

It is beyond doubt that a nuclear-armed Iran will keep sponsoring its affiliated proxies across the Middle East. These proxies and Israel are most likely to keep challenging and inflicting pains upon each other in every opportunity that presents itself. Third, far from restoration of stability, it is highly likely that a nuclear-armed Iran would embolden Iran's network of proxies which could adopt a more confrontational approach towards Israel (Hobbs & Moran, 2012). From Tel Aviv's perspective, an Iranian nuclear capability could negate Israel's overwhelming military superiority over Hizballah, Hamas and other potential adversaries. An Iranian nuclear weapons capability that would serve as an "umbrella" for its allies could significantly hamper Israel's military operations in the Palestinian territories, the Levant, and the wider Middle East (Nader, 2013). In an August 2012 interview, Ehud Barak said "if we will need to take action against Hezbollah and a nuclear Iran would declare that an attack on Hezbollah constitute an attack on Iran, what we shall do then?" Barak further stated that non-state actors cannot be deterred in the way that countries can exert deterrence against one another (Eiran & Martin, 2013) because nuclear weapons cannot be used against guerrillas (Ayoob, 2014). The implications of such a development would be much graver than now.

Fourth, although Iran with nuclear capability will not welcome a nuclear conflagration with any country including Israel, however it will be emboldened enough to start a direct conventional war with Israel (Hobbs & Moran, 2012). The 1999 Kargil conflict demonstrated that nuclear-armed states can fight wars (Sagan, 2009). This concern has already been expressed by some Western politicians. During the war between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006, President Bush averred that the event would have been much more dangerous had Iran possessed nuclear weapons. His implication was that Iran would have been more inclined to involve itself directly in the crisis. At that point, Iran's leadership would shelter behind its nuclear deterrent. Great powers would be afraid to attack Iran directly, especially to invade Iran, if they faced the risk of nuclear escalation. Therefore, Iran would be free to do anything from meddling in the internal affairs of other countries to invading them with conventional forces, because it could control its costs (Waltz, 2009).

One thing is certain, although Iranian officials repeatedly claimed that Israel, the 'Little Satan' is a true cancerous tumor at the heart of Islamic countries that should be cut off (Huang, 2016), however a nuclear Iran will not pose an existential threat to Israel (Rand). 'If this is 1938', as former Israeli prime minister Netanyahu famously once declared, then Iran is Romania, not Germany (Zakaria, 2008). Despite a widespread belief to the contrary, Iran is not being led by irrational Mullahs, but "perfectly sane ayatollahs who want to survive just like any other leaders. (Waltz, 2012). A primary

purpose of Iran's nuclear arsenal would be to deter an American and/or Israel attack against Iran, not to destroy Israel. Taking all what discussed into consideration, the possibility of nuclear weapons' use in a potential conflict involving Iran and Israel should not be dismissed as impossible forever (Nader, 2013). Therefore, it seems that the Middle East is stranger to stability in the foreseeable future and a nuclear-armed Iran would make the world, particularly the Middle East, a far more dangerous place (Brewer, 2021).

The fear of Iran with nuclear capability among Sunni Arab countries may be the only positive outcome for Israel. Many Sunni-Arab states (including Saudi Arabia) believe that this is now the time to make peace with Israel so as not to have to deal with two adversaries at the same time (Mousavian, 2012). The decision by four Arab countries (the United Arab Emirates, Sudan, Morocco and to a lesser extent, Bahrain) to forge ties with Israel in 2020 is not unrelated to Iran (Ephron, 2020). Hussein Ibish, a senior Resident Scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, asserted that even Saudi leaders like Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have focused on the benefits of normalization with Israel (Ibish, 2021). Israelis also believe that a nuclear-armed Iran would have many socioeconomic effects on Israel. Yarom Ariav, a former Director General of the Israeli Finance Minister, asserted that nuclear Iran involves considerable economic costs to Israel, from its effect on our economy rating to large security outlays. Israelis are concerned that Iran with nuclear capability would hinder the state's ability to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (Eiran & Martin, 2013). Many argue that nuclear Iran would cause insecurity in Israel. Insecurity, in its turn, creates crisis of confidence along with uncertainties. Insecurity destroys investor's confidence and even may lead to mass exodus of local and foreign companies (Abubakar, Tanko, & Abubakar, 2021). Nobody wants to invest in a country where security is a challenge, because that can hamper the future of such investment.

Columnist Lawrence Solomon articulated the concern: You're the CEO of IBM or intel or Siemens or Nestle or any one of the 500 other Western companies that have opened up operations in Israel. What do you do should Iran get the bomb? Do you continue to invest in Israel, on the hope that Iran doesn't make good on its promise to wipe it off the map? Would your top executives agree to stay in or relocate to Israel, knowing that they would be putting their families at risk of perishing in the same mushroom cloud that could snuff out the tiny country (Solomon, 2012). If this fear materialized, it would be a major problem for Israel: in 2010, 49 percent of its industrial exports (excluding diamonds) were from the globally oriented high-tech sector (Eiran & Martin, 2013). In turn, this sector is heavily dependent on external funding from Research and Development (R&D) centers set in Israel by global giants like Microsoft and Google, purchases of Israeli firms by foreign firms, and venture capital funding from abroad.

Indeed, Israeli economist Yair Aharoni reported that in 2005 50 percent of the output in R&D and communications equipment was produced in Israel by foreign direct investment-based enterprises. The concern goes well beyond high-tech. Indeed, Aharoni showed the fifteen out of Israel's top 100 industrial and service companies are FDI-based enterprises that include not only technology companies but also food, metal, and paper producers. Correspondingly, employment in some sectors is heavily dependent on foreign direct investment. Almost half of the employees of the electronic communication sector and about a third of the basic metal sector worked in 2005 for FDI-based enterprise (Shay, 2018b). And additional socioeconomic fear is that a nuclear Iran would diminish Israel's ability to retain and attract the globally-oriented, highly qualified portions of its labor force, which are the main engines of Israel's economy.

As Ephraim Sneh, former Deputy Defense Minister, who lost his grandparents in the Holocaust, asserted, if we have to live under the shadow of an Iranian nuclear bomb, Israeli Stanford graduates won't come to Israel. From Sneh's perspective, a nuclear-armed Iran could lead to the withering of Israel even if the bomb would not be used. He believes, even the possibility that Iran

would use a nuclear weapon would halt Jewish immigration into Israel, deter foreign investment, and lead Israeli technological elite to leave the country. This is how the sunset of the Zionist dream begins. Even without a nuclear event, Khamenei will succeed in bringing about the decay of the state of Israel (Shay, 2018a).

Iranian Nuclear Weapon Impact on Gulf State

Inside the Middle East and the GCC, Iran is suspected of imparting monetary, logistical and even army assistance to radical Islamic agencies to export the Islamic revolution and assist worldwide terrorism. Underneath the late Ayatollah Khomeini, Tehran considered itself the herbal leader of the Muslim global. In an effort to deliver lengthy-range missiles into nuclear warheads, it seems that if it chooses to make complete use of its perceived authority, a militant Iran may be given a totally effective facet. The GCC states have welcomed signs and symptoms of moderation in Iran and rejected the suggestion that Tehran helps terrorism, or when it launches lengthy-variety missiles at WMD warheads. Has evolved the era, then he intends to threaten. The GCC states have dropped severe predictions of a nuclear Iran risk. If Iran assessments its nuclear talents, it has several alternatives (Tass News Agency, 2019). Most of the Gulf States are very rich. From past experience, they have invested heavily in conventional weapons systems, such as airplanes, tanks and arrows missile system. According to Richard Russell, Saudi Arabia invested heavily in Pakistan's nuclear programmeme for its commitment to supplying nuclear weapons to Saudi Arabia wherever necessary, as Richard Russell estimates, Research, Saudi-Pakistani Development, and delivery to help each other (Wehrey, 2012). The UAE is concerned about Iran's intentions and will seek to negotiate arms deal with the United States. The understanding will incorporate everything the projects they require to ensure their nation. The two nations will do all that they can recover their freedom, remembering the acquisition of rockets framework for China. Building or joining an atomic umbrella could be an answer for other Gulf nations like Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar. It could be a vital partnership with the United States, like the NATO model. Americans will make sure that they have oil, opportunity of route and the arrangement of more soldiers to their nations. Americans are ensured about their security. The third option is that the GCC will sit anything and they will hold to see how the world reacts to Iran's atomic bomb. This was part of his arrangement when Iraq assaulted Kuwait. They may be happy to see Israel assault on Iran and may even allow Israel to fly or use their territorial waters (Shay, 2018a).

Likelihood of Regional Nuclear Proliferation

Security instability challenge, which accentuates that a restricted ordinary war is possible under the presence of atomic weapons, is a tremendous danger where conflict could incidentally go into an atomic one. Under the instability of atomic weapons entice nations to clash little kind of wars the domain area of international ties it isn't amazing that the intensity of speculations is compelled and any minor acceleration could transform a customary clash into an atomic one. From this view point, as in South Asia, the circumstance in the Middle East is a long way from stable and could lead unintentionally to an atomic heightening during a regular clash among Iran and Israel. In a possible regular clash, actors may gather their atomic weapons in the heat of contention with shocking results. Atomic prevention even concedes that widespread proliferation builds the chances of disasters and atomic oppression. Atomic accidents and unapproved atomic use are bound to occur in a more multiplied atomic and unstable regional (Un-Nisa, Mustafa, Malik & Wakil, 2020).

There is an old maxim that proliferation begets proliferation. If a country acquires nuclear weapons its regional rivals will follow suit (Economist, 2021). The prospect that a nuclear-armed Iran could trigger a regional proliferation cascade is one of the most commonly cited dangers associated with Iran's nuclear ambitions. Former US President Barack Obama once said that face with a nuclear-armed Iran, it is almost certain that others in the region would feel compelled to get

their own nuclear weapons. UK officials also asserted that Iran's nuclear ambitions would likely lead to a new Cold War in the Middle East (Hobbs & Moran, 2012). The three countries most mentioned as candidates for following Iran into the nuclear club are Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. In a March 2012 New York Times op-ed, for example, Haaretz senior correspondent Ari Shavit argued, an Iranian atom bomb will force Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt to acquire their own atom bombs. Thus, a multipolar nuclear arena will be established in the most volatile region on earth (Khayat, 2017). Nevertheless, the conventional wisdom that Iranian nuclearization will inevitably spark region-wide proliferation deserves closer scrutiny. Historically, reactive proliferation has been exceedingly rare. And in the current context, going nuclear carries significant risk for every ambitious state. It is time to discuss every candidate state in detail.

Egypt

Egypt and Iran are natural regional rivals due to similarities in geographical size, imperial pasts, and differences in religion (predominantly Sunni Arab versus Shia Persian population). This rivalry has been borne out through a long history of strained relations and opposition including Egypt's support of Iraq in the Iran-Iraq war, Iran's sponsorship of Hamas and Hezbollah, the signing of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty in 1979 and Egypt's strategic relationship with the United States (Hobbs & Moran, 201). Moreover, as a result of Egypt's historical role as a leader in the pan-Arab movement and its status as the most populous country in the Arab world, it has always been expected to develop a nuclear weapons programme (Taha, 2021). Against this backdrop, it is hardly surprising that Egypt has long viewed Iran's nuclear programme with suspicion hinting to US officials that Egypt might be forced to begin its own nuclear weapons programme if Iran gets the bomb. There is no doubt that Cairo would be concerned for reasons of both prestige and security if Iran succeeds in acquiring nuclear weapons.

Egypt at one time had an active nuclear energy research programme, and there was concern that it could become a nuclear weapons programme. It has the technological and scientific expertise and has recently announced a new civilian nuclear energy programme. In 2015, Egypt signed an agreement with ROSATOM, the Russian state atomic energy corporation, to build a nuclear power plant at Al Dabaa on the country's northern coast, west of Alexandria. The agreement is a culmination of around six decades of discussions and plans in Egypt to harness nuclear energy declared for peaceful purposes. Egypt has two research reactors which are currently operational (Taha, 2021). Some analysts argue that absent active US diplomacy, and strategic guarantees, Egypt probably would follow suit in developing nuclear weapons (Oswald, 2021).

Egypt faces a number of barriers, however. First, it is highly dependent on the United States for conventional weaponry. The United States surely would suspend this relationship if Egypt decided to pursue nuclear weapons. This would be quite unsettling to Egypt's internal politics. Second, Egypt is a poor country; foreign economic assistance would also dry up. Egypt is one of the top recipients of US foreign assistance, coming third after Israel and Jordan in 2020 by receiving USD 1.43 billion in foreign assistance (Oswald, 2021). Third, given that Israel is already a nuclear-armed state, and Iran is on the threshold of become a nuclear weapons state, Egypt would go through a period of both conventional and nuclear vulnerability as it attempted to produce nuclear weapons (Sagan, 2009). It is worth noting, Egypt for years has pursued a strategy of nuclear diplomacy, under which it has used the non-proliferation treaty and other international for to apply pressure to Israel's nuclear weapons programme for the past four decades. It would seem very unlikely that the threat presented by a nuclear-armed Iran cause Egypt to abandon this approach. Egypt

has never faced Iran in a major military conflict, nor is Egypt involved in any territorial disputes with Iran (Hobbs & Moran, 2012).

In addition, although Egypt views Iran as a regional rival, it does not see Iran's nuclear ambitions as an existential threat (Taha, 2021). Consequently, the security threat posed by nuclear-armed Iran is arguably weaker than the challenges Egypt has faced from other quarters. As a result, the Egyptian government is highly unlikely to divert scarce financial resources, put its peace agreement with Israel at risk and invite the ire (crippling sanctions) of the international community by pursuing nuclear weapons (Taha, 2021). In authors view, Egypt is not in a position to accept all these risks and costs, but it seems more plausible that the United States and European Union could find a package of assurances and incentives that would be acceptable to Egypt. During the Cold War, the United States offered the protection of its nuclear deterrent forces to many allies who did not possess nuclear weapons (Posen, 2009). It is likely that the United States would simply extend its nuclear umbrella over its key Middle Eastern allies. This also occurred when China acquired nuclear weapons during the Cold War. The US nuclear umbrella covers South Korea and Japan. This is why South Korea deemed it unnecessary to pursue its own nuclear weapons when North Korea built its own nuclear capabilities. Indeed, the United States would even benefit from extending its umbrella over Arab allies as a solidified security reliance on American protection puts the United States in a very favorable light with the oil exporters in the Gulf. Moreover, former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton explicitly stated that the United States would consider a "defense umbrella" over the Middle East in just such a scenario. Thus, there would be no reason for Egypt to fear Shia Iran's nuclearization (Thomson, 2014).

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia might be constrained to build up an atomic programme if Iranian bomb is created. An atomic arrangement was signed between Iran, the US, and other world major powers on the fourteenth of July 2015. This atomic arrangement pulled in analysis from US. Moreover, Iranian disciplinarians, just as from the other territorial groups, for example, some Arab nations. In the perspective on Saudi Arabia, this is a demonstration of the U.S. affirming Iran's atomic programme. Saudi Arabia as the major key and historical opponent of Iran declared its own arrangement to begin an atomic programme with in any event 16 atomic reactors with an end goal to close this whole (Samaan, 2018). They accepted that the approach of atomic weapons from an external source. Being that Saudi Arabia is known for having a past filled with undercover atomic exercises, it is as just workable for them to deliver a Sunni bomb to counter Iran's Shi'ite bomb.

Permitting Iran entrance to an atomic bomb is viewed as a danger to world and a move that could achieve the proliferation of atomic weapons in the Middle East. Despite these asserted claims, Iran utilized on the attack of Iraq by the United States to accomplish its public point of atomic proliferation. It was the assessment of the specialists that permitting Iran to have atomic weapons will definitely push Saudi Arabia to restore their own atomic programme (Huwaitin, 2015). Saudi Arabia got stressed of becoming a pawn in Iran's clash of becoming into the sovereign country in the Islamic World. Accepting Islamic authority and territorial authority would give Iran an unrivaled force which the other driving countries would not have any desire to provoke. Saudi Arabia, a most despised opponent of Iran, isn't irritated if Iran will convey the bomb against them, Israel, or the United States. In any case, the hypothesis of deterrence is still set up, however Saudi Arabia may not permit the discretionary, political, and military force Iran can accomplish whenever permitted to create atomic weapons. Saudi Arabia has been compelled to reexamine its situation in the Middle East and to investigate its own atomic choices because of the developing

Iranian atomic expansion threat, combined with the opposing open articulations and international strategies of Ahmadinejad. An issue of the measures that can be taken to have a global substitute against Iran if the Iranian government undermines the financial interests of oil-trading nations was raised (Yazicioglu, 2019).

If Iran gets the bomb, Saudi Arabia will face similar, though stronger temptations, than Egypt. Saudi Arabia is arguably the other great power of the Persian Gulf region and thus a natural competitor with Iran, particularly after the collapse of Saddam (Posen, 2009). Saudi leaders have long viewed Iran as a regional rival, and Tehran has become increasingly central to Riyadh's strategic considerations since the 1979 Iranian revolution. Today, the Kingdom views the Islamic Republic as its principal geopolitical foe (Taha, 2021). Iran's Shia revolutionary, also, viewed the Saudi monarchy as a cornerstone of the regional Pax-Americana. The Saudi family's control of Mecca and Medina and its espousal of the ultra-conservative Sunni Wahhabi doctrine was a particular affront to the Islamic Republic, which viewed itself as the natural leader of the Islamic world. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, was especially hostile toward the House of Saud. He accused the House of Saud of distorting the Islamic spirit. He also stated Mecca is now in the hands of a group of infidels who are grossly unaware of what they should do (Nader, 2013).

More broadly, Saudi leaders believe that Iranian nuclear weapons would facilitate the Islamic Republic's aspiration for regional leadership. For four decades, Saudi Arabia and Iran have competed for regional influence, with the House of Saud serving as the self-appointed capital of Sunni Islam and a conservative defender of the status quo and the revolutionary Iranian regime serving as the advocate for Shia interests and the champion of regional "resistance" against Israel and the West. The Saudi-Iranian cold war has been fought in myriad ways and on numerous fronts, from the Iran-Iraq war to current proxy conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Iraq and even Afghanistan (Taha, 2021). Saudi Arabia has long aspired to achieve nuclear capacity of its own, in order to counter Iran's atomic ambitions. Saudi Arabia has not hidden its ambition, openly stating to the US as early as 2009 that it would also seek capacity if Iran crosses the threshold. In 2018 Muhammad bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, told CBS, an American broadcaster, that the Kingdom does not want to acquire any nuclear bomb, but without a doubt, if Iran develop a nuclear bomb, we will follow suit as soon as possible. (Economist, 2021). King Abdullah had expressed the same view in 2012 (Shay, 2018a). But rather than being taken at face value, such intimidations should be seen as part of a broader Saudi tactic of prodding Washington to take a tougher line toward Iran. Such warnings are akin to the much-hyped statements from Riyadh in 2006 that it would be forced to intervene militarily in Iraq if Washington did not do more to quell the sectarian bloodshed there and counter Iran's malign influence (Wehrey, 2012).

Many argue that the prospects of Saudi reactive proliferation are lower than the conventional wisdom suggests (Taha, 2021). Saudi Arabia's economic policy outlook exemplified Etel Solingen's seminal theory on the relationship between economic liberalism and nuclear restraint. Solingen argues that political coalition favoring economic liberalization is more likely to be receptive to compromise nuclear postures that do not endanger their [economic] interests. In this regard, Saudi Arabia's emphasis on facilitating the growth of foreign investment is significant. Riyadh has cultivated extensive trade relations with most international powers and in 2012; Saudi Arabia was identified as one of the leading global economies in terms of business-friendly regulation. The monarchy has placed emphasis on foreign investment as a means of reducing over-reliance on oil and gas, increasing employment opportunities for the local population, and reinvigorating the Saudi private sector. In this context, the acquisition of nuclear weapons would have far-reaching consequences, stalling progress and bringing progressive economic isolation, thus drastically changing the nature of the Kingdom's international trade relations (Hobbs & Moran, 2012).

Moreover, the Saudis are unlikely to engage in a race to produce the bomb because doing so could make the Kingdom's strategic predicament worse, not better. It would complicate the Kingdom's national security, risk a strategic rupture with the United States, do great damage to Saudi Arabia's international reputation and potentially make Riyadh the target of international sanctions (Maleki, 2010). Saudi Arabia's economy depends almost entirely on its Petroleum sector, which in 2021 accounted for nearly 87 percent of budget revenue, 42 percent of gross domestic product and 90 percent of export earnings. Consequently, the Kingdom could be highly vulnerable to energy sanctions (Economic Indicator, 2021). Compared to Iran, Saudi Arabia is much less economically self-sufficient and causes it not to attempt to shoulder its way into the nuclear club. In addition, Saudi Arabia does not have a developed nuclear science and technology effort and it does not have the other industrial capabilities needed to support a nuclear weapons programme and associated delivery systems. Saudi Arabia would thus take quite a long time to develop its own nuclear forces, and like Egypt, would be vulnerable in the interval (Posen, 2009). Given the risks and costs of such a move for Saudi Arabia, it is safe to say that Riyadh is much more likely to seek a nuclear security umbrella from either Pakistan or the United States (Mallard, Sabet & Sun, 2020). It is needless to say why the US is 'defense umbrella' candidate, but Pakistan might require some explanation. Saudi Arabia provided generous financial support (\$1 billion) to Pakistan that enabled the nuclear programme to continue, particularly when the country was under sanctions. Saudi cooperation with nuclear power Pakistan has been a source of speculation about the Kingdom's nuclear ambition. It has long been rumored that in return for that support, Saudi Arabia has a claim on some of those weapons in time of need (Shay, 2018b). Pakistan, however, would face enormous pressure not to transfer complete weapons to another party. Furthermore, even if Islamabad proved willing to extend its nuclear umbrella, a potential US nuclear guarantee would likely out compete a Pakistanis alternative (Taha, 2021). Finally, Saudi Arabia does have good reason to believe that outsiders are committed to its security. The United States and other great powers have extensive economic and military interests in maintaining Saudi security. The United States has demonstrated its commitment in many ways, including war. The Saudis are accustomed to security cooperation with the United States. Therefore, Saudi Arabia is not going to follow in Iran's footsteps and US guarantee likely would prove the most attractive option for Riyadh (Posen, 2009).

Turkey

Turkey also will be concerned, for security and prestige reasons, about a nuclear weapons capability in neighboring Iran (Posen, 2009). Turkey has already decided to build three nuclear power plants to apparently reduce its dependence on importing energy. The project is part of President Erdogan's 2023 Vision marking 100 years since the foundation of modern Turkey. In 2007, the Turkish government began its first push in the twenty-first century to construct a nuclear power plant, in passing The Law on Construction and Operation of Nuclear Power plants and Energy Sale. President Erdogan and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin launched the construction of the Akkuyu plant at a ceremony in Ankara in early April 2018. The Akkuyu project is based on an inter-governmental agreement signed between Russia and Turkey in May 2010 (Un-Zaman, 2011).

Despite the difference between Turkey and Iran after Islamic revolution, the turn of the millennium brought a change of direction in bilateral relations between the countries. Turkey and Iran have developed strong energy and economic links. For example, Iran is the second largest supplier of natural gas to Turkey after Azerbaijan. Moreover, Turkey has proved sympathetic to Tehran's nuclear cause. In 2009, Erdogan accused the West of "double standard" treating Iran unfairly over its nuclear programme and in 2010, it voted against the imposition of additional sanctions on Iran by the UN Security Council (Hobbs & Moran, 2012). Second, Turkey is a NATO member since 1952. Under NATO's nuclear sharing arrangement, five European countries—Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey—host US tactical nuclear weapons. At Incirlik Air Base, Ankara

stores the most of any NATO state, about 50 B61 nuclear gravity bombs (Bugos, 2019). Therefore, the US defense umbrella is already extended to Turkey and Turkey does not need to build its own bombs. Third, Turkey has eye on European Union (EU) membership. Membership of the EU is a political priority for Ankara and the Turkish government would be wary of jeopardizing its relations with European powers by going nuclear (Wyn, 2011).

Despite what mentioned, Erdogan's Turkey has showed interest in nuclear weapons. In 2006, military chief of staff General HimoOzkok referred implicitly to the nuclear option. He stated, the presence of countries possessing or suspected of possessing weapons of mass destruction. The Middle East is a serious and determining threat for our country today. Furthermore, he said, if the problem cannot be resolved despite the intense diplomatic efforts of the international community, I see a strong likelihood that we will face some important decision stages in the near future. Otherwise, we will face the prospect of losing our strategic superiority in the region (Yazicioglu, 2019).

Turkey feels the need for having nuclear capability for the following reasons. First, the relations between Turkey and Iran have not been that friendly. Similar to Saudi Arabia, Turkey's relationship with Iran has historically been characterized by rivalry, based largely on competing expansionist and religious ambitions (Hobbs & Moran, 2012). The outbreak of the Arab Spring gave the historical rivalry between Turkey and Iran new impetus. As the unrest and pressures for change spread, Turkish-Iranian relations became increasingly strained. Turkey and Iran had clashed over a number of issues (Nader, 2013). The most important factor contributing to the growing strains in relations was Turkey's support for the opposition to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Syria is Iran's only true ally in the Middle East. Since 1979, the secular, Baathist Syrian regime and Revolutionary Iran have strongly supported each other. Assad's downfall would be a serious strategic blow to Iran and could result in the growth of Turkey's influence (Bensaid, 2020).

Moreover, in 2015, Turkey explicitly supported the Saudi war in Yemen, called on Iran to withdraw from the country and joined Riyadh's so-called Islamic military alliance against terrorism, which many saw as targeting Iran. In this period, Erdogan accused Iran of attempting to dominate the Middle East, which he said was anathema to Turkey (Dalay, 2021). Publicly, Turkey has downplayed the dangers of Iran's nuclear programmeme, stressing that Iran has the right to develop a peaceful programmeme. However, the difference between the United States and Turkey on the Iranian issue is largely over tactics, not strategic goals. Bothe countries want to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power. They differ, however, on how best to achieve that goal. In principle, Turkey opposed sanctions against Iran, although it had grudgingly carried out UN-imposed sanctions against the Islamic Republic. Its opposition was heavily influenced by its bitter experience with sanctions during the 1990-1991 Guld War. Iraq was one of Turkey's most important trading partners, and Turkey suffered substantial economic losses as a result of its support of sanctions against Iraq. This time Turkish officials learned from history and argued that quiet diplomacy is likely to have more effect in moderating Iranian behavior in the long run than overt efforts to isolate or punish the regime (Bugos, 2019).

Second, some argues that, on the one hand, the willingness, and the ability of the United States to defend its partners in the region against a nuclear-armed Iran are questionable (Edelman, Krepinevich, &Montgomery, 2011). On the other hand, others believe while Erdogan called out for no nuclear weapons in the region before, certainly after the crisis of S-400 and deprivation of F-35 warplanes, geopolitical context has changed for Turkey. (Yazicioglu 2019). Turkey claims that it attempted to procure the US Patriot missile system to meet its domestic defence needs but the US did not offer the missile defence system then Turkey was forced to pursue the Russian S-400 missile systems (Tass News Agency, 2019; Fraser, 2019). One lesson that Turkey might learn from the crisis is that the United States is not a trustworthy partner. Moreover, Turkish officials asserted,

the S-400 was found to better meet Turkey's security concerns in light of defective patriot missiles (Bensaid, 2020). Turkey's changing role in the alliance as well as in the region are raising many questions, including a potential proliferation dilemma.

Third, the European Union's executive body has said in October 2021 that Turkey's bid to join the bloc had "come to a standstill amid serious democratic shortfalls. According to the EU, Ankara was no longer serious about delivering on EU-backed reforms. The EU's serious concerns on the continued deterioration of democracy, the rule of law, fundamental rights and independence of the judiciary have not been addressed. There was further backsliding in many areas (Aljazeera, 2021). An article by The Economist had described the accession process as 'dead' and claimed that many European voters regard the prospect of such a nation joining the club with horror (Daily Sabah, 2021). Given the current situation, there is huge gap between Turkey and the EU. It sounds that EU has lost its attraction for Turkey, and it decreased the EU's leverage on Turkey to push it away from its nuclear ambitions. Finally, Turkish President Erdogan has vowed to eliminate external dependency on foreign defense technology (Bensaid, 2020). The best way of defense independence is joining the nuclear club. Erdogan has already expressed his desperation on developing the 'caliphate atom bomb' to fulfil his neo-Ottoman aspiration. The emergence of a China-Pakistan-Turkey nexus on nuclear proliferation and Pakistan coordinating on capacity building of the three countries have already been flagged by watchdogs and media (Fassihi, 2020); given Erdogan's dream of reviving Ottoman time, his vision of Turkey as regional power in the Middle East, and nuclear arms as a source of national prestige Turkey has to join the regional nuclear race. Otherwise, Turkey will remain second class a position that Erdogan cannot and will not accept (Shay, 2018b; Yazicioglu, 2019).

RESEARCH METHODS

The research design that was adopted for this study is the historical research design. Historical design is a process of describing and examining past events to better understand the present and to anticipate potential effects on the future. The purpose of a historical research design is to collect, verify, and synthesize evidence from the past to establish facts that defend or refute a hypothesis. It uses secondary sources and a variety of primary documentary evidence, such as, diaries, official records, reports, archives, and non-textual information [maps, pictures, audio and visual recordings]. The limitation is that the sources must be both authentic and valid (Sanibi, 2011). The study which is theoretical in nature draws its argument basically from secondary data which include journal articles, books and internet sources, and were content analyzed in relation to the scope of the study. This is because it piques the researcher interest and desire for a thorough understanding of the subject. The focus of this study is on the nuclear armed Iran and its implication for Middle East security. This study relied on the secondary method of data collection, which included extracting relevant data from conference papers, public records, textbooks, journals, magazines, and other sources. This enables the researchers to examine the approach used by states to consolidate their influence in the Middle East region. This study adopted descriptive analysis to interrogate the contentious issues in the Iran nuclear debacle, examine the details of the joint comprehensive plan of action (JCPOA), explore the reason for pull-out of the U.S. from the JCPOA by the Trump administration and examined the implication of a nuclear armed Iran for the Middle East regional Security.

CONCLUSION

The current asymmetry of power distribution in the Middle East has pushed Iran towards the development of a nuclear weapon capability. It is the most effective way to guarantee the security and survival of the regime and state. But it has led to speculation as to how other Middle Eastern

states would react. One fear is that Iranian nuclearization will spark a nuclear arms race in the region. In line with offensive realist thinking, this possibility suggests that states such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, or any of the Gulf states would develop their own nuclear weapons programmes to maximize their power capabilities. This fear stems from the possibility that more nuclear weapons in such a volatile region would increase the possibility of disastrous consequences. Fearing consequences such as inadvertent escalation is premature for several reasons. It is widely hoped that a diplomatic resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue will eventually usher in an era of greater cooperation between Iran and the West, as well as among the countries in the Gulf region. Nevertheless, there are fears that the JCPOA, by addressing the nuclear issue only and not dealing with non-nuclear concerns about Iran, may increase tensions in the region in the short-to-medium term. A regional security framework that takes into account both the nuclear and non-nuclear concerns of all players is therefore urgently required for a sustainable resolution of the nuclear issue and lasting peace in the region. Although such a framework is unlikely to be achieved under current circumstances, especially while the wars in Syria, Yemen and Russia continue, world powers, particularly the United States will need to push their allies towards realizing the goal. The UN can play an important facilitating role in this regard.

The Iranian Nuclear Agreement signed between Iran and P5+1 (US, UK, France, China, Russia and Germany) on July 14, 2015 represents the success of coercive diplomacy. Since the beginning of Iranian nuclear crisis, the US and its key allies around the world extrapolated 'alleged' Iranian ambitions to acquire nuclear weapons and demanded to cease and forego its weapons path. On the contrary, Iran held these claims as mere allegations and continued to develop capabilities (underground undeclared infrastructure, advance centrifuges and constructing heavy water reactor at Arak) to complete its fuel cycle. Threat was communicated through sanctions and options under consideration for limited military strikes. In view of the findings made in the course of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Iran-US relations matters most and if they remain enemies, unsubstantial improvements in international relations in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East are unlikely to take place. The UN should be more proactive and assertive in supporting efforts aimed at restoring peace and stability to the Middle East, including a possible regional security framework.
2. America's allies should place more emphasis on strengthening their ability to address the various threats posed by Iran toward their security, whether it enhance cyber security, regional maritime security cooperation, or deterring radical Shia factions from exacerbating sectarianism in the region.

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