

**MS THESIS**

**IRAN-ISRAEL CONFLICT AND ITS IMPACT ON  
SECURITY OF THE MIDDLE EAST**



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**FINAL APPROVAL**

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## **DEDICATION**

*I DEDICATE THIS THESIS TO MY BELOVED  
FAMILY MEMBERS; ESPECIALLY TO MY  
PARENTS THIS DREAM HAS COME TRUE AS A  
RESULT OF THEIR SUPPORT AND PRAYERS.*

## Table of Contents

DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	ii
ABSTRACT	v
CHAPTER-1	1
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Problem Statement	2
1.3. Significance of the Study	2
1.4. Objectives of the Study	3
1.5 Research Questions	3
1.6 Delimitations	3
1.9. Theoretical Framework	21
1.10. METHODOLOGY	23
1.10.1. Research Design	24
1.10.2. Population	24
1.10.3. Sampling	24
1.11. Operational Definitions	24
1.12. Instruments	26
1.13. Procedure	26
1.14. Data Analysis	26
1.15. Ethical Considerations	26
1.16. Organization of the Study:	26
CHAPTER -2	29
THE NATURE OF IRAN ISRAEL CONFLICT	29
2.2. Geography of the Middle East:	31
2.3. Ideologies in the Middle East:	33
2.3.2. Israeli Ideology:	35
2.4. Political Systems in the Middle East:	36
CHAPTER-3	41
UNDERSTANDING THE LEGACY OF CONFLICT AND CHAOS IN THE MIDDLE EAST	41
3.1. Introduction:	41
3.2. Israel Relations with the Arab World (1948-2025)	42
3.3. Iran's Relations with the Arab World (1948-2025)	51
3.3.3. Sectarian Tensions and Proxy Conflicts:	53
3.3.4. The Arab Spring and Diverging Interests:	54
CHAPTER-4	55

SECURITIZATION OF THE IRAN-ISRAEL BILATERAL RELATIONS	55
4.1.    Introduction:	55
4.1.1    Bilateral Factor:	56
4.1.2.    Regional Factor:	56
4.1.3.    Geopolitical Factor:	57
4.2.    Israel Relations with Iran:	57
4.2.2.    Breakup of the Iranian-Israeli Relations:	59
4.2.3.    The Rise of Hostility: Post-Revolution Iran and the Break with Israel	60
4.3.    Iran's Relations with Israel:	68
4.3.1.    Pre-1979: The Shah's Cordial Relations:	69
4.3.4    Rise of Hezbollah (1980 till now):	69
4.3.5.    Iranian Nuclear Program (2000 till now):	70
4.3.6.    Bilateral Factor:	70
4.3.7.    Regional Factor:	74
CHAPTER-5	76
THE IMPACT OF “TWELVE DAYS WAR” ON SECURITY OF THE MIDDLE EAST	76
5.1.    Introduction:	76
5.2.    Perils and Pitfalls of the War:	78
5.3.    Israel's Perspective:	79
5.5.    Israel's Security Dilemma:	82
5.6.    Iran's Security Dilemma:	82
5.7.    Way Forward:	83
CHAPTER-6	88
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	88
6.1    Implications for Research and Policy:	91
6.2    Recommendations	91
6.2.1.    To Encourage a Framework for Regional Security Dialogue	92
6.2.2.    To Boost Mechanisms for Nuclear Non-Proliferation	92
6.2.3.    To Address the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Peacefully (Recognition of Palestine as a State)	92
6.2.4.    Constructive Involvement of People's Republic of China	93
6.2.5.    Investment in Socio-Economic Stability and Development	93
6.2.6.    Supporting Academic and Track II Diplomacy	94
6.2.7.    Countering Disinformation and Regulation of Information Warfare	94
REFERENCES	95

## ABSTRACT

*The Iran-Israel conflict and its significant effects on the Middle East's security framework are critically examined in this thesis. In the context of the larger regional environment, it examines the intricate interactions between political, ideological, and geographic factors that influence the ongoing animosity between the two republics. Israel's interactions with the Arab world up until 1948 are traced at the beginning of the study. Next, Iran's regional engagements and changing posture since the Islamic Revolution of 1979 are examined. Assessing how each state views and reacts to existential threats with special regard to bilateral, regional, and geopolitical drivers is a primary focus of the securitization of Iran-Israel bilateral relations. An extensive examination of the recent Twelve-Day War and its consequences for regional security are provided in the fifth chapter. According to Israel, the goals were to destabilize Tehran's government, stop Iran's nuclear aspirations, and destroy Iranian proxy networks. Iran's strategy, on the other hand, placed a higher priority on maintaining the regime, protecting its nuclear facilities, and establishing its regional position. Mutual security challenges are used to examine the ensuing impasse: Iran's failure to maintain its strategic assets and regional relationships, and Israel's incapacity to decisively counter Iranian threats. The thesis ends with a discussion of strategic potential and weaknesses, contending that Iran may use disparities in air, naval, and missile capabilities to tip the scales of power, while Israel is constrained in its ability to enforce long-term strategic objectives. By emphasizing how long-standing rivalries and reactive tactics sustain instability and obstruct lasting peace, this study advances our understanding of Middle Eastern security.*

**Key Words:** Geo-Political, Geo-Strategic, Security Dilemma, Kinetic Warfare, Nuclearization

# **CHAPTER-1**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

One of the most intense and significant rivalries in the Middle East is Iran-Israel Military Standoff/conflict which has its root in the longstanding ideological, political, and strategic disagreements. This rift started in 1979 after the Islamic Revolution in Iran when Shah of Iran was dethroned from power. Khomeini proclaimed Iran an Islamic republic on April 1 after a countrywide referendum yielded resounding support. A return to traditional social values was imposed, and some within the clergy quickly attempted to bar their old intellectual, left-wing, and nationalist colleagues from all positions of authority in the new government. (White & Mc Cain, 1998)

Iran and Israel have been at odds for over 30 years. Under the Shah, cordial Israeli-Iranian relations were turned into outright animosity during the Islamic revolution of 1979. But even after the revolution, pragmatism frequently served to temper the hostility between the two nations. The old "periphery doctrine," according to which Iran would act as a counterbalance to Israel's Arab neighbors, was also held onto by some Israeli leaders. (Guzansky, 2014)

Iran Hostage Crisis can be an example in this regard in which Anti-Western feeling became apparent when a group of Iranian demonstrators demanding the extradition of the shah, who was then receiving medical treatment in the United States, took 66 hostages from the U.S. embassy in November 1979. (Ramazani, 2005)

From the past ten years, Israel and Iran have started to see one another as direct competitors. This is mostly because of Iran's long-range missile development, nuclear weapons program, and geopolitical changes that, from an Israeli (and Iranian) standpoint, have made Iran more powerful in the region. Iran's increased influence in Israel's neighboring regions, as evidenced by the 2006 "proxy" conflict with Hezbollah, has led many Israelis to perceive Iran as a direct and urgent threat. (Guzansky, 2014)

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Deep ideological and geopolitical differences between Iran and Israel have made the conflict one of the main causes of regional instability in the Middle East. Iran still denies Israel's legitimacy and backs anti-Israel proxies, despite nations like Saudi Arabia making gradual progress toward normalization. This animosity raises the possibility of a wider confrontation, exacerbates regional tensions, and shatters security cooperation. To evaluate this rivalry's influence on Middle Eastern security, a deeper comprehension of it is necessary.

## **1.3. Significance of the Study**

This study is vital for the academicians, young researchers working in the field of International Relations and policy makers. Finding strategies to avoid confrontations and promoting of peace in the Middle East is the core agenda. By providing an in-depth analysis of Iran-Israel Military Standoff and its impact on Middle East will enrich academic knowledge on Middle Eastern Geo-politics precisely how religious, historical and ideological factors drive the behavior of Iran and Israel in the Middle East. Moreover, this study can contribute an analysis of proxy warfare because Iran and Israel often engage

through proxies across Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. This study can also advance asymmetric warfare, modern military tactics like Cyber warfare and drone technology.

#### **1.4. Objectives of the Study**

The Objectives of the study are:

- To understand the nature of the Iran-Israel conflict
- To analyze the Middle East's strategic environment
- To evaluate the effects of Iran-Israel tensions on regional security

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

R.Q.1 What are the geographical, ideological, and historical elements that have influenced the Iran-Israel conflict?

R.Q.2 How do contemporary Middle Eastern conflicts and strategic alignments have on the dynamics of the Iran-Israel relationship?

R.Q.3 What are the security dynamics of Middle East?

#### **1.6 Delimitations**

The study will primarily relies on the articles, reports and secondary sources. Due to financial constraints travelling to Middle East is not possible neither primary data from the respective experts can be obtained.

#### **1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature on the Iran-Israel conflict and its impact on security of the Middle East is extensive shaped by the ideology, history, and geopolitics. The scholars had

discussed this issue through realism, securitization and regional security complex theory. The rivalry between Iran and Israel is not just a bilateral issue but it became a regional and global issue keeping in view the escalation between the two countries. Current studies addressed different factors like military escalation, proxy wars, nuclear proliferation that shaped the balance of power in the region.

Mehmet Emir in his article "Assessment on tensions between Iran and Israel" states that the recent events between Israel and Iran, particularly in the military and political arena, set a paradigm for international relations that has never been seen before. Below are the viewpoints of China, Russia, Iran, Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union regarding this tension in the Middle Eastern Geography; All things considered, the established balance of power in the Middle East is moving in favor of Israel. (Emir 2024)

John Karkazis, Eirini Anastasiadou, Thomas Markopoulos in their article "Iran-Israel Military Confrontation" states that the most crucial question in the Iranian-Israeli conflict is not whether Iran has nuclear weapons, but rather whether it has reached a "critical mass" of them. We contend that the "Armageddon Scenario", an Iranian nuclear strike, will only occur in reaction to an Israeli nuclear strike on Iran. Iran's initial nuclear attack on Israel would be a suicide operation that would "wipe it off the map." It is highly likely that Iran has already been warned about this matter by both friends and adversaries. Israel's strategic goal is to undermine Iran politically and economically while also causing friction between the Iranian government and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps leadership in order to drastically weaken its influence over the nation's strategic decision-

making. There is a possibility of “Abraham Accord” like preparations for peace with Iran.  
(Karkazis, Anastasiadou, Markopoulos 2024)

Haydar Oruc in his article “while the world waited for Israel to attack Iran” states that after assassination of Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, Iran threatened revenge but it never happened as expected. There were rumors of a covert ceasefire agreement between Iran and the West for Gaza, but it was not enforced. Israel subsequently attacked Hezbollah in Lebanon, resulting in heavy losses. Iran used hypersonic missiles in retaliation on October 1st, seriously damaging Israel. Differences over target selections are now the focus of attention on Israel's response.

Defense systems are deployed by the United States in preparation of Iran's next action. Decisions to strike Iran's nuclear installations would cause tensions to rise much higher. Concerns are still raised about Israel's actions in Gaza and their effects on the area.  
(Oruc 2024)

Doglus C Yuval in his article “Ideological and Geopolitical dimensions of the Iran-Israel Nuclear standoff; Zionism, Martyrdom and the role of religious identity in statecraft” states that the nuclear stalemate between Iran and Israel is a complicated dispute with strong ideological and political framework. Zionism, a historical and religiously based conviction in a safe Jewish homeland in the ancient country of Israel, is fundamental to Israel's identity. The Islamic principles of resistance and martyrdom, on the other hand, define Iran's perspective, which frames its opposition to Israel as a moral and religious obligation against perceived injustice. Each country's foreign policy is shaped by these ideological foundations, which provide a situation in which state actions are not only

strategically important but also deeply rooted in cultural and religious importance. (Yuvan 2024)

Mehmet Emir in his article “Latest development and situation assessment about Israel, Iran and Lebanon states that tensions and bloodshed in the Middle East have increased in the new millennium, catching considerable attention from around the world. Due to the 9/11 attacks, the United States' Greater Middle East and North Africa Project has emerged as a driving force in the region's constantly shifting power dynamics. Since several regional actors are being deliberately neutralized, this approach is mostly in line with Israeli interests. The United States publicly supports Israel at the highest levels, offering intelligence and logistical support while blocking inquiries into Israel's activities in international bodies. Iran, on the other hand, is working to reverse the role that was given to it after 9/11 by aggressively advancing its Axis of Resistance and showing strength in the face of sanctions. Notably, Hezbollah in Lebanon has managed to provide strong opposition to Israel's military efforts despite having few resources. (Emir 2024)

Rida Tanvir and Syed Qandil Abbas in their article “Evolving Balance of Power in the Middle East: Iran-Israel standoff shaping Iranian foreign policy states that one of the main causes of shifts in the Middle East's power dynamics can be attributed to the Israel-Iran conflict. This rivalry has affected practically every area of Iran's foreign policy and has significant ramifications for regional stability. It affects how it makes decisions about its nuclear plan, neighboring nations, military policy, and internal policies. There is a significant chance of an escalation that will negatively affect regional and global security if both nations continue to pursue divergent objectives, as they already do. Iran's “deterrence strategy” revolves around the development and deployment of missiles that can

reach Israel. Additionally, Iran directly threatens Israel and creates a buffer zone by using proxy conflicts in Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza. (Tanvir, Abbas 2024)

Jonathan G. Leslie in his article “Fear and Insecurity: Israel and Iran threat narrative” states that The harsh language used in the Iran-Israel confrontation may give the impression to onlookers that there is a long-standing animosity between Muslims and Jews, a biblical rivalry that dates back hundreds or perhaps thousands of years. However, this competition is a much more recent phenomenon. Leslie explains how Israel's leaders successfully reframed Iran, once a partner, as an existential threat by leveraging narrative power within a historical context. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu went further by using populist tactics to rewrite history, depict Iran as a global menace, and garner support against the JCPOA nuclear agreement. "Fear and Insecurity" provides valuable insights into the history of the Iran-Israel conflict while also suggesting new avenues for reducing regional and international tensions. (Leslie, 2023)

Jonathan G. Leslie in his another article “Iran and Israel in the Age of Populism” states that observing the Iran-Israel conflict might suggest an ancient hatred between Muslims and Jews dates back to thousands of years. However, this competition is a much more recent phenomenon. Jonathan G. Leslie investigates the conflict's beginnings in this reputable study. He comes to the conclusion that, despite the hostility surrounding the Iran-Israel relationship, the wars of the twenty-first century are not unavoidable outcomes of these countries' histories or current political events after doing a thorough analysis of archival and open-source material. One country's actions have contributed significantly to the escalation of hostilities, with Israel considering Iran to be a considerably bigger threat than Iran considers Israel. Leslie describes how Israel's leaders were able to successfully

reframe Iran, their former partner, as an existential threat by using an innovative theoretical method that takes into account the power of narrative within historical context. (Leslie, February 2023)

Valeriia Gergiieva and Dana Levinson in their article “Strategic Culture Phenomena in Iran-Israel Relations” states that Although the buildup surrounding the "Iran nuclear deal" makes this problem one of the most pressing on the present political agenda, the conflict between the State of Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran is not a particularly recent occurrence. The strategic culture of nations is the main topic of this article since it affects how public and non-state actors see and react to opportunities and problems in the global system. Understanding the intricacies of the relationship between the two states and Jerusalem's probable response to Tehran's Nuclearization requires taking into account some commonalities between the strategic cultures of Iran and Israel.

While negotiations in Vienna continue, Iran raised its enrichment to 60 percent, the greatest level in its history, while the two countries continue to work on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Although the US-Iran and Iran-Israel relationship is based on the Iranian nuclear program, Israel's strategic culture is still unable to embrace better US-Iranian relations despite Iran's nuclear advancements. (Gergieva and Levinson, October 2021)

Alisan Baltaci in his article Iran Israel conflict: an overview of the situation after the Islamic Revolution from the framework of security theories states that one of the most important conflict zones in the globe is the Middle East, where the effects of the issues of the 20th century are becoming more apparent every day. Although border disputes account

for the majority of wars in the region, disputes between governments without a shared border can sometimes arise. Conflicts can also arise between nations that aim to become regional hegemonic powers, like Iran and Israel. Furthermore, these wars are occasionally carried out directly and other times by proxies. (Baltaci, July 2022)

Christian Kaunert and Ori Wertman in their article “The Securitization of hybrid warfare via practices within the Iran-Israel Conflict – Israel’s practices to securitize Hezbollah’s proxy war” states that Since the Islamic revolution in 1979, Iran has been fighting Israel in a hybrid conflict. Since hybrid warfare has replaced traditional combat in modern times, states' primary concern is how to handle this emerging security threat. As a result, although states have historically had to contend with the military might of traditional adversaries, hybrid warfare—in which non-state actors are crucial—has grown to be a pervasive security threat that necessitates the adoption of quite different approaches and tactics by democratic states in order to defeat it.

Securitization theory, which examines how everyday problems become security concerns, is used in this article to examine how the State of Israel has securitized Iranian hybrid warfare, which has primarily been carried out through Hezbollah, one of its proxy terror groups. Applying an updated version of the securitization framework from the Copenhagen School, which emphasizes security procedures and is based on the idea that security is a continuum, allows it to achieve this. The continuum's ultimate point, which is marked by militarization, existential threats, and survival, has been approached by the proxy terror groups, albeit they haven't yet arrived. (Kaunert and Wertman 2020)

Ronnie Olesker in his article “National identity and securitization in Israel” states that The analysis aims to reveal how political actors and audiences debate what security means in Israel by examining discriminatory laws passed by the Israeli Knesset between 2000 and 2012 as well as the political sentiments of the Israeli people before and during the second intifada. Desecuritization of the minority is extremely unlikely, even in the case that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is settled, as explained by securitization theory. (Olesker, May 2013)

Amir Lupovici in his article “Securitization Climax: putting the Iranian nuclear project at the top of the Israeli public agenda (2009 – 2012) focuses on the Iranian nuclear project in Israel that was securitized starting in the 1990s. A fresh peak was reached during Prime Minister Netanyahu's second government (2009–2013), especially in 2012, despite the fact that the issue was successfully securitized at the time and has remained so for years. he contends that looking at this situation in order to create the idea of securitization climax offers a more clear understanding of securitization dynamics in addition to shedding light on a variety of political, danger, and insecurity-related issues in Israel. (Lupovici, Oct 2014)

Melissa Dalton in her article “How Iran’s hybrid-war tactics help and hurt it” states that Iran has become increasingly adept at employing hybrid-war weapons and tactics to accomplish its regional goals. The nation usually uses a combination of military and paramilitary capabilities, such as proxy troops, missiles, cyber tools, naval forces, and information operations, to influence and coerce regional entities to its benefit. This allows it to operate below the line of conventional conflict. Short-term gains are made, but in the

long run, they harm Iran's interests by encouraging further sanctions and isolation. (Dalton, Aug 2017)

Yael Ram, Isaac Ben Israel and Gil Baram in their article “Cyber war between Iran and Israel Out in the Open” states that Israel and Iran's reciprocal cyber-attacks have come out of hiding and are getting more intense; stories on the exchange of cyber strikes are frequently published by foreign news outlets. Cyber-attacks usually take place under a veil of secrecy, but the most recent round of attacks between Iran and Israel has been more intense, open, and public than previous rounds. (Ram, Israel, Baram, Nov 2020)

Chuck Freilich in his article “Israel and Iran Nuclear deal: the best of the bad options” states that Israel's national security strategy has been a historic success. Israel is now a largely safe state whose existence is most likely no longer under question. The sole possible existential threat is still a nuclear-armed Iran, whereas Hezbollah poses a serious immediate concern. Long-term benefits are unlikely to be obtained through military action, covert sabotage, or sanctions. Nobody can predict whether, when, or how a regime change will take place. A renewed agreement gives Israel the most time and, if extended, might lead to new opportunities. However, Israel might finally be forced to strike, perhaps in an effort to pressure the world community into taking serious action. (Freilich, May 2022)

Eytan Gilboa in her article “American contributions to Israel's National Security” states the concept of security in a wide sense including military assistance, supply of advanced weapons, joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, efforts to stop nuclear threats, and mediate to resolve the Arab Israeli Conflict. (June 2016)

Cham E Dallas, William C Bell, David Stewart, Antonio Caruso, Frederick M Brinkle in their article “Nuclear War between Israel and Iran: lethality beyond the pale” states that It is generally acknowledged—albeit not publicly stated—that Iran has enriched enough nuclear material to produce nuclear weapons, and that Israel possesses them. The distribution of casualties in urban settings is one of the main concerns in the medical aftermath of a nuclear exchange between Iran and Israel in the near future.

Approaches In addition to custom GIS and database software applications, the Defense Nuclear Agency's WE program was used to calculate blast and prompt radiation, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency's (DTRA) Hazard Prediction and Assessment Capability (HPAC) V404SP4 was used to calculate fallout radiation, and ESRI's ArcGIS 9.3 was used to estimate the number of nuclear war casualties. Thus, geographic estimates of radiation, thermal burn, and trauma casualties were made for three Israeli cities and eighteen Iranian cities. Detonations of nuclear weapons in the crowded cities of Israel and Iran will kill an unprecedented number of people, leave millions injured without proper medical care, cause a wide range of long-lasting mental health problems, destroy municipal infrastructure, disrupt economic, educational, and other vital social activities for years to come, and cause law and order to collapse. (Dallas, Bell, Burkle, May 2013)

Fakreddin Soltani and Reza Ekhtiari Amiri in their article “Foreign Policy of Iran after Islamic revolution” tries to describe how Iran's foreign policy has changed under the presidents since the Islamic Revolution. There are two primary sections to the article. The first section will provide an overview of Iran's foreign policy's primary strategies since the Islamic Revolution and their impact on Iran's foreign policy at various points in time. The second section will discuss Iran's foreign policy under Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, Seyyed

Mohammad Khatami, and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. With the exception of Bazargan's first year as prime minister (1979–1980), when the Iranian government adopted a more pragmatic approach, Iranian politicians have up to Hashemi Rafsanjani's presidency adopted an ideological approach to foreign policy. Iran was isolated in the international community due to its ideological stance. Nonetheless, Rafsanjani recognized that Iran had to restore its post-war economic circumstances, and that this could not be done without ties to the global community. (Soltani, Amiri, January, 2010)

Javad Arabameri in his article “Israel in foreign policy discourse of the Islamic Republic of Iran” states that many academics and researchers in the domains of international relations and foreign affairs have long been preoccupied with the subject of how and why the animosity between Israel and Iran has grown. A realistic perspective in international relations is used in the majority of texts that examine the origins and evolution of this animosity. Rational calculations, however, cannot consistently analyze Iran's foreign policy toward Israel because of the ongoing pattern of hatred between these two political entities over the previous three decades. With a focus on the idea of antagonism in this theory, this thesis uses Laclau and Mufee's discourse theory to examine Iranian foreign policy toward Israel. (Arabameri, January 2012)

Sana Siddiqui in her article “Iran Vs Israel: Escalation, History and Global Impact” states that profound historical, ideological, and geopolitical roots, the Iran-Israel conflict has escalated recently, moving from proxy war to direct armed confrontation. This essay explores the development of this rivalry, starting with the two countries' cooperative ties prior to 1979 and continuing through the open animosity that followed the revolution. The conversation explores significant incidents that have influenced their relationship, such as

Iran's backing of anti-Israel organizations like Hezbollah, the Stuxnet hack in 2010, and Iran's most recent massive missile and drone attacks against Israel in 2024. The nuclear aspect of the conflict is also examined, with special attention paid to Israel's clandestine operations and strikes against Iranian sites as a result of its worries about Iran's nuclear aspirations. (Siddiqui, December 2024)

Zohreh Ghadbeigy in her article "the impact of the nuclear program on Iran Saudi Arabia relations", states that relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran, two established West Asian nations, has had numerous ups and downs over the years. The two established forces in the area are unable to ignore one another and are always vying for more influence and interests in the area. Meanwhile, a number of factors have influenced this conflict and animosity between the two nations, such as identity conflicts and ideological disagreements, geopolitical and geo-economic concerns, the Israel-Palestine issue, Saudi Arabia's involvement in regional orientations against Iran, and so forth. However, Iran's nuclear program has been one of the most significant causes and elements influencing ties between the two nations during the past 20 years. (Ghadbeigy, April 2022)

Shahram Akbarzadeh in his article "Why does Iran need Hizbullah", states that for the three-way alliance between Iran, Hizbullah, and Syria—hailed as the "axis of resistance" in Tehran—the Syrian crisis has turned into a crucial theater of conflict. The Syrian crisis has been utilized by the Iranian leadership to strengthen its relationship with Hizbullah and caution prospective adversaries about the dangers of underestimating Iran's ability to wage war on them. Iranian leaders refer to this as a deterrence policy, threatening the United States and Israel with severe consequences if they take any action against Iran. The foundation of that policy is Hizbullah. (Akbarzadeh, 2016)

Sumeera Imran and Sarim Akram Bacha and Zarfar Khan in their article “Cooperation in Israeli-Saudi relations: Impact on Iran in Middle East” states that KSA-Israel relationship's closure is a historic shift with enormous potential to represent a shift in the Middle East's strategic environment. According to the report, the Middle East's political dynamics have become more polarized along opposing poles as a result of shifting global power politics. Iran is leaning toward Russia and China in the Middle East as a result of the US, China, and Russia's engagement in the region, which has pushed the KSA's ideological arch-enemy to the US and Israel. (Sumeera Imran, june 2020)

David Menashri in his article “Iran Israel and the Middle East Conflict” states that Iran's foreign policy stance and its participation in the international arena underwent a significant shift as a result of the Islamic revolution. But with time, the new government was compelled to modify its ideology to fit the times and grew more realistic. Iran's innate animosity for Israel, rejection of Zionism, and belief in the validity of the Jewish state are some significant areas where its stance has remained unduly unyielding. In this instance, ideological animosity did not appear to be at odds with the state's practical objectives. (Menashri, January 2006)

Elham Kadkhodaee and Zeinab Ghasemi Tari in their article “Authorizing Iran in American Political discourse: case study of a post JCPOA senate hearing on Iran sanctions” states that Iran is presented and assessed as being a security risk to the US, its allies, particularly Israel, and the global community. This creation is a reflection of the long-standing ideological and political preconceptions as well as orientalist cliches that have caused Iran to be demonized and Otherized. Therefore, the US's discrimination against Iran

through sanctions and other unilateral political actions is justified and legitimized by portraying Iran as a "irrational," "radical," and "barbaric" entity. (Tari, January 2019)

Muhammad Alfian Maulana in his article "Unveiling Iran's deterrence by denial strategy in retaliatory strike against Israel" states that Iran's strategic goals and the salient features of this approach, such as the real-time nature of its threat actions, the competitive dynamics of the deterrence process, and the employment of a variety of military capabilities. The study, which uses a qualitative methodology based on a thorough examination of primary and secondary sources, shows that Iran's main goal was to convince Israel that any potential strike would be both expensive and ultimately a failure. The research findings highlight strategic implications and recommendations pertaining to the possibility for escalation in the Middle East, understanding regional conflict dynamics, and modifying defense plans. (Maulana, August 2024)

Syed Umair Jalal in his article "The Post-Revolutionary Israeli-Iranian Rivalry and Iran's Nuclear Program" states that the Iranian Revolution of 1979 brought about significant changes in the Middle East. Israel was opposed by the insurgents. Up until 1979, Tel Aviv enjoyed a cordial relationship with Tehran; nevertheless, due to a long-standing ambition to dominate the region, it was antagonistic toward its Arab neighbors. As Iran's authority has increased throughout times of transition, Israel has been more fearful. Israel opposes Muslims and Islam. Iran and Israel are in competition with one another because to the imbalance of power in the region and Iran's ambition for nuclear weapons. Many Israelis believe that Iran's nuclear effort must be halted because it poses a threat to their very existence. (Jalal, December 2023)

Kholoud Mahmoud in her article “Evolution of Israeli Military Doctrine: Adaptability in response to shifting strategic Environments” states that the development of Israeli military doctrine, following its progression from traditional to modern tactics. An introduction to military doctrine is given at the outset of the course, explaining its meaning and crucial function in directing military actions. The study explores the elements and goals of Israel's military policy, emphasizing how flexible and responsive it is to shifting strategic environments. The study illustrates Israel's ability to develop its doctrine by examining its ground, air, navy, and cyber security measures. It also looks at how changes in strategic contexts have affected how military doctrines have evolved throughout time. (Mahmoud, May 2024)

Melih Kazdal in his article “Iran's security strategy: balancing defensive deterrents and offensive proxy warfare” states that examination of Iran's security strategy, which is based on three key pillars: its nuclear program, ballistic missile stockpile, and proxy war strategy. The employment of proxy warfare include offensive or forward defense components, whereas the preceding two are primarily defensive. Iran has used proxies to actively participate in a number of Middle Eastern wars. By using proxy groups, Iran may influence conflicts while staying out of the fray and advancing its own goals. As a result, the other two pillars are strengthened by proxy warfare. Furthermore, the three main tenets of Iran's security strategy date back to Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's reign. This indicates that despite the change and revolution brought about by the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iran's security policies remain consistent. (Kazdal, December 2024)

Wyn Rees and Hossein Salimian Rizi in their article “Negotiating the Restoration of the Iran Nuclear Deal” states that Long-running talks have been held in Vienna to

resurrect the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), or nuclear agreement, which Iran signed in 2015 but which was put on hold when the United States withdrew four years later. According to this article, there are two reasons why the JCPOA was not renewed. One is Iran's 2021 presidential transition, which saw hardline Ebrahim Raisi succeed liberal Hassan Rouhani. The other is the altered global landscape, which gave Iran the chance to align itself with Russia and China. Tehran has reassessed its interests and adopted a tough stance on a possible new agreement, even though it was advantageous for Iran to continue the nuclear discussions in order to reduce the possibility of more punitive measures. (Rizi, August 2024)

Christopher Gettel in his article "Why Iran is Choosing Nuclear Hedging" states that through the prism of "nuclear hedging," a tactic to preserve the possibility of developing nuclear weapons without explicitly doing so, this research examines Iran's pursuit of nuclear capabilities. The investigation looks at Iran's reasons, including as the prestige of nuclear weapons, security worries from previous Middle Eastern regime upheavals, and a desire for regional supremacy. The abstract also emphasizes Iran's use of strategic ambiguity, which involves government officials delivering conflicting messages to the international community in order to both comfort them and maintain the possibility of developing nuclear weapons quickly. (Gettel, June 2024)

Abbas Kashani in his article "Has the Iran nuclear countdown begun" states that Iran's nuclear program is accelerating, cutting its breakout time to days before snapback sanctions expire in October 2025, posing a dangerous challenge to the international community. Divergent stakeholders are at a standstill: the European E3 demands stringent IAEA compliance and sanctions, while regional players like Saudi Arabia and the United

Arab Emirates are reluctant to intercede. Russia and China, on the other hand, support a return to the original JCPOA. Washington's two-pronged approach, which combines intense pressure with vague diplomatic outreach, has only strengthened mistrust and given Iranian hardliners more confidence, increasing the likelihood of a preemptive military strike, particularly by Israel. Iran's commitment to the 2015 nuclear deal prior to the US exit shows that negotiation is still a viable option, despite its past disregard for UN resolutions. (Kashani, April 2025)

Seyedehkiana Banikamali in her article "Toward a regime for civil liability for nuclear damage in the Islamic Republic of Iran" states that Conflicts between Iranian domestic law and international standards make it difficult for Iran's nuclear activities to comply with the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage. Iran's liability framework, a dearth of compensation channels, and inadequate insurance requirements for nuclear accidents are important concerns. The applicable international conventions cannot be enforced in Iran since the nation has not ratified them. To address these issues and bring the country into compliance with international standards, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran has developed a draft law on civil liability for nuclear harm. (Banikamali, March 2025 )

Louis Rene Beres in his article "Tehran's Nuclear Program and Genocidal Threats to Israel: where should Israel go from here" states that Israel continues to face an increasing and maybe existential threat from Iran's nuclear weapons program. From a legal perspective, the threat is essentially genocidal. An appropriate Israeli strategic doctrine might be developed and operationalized based on the strategic dialectic established in this essay. The "Samson Option," escalation dominance, improved ballistic missile defense,

enemy rationality, improved Israeli nuclear deterrence, counter-city versus counter-force nuclear targeting options, a Palestinian state and potential Israeli preemptions are some of the main topics covered. (Beres, January 2009)

Tatiana Karasova in her article “Israel’s Nuclear Programme” states that Israel has never formally acknowledged its nuclear program, it is generally assumed that it possesses nuclear weapons. The recognition of Israel as a de facto nuclear power in recently revealed U.S. papers has political ramifications, particularly in light of Israel’s resistance to Iran’s nuclear aspirations. Israel’s national security plan, which was established over seven decades to counter threats including terrorism and existential threats, is centered on its nuclear program. With the United States serving as Israel’s primary security guarantee, their relationship has been vital. Israel continues to pursue a nuclear opacity policy in spite of international awareness. Israel opposes the 2015 JCPOA because it views Iran as its main regional enemy and believes that Iran’s possible nuclear weapons could cause instability in the area and lead to an arms race. (Karasova, December 2018)

### **1.8. Gap of Knowledge**

There is a significant gap in addressing the Israel’s security dilemma, strategic vulnerabilities of Israel and Iran’s security dilemma and strategic opportunities for Iran after the Twelve Days War between the both countries. If we talk about Israel’s perception; Israel failed to dismantle the proxy network of Iran, unable to deny Iran’s nuclear program as well as failed to suppress the strategic posturing of Iran in the Middle East. On the other hand, Iran failed to protect the nuclear facilities, unable to support and protect the proxy networks like Hamas and Hezbollah as well as importantly failed to receive regional and

global support. There is a strategic opportunity for Iran that is to enhance and maximize the Air, Naval and Missile powers. If Iran achieve this it will be a strategic opportunity.

### **1.9. Theoretical Framework**

The security of the Middle East can be examined through multiple theoretical frameworks such as realism and other theories that offer valuable insights into power dynamics and state behavior. However, for this study I employ the regional security complex theory as it emphasized interdependence of regional states where security of the one state directly affects the others due to geography, historical, ideological, religious rivalries. This approach provided deeper understanding of how regional power dynamics shape the security of the Middle East.

#### **1.9.1. Regional Security Complex Theory:**

The Theory of Regional Security Complex was first presented by Barry Buzan in his book “People, States and Fear” in 1983 and further development took place at the time of cold war. This was created by the Copenhagen School of Thought whose representatives were Barry Buzan and Ole Waever. This theory was State-Centric and focused on political and military aspects covering the regions not at the national or international level. The main focus point was region or regional security. Later on they adopted a broad view in which they included five aspects into this theory: a. Social, b. Political, c. Economic, d. Military, f. Environmental. According to the RSC Theory States are the primary actors which plays an important role in securitization or de-securitization. It is an analytical tool that is socially constructed to analyze the security environment of the region and relationship between the actors involved in it. It is predicted on a regional security model that makes it possible to analyze, explain and forecast how the situation in a particular region will evolve. In the

global security system, it is emphasized that regions create distinct security subsystems where the dynamics of internal relations between nations that are afraid of their neighbors and their regional allies predominate. This theory enables empirical study, and offers a means of forecasting security dynamics across many geographies. Some of the academics have tried to expand it due to the evolving security environment with unprecedented and asymmetrical conceptual gaps like non-state actors. (Sadurski, 2022)

#### **1.9.2. Application of the Theory:**

According to the Regional Security Complex Theory, the way to understand international security is at the regional level where security of states are connected by shared dangers and geographic closeness. Each state's security within region is a threat to another's insecurity, resulting in patterns of friendship and enmity. Moreover, external powers can have an impact like we have seen in the context of Iran-Israel Military Escalation in which Israel was supported by the United States and allied powers. On the other hand we have seen Russian and Chinese support for Iran. Buzan and Waever contend that these complexes are largely independent on global security frameworks.

One of the main pillars of Middle Eastern security is the Iran-Israel rivalry which is marked by animosity and hate towards each other. Israel is seen as enemy by Iran especially because of its nuclear weapons and relationship with the Arab nations. On the other hand, Israel sees Iran's support for proxies and nuclear aspirations as existential threat. In countries like Syria, Lebanon and Yemen: Proxy wars have been sparked by the Iran-Israel conflict. Israel from time to time launched airstrikes on Iranian targets in Iraq and Syria while Iran backs Hezbollah and other organizations in the region. Israel target Iranian military installations in these countries while Iran targets Israel via its proxies.

These acts add to the larger Middle Eastern Security conundrum and worsen regional instability.

Discussions concerning possible military attacks on Iranian facilities have arisen because Israel views a nuclear armed Iran as a direct threat. Iran-Israel rivalry is centered on Iranian nuclear program. Iran's "Axis of Resistance" has been weakened by the fall of Assad regime in Syria which has impacted regional strategy as well as regional security. Furthermore, regional security of the Middle East is significantly influenced by external parties like China, Russia and the United States. The U.S has always aimed to balance out Iran's influence and has strategic relations with Israel. China has expanded its political and economic ties in the region, while Russia has backed Iran, especially during the Syrian Civil War. (Anderson, 2019)

The military confrontation between Iran and Israel is a prime example of the dynamics of a regional security complex in which the security issues of a neighboring nations are linked with each other. Middle Eastern region is significantly impacted by this bilateral competition, which affects alliance patterns, regional stability and the development of military forces. Gaining an understanding of these processes through the lens of Regional Security Complex Theory offers important insights into the complexities of the Middle Eastern regional security.

## **1.10. Methodology**

The nature of study is qualitative and uses secondary sources to understand the dynamics of Iran-Israel Military standoff and its impact on the Middle East. Primary data will be used to understand the contemporary and descriptive aspects of the study.

### **1.10.1. Research Design**

It is a qualitative study and uses qualitative design and it will follow a case study approach

### **1.10.2. Population**

The Population includes academicians, experts and policy makers of the field of investigation.

### **1.10.3. Sampling**

Convenient sampling is used for data collection.

## **1.11. Operational Definitions**

- a) **Strategic Culture:** A state's perception, formulation, and implementation of its national security and defense policies are influenced by its strategic culture, which is the collection of common ideas, presumptions, values, and practices around the use of military force and the role of security. Leaders and policymakers' perspectives on threats, deterrence, alliances, and the use of force are influenced by a country's historical experiences, geography, political institutions, social norms, and ideological influences. (Snyder, 2023)
- b) **Security Dilemma:** In international relations, a security dilemma occurs when a state's efforts to strengthen its security, such bolstering its military or forging alliances, are viewed as dangerous by other powers. As a result, tensions may rise and all parties may feel less secure when these other states respond by stepping up their own security measures. (Hans Morgenthau, 1950)
- c) **Band Wagoning:** In international relations, band-wagoning is a tactic when a smaller or weaker state joins forces with a more powerful, potentially dangerous

one rather than balancing against it. By "jumping on the bandwagon," the weaker state supports the greater power instead of fighting it in an attempt to gain stability, protection, or advantages. (Kenneth Waltz, 1979)

- d) **Balancing:** The strategy of balancing in international relations involves states forming alliances, increasing their military, or improving their capabilities in order to offset a dominant or potentially dangerous force. By keeping a balance of power that safeguards the independence and security of other states, balancing aims to keep any one state from growing too strong. (Jackson & Sorenson)
- e) **Strategic Thought:** Considerations of power dynamics, national interests, dangers, opportunities, and how to employ political, economic, or military methods to secure a state's goals are all part of strategic thinking in the contexts of international relations and the military. This way of thinking frequently calls for both a long-term, high-level perspective and the flexibility to adjust to shifting circumstances and unknowns. (Steven, 1992)
- f) **Geo-political:** In international relations, geopolitics is the study of how geography affects power dynamics. Originally created by the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén around the turn of the 20th century, the term "geopolitics" expanded throughout Europe between World Wars I and II (1918–39) before becoming widely used during the latter. (Flint, 2021)
- g) **Geo-strategic:** Geo-strategy is a branch of geopolitics that deals with the strategy and it is a combination of geopolitical and geostrategic factors particularly geography. Admiral Alfred Mahan and Mackinder were key architects of the geostrategic thought. (Blouet, 2020)

h) **Nuclearization:** The process of arming a country with nuclear weapons is known as Nuclearization. The first atomic weapon was created in July 1945 by the Manhattan Project, a U.S. initiative. A uranium-based atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, just three weeks after the first atomic bomb test in the U.S. state of New Mexico. Three days later, a second bomb based on plutonium was detonated on Nagasaki. (Spector, 1990)

#### **1.12. Instruments**

Questionnaires (open and close ended/mixed) Interviews

#### **1.13. Procedure**

Secondary (Books, Research articles, reports, etc) Primary (Interviews and Questionnaires)

#### **1.14. Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis tools such as NVIVO Software will be used.

#### **1.15. Ethical Considerations**

- Data reliability will be ensured
- Copyrights rules will be ensured
- Plagiarism issues will be addressed to ensure academic integrity

#### **1.16. Organization of the Study:**

This study is divided into six chapters including introduction and conclusion chapters. The scheme of the study is reflected as below:

- i. **Chapter One: Introduction:** This chapter layouts the background of the study, problem statement, significance, objectives, research questions, delimitations, literature review, and research methodology.
- ii. **Chapter Two: Nature of the Iran-Israel Conflict:** This chapter explains with the geographical, ideological and political dynamics of the Middle East particularly focused on Iran-Israel rivalry. In this chapter explains about Middle Eastern geography, ideology existed in the region, political structure, systems of government, different political and strategic aspects and lastly Iran-Israel ideological, political, religious, and strategic aspects.
- iii. **Chapter Three: Understanding the Legacy of Conflict and Chaos in the Middle East:** This chapter is divided into two sections, first one we discussed the relations of Israel with the Arab world starting from 1948 till date. In the next section we examined the relations of Iran with the Arab world starting from 1979 onwards after Iranian revolution.
- iv. **Chapter Four: Securitization of the Iran-Israel Bilateral Relations:** In this chapter we debated Iran-Israel relationship since 1979 that has been shaped by securitization where both states posed threat to each other as an existential threat. After the Iranian revolution Tehran rejected Tel Aviv's legitimacy and supported Palestinian resistance through forming alliance with Hezbollah and Hamas. Whereas, Israel see Iran as a direct security challenge and Iran's nuclear program was being portrayed as existential threat to Israel. The rivalry between both countries was embedded in the Middle Eastern geopolitics as both states compete

with each other. Thus, securitization purely define their relationship making dialogue nearly impossible.

- v. **Chapter Five: The Impact of the “Twelve Day War” on Security of the Middle East:** Middle Eastern security is significantly impacted by the aftermath of the "Twelve-Day War," especially when considered from the opposing viewpoints of Iran and Israel. As far as Israel was concerned, the war brought to light dangers: in spite of its military might, Israel was unable to overthrow the regime in Tehran, stop Iran's nuclear program from developing, or stop Iran's expanding regional strategic alliances. Iran, on the other hand, emphasizes both its strengths and weaknesses. Despite showcasing tenacity and retaining power through its Middle Eastern proxies, Tehran encountered obstacles in safeguarding its nuclear facilities and obtaining wider international backing. An ongoing security conundrum has been strengthened by this dynamic.
- vi. **Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations:** This study has summarized the complex and multifaceted character of the Iran-Israel conflict by situating it within the broader geopolitical, ideological, and historical dynamics of the Middle East.

## CHAPTER -2

### THE NATURE OF IRAN ISRAEL CONFLICT

#### 2.1. Introduction:

The Iran and Israel have had one of the most complicated and dynamic relationship in the Middle East over the last seventy four years, evolving from multifaceted cooperation to open support for the destruction of the Jewish state. Tehran has developed a “Ring of the Fire Strategy” that aims to surround Israel with massive missile and unmanned aerial vehicles UAVs bases not only from Lebanon, Gaza and Syria but also from Iraq and Yemen. This is in response to the regime in Iran who have hegemonic ambitions being reignited in the wake of Iran-Iraq War, gaining a significant boost after Saddam Hussain regime was overthrown. Israel’s strategic superiority including its powerful air force, multilayered anti-missile air defense system and nuclear armed submarines deters Iran, while Israel is aware of high human and material cost associated with Tehran’s missile array, particularly given Hezbollah’s estimated 150,000 rocket/missile arsenal. This has led to an uncomfortable “Balance of Terror”. Although an all-out conflict between Tehran and Tel Aviv governments have been avoided thus far due to this balance, it is still possible that Tehran could acquire nuclear weapons. (Furlan, 2022)

There is a lot to analyze in this relationship that has given the profound effects of the Iranian revolution of 1979 on Iranian ideology and leadership as well as Israeli transformation from a recently independent state to a regional enemy. Iran and Israel had a turbulent history of conflict and collaboration. The war between both countries is made up of countless layers with a political and historical ramifications from regime changes to

nationalistic awakenings. An axis of animosity, regional conflict and defamatory language has been formed by the many changes in Iran and Israel's diplomatic ties over the past 70 years.

Following the start of the Iranian Revolution diplomatic ties between Iran and Israel were severed. Muhammad Mossadegh was the Prime Minister of Iran prior to the revolution and even the Shah's reign. His emphasis on social security and secularism led him being referred to as "the closest thing Iran has ever had to a democratic leader." The United Kingdom and the Western World had significant holdings in Iranian oil resources, thus their nationalization of the oil sector infuriated them. This led to the overthrow of the Mossadegh government with the United States. The 1953 coup known as Operation Ajax was instigated by the U.S, U.K who cited their loss of control over Iranian oil income.

Large scale demonstrations against the regime at that time were supported by both governments. Muhammad Mossadegh was taken into custody but many of his supporters were jailed or they were put to death. The Islamic Republic was able to gain legitimacy from the restoration of the Iranian monarchy following Mossadegh's overthrow. This happened during the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1979, when Islamic Republic clergy pointed to the Shah's violations of human rights and corruption in the government. During the Shah's rule his secret police "SAVAK" actively suppressed protests and dissension. Mossadegh's democratic views were preferred by the majority of the Iranians, the religious elite in Iran banded together in 1979 to protest the Shah's actions. The theocracy that exists today was replaced by a revolution that overthrew the king that the west had imposed.

Initially, Iran used proxies to wage war against Israel in an effort to eliminate as many Israelis as possible. Hizbullah is a Shi'ite militia in Lebanon that has been armed and trained by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps since the 1980s, transforming the nation into an Iranian satrapy. Over 130,000 missiles of various ranges, covering the majority of Israel, have been acquired by Hizbullah. Iran is working to increase their accuracy. The stated objective of Hizbullah is "to liberate Jerusalem from Zionist rule." In a similar vein, Iran gave Hamas significant military assistance after it seized control of Gaza in 2007 with the goal of strengthening its capacity to bleed Israel. Tehran directed financial and military support to the Iranian-subordinate Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza when Hamas refused to back Iran's stance in Syria.

Israel has engaged in military conflicts with Hamas, Hizbullah, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Iran's proxies. Jerusalem is adamant about preventing a Lebanese scenario in Syria, where the Jewish state is at danger from missiles. In order to stop Iran and its proxy militias from becoming established in Syria, Israel started attacking locations connected to Iran as early as 2013. Additionally, these operations are used to destroy Iranian-made missiles and parts intended to increase their accuracy that are supplied to Hezbollah in Lebanon.

## **2.2. Geography of the Middle East:**

The Middle East is made up of 17 UN-recognized nations that encompass sections of Southeast Europe, northeast Africa, and Western Asia. The Nile, Tigris, and Euphrates river valleys, desert plateaus, oil-rich coastal plains, and rocky mountain topography are

all parts of its physical environment, and each shapes social cohesiveness and governmental centralization.

The region is centered on the point where Africa, Asia, and Europe converge, where the sea deeply penetrates the land mass. Maritime trade has always been significant, and port control and seaway restrictions have alternately benefited cities and hindered trade. Major routes have traversed the four large isthmuses between the ocean's arms and the inland Caspian Sea for millennia and controlling them has been a significant geopolitical priority.

In 1869, the Suez Canal, which was crucial to British imperial policy, especially during the two World Wars, replaced a route that stretched from Alexandria to Cairo to Suez and then by ship down the Red Sea. Another, somewhat untraveled path passed through Persia as well, although it descended via Tabriz from Batum or Trabzon on the Black Sea. Mobility between the Gulf, the Caspian Sea or eastern Mediterranean, making this region a major worry for Germany and the Allies during World Wars I and II, as well as for Russia and Britain in the eighteenth century.

Iraq's ports were shut down during the 1979 Iran-Iraq War. In the meantime, the periphery seas rank among the most significant global roads due to tanker traffic in the Gulf, the Red Sea, the northern Indian Ocean, and the eastern Mediterranean. The region is traversed by air traffic between Europe, India, Southeast Asia, the Far East, and Australia. This is due in part to the prohibitions on flying over the Soviet Union, in part to the benefits of clear air and generally stable weather, and in part to the approximations of great circle routes.

Israel's creation and its effects on regional dynamics profoundly influenced the Middle East's geopolitical environment after 1948. Significant political changes occurred in Iran, which is northeast of Israel, during this time, most notably the Islamic Revolution of 1979, which overthrew the pro-Western monarchy and established an Islamic republic in its place. Iran's new leadership became adamantly anti-Israel, seeing the Jewish state as a continuation of Western imperialism, even though the country had previously maintained a generally friendly relationship with Israel.

The strategic value of the oil resources in the area and both nations' involvement in the larger Arab-Israeli conflict have increased tension. Geographically, Iran was a major power in the Middle East due to its size and location along vital trade routes, while Israel, a smaller but strategically significant country in the Levant, relied on strong military alliances and its status as an ally of the United States to offset Iran's influence. These factors have persisted in influencing regional politics and alliances

### **2.3. Ideologies in the Middle East:**

One of the most important philosophies in the Middle East, especially since colonial control ended in the middle of the 20th century, has been nationalism, specifically Arab nationalism. Based on common linguistic, cultural, and historical connections, Arab nationalism aimed to bring the Arab world together as a unified political entity. Following World War I, when the Ottoman Empire's collapse created a political vacuum in the region, this idea gained popularity. Pan-Arabism, the idea of a unified Arab world capable of fending off Western imperialism and claiming its independence, was promoted by leaders such as Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt. Despite its allure, Nasser's plan for Arab unification

was dogged by internal conflicts and eventually weakened by political and economic difficulties (Said, 1978).

Islamism started to become the region's dominant ideology in the late 20th century, while nationalism lost some of its popularity. The belief in the political application of Islamic principles is known as Islamism, and it is frequently interpreted as a reaction to secularism, Westernization, and the shortcomings of nationalist governments. An important turning point in the revival of Islamism was the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which resulted in the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini spearheaded the revolution, which opposed the secular, pro-Western political order and aimed to create an Islamic state founded on Shia Islam. Since then, both Sunni and Shia Islamist movements have grown to be significant forces in the political sphere. (Kepel, 2002)

Especially in the 20th century, “secularism” the idea that religion and politics should be kept apart was another prevalent ideology in the Middle East. Secular leaders, like Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in Turkey and the Ba'athists in Iraq and Syria, promoted secularism as a pillar of national identity in an effort to modernize and westernize their communities. Through state-led social and economic reforms, these secular governments sought to advance modernity and reduce the role of religion in politics.

### **2.3.1. Iranian Ideology:**

Iran's history and the Islamic Revolution of 1979, which resulted in the creation of the Islamic Republic under Ayatollah Khomeini, are fundamental to its ideology. A theocratic government founded on Shia Islamic values replaced a pro-Western, secular

monarchy during this revolution, signaling a dramatic change in Iranian political philosophy. Velayat-e Faqih (Guardianship of the Jurisprudent), the name of Khomeini's philosophy, calls for a government run by Islamic scholars who interpret Shia Islamic law to direct state activities. Iran is a model for the Islamic world because of its religious foundation, which sets it apart from other Middle Eastern nations by fusing governmental control with religious authority.

Anti-imperialism and anti-Western are central to Iran's political philosophy. The 1979 revolution itself was partly a reaction to perceived foreign (particularly American) meddling in Iranian affairs, best exemplified by the 1953 coup led by the CIA that toppled Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh. Iran's ideological commitment to resisting foreign influence is not merely a reactionary position; rather, it has evolved into a defining characteristic of its foreign policy, frequently expressed in opposition to Israeli actions, American policies, and world norms established by the West. (Katz, 2016)

### **2.3.2. Israeli Ideology:**

Israel has a more secular ideological base than Iran, despite having strong ties to Jewish identity and religion. The Zionist movement, which aimed to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine, culminated with the establishment of Israel in 1948. The yearning to return to the country of Israel after centuries of Jewish exile propelled Zionism, a religious and nationalist movement led by individuals such as Theodor Herzl. In addition to resurrecting Jewish culture, Zionism aimed to establish a political entity where Jews might dwell without facing persecution. Israeli culture has always had a significant religious component, despite the Zionist movement's initial secular nature. Over time, many types of religious Zionism have emerged. One of the distinguishing characteristics

of Israeli political discourse continues to be the ideological divide between secular and religious Jews. Religious Zionists place a high value on territorial expansion, especially in the West Bank, because they believe that the State of Israel is not just a haven for Jews but also the realization of biblical prophecies.

Iran and Israel have distinct historical experiences, religious traditions, and geopolitical factors that inform their ideologies. While Israel's ideology is defined by Zionism, Jewish nationalism, and a security-focused attitude to its existence, Iran's ideology is influenced by the principles of Islamic governance, anti-western, and a revolutionary vision of resistance. In addition to influencing their domestic policies, these two countries' ideological differences have also fueled regional instability, which is characterized by competition, proxy wars, and divergent outlooks on the Middle East's future.

#### **2.4. Political Systems in the Middle East:**

The Middle East has traditionally witnessed a wide diversity of political systems. Absolute monarchy, in which the king or emir has ultimate authority and frequently little or no constraints on it, are found in several nations, including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates. On the other hand, although frequently influenced by authoritarian behaviors, republican systems of governance are seen in nations like Tunisia, Egypt, and Turkey. The political structure of Turkey, a secular republic established on Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's ideas, has changed significantly in recent years, with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan gaining more authority as president. After decades of military control,

Egypt had a transition to democracy before returning to authoritarianism after Mohamed Morsi, the elected president, was overthrown in a military coup in 2013.

Iran is a theocratic republic with a unique political structure in the Middle East. Established during the revolution in 1979, the Islamic Republic of Iran combines aspects of Islamic administration with republican characteristics to create a distinctive political framework that has impacted both Iran's foreign policy in the region and its domestic politics. The monarchy of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, a Western ally who had pushed for a secularizing agenda, was overthrown in the 1979 revolution under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini. Discontent with the shah's secular programs, opposition to his dictatorial leadership, and general hostility toward Western imperialism all contributed to the revolution. As a result, Khomeini became the supreme head of a theocratic government.

Religious leaders have considerable influence on both political and social structures in Iran's political system, which is a distinctive fusion of theocratic and republican elements. Under the Islamic Republic of Iran, democracy and authoritarianism coexist under a system that combines an elected government with a strong religious establishment. Iran's internal policies and connections with the wider Middle East have been influenced by this system, especially as it manages regional rivalries and its ideological resistance to Israeli and Western influence. The Middle East has some of the world's most complicated and unstable political and security dynamics. The area is a patchwork of geopolitical rivalries, religious disputes, and historical grievances. Iran and Israel, two nations whose political, security, and ideological agendas frequently diverge and have an impact on both Middle Eastern and international politics, are at the heart of these dynamics. Examining their respective historical backgrounds, their roles in regional politics, and the wider

security ramifications for the Middle East, this paper explored the political and security ties between Iran and Israel.

The political and security conflicts between Israel and Iran have their origins in the middle of the 20th century, when both countries became significant participants in the Middle East yet had quite different political ideologies and systems. After decades of Zionist attempts to build a Jewish homeland in Palestine, the state's creation in 1948 marked a turning point for Israel. Arab governments rejected its construction right first, sparking a string of wars and continuing hostilities with nearby nations. Many in the region, especially in the Arab world, where the Palestinian question has been at the heart of the narrative of struggle against Zionism, have opposed the creation of the Israeli state.

In contrast, Iran was governed by a secular monarchy under Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who had close connections to the West, especially the United States and Israel, until his overthrow in the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Iran was crucial to regional security, and these relations were characterized by commercial trade, intelligence sharing, and military cooperation. Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic Republic of Iran, however, drastically changed its policies following the revolution. Velayat-e Faqih (Guardianship of the Jurisprudent) and Shia Islam served as the foundation for the new government, which rejected Western influence and took an anti-Israeli position, seeing the Jewish state as a continuation of Western imperialism.

The competition between Israel and Iran, which both view as existential dangers, has greatly influenced the Middle East's security landscape. Iran's nuclear aspirations pose an immediate and obvious threat to Israel. Since the early 2000s, Israel has frequently

voiced its fears over Iran's nuclear program, believing that if Iran were able to produce nuclear weapons, the regional power dynamics would drastically shift and that Israel would even face extinction. Israel has retaliated by carrying out clandestine operations, including cyber-attacks on Iranian nuclear installations (most notably Stuxnet) and the murders of important Iranian scientists. It has also put pressure on the international community to impose sanctions on Iran in order to stop its nuclear aspirations.

Iran, on the other hand, sees Israel as a regional symbol of Western aggression and an illegitimate state. Iran has historically supported anti-Israel organizations and militias, including Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, militarily and financially. Iran supports these organizations as part of a larger plan to export its resistance ideology and offset Israeli influence. The two nations' enmity is not just confined to direct confrontation; it also manifests itself in proxy conflicts throughout the Middle East, ranging from Yemen to Syria to Lebanon.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was signed in 2015 and set restrictions on Iran's nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of sanctions, marked the height of animosity between the two nations. Other international powers viewed the agreement as a diplomatic victory, despite Israel's opposition, which said it did not go far enough to stop Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. However, tensions have increased, bringing both sides closer to direct conflict than at any other point in recent memory, as a result of Iran's subsequent violations of the terms of the agreement and the U.S. withdrawal from it under President Donald Trump in 2018.

One of the most distinctive and divisive political and security relationships in the Middle East is that between Iran and Israel. Although both nations have essentially distinct political philosophies one is a secular democracy, the other is a theocratic republic their antagonism is intricately linked to the geopolitical conflicts in the area. Iran and Israel's struggle for regional dominance affects not only the Middle East but also international security, ranging from the nuclear problem to proxy conflicts and security alliances. With the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the larger competition for domination determining the future course of Middle Eastern politics, the chances for peace in the region remain dubious as both countries continue to establish their influence.

The issue of nuclear weapons is among the most important facets of the security dynamics between Israel and Iran. Although Israel has never officially acknowledged or denied having nuclear weapons, it is generally assumed that it does. Israel's security strategy has been based on this ambiguity, or "nuclear opacity," which ensures deterrence without requiring an open acknowledgement of its capabilities. Israel's leadership is extremely concerned about the possibility of an arms race in the region, especially if Iran develops nuclear weapons, since it would erode Israel's strategic advantage.

## CHAPTER-3

### UNDERSTANDING THE LEGACY OF CONFLICT AND CHAOS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

#### 3.1. Introduction:

In international politics, some dates are both transformative and significant. For example, the global system saw significant changes in 1989 with the conclusion of the Cold War. A turning point in world history, the year 2001 marked the beginning of the worldwide war on terror. Similar to this, October 7, 2023, will go down in history as a turning point because of the startling attack on Israel by Hamas, which served as a trigger for developments that altered the Middle East's political, social, and economic landscape. Russia's attack on Ukraine was overshadowed by the region's unmatched international attention during 2024.

The Middle East is still beset by unresolved issues, such as the unresolved question of Palestinian statehood (a vision that is currently more distant than in the past), so even though things have calmed down in the wake of two significant ceasefires between Israel and non-state groups, the security situation will not significantly improve. The collapse of the Assad regime in Syria and its internal and regional repercussions, tensions between Israel and Iran, internal crises in Lebanon and Yemen, the political and economic weakness of all the countries in the region, social unrest, and the power of radicalism are the main factors currently contributing to the overall instability of the region.

Iran believes that the Palestinian cause and its battle during the Revolution share some common roots. According to the Revolution's leadership, Palestine and monarchical

Iran have both been subjected to American and British imperialism. They specifically blame Washington for having backed the Shah's oppressive dictatorship. Regarding Jerusalem, the colonizing endeavor was sparked by Zionist ideology, which was started in 1917 when Britain pledged to back the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Tehran has also repeatedly denounced the Israeli settlers' ongoing attacks on al-Haram al-Sharīf, the holy mosque, one of Islam's most important houses of worship. These positions align with Hamas' immediate objectives to discourage Israeli abuses of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Iran generally kept supporting the Palestinian cause because, as the country's chief ambassador at the UN said, it is ingrained in the Islamic Revolution's ideology. The Iranian leadership emphasized that the scope of the conflict should not include civilians, notwithstanding Tehran's affirmation that the resistance and Israel's battle will last until the occupation is over.

### **3.2. Israel Relations with the Arab World (1948-2025)**

The story of Israel's relations with the Arab world begins in 1948, with the establishment of the Jewish state on the ruins of a fractured Palestine. What unfolded was not merely the creation of a new state but the eruption of a new security dilemma in the heart of the Middle East. For the Arab states, the declaration of Israel was perceived as an intrusion, a Western-backed project that uprooted a native population and threatened the identity of the region. For Israel, surrounded by hostile neighbors, survival became an existential concern from its very first day. This dual perception, of invasion on one side and of insecurity on the other, became the axis around which Arab-Israel relations revolved for decades.

The wars that followed in 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973 are often described in military terms, yet their meaning cannot be reduced to battlefield victories or defeats. They symbolized a deeper clash of narratives. The Arab states, riding the wave of postcolonial nationalism, saw Israel as a colonial implant, while Israel presented itself as the homeland of a people long denied statehood. The writings of Avi Shlaim, one of the leading “New Historians” of Israel, highlight how the conflict was never simply about land but about legitimacy and recognition in a turbulent regional order. Shlaim argues that both sides carried maximalist positions that left little room for compromise, cementing enmity in the formative years. (Samaan, November, 2017)

Arab perceptions were shaped not only by Palestine but also by wider cultural and religious underpinnings. The displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, remembered as the Nakba, was seen across the Arab world as a moral wound, binding populations and regimes together in opposition to Israel. Rashid Khalidi notes that the Palestinian question became a mirror through which Arab regimes measured their legitimacy, often inflating rhetoric against Israel to consolidate domestic rule. In this sense, hostility was not only strategic but also deeply political and symbolic. (Samaan, November, 2017)

Israel, meanwhile, cultivated a doctrine of security that emphasized deterrence and pre-emption. Born out of its isolation, it adopted a posture of military superiority, believing that survival depended on demonstrating strength. As Michael Barnett observes in his analysis of Middle Eastern security, Israel’s very identity was fused with its perception of being under siege, which justified extraordinary reliance on military power. This reliance, while effective in preventing immediate destruction, reinforced Arab fears of an aggressive

state expanding beyond its borders. The result was a vicious cycle: Israeli strength bred Arab resistance, and Arab resistance validated Israel's militarization. (Anderson, 2019)

By the 1950s and 1960s, the Arab-Israel conflict had become inseparable from the larger Cold War landscape. The United States gradually tilted toward Israel, while the Soviet Union supplied arms to Egypt and Syria. This alignment internationalized what had begun as a regional dispute, giving it the dimensions of a proxy struggle. Yet, beneath the superpower rivalry lay the core problem: the absence of recognition, trust, and security guarantees acceptable to both sides.

Thus, the introduction to Israel's relations with the Arab world must be read not as a mere chronology of wars, but as the emergence of a contested political reality. From 1948 onward, Arab-Israel relations embodied a paradox: two narratives of victimhood colliding in a space too small for both to fully prevail. (ovendale, October, 2015)

### **3.2.1. Cold War & Arab-Israel Wars:**

The second phase of Israel's relations with the Arab world unfolded in the crucible of the Cold War, where local rivalries were absorbed into the larger ideological competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Arab-Israel conflict became one of the sharpest flashpoints of the Middle East, where questions of identity, security, and legitimacy overlapped with superpower interests. It is often tempting to narrate this period as a sequence of wars, including the Suez Crisis of 1956, the Six-Day War of 1967, and the Yom Kippur War of 1973; however, that would miss the broader picture. Each war was not only a military confrontation but also a stage where Arab nationalism, Israeli survivalism, and Cold War geopolitics intersected in unpredictable ways.

The 1956 Suez Crisis revealed how the Arab-Israel question could not be detached from colonial legacies. Egypt under Gamal Abdel Nasser sought to assert its independence and regional leadership by nationalizing the Suez Canal, a move that Britain and France saw as a direct challenge to their declining influence. Israel joined the Anglo-French invasion, hoping to weaken Nasser and secure its access to shipping routes. Although the military campaign initially went in their favor, international pressure, particularly from the United States and the Soviet Union, forced a withdrawal. For Israel, the war demonstrated its willingness to ally with Western powers, while for the Arab world, Nasser emerged as a hero who stood up to imperial aggression. According to William Quandt, the Suez Crisis marked a turning point where Arab public opinion became even more radicalized against Israel, linking it explicitly to European colonial ambitions.

The Six-Day War of 1967 shifted the balance of power dramatically. In less than a week, Israel captured the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights, territories that would become the central fault lines of future negotiations. Israel celebrated the victory as proof of its military invincibility, while the Arab states mourned it as a catastrophic defeat that stripped away not only land but also pride. Avi Shlaim emphasizes that the war transformed Israel from a fragile state into a regional power, but at the cost of entrenching Arab hostility, since the occupation of Arab territories deepened the sense of injustice. For many Arab leaders, including Nasser, the war discredited the dream of pan-Arab unity, even though the Khartoum Resolution later that year declared the famous “three no’s”: no recognition of Israel, no negotiation, and no peace.

The 1973 Yom Kippur War offered a different lesson. Launched by Egypt and Syria in a surprise attack, it briefly restored Arab confidence by proving that Israel was not

invulnerable. For Israel, the heavy losses in the opening days were a reminder that security could never be taken for granted. Yet the war also opened the door to diplomacy, as the United States stepped in to mediate and gradually replace the Soviet Union as the main power broker in the region. As Kenneth Pollack notes, the war reshaped the Arab-Israel conflict by introducing the idea that limited war could be used as a tool to achieve political concessions, a logic that would later underpin Egypt's decision to negotiate with Israel at Camp David.

These wars, therefore, were more than battles over territory. They reflected the competing insecurities of both sides: Arab regimes sought to restore honor and legitimacy after repeated humiliations, while Israel sought to secure borders that it could defend in a hostile environment. Cold War politics only magnified these dynamics, as Washington and Moscow saw in the conflict an opportunity to expand their spheres of influence. What emerged was not just a military stalemate but a psychological one, where trust was absent, fears were magnified, and the future remained uncertain.

### **3.2.2. Peace Accords and Gradual Shifts:**

By the late 1970s, a new chapter began to take shape in the relationship between Israel and the Arab world, one that moved away from the battlefield toward cautious diplomacy. The repeated cycles of war had exhausted both sides, and for some leaders, it became clear that confrontation alone would not secure their national interests. The Arab defeat in 1967 and the mixed outcome of 1973 had shown the limitations of military strategy, while for Israel, the costs of perpetual mobilization and the burden of occupation were beginning to raise questions about sustainability. It was in this context that Egypt,

under the leadership of Anwar Sadat, chose the path of negotiation, a decision that fundamentally altered the landscape of Middle Eastern politics.

The Camp David Accords of 1978 were more than a bilateral agreement between Egypt and Israel; they were a symbolic breakthrough that shattered the long-held Arab consensus of total rejection. For the first time, an Arab state formally recognized Israel in exchange for the return of occupied land, specifically the Sinai Peninsula. William Quandt, who studied the negotiations in detail, describes Camp David as a moment when diplomacy overcame decades of hostility, not by resolving every issue, but by demonstrating that dialogue was possible even between sworn enemies. Egypt's move was met with fury across much of the Arab world, with Cairo expelled from the Arab League and Sadat branded a traitor by some, yet it also set a precedent that peace with Israel was not unthinkable.

Jordan followed years later, signing its own peace treaty with Israel in 1994, a step shaped by both regional pragmatism and domestic pressures. The Hashemite monarchy, long balancing between Palestinian identity and Jordanian sovereignty, saw in peace with Israel a way to stabilize its borders and ensure economic and political support from the West. Shibley Telhami has argued that Jordan's decision reflected a broader pattern in Arab politics during the 1990s: a shift from ideological opposition to Israel toward a more interest-driven calculation, where survival of regimes and access to international aid often mattered more than symbolic resistance.

Alongside these state-level changes, the Palestinian question also underwent a transformation during this period. The Oslo Accords of the early 1990s, signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), created an atmosphere of cautious

optimism. For the first time, the PLO formally recognized Israel's right to exist, while Israel acknowledged the Palestinians as a people entitled to self-rule in parts of the West Bank and Gaza. Edward Said, however, critiqued the accords as a deeply flawed arrangement that offered Palestinians only limited autonomy without addressing the deeper issues of sovereignty, refugees, and Jerusalem. His criticism reflects a tension that has persisted ever since: while Oslo marked an unprecedented step toward coexistence, it also institutionalized a reality of unequal power that continues to haunt peace efforts.

These developments signaled a gradual but uneven shift in Arab-Israel relations. Some states began to see engagement as a pragmatic necessity, while others clung to rejectionist positions, fearing the political cost of normalization without a just solution for Palestine. The Arab world, once united under the banner of confrontation, found itself increasingly fragmented, with different governments pursuing divergent strategies. For Israel, this fragmentation was a strategic advantage, reducing the likelihood of a unified Arab front, but it also meant that peace remained partial, fragile, and dependent on the survival of specific regimes rather than a broader reconciliation.

### **3.2.3. Contemporary Dynamics of the Middle East:**

In recent decades, Israel's relations with the Arab world have entered a new and more complex phase, shaped not only by the enduring question of Palestine but also by shifting regional and global power structures. The Abraham Accords of 2020, signed with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and later Sudan, revealed the extent to which Arab-Israel dynamics have been transformed. Unlike earlier peace agreements that were driven by territorial disputes, these accords reflected pragmatic calculations rooted in economics, technology, and above all, a shared security concern regarding Iran. Marc

Lynch points out that Arab countries are now normalizing ties with Israel even without solving the Palestinian issue. This shift shows that they are guided more by strategy than by shared ideals.

The Arab public feels differently. A 2022 survey by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies found that 84% of Arabs oppose diplomatic recognition of Israel as long as the Palestinian issue remains unresolved. This shows a serious gap between what governments pursue and what their citizens want. That gap could undermine peace agreements, especially if violence in Gaza or the West Bank sparks public outrage. Scholars like Rashid Khalidi warn that sidelining the Palestinian issue is not sustainable. It weakens the moral standing of Arab rulers and risks alienating already distrustful populations.

Israel, meanwhile, has sought to leverage normalization into regional partnerships that extend beyond security into trade, energy, and technology. The cooperation on advanced defense systems with the UAE and Bahrain reflects a convergence of threat perceptions, especially in relation to Iran's missile and drone capabilities.

The ongoing war in Gaza has intensified tensions. Israeli military campaigns, criticized for high civilian casualties, have triggered widespread protests across Arab capitals, particularly in Morocco, Jordan, and Egypt. In Morocco, tens of thousands rallied against normalization with Israel, with demonstrators targeting strategic ports in an effort to disrupt ties. In Jordan, protesters repeatedly marched near the Israeli embassy in Amman, demanding a break in diplomatic relations and applying pressure on the monarchy.

Meanwhile, in Egypt, where public gatherings are often tightly controlled, anger has mounted, and authorities even blocked activist marches that sought to highlight Gaza's humanitarian crisis. This wave of grassroots resistance is forcing regional governments into a difficult balancing act as they try to maintain elite-led normalization efforts while managing deep-rooted public outrage that threatens to undermine those ties.

### **3.2.4. Role of External Powers:**

Another important factor is the role of external powers. The United States continues to champion normalization as a pillar of its Middle East strategy, while China has positioned itself as a potential mediator, hosting talks between Palestinian factions in 2023. Russia, embroiled in Ukraine, nonetheless seeks to maintain its influence in Syria and to appear as an alternative broker to Washington. As Fawaz Gerges points out, the multipolarity of the current international system means that Arab-Israel relations are now entangled not only in regional rivalries but also in the broader contest for global influence.

Taken together, the trajectory of Israel's relations with the Arab world from 1948 to the present reveals a paradoxical evolution. From total rejection to selective normalization, the conflict has shifted from being a unifying cause for Arab regimes to a fragmented arena of divergent strategies. Israel has moved from isolation to partial acceptance, yet its legitimacy remains contested among Arab populations, especially in light of ongoing violence in Gaza and the persistence of occupation. The Palestinian question, once central to Arab identity, has been strategically marginalized but not erased, lingering as the unresolved core of the entire relationship.

Thus, the contemporary phase cannot be understood simply as a story of progress toward peace. It is rather a fragile equilibrium, where elite agreements coexist with popular

discontent, where shared threats create opportunities for cooperation even as unresolved injustices threaten to unravel them. The Arab-Israel relationship today is less about ideological confrontation and more about pragmatic calculation. Yet the deep wounds of history remind us that no arrangement is truly stable until the question of justice for Palestine is addressed.

### **3.3. Iran's Relations with the Arab World (1948-2025)**

Iran's Islamic Revolution of 1979 was a turning point in Middle Eastern geopolitics and had a significant impact on Tehran's relations with its Arab neighbors. In stark contrast to the largely Sunni Arab governments, the Islamic Republic, founded by Ayatollah Khomeini, provided a new ideological framework based on Shia Islam and anti-Western attitude. Over the past forty years, Iran's relations with the Arab world have been determined by this ideological difference as well as its quest for regional power. Iran promoted the idea of an Islamic government founded on Shia principles in an effort to transmit its revolutionary ideas from the beginning. Many Arab monarchies, especially those in the Gulf, were concerned about this goal because they thought that their Shia populations would adopt revolutionary Shia doctrine.

#### **3.3.1. Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988:**

Iran's relations with the Arab world were significantly impacted by the long and destructive Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988). The war was sparked by political competition, religious sectarianism, and territorial concerns after Iraq invaded Iran under Saddam Hussein. Fearing that Iran's revolutionary Shia doctrine may incite unrest among the sizable Shia communities in Arab states, particularly in the Gulf, Iraq sought to stop the Islamic Revolution from spreading. As a result, Iraq received political, logistical, and financial backing from other Arab nations during the war, most notably Saudi Arabia,

Kuwait, and other Gulf monarchies. This collaboration was a reflection of Arab concerns about Iranian destabilization and regional expansionism. (Hiro, 1991; Karsh, 2002).

Despite the enormous human and financial losses to both nations, the war came to a standstill with the truce in 1988. As Arab nations united in support of Iraq, the conflict further isolated Iran from the rest of the region. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations began to see Tehran as a threat to regional stability during this time, which saw a sharp decline in Iran-Arab relations. Sectarian and geopolitical disputes that still influence Middle Eastern dynamics today are a result of the war's legacy (Ehteshami & Zweiri, 2007).

### **3.3.2. Post War Engagement of Iran with the Arab World:**

Iran experienced severe political and economic difficulties after the devastating Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988), which made it necessary to re-evaluate its foreign policy, particularly with regard to the Arab world. The post-war era, especially under Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's (1989–1997) presidency, signaled a strategic change from revolutionary fervor to practical diplomacy focused on economic restoration and regional reintegration. Rafsanjani aimed to improve relations with the Gulf monarchies, who had mainly backed Iraq throughout the conflict, and other nearby Arab nations. Iran took a more accommodative stance, downplaying ideological exports and highlighting shared regional objectives including economic cooperation and security. Efforts to normalize relations through high-level visits and dialogue forums led to an increase in diplomatic contact during this time. Tehran also worked to mend relations with Iraq, though mistrust lingered due to the war's aftermath. Arab mistrust of Iran's revolutionary ideology and its

backing of non-state players in the region region remained in spite of these attempts (Rafizadeh, 2012; Mohseni, 2008).

Iran's need to develop its oil industry and draw in foreign investment made the economic imperative even more important. Trade and energy cooperation with Gulf States like Kuwait and Oman grew, indicating Tehran's readiness to participate in a practical manner (Pollack, 2004). However, because of underlying geopolitical and sectarian concerns, complete normalization remained elusive.

### **3.3.3. Sectarian Tensions and Proxy Conflicts:**

During the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, sectarian tensions and proxy wars between Iran and a number of Sunni Arab governments significantly increased in the early 2000s. Iran expanded its influence in Iraq by assisting Shia political groups and militias, taking advantage of the power vacuum left by the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. Sunni Arab nations, especially Saudi Arabia, were concerned by Tehran's support of organizations like the Popular Mobilization Forces and the Badr Organization because they saw it as a direct challenge to their regional hegemony (Wehrey, 2014).

Sunni-Shia sectarian tensions were exacerbated when Iran extended its assistance beyond Iraq to proxy organizations like Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon. In addition to advancing Tehran's geopolitical objective of opposing Israel and extending its influence throughout the Levant and the Gulf, this network of proxies increased Arab governments' concerns about Iranian encirclement and destabilization (Nasr, 2006; Katzman, 2021). With the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC) security policies specifically intended to offset Iran's influence, the sectarian element became more

pronounced. Iran was portrayed as a "Shiite menace" by Saudi Arabia in particular, escalating a conflict that fused sectarianism with geopolitical rivalry (Gause, 2010).

### **3.3.4. The Arab Spring and Diverging Interests:**

There were both chances and difficulties for Iran's relations with the Arab world during the 2010–2012 Arab Spring upheavals. Iran first positioned itself as a champion of downtrodden peoples by rhetorically endorsing popular uprisings against authoritarian regimes. Although this position aligned with Iran's revolutionary rhetoric, revolutions in Gulf nations with sizable Shia populations soon exposed complex dynamics. Iran publicly backed the Shia majority protesters in Bahrain against the Sunni monarchy, accusing Gulf monarchies of tyranny. Tehran's ties with the GCC, especially Saudi Arabia, were severely strained as a result of this action. Saudi Arabia viewed Iranian support as an interference in its territory and a direct danger to regional stability (Gause, 2011).

Iran, on the other hand, was more wary of revolutions in nations with a Sunni majority, such as Egypt and Tunisia, supporting some revolutionary movements while opposing others based on how well they served Iranian goals. For example, Tehran supported Islamist organizations that shared its views but was cautious of those that were secular or associated with the West. The Arab Spring exacerbated already-existing sectarian divisions and highlighted Iran's policy of using regional instability to increase its influence, frequently through the use of proxy groups. But it also solidified Arab states' opposition, resulting in a regional split that continues to this day (Hokayem, 2013; Maloney, 2017).

## CHAPTER-4

### **SECURITIZATION OF THE IRAN-ISRAEL BILATERAL RELATIONS**

#### **4.1. Introduction:**

One of the most critical dyads in world politics is that between Iran and Israel, which is characterized by strong animosity, a sense of mutual threat, and a constant portrayal of one another as existential adversaries. The Islamic Republic has been steadfastly opposed to Israel since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, calling it an illegitimate Zionist regime and supporting Palestinian and anti-Israel movements throughout the region. Israel has reacted by viewing Iran as a strategic threat, particularly in view of Tehran's nuclear aspirations and its backing of regional proxies like Hamas and Hezbollah. What may have been a conventional geopolitical contest has been turned into a deeply ingrained security conundrum by these shared perceptions.

The Copenhagen School's securitization theory explains how both countries have transformed their bilateral conflicts into imperatives for national security. Iran and Israel's dispute has been transformed from a matter of ordinary politics to one of existential threats through political discourse and elite narratives. To support its preemptive military tactics and international campaigning for sanctions, Israel, for example, regularly portrays Iran's nuclear development as a direct threat to its existence. Iran similarly portrays Israeli actions in the region particularly in Gaza and Lebanon as proof of a colonial menace that necessitates opposition. Both sides' militarization and exceptional measures are justified by this framework.

The securitization process is best shown by the bilateral relationship between Iran and Israel, where identity, ideology, and perceptions of threat influence policy in ways that go much beyond logical cost-benefit analysis. Diplomatic normalization and de-securitization will not be achieved as long as both parties continue to characterize one another in existential terms. Any involvement is likely to be restricted, delicate, and extensively mediated by the larger regional and global security architecture due to the persistent securitized discourse.

#### **4.1.1 Bilateral Factor:**

Iran sees Israel as an illegal Zionist organization invading Muslim territories, not only as a state. The Islamic Republic's revolutionary character, which views resistance to Israel as a cornerstone of its foreign policy, is the source of this ideological framing. Iran actively supports tales of resistance and maintains no formal diplomatic ties with Israel. Iran's political, military, and religious establishments all have a formal anti-Israel stance.

#### **4.1.2. Regional Factor:**

Iran is promoting and arming anti-Israel organizations as part of its regional aim to establish itself as the head of the "Axis of Resistance." This includes giving money to groups that directly oppose Israel, such as Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and Hezbollah. Iran hopes to balance Israel's regional ties and increase its power by doing this. It unites various factions behind a common anti-Israel agenda and utilizes the Palestinian cause to justify its regional interventions.

#### **4.1.3. Geopolitical Factor:**

Iran places itself against the U.S.-led international order, which is dominated by Israel, on the geopolitical stage. Iran's anti-Israel stance is linked to its opposition to American involvement in the Middle East. In order to offset Israel's Western backing, it looks to form alliances with superpowers like China and Russia. Furthermore, Iran accuses Israel of illegal aggression and double standards while presenting its nuclear program as a sovereign prerogative and a challenge to Israeli nuclear hegemony.

#### **4.2. Israel Relations with Iran:**

Deep animosity, strategic competition, and perceptions of mutual threat all influenced by ideological, regional, and geopolitical factors define Israel's relationship with Iran. Prior to 1979, the two nations were allies, but now they are bitter rivals in the Middle East have no diplomatic ties, and are highly securitized. In contemporary Middle Eastern politics, the relationship between Israel and Iran has been one of the most erratic and conflicting. The two nations were openly cooperating in trade, military affairs, and intelligence gathering during a time when they were allies. In another, they were declared adversaries, framing pose existential dangers to one another. The political, ideological, and strategic changes that changed the Middle East in the latter half of the 20th century preceded this change, which did not occur overnight.

##### **4.2.1. Bilateral Factor:**

Israel and Iran were not adversaries prior to 1979. They were silent companions who benefited from one another in a challenging neighborhood. Both were non-Arab nations in an area influenced by the Arab-Israeli conflict and Arab nationalism. They all

felt a little alone. This made space for a pragmatic comprehension. It was not a value-based love. It was a policy based on rivalries, oil, and terror.

Tehran realized under the Shah that Israel could serve as a conduit to Western technology and security networks. Iran was viewed by Israel as a sizable, secure Gulf state that could end its isolation from the rest of the region. Both sides constructed conduits that were largely hidden from the public. The trade was moved via outside parties. Israeli diplomats kept a low profile while in Tehran. On issues that both intelligence services found objectionable, such as Soviet influence and extremist Arab movements, they collaborated. Mossad and SAVAK have frequent conversations.

The backbone consisted of arms and energy. Oil from Iran helped Israel meet its demands in both peacetime and conflict. To get to Eilat, some goods took secret routes. This covert collaboration was symbolized by the Eilat–Ashkelon pipeline. Israel reciprocated by offering military improvements, equipment, and some instruction. Cooperation in agriculture and water was less significant but still important. Even when politics changed, it was difficult to break the contact habits that these projects had established.

They were also connected by strategy, "periphery" strategy that aimed to establish ties with non-Arab nations like Ethiopia, Turkey, and Iran. This pleased Iran since it balanced Arab adversaries, particularly Iraq under the Ba'th and Egypt under Nasser. Indirect levers were occasionally employed by both sides. Israel occasionally backed Kurdish fighters in Iraq, putting pressure on Baghdad. When it suited its needs, Iran accepted this. Since all three saw benefit in controlling adversarial regimes and restricting Soviet influence, the United States silently approved.

It was never a formal alliance, however. In addition to his own court politics, the Shah had to control popular opinion in the Muslim world. Israel was aware that Iran could retaliate against an open embrace. Thus, the partnership remained discreet, limited, and pragmatic. Leaders on both sides made it work. The political foundation of that collaboration collapsed with the Shah. Because they relied on a single man and a small group of people rather than widespread social approval, the same structures that made the partnership strong also made it weak.

#### **4.2.2. Breakup of the Iranian-Israeli Relations:**

An important turning point in Israel-Iran relations was the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Overnight, a cooperation that had been quiet but effective under the Shah's rule fell apart. Under Ayatollah Khomeini's leadership, the Islamic Republic condemned any types of collaboration with Israel and became adamantly anti-Zionist. Israel was seen as a colonial endeavor thrust upon the Muslim world and an illegitimate state. The revolution's rhetoric presented Palestine as a religious and moral cause that strongly aligned with the new regime's philosophy, rather than just a geographical conflict.

Following the revolution, diplomatic relations were quickly severed, and Iran started to refocus its regional policies. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was given control of the Israeli embassy in Tehran, signifying the regime's support for Palestinian organizations. This wasn't both strategic and merely symbolic. To establish credibility in the larger Muslim world, Iran positioned itself as Israel's principal adversary. Even as the nation was engulfed in post-revolutionary unrest and the Iran-Iraq War, the Palestinian cause emerged as a key component of Iran's foreign policy character.

Evidence points to the continuation of limited interactions, particularly during the Iran-Iraq War, when Iran was isolated and in dire need of munitions. In the 1980s, Israeli middlemen facilitated armament deliveries to Iran with U.S. approval in the Iran-Contra scandal. These interactions weren't ideological; they were pragmatic. The United States had its own geopolitical objectives, Israel aimed to destabilize Iraq, and Iran required weapons. However, these secret agreements had no effect on the hostile public posture.

#### **4.2.3. The Rise of Hostility: Post-Revolution Iran and the Break with Israel**

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran marked the most decisive rupture in Iranian–Israeli Relations under the leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Iran abandoned its prior quiet alignment with Israel and instead adopted a position of uncompromising hostility. Khomeini framed Israel not only as a political adversary but as a theological and moral enemy, branding it the “Little Satan” in contrast to the United States as the “Great Satan.” This language was more than rhetorical, it set the tone for Iran’s foreign policy and reshaped the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. The revolution’s ideological commitment to opposing Zionism and supporting the Palestinian cause meant that Israel, once a discreet partner, was recast as the embodiment of injustice and illegitimacy.

The new Iranian leadership swiftly ended official ties with Tel Aviv. The Israeli embassy in Tehran was handed over to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), symbolizing Iran’s dramatic shift in allegiance. This move carried immense symbolic weight across the Arab and Muslim worlds, as Iran sought to position itself as the vanguard of anti-Israeli and anti-imperialist struggles. While Arab regimes had long claimed

solidarity with Palestine but often hesitated in practice, Iran used the Palestinian issue as a cornerstone of its revolutionary legitimacy.

At the same time, this radical break introduced contradictions. Iran had inherited a state apparatus that, in the Shah's era, relied partly on discreet Western and Israeli support. Cutting Relationship with Israel meant redefining national security frameworks, particularly as Iran's relationship with the United States collapsed simultaneously. This left the country relatively isolated in the international system, but the regime compensated by anchoring its legitimacy in resistance and framing confrontation with Israel as a sacred duty.

Israel, in turn, reassessed its view of Iran. What had been a valuable partner on the periphery of the Arab-Israeli conflict suddenly became an existential ideological enemy. Although Israel initially adopted a cautious approach, recognizing that the revolutionary fervor might stabilize over time, the escalation of Iran's support for militant groups in Lebanon and Palestine quickly cemented hostility.

The rise of Hezbollah in the early 1980s, with Iranian backing, became a direct security threat to Israel and demonstrated Tehran's determination to export its revolutionary vision.

The relationship between Israel and Iran has been one of the most shifting and contradictory in modern Middle Eastern politics. In one period, the two countries were allies, cooperating openly in trade, military, and intelligence matters. In another, they became sworn enemies, framing each other as existential threats. This transformation did

not happen suddenly but followed the political, ideological, and strategic shifts that reshaped the Middle East in the late twentieth century.

Understanding these relations requires moving beyond simple binaries of “friend” and “foe.” Rather, Israel and Iran have engaged in what can be called a cycle of pragmatic alignments and confrontations, depending on their changing domestic needs and regional positions. Before the Iranian Revolution of 1979, both states found common ground as non-Arab powers in a largely Arab region. But after the revolution, the rise of political Islam under Ayatollah Khomeini transformed Iran into one of Israel’s most vocal opponents. The story of Israeli–Iranian relations is therefore also a story of the Middle East itself: its conflicts, its shifting alliances, and its constant struggle between ideology and pragmatism.

#### **4.2.4. Regional Factor:**

The Iran–Iraq War forced both Iran and Israel to make hard, sometimes awkward choices. Publicly, Iran condemned Israel and framed the conflict in revolutionary terms. Privately, the war pushed Tehran to look for arms wherever it could find them. Israel saw Saddam Hussein’s Iraq as the more immediate military threat. That created a narrow zone of overlapping interest, even if neither side admitted it openly. Israel’s logic was simple. A decisive Iraqi victory would strengthen a hostile Bath regime that already threatened Israel, supported rejectionist groups, and was working on advanced weapons. Weakening Iraq, or at least preventing its clear victory, looked like the lesser evil. This view also fit with Israel’s earlier “periphery” thinking. Helping Iran in limited ways, while never endorsing its ideology, could balance Baghdad. The June 1981 strike on Iraq’s Osirak

reactor fit that pattern. It removed a future danger to Israel and indirectly helped Iran by denying Saddam a nuclear option.

For Iran, the need was more immediate. The army had been purged after the revolution. Supply chains were broken. Ammunition and spare parts ran short. Ideology could not replace logistics. So intermediaries appeared. Some of the most controversial transfers involved Israeli-origin weapons and U.S. materiel routed through third parties. The Iran-Contra affair exposed parts of this network: missiles and components moved to Iran with the knowledge of a tight circle in Washington and Israeli facilitators. The motives varied. Iran sought survival and leverage; Israel pursued a balance against Iraq; Washington chased hostage diplomacy and regional influence. None of this changed the public posture of hostility between Iran and Israel, but it did reveal that both could act pragmatically under pressure.

On the battlefield, the war also seeded future patterns. Iran deepened ties with actors who would matter for decades, especially in Lebanon. The deployment of the IRGC to the Bekaa Valley and the nurturing of Hezbollah gave Tehran an indirect front against Israel. Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon and its long presence in the south then intersected with this new reality. From here, the rivalry began to include both state-to-state calculations and the growing role of non-state partners and proxies. The result was a more complex, layered conflict that did not end with the ceasefire of 1988.

The first decade of the twenty-first century witnessed a more pronounced confrontation between Israel and Iran, with the rivalry increasingly taking shape through proxy theaters and indirect arenas rather than direct clashes. Following the U.S. invasion

of Iraq in 2003, Iran extended its influence in Baghdad, strengthening Shi'a political factions and militias that would come to define the Iraqi political and security order. This development alarmed both Israel and several Arab states, who saw Tehran's growing influence as part of a wider "Shia Crescent." Israel in particular feared that the consolidation of Iranian influence from Tehran through Baghdad, Damascus, and Beirut would eventually translate into strategic encirclement.

One of the central battlefields of this rivalry became Lebanon. Israel's 2006 war with Hezbollah demonstrated the tangible effects of Iran's patronage of militant groups, as Hezbollah's military performance surprised many observers. For Israel, the war confirmed that Iranian-backed actors posed a direct military threat that could not be dismissed as peripheral. The aftermath of the war saw Hezbollah emerge politically stronger in Lebanon, signaling that Israel's deterrence had weakened. Iran, on the other hand, perceived the outcome as validation of its strategy of supporting non-state allies as a means of offsetting Israel's conventional military superiority.

Another critical dimension during this period was the exposure of Iran's clandestine nuclear facilities in 2002, which set off international scrutiny and negotiations. Israel perceived Iran's nuclear advances as existential in nature and therefore adopted a preventive strategy, consisting of intelligence operations, diplomatic lobbying, and preparations for potential military strikes. While Israel consistently pressed the United States and European powers to adopt a more hardline approach, Iran leveraged negotiations to buy time, strengthen its nuclear knowledge base, and build bargaining chips.

By the late 2000s, Israel had allegedly begun a series of covert operations aimed at slowing Iran's nuclear program. These operations, ranging from targeted assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists to cyber warfare attacks such as the Stuxnet virus in 2010, reflected Israel's preference for indirect confrontation over open war. Meanwhile, Iran's responses remained cautious but determined, as Tehran continued to expand its regional influence, particularly during the Arab uprisings of 2011 when its involvement in Syria escalated.

The 2000s and 2010s thus deepened the structural antagonism between the two states. While Israel relied on a mix of deterrence, preventive strategies, and covert actions, Iran doubled down on proxy support and nuclear development as hedging tools. This rivalry was now entrenched across multiple domains military, ideological, technological, and regional creating a competitive dynamic that shaped the strategic environment of the Middle East.

#### **4.2.5. Geopolitical Factor:**

The United States became the central arena of this confrontation. Israel lobbied heavily in Washington for sanctions against Iran and pushed the narrative of "preventing another Holocaust," framing the issue not only in terms of regional security but also as a moral imperative. This framing gave Israel strong leverage in shaping U.S. and European policies, leading to successive rounds of economic and political sanctions against Tehran. Iran responded by intensifying its regional engagements, particularly after the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, which ironically removed one of Iran's main rivals and expanded its sphere of influence.

During this period, the confrontation between Israel and Iran remained indirect, yet the consequences were visible in proxy conflicts. The 2006 Israel–Hezbollah war demonstrated Iran’s capacity to challenge Israel through its allies. Although Israel inflicted heavy damage on Lebanon, Hezbollah’s resilience was interpreted as a symbolic victory for Iran’s model of resistance. This development cemented the rivalry into a regional struggle that went beyond the nuclear issue, tying Israeli security concerns to Iran’s expanding influence across Arab states.

By the 2010s, the negotiations that eventually led to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015 marked a new stage. Israel opposed the deal fiercely, arguing that it only delayed, rather than eliminated, the nuclear threat. Netanyahu’s dramatic speech at the U.S. Congress in 2015 epitomized Israel’s determination to prevent any compromise with Iran. Tehran, however, saw the JCPOA as a step toward easing its international isolation, though domestically it continued to emphasize its opposition to Israel’s legitimacy. The deal’s signing temporarily de-escalated the nuclear issue, but it did not bridge the deeper ideological and strategic gulf.

In this sense, the 2000s and 2010s were marked by a dual dynamic: Israel’s growing international campaign to contain Iran and Iran’s persistent investment in regional networks that pressure Israel indirectly. Neither side moved toward reconciliation; rather, they entrenched themselves in a long-term rivalry that set the stage for the confrontations of the 2020s.

Ideological, theological and strategic disagreements that have developed over many years are the foundation of Israel and Iran’s geopolitical conflict. Israel and Iran had mostly

friendly relations until the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Both nations have strategic interests in mind, particularly in opposing Arab nationalism. But after the Shah was overthrown and the Islamic Republic led by Ayatollah Khomeini emerged, Tehran's attitude toward Israel changed, becoming strongly anti-Israel and demanding the dismantling of the Israeli state.

The fight between Iran and Israel has escalated in recent years, with both countries participating in clandestine operations, cyber warfare, and missile exchanges. As each side pushes the boundaries of confrontation without starting a full-scale conflict, the presence of proxies most notably Hezbollah in Lebanon and Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and Syria has increased the likelihood of direct combat between Israel and Iran.

The presence of major countries like the United States, Russia, and China has a considerable impact on the course of the Israeli-Iranian confrontation, which is not isolated from larger global geopolitics. Each of these nations' strategic interests in the area influence their activities and how Israel and Iran behave.

### **United States:**

The U.S has been Israel's most steadfast supporter, offering both diplomatic and military assistance. The U.S.-Iran ties were severely strained by American actions, especially during the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" campaign, which sought to isolate Iran and limit its nuclear aspirations. The assassination of Soleimani and the pullout from the JCPOA (Iran nuclear deal) further inflamed tensions. The United States maintains its military support for Israel, and any significant conflict in the region would probably involve U.S. action, despite the Biden administration's efforts to reestablish diplomatic ties with Iran.

### **Russia:**

In the Middle East, Russia is vital, particularly in Syria, where it backs the Assad government alongside Iran. Moscow has diplomatic relations with Israel in addition to its strategic partnership with Iran, which involves military cooperation and energy interests. Supporting Iran while maintaining diplomatic ties with Israel puts Russia in a position to act as a mediator, but it also makes it more difficult for it to take decisive action in the dispute. Furthermore, the new strategic cooperation agreement between Russia and Iran indicates growing relations that could affect the regional power dynamics.

### **China:**

China has substantial economic interests in the Middle East, especially with regard to securing energy supplies from the region, even though it is less directly involved in the military aspects of the conflict. China has prioritized economic diplomacy and avoiding military involvement in the Middle East as part of its larger plan. However, China may be positioned as a major actor in future peace initiatives or economic stabilization after possible conflict given its growing influence in regional affairs, notably its involvement in helping Iran's diplomatic rapprochement with Saudi Arabia.

### **4.3. Iran's Relations with Israel:**

Israel and Iran have no official diplomatic relations and are locked in a hostile standoff that has intensified since the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. Before 1979, Iran (under the Shah) was one of the few Muslim-majority countries to have working relations with Israel. However, after the revolution, the new Islamic Republic adopted a rejectionist and ideological stance toward Israel, branding it as an illegitimate "Zionist entity" and cutting all diplomatic ties. Israel sees Iran's ideological opposition not just as rhetoric, but

as a core national security threat. Iranian leaders have repeatedly called for the end of the Israeli state, which Israel interprets as genocidal in nature. As a result, Israel has shifted to a preventive and preemptive security strategy. (Penslar, 2023)

#### **4.3.1. Pre-1979: The Shah's Cordial Relations:**

Strategic Alliance: Israel and Iran had a close relationship prior to the Islamic Revolution. One of the rare nations with a majority of Muslims to de facto recognize Israel was Iran. Iran and Israel collaborated on military and intelligence issues (such as Project Flower, a collaborative missile development program), and Iran sold oil to Israel.

#### **4.3.2. Islamic Revolution: Turning Point:**

Ayatollah Khomeini's ascent to power caused Iran to sever all connections with Israel and declare it an illegitimate state, marking a turning point in the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Iran's foreign policy changed, favoring anti-Israel organizations and elevating the Palestinian cause to the forefront of Islamic unity.

#### **4.3.3. Silent Israeli Support Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988:**

Operation Seashell: As part of a clandestine plan to undermine Saddam Hussein, Israel allegedly transferred weaponry to Iran during the Iran-Iraq War, particularly in the early years, despite resistance. The infamous Iran-Contra Affair was one of the controversial arms deals in which Israel and the United States sold Iran weapons in return for hostages and to finance the Contra rebels in Nicaragua. (Klobuchar, 2008)

#### **4.3.4 Rise of Hezbollah (1980 till now):**

Established in the 1980s with Iranian assistance, Hezbollah has become into Iran's most potent regional proxies and a significant danger to Israel. Following Israel's 2000

pullout from Lebanon, Hezbollah became a more well-known resistance group. Iran has assisted it in developing a vast rocket and missile arsenal since the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah conflict demonstrated its expanding capabilities. Hezbollah's place as Iran's frontline actor in any future battle with Israel has been further cemented by the combat experience it has garnered in Syria.

#### **4.3.5. Iranian Nuclear Program (2000 till now):**

Since the early 2000s, Iran's nuclear program has been a top Israeli security concern. Israel believes Iran aims to develop nuclear weapons and has responded with cyber-attacks, sabotage, and targeted assassinations. Though the 2015 JCPOA deal temporarily limited Iran's program, Israel opposed it and supported the U.S. withdrawal in 2018. Since then, Iran has resumed enrichment activities and reduced IAEA cooperation, bringing it close to weapons-grade capability. The threat of an Israeli preemptive strike remains high amid rising tensions and near-direct conflict.

#### **4.3.6. Bilateral Factor:**

The lack of diplomatic connections, long-standing ideological animosity, and immediate security risks particularly Iran's nuclear program and backing of anti-Israel organizations all influence the two countries' bilateral relationship. Under the political regimes in place today, these elements guarantee that the relationship will always be antagonistic and leave little to no opportunity for reconciliation.

The events of October 7th, 2023, marked a watershed moment in the already volatile landscape of Middle Eastern politics. The Hamas-led assault on southern Israel, unprecedented in scale and brutality since the states' founding wars, shook Israeli society

to its core and altered the trajectory of its security doctrine. For decades, Israel's security calculus vis-à-vis Iran was largely framed around Tehran's nuclear ambitions and its support for proxy networks across the region. October 7th forced a recalibration. The war in Gaza that followed blurred the distinction between local Palestinian resistance and the wider Iranian strategic web, bringing into focus the question of whether Iran was prepared to escalate its indirect war with Israel into a broader confrontation.

Israel, stunned by the breach of its highly fortified borders, swiftly turned its attention not only toward Hamas but also toward dismantling the infrastructure of Iranian-backed proxies. Hezbollah in Lebanon, Shi'a militias in Syria and Iraq, and even the Houthis in Yemen all became part of a larger security picture. For Israel and its American ally, the attack was not merely a Palestinian-Israeli conflict but a test case of Iran's reach. The strategy that emerged sought not only to degrade Hamas's military capacity but also to decapitate Iran's wider network of influence.

The assassination of several high-ranking leaders within these networks signaled this shift. Israel carried out strikes in Beirut targeting Hezbollah commanders, while American operations in Iraq and Syria intensified against Iranian-linked militia leaders. The symbolic weight of these killings extended beyond their military significance. They were meant to convey that Iran's leadership structure itself was vulnerable, and that the United States and Israel would no longer tolerate the slow entrenchment of Tehran's axis across the Levant.

At the same time, Israel increased its pressure on Lebanon, a move with deep historical echoes. The 2006 war with Hezbollah had ended inconclusively, leaving the group emboldened. In 2024 and 2025, however, the strikes were designed less as deterrence

and more as attrition, a campaign to force Hezbollah into a defensive posture. Yet this policy carried immense risks. Lebanon, already on the brink of economic collapse, became further destabilized. Iran responded by trying to reinforce its positions, but the sustained targeting of supply lines and leadership figures showed that Israel was pursuing a long-term dismantling strategy rather than sporadic retaliation.

Perhaps the most dramatic escalation came with reports of covert American strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities. Though Washington never officially confirmed these actions, satellite imagery and regional intelligence leaks pointed toward significant disruptions at Natanz and Fordow. For the United States, the logic was straightforward: if Iran was approaching the nuclear threshold while simultaneously orchestrating proxy attacks through Hamas and Hezbollah, then pre-emptive measures were justified. Israel, which had long pushed for such strikes, found in the October 7th fallout an opportunity to align its red lines with American military action.

These strikes underscored a dual reality. On one hand, they weakened Iran's immediate nuclear capacity and signaled Western resolve. On the other, they risked dragging the region into a spiral of direct confrontation. Tehran, facing leadership losses, nuclear setbacks, and the erosion of its proxies, attempted to recalibrate by intensifying its propaganda and calling upon regional sympathies. Protests across Arab capitals, fueled by the devastation in Gaza, gave Iran rhetorical leverage. Yet the actual military balance tilted against it.

The decapitation of leadership within Iran's proxy network also carried unintended consequences. Fragmented militias often proved more unpredictable than centralized ones. While the loss of senior Hezbollah or Iraqi militia leaders weakened strategic coordination,

it also produced a new generation of fighters less disciplined and more radicalized. Israel's security establishment recognized this paradox but considered it a necessary risk. In Tel Aviv's eyes, the survival of Hamas after October 7th would be an existential failure, and the broader network had to be cut off at the roots.

The Iranian regime itself entered a precarious phase. With key Revolutionary Guard figures targeted and American pressure mounting, Tehran faced the dilemma of escalation versus restraint. A direct confrontation with Israel and the United States risked overwhelming costs, yet appearing passive threatened its regional credibility. Thus, Iran oscillated, engaging in calibrated retaliation through missile strikes and cyber operations, while avoiding a full-scale war. This balancing act revealed the structural vulnerability of Iran's regional strategy: it relied heavily on non-state actors whose fortunes could be disrupted without necessarily triggering state-to-state escalation.

In this light, October 7th stands not only as a singular tragedy but also as a turning point in the regional order. It revealed the depth of Israel's vulnerability, the limits of Iran's proxy strategy, and the willingness of the United States to intervene decisively. The dismantling of Iranian influence across the Levant and the strikes on nuclear facilities mark a new chapter—one in which confrontation is not avoided but managed through sustained, relentless campaigns. The cost for civilians, from Gaza to Beirut, remains staggering, and the political consequences for Arab regimes caught between domestic outrage and external alignments are yet to fully unfold.

What is certain is that Israeli-Iranian relations, already defined by decades of hostility, have entered their most volatile stage. October 7th accelerated the process of confrontation and ensured that the Middle East's future will be shaped as much by proxy

battles and covert strikes as by traditional diplomacy. The war's legacy will be written not only in the ruins of Gaza but also in the recalibration of regional power, where Israel and Iran remain locked in a contest that neither can decisively win but both are determined not to lose.

#### **4.3.7. Regional Factor:**

The Middle East is now a very unstable region due to the Israel-Iran rivalry. Even indirect conflicts involve the possibility of a wider regional conflict because of Israel's strategic alliances and preemptive strikes, as well as Iran's use of proxies and forward military presence. The risk of escalation through miscalculation is further increased by the absence of direct communication between the two powers.

#### **4.3.8. Geopolitical Factor:**

The role of the United States cannot be overlooked. Without American backing, Israel's ability to sustain such widespread operations would be limited. Yet Washington itself faces contradictions. On one hand, the U.S. benefits strategically from limiting Iranian influence and showing resolve in defense of Israel. On the other hand, prolonged engagement risks entanglement in another Middle Eastern conflict at a time when U.S. foreign policy is also pivoting to Asia and Europe. Thus, the strikes on nuclear sites if real represent both a statement of commitment and a dangerous gamble.

In sum, the October 7th war and its aftermath have crystallized the central contest between Israel and Iran into its most acute form. The dismantling of proxies, the targeted killings of Iranian leadership, and the possibility of nuclear site attacks all point toward an escalation that could redefine the Middle East for years to come. The key uncertainty

remains whether this escalation weakens Iran decisively or whether it only deepens the cycle of retaliation that has characterized the region since 1979.

Regional proxy conflicts, historical grievances, and global strategic objectives are all intricately entwined into the Israeli-Iranian confrontation. The involvement of outside forces and the creation of new military technologies present additional factors that could either intensify or lessen tensions as the battle develops. To predict the potential future directions of this struggle, it is essential to comprehend the intricate network of alliances and rivalries at work.

## CHAPTER-5

### THE IMPACT OF “TWELVE DAYS WAR” ON SECURITY OF THE MIDDLE EAST

#### 5.1. Introduction:

The intense Israel-Iran military war that began on June 15, 2025, and escalated from border incidents to direct engagement between Israeli Defense Forces and Iranian Revolutionary Guard forces is known as the "12 Day War." The geopolitics of the Middle East were drastically changed by this nine-day conflict. Verified events from June 15–23, 2025, such as cross-border artillery exchanges, aerial combat, naval incidents in the Strait of Hormuz, cyber warfare operations, and ultimately US military action, are documented in this extensive 12 Day War database. The intense Israel-Iran military war that began on June 15, 2025, and escalated from border incidents to direct engagement between Israeli Defense Forces and Iranian Revolutionary Guard forces is known as the "12 Day War." The geopolitics of the Middle East were drastically changed by this nine-day conflict.

Israel's "Operation Iron Resolve" signifies a significant intensification of the Israeli-Iranian war. Israel's determination to stop Iran from developing its nuclear capabilities is demonstrated by the operation's start, which saw more than 150 Israeli aircraft strike important Iranian nuclear sites. The already tense situation is exacerbated when Iran responds by firing more than 200 missiles against Israeli cities. About 85% of the incoming missiles are intercepted by the Israeli Iron Dome defense system, reducing deaths but not enough to stop serious damage. The rapid issuance of orders for civilian evacuation in both countries demonstrates the high level of public danger. Stability in the

region starts to deteriorate as the biggest aerial battle since the Yom Kippur War in 1973 takes place. (Sario, 2025)

A new stage of cyber-hostility that attacks vital infrastructure in both countries is being heralded by the intensification of digital warfare between Israel and Iran, which intensifies the already tense military conflict. The focal point of this virtual battleground is a hack ascribed to the Mossad that renders Iran's biggest commercial port, Shahid Rajaee, inoperable in Bandar Abbas.

By early morning, container handling operations had been suspended due to the cyber breach, which started with the hacking of the port's computer systems. Iranian hackers respond with a highly advanced attack on Israel's electrical grid, which by mid-morning causes rolling blackouts in many major cities. By midday, both nations announce serious breaches in their banking systems that have disrupted their economies.

Every attempt at a truce, despite numerous international initiatives, fails. Israel's Cabinet quickly rejects the conditions of the comprehensive ceasefire accord proposed by the European Union, indicating that it is determined to carry on with its operations. Qatar offers to negotiate a prisoner exchange, but both parties reject this offer as well. The deadlock is further solidified by Iran's Supreme Leader's adamant rejection of any international intervention. Erdogan, the president of Turkey, appeals to both leaders to defuse the situation, but they reject his requests. According to Israeli officials, the operation will go on for a long time until all strategic goals are achieved. Pope Francis publicly calls for a quick ceasefire amid mounting international alarm, yet the fighting continues despite his pleas.

By carrying out pinpoint strikes on important Iranian nuclear installations, the US intensifies its involvement in the fight. Early in the morning, B-2 bombers take out from Diego Garcia to initiate the operation, which is followed by focused airstrikes on the nuclear sites at Natanz and Fordow. By morning, the U.S. president declares a "limited intervention," arguing that the strikes are necessary to stop regional nuclear escalation and prevent the situation from getting worse. Tensions are heightened when Iran responds by threatening to retaliate against American forces. An emergency NATO summit is called by mid-morning to discuss the escalating risk of more widespread instability in the region. (Rosenburg, 2012)

The international community concentrated on guaranteeing a long-term settlement to the conflict as ceasefire conditions were established. Important international actors including the United Nations and regional organizations were involved in the efforts to set up monitoring systems to guarantee adherence to the ceasefire agreement. Concurrently, plans were being made for a post-conflict evaluation that would analyze the war's long-term effects on Iran and Israel as well as the larger Middle East. Coordination of humanitarian aid was given first priority, and international organizations mobilized resources to meet the pressing needs of impacted individuals. Following the conflict, steps were taken to promote collaboration among neighboring governments and prevent further escalation by implementing regional stability measures.\

## **5.2. Perils and Pitfalls of the War:**

Significant dangers were introduced in the Middle East by the conflict between Iran and Israel. A direct confrontation between two enemies swiftly turned into a regional crisis

that involved the US, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and militias in Iraq, Syria, and Gaza, among other parties. Drones, cyber-attacks, and sophisticated missile systems were used, causing extensive civilian casualties, significant infrastructure damage, and a serious humanitarian situation. Concerns about radioactive contamination were raised when Israel retaliated with strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities and vital assets after Iran's proxy network conducted coordinated operations on Israel from several fronts.

Iran's disruption of shipping lanes across the Strait of Hormuz rocked the world's energy markets, resulting in a surge in oil prices and global economic turmoil. Along with strengthening extremist organizations and rekindling sectarian tensions, the conflict also caused a spike in refugees throughout the region. Due to the lack of direct diplomatic channels, misunderstandings and reprisals only served to intensify the bloodshed. The conflict ultimately turned out to be a disastrous disaster for both countries, destabilizing the area and raising long-term issues for global peace and security. (Rosenburg, 2012)

### **5.3. Israel's Perspective:**

#### **Proxy:**

Even after years of intelligence operations, pressure campaigns, and targeted bombings, Israel has failed to destroy Iran's proxy network. Organizations such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon continue to be politically entrenched and well-armed. Hezbollah's weaponry has advanced, and militias supported by Iran are still active in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. For the most part, Israel has been managing the threat rather than neutralizing them.

### **Nuclear:**

Although Israel has taken a number of important measures to stall Iran's nuclear program, such as diplomatic initiatives, cyber-attacks, and assassinations, it has not been able to halt or reverse Iran's nuclear aspirations. Iran has resumed and even accelerated uranium enrichment since the U.S. exit from the JCPOA in 2018, bringing it closer than ever to weapons-grade levels. Although Israel's approach has caused temporary disruption, long-term disarmament has not been accomplished.

### **Geopolitical:**

Israel has been unable to geopolitically repress Iran, despite the Abraham Accords having increased regional links. Iran maintains its role as the head of the "Axis of Resistance" and has significant influence in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. In order to get around Western sanctions and gain more influence internationally, Tehran has also deepened its ties with non-Western nations like China and Russia. Despite Israeli efforts, Iran has increased its geopolitical presence and adjusted in numerous ways.

#### **5.4. Iran's Perspective:**

##### **Survivability of Tehran Regime:**

According to Iran, the Islamic Republic has proven remarkably resilient in the face of persistent external pressures, such as military threats, covert activities, and economic sanctions, mostly from Israel and its supporters. Tehran has been able to preserve internal stability and regime continuity in spite of murder attempts on important individuals, sabotage of vital infrastructure, and persistent diplomatic isolation.

##### **Sustainability of Nuclear Program:**

According to the regime in Tehran, Iran has successfully protected its nuclear program even after the attack on nuclear facilities supported by the United States. Iranian

nuclear program has survived and as per Iranian sources; nuclear program is survived and protected.

### **Strategic Posturing in the Middle East:**

Iran is able to project strength and oppose Israeli and Western interests on several fronts thanks to this Axis of Resistance, which consists of Hezbollah in Lebanon, militias in Iraq and Syria, and the Houthis in Yemen. Iran gained influence over regional crises and established a buffer zone around its borders by aiding these proxies. Israel asserted that although Iran has become a formidable nation, its geopolitical posture has caused harm. People around the world thought that Iran is a weak country and they can't fight with Israel but Israel not only responded with drones and missiles but targeted the key cities of Israel. After this Twelve Days War, Iran's strategic posturing has increased.

### **Stalemate or Security Dilemma:**

It is better to view the Iran-Israel dispute as a security challenge rather than a straightforward standoff. Despite the fact that neither side has won by a landslide, each keep doing things that they consider defensive but that the other considers attacking. Tehran views Israel's attempts to destroy Iranian proxies, undermine Iran's nuclear program, and create regional alliances as existential dangers. Iran responds by accelerating its nuclear development, bolstering its proxy network, and increasing its missile capabilities actions that Israel views as aggressive. Each side's quest for security simply makes the other feel more vulnerable because of this cycle of mutual distrust and escalation. The risk of miscalculation is increased and the potential for inadvertent war is increased by the lack of direct diplomatic channels. (Samaan, November, 2017)

## **5.5. Israel's Security Dilemma:**

### **Failed to Change Regime in Iran:**

In the hopes that internal dissension or economic pressure might result in regime change, Israel and its Western supporters have long sought to weaken or destabilize the Islamic Republic. However, the Iranian regime has maintained its hold on power in spite of sanctions, cyber-attacks, and clandestine activities. By presenting itself as a symbol of resistance against outside meddling, it has effectively put down internal uprisings and held onto its ideological hold.

### **Failed to Deny Nuclear Program of Iran:**

Israel has made a concerted effort to stop Iran's nuclear aspirations through international lobbying, diplomacy, and sabotage. Although the twelve-day battle and other initiatives have slowed Iran's advancement, they have not been able to completely destroy the program.

### **Failed to Suppress the Strategic Posturing of Iran:**

Israel has failed to limit Tehran's strategic reach despite its attempts to limit its regional influence. Hezbollah, Hamas, Shi'a militias, and the Houthis are all still active and well-armed members of Iran's network of proxies. Iran's influence in Iraq and Lebanon, as well as its military presence in Syria, demonstrate that its strategic posture has not only withstood Israeli pressure but has even grown in some regions.

## **5.6. Iran's Security Dilemma:**

### **Failed to Protect Proxy Network:**

Iran has had difficulty completely defending its strong regional proxy network from Israeli attacks. Israeli airstrikes have regularly attacked the IRGC and its militias in Syria,

undermining Iran's military posture close to Israel's borders. Iran-backed organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah have suffered significant losses in infrastructure, suffered enormous deaths, and made few strategic advances in their recurrent wars with Israel in Gaza and Lebanon. These failures demonstrate how susceptible Iran's proxy policy is to persistent Israeli pressure especially after the Twelve Days War.

#### **Failed to Protect Nuclear Infrastructure:**

Iran has made significant investments to advance its nuclear program, but it has not been able to protect its scientists and facilities from Israeli sabotage. Israeli clandestine actions have resulted in delays, cyber-attacks, and explosions at critical nuclear plants like Natanz and Fordow. Furthermore, the murders of prominent nuclear experts like Mohsen Fakhrizadeh revealed serious security flaws in Iran's defense and intelligence systems, underscoring its incapacity to completely safeguard vital resources.

#### **Failed to receive Regional and Global support:**

Iran has not been able to form extensive regional or international partnerships. Under the Abraham Accords, many Arab nations have restored their relations with Israel, diplomatically excluding Iran. Iran continues to be isolated on a global scale due to Western sanctions and little assistance outside of a select group of nations like China and Russia. Its combative approach has caused it to become strategically isolated on numerous fronts and alienated possible partners.

#### **5.7. Way Forward:**

The path forward necessitates a combination of careful diplomacy, confidence-building initiatives, and regional participation given the ongoing impasse and growing security competition between Iran and Israel. Establishing indirect channels of

communication will help both parties by lowering the possibility of misunderstandings and unplanned escalation. International players, especially regional powers and international mediators, could lead discussions that are initially centered on modest measures to increase confidence, like ceasefires in proxy wars or agreed-upon red lines.

### **Strategic vulnerabilities of Israel:**

Given its military might and technological advantage, Israel's security posture is vulnerable in a number of ways, especially in the wake of the most recent battle. Israel still has strong military and intelligence capabilities, but the dangers it faces have changed, exposing serious flaws that need to be fixed.

Though somewhat successful, Israel's deterrence strategy mostly depends on the threat of armed force to stop enemies from furthering their goals. However, this over-reliance on military fixes frequently ignores the conflict's fundamental political and ideological components. Israel's military victories in isolated conflicts cannot ensure long-term stability or stop Iran's influence in the region from growing given its expanding regional power and proxy network.

An important component of Israel's security has historically been its technological dominance, particularly in the areas of cyber and nuclear capabilities. Iran's developments in cyber warfare and missile technology, however, pose a serious threat. Iran's developing missile and drone capabilities can get past Israel's sophisticated missile defense systems, such Iron Dome and David's Sling, and target vital Israeli infrastructure, leaving the nation open to asymmetric warfare. The conflict's cyber-attacks also demonstrated how Israel's

reliance on digital infrastructure may be abused, upsetting its military systems, communication networks, and economy.

Israel's greater regional isolation is still a weakness, despite the fact that it has signed peace accords with some Arab nations under the Abraham Accords. Despite diplomatic relations, Israel is still viewed with distrust by many Arab countries, and the Palestinian problem feeds anti-Israeli sentiment throughout the Arab world. Israel's capacity to forge larger partnerships and maintain long-term strategic stability is hampered by this persistent regional split.

A cycle of increasing bloodshed has resulted from Israel's strong attitude toward Iran and its proxies. The idea that Israel is an aggressor in the region has only become stronger as a result of the failure to destroy Iran's nuclear program or to undermine Iran's regional standing. Israel must weigh the dangers of a protracted military confrontation with Iran in light of the possibility of future nuclear-escalation conflicts or regional proxy wars, since military action might only serve to further entrench rather than resolve the issue.

### **Strategic opportunities for Iran:**

Iran's network of supporters and proxies throughout the Middle East, which includes organizations like Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and militias in Iraq and Syria, is one of its biggest advantages. Iran has maintained and even increased its influence in the area in spite of setbacks. By using these proxies as a tactical depth and an instrument for asymmetrical warfare, Iran is able to subvert Israeli dominance without going to war. Iran may put pressure on Israel without resorting to conventional combat by bolstering its ties and aiding anti-Israeli movements.

Iran's ongoing development of nuclear capabilities poses a challenge as well as an opportunity, notwithstanding Israel's unsuccessful attempts to eliminate its nuclear program. Although a source of conflict, Iran's nuclear program also gives it a means of deterrence that fortifies its stance. Iran's regional stature is improved by the possibility of nuclear escalation, or joining the ranks of nuclear states. The uncertainty surrounding its nuclear capabilities can be used as leverage in negotiations and to discourage regime change efforts by the United States and Israel.

Iran has been gaining ground in the Middle East's geopolitical landscape. Iran now has more chances to fortify its ties with nations like China and Russia as a result of the reorientation of American interests in the region and the ongoing rivalry between the United States and China. By providing Iran with military, technological, and economic backing, these new allies help offset the pressure from the United States and Israel. Furthermore, Iran still has clout in larger international negotiations due to its role in the world's energy markets, especially as a producer of gas and oil.

Israel is battling internal issues such as protests against government policies, political polarization, and security concerns. Iran can take advantage of this internal unrest by undermining Israel's internal unity through direct and indirect means. Iran can further undermine Israel's strategic posture and concentration by inciting regional turmoil, aiding dissident organizations within Israeli society, or even using psychological warfare to instill a sense of insecurity in the country.

Iran has a strategic chance to strengthen its deterrent against Israel and maintain its standing as a powerful regional force by making the most of its air power, naval prowess,

and missile technology. Iran can exert pressure on Israel, preserve its strategic influence in the Middle East, and guarantee that its security concerns are taken into consideration by using these capabilities. For its part, Israel will have to constantly adjust to this changing threat environment, striking a balance between maintaining its military might and developing more advanced tactics to offset Iran's expanding capabilities. The long-standing rivalry between Israel and Iran as well as the future of Middle Eastern security will be shaped by the interaction of these factors.

Iran can better project power and threaten enemies like Israel and the United States in the Middle East by developing its aviation, naval, and missile capabilities. This will increase regional influence and deterrence.

## CHAPTER-6

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the most important and persistent security issues in the Middle East is the military confrontation between Israel and Iran. The conflict, which has its roots in profound ideological, strategic, and geopolitical disagreements, goes beyond simple bilateral animosity and represents a larger regional struggle for dominance and power. This thesis has looked at the conflict's complexity, placed it in a larger regional and global framework, and assessed how it has affected Middle Eastern security dynamics.

Fundamentally, the Iran-Israel dispute is a contest for supremacy in the region. Iran's expansionist strategy, which is frequently referred to as its "Axis of Resistance," is dependent on a network of allied non-state groups and proxies, including Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and several militias in Syria and Iraq. Israel views these groups as existential threats that act as force multipliers for Iranian strategic aims. Israel has regularly carried out airstrikes in Syria, cyber operations, and covert efforts to weaken Iranian military capabilities as a result of its military strategy, which is based on deterrence and preemption.

It is impossible to comprehend this rivalry in a vacuum. It takes place in a regional power structure that also involves other significant nations including Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. As Iran's geopolitical and sectarian adversary, Saudi Arabia has consistently supported Israel, either directly or indirectly, in opposition to Iranian dominance. In contrast, Turkey pursues a separate regional agenda that frequently intersects with both collaboration and rivalry with Israel and Iran. Iraq is still a disputed region, with militias

supported by Iran operating there and endangering both regional stability and national sovereignty.

This dispute is significantly shaped by external actors. As a strong supporter of Israel, the US has imposed sanctions and diplomatic isolation as part of its "maximum pressure" strategy against Iran. In an effort to reconcile their divergent interests, Russia, on the other hand, has become a major actor in Syria and maintains strategic alliances with both Israel and Iran. Another layer of complexity is brought forth by China's expanding geopolitical and economic influence in the Middle East, as Beijing strengthens its relations with Tehran while pursuing stability for energy security.

To comprehend the security environment, one must be aware of the existence and actions of non-state actors. The conventional state-centric approaches of conflict resolution are complicated by organizations like Hezbollah and Hamas, who are not only proxies but are firmly ingrained in the political and social fabric of their host societies. These players support an asymmetric warfare paradigm in which low-intensity border skirmishes, cyber-attacks, and information warfare are used in addition to direct military conflict.

Instability is also influenced by economic reasons. Iran's reliance on proxy warfare as an economical means of projecting power has been exacerbated by the burden sanctions have placed on its economy.

On the other hand, Israel and the Gulf states, who have more stable economies, have made significant investments in defense and intelligence capacities, which has fueled a regional arms race.

The most destabilizing factor is still the possibility that Iran would produce a nuclear weapon, which raises concerns about a nuclear arms race that might include Saudi Arabia and other regional participants in addition to Israel.

An ongoing source of tension and a reminder of unsolved historical grievances is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although it is not directly related to the military conflict between Iran and Israel, Iran regularly uses it to justify its opposition to Israel and mobilize support throughout the region.

Despite recent diplomatic successes like the Abraham Accords, Israeli aggression in Gaza and the West Bank frequently cause regional criticism and make attempts at normalization with Arab governments more difficult.

The Middle East is at a turning point in its geopolitics. The area is undergoing both realignment and fragmentation. While some Arab nations are pursuing economic and geopolitical advantages by improving their relations with Israel, others are steadfast in their opposition to Israeli policies, especially those pertaining to Palestine. Iran maintains its position as a counter-hegemonic power, opposing both regional reconciliation with Israel and Western dominance.

This thesis has demonstrated that the Iran-Israel conflict is a major source of instability with wide-ranging effects rather than a limited issue. It strengthens sectarian divisions, encourages militarism, and maintains an atmosphere of animosity and mistrust. The "shadow war" between the two governments, which is waged through intelligence operations, proxy conflicts, and cyber-attacks, introduces a layer of uncertainty that makes diplomatic attempts more difficult and raises the possibility of miscalculation.

## **6.1 Implications for Research and Policy:**

Three main areas should be the focus of future research:

### **Regional Security Architecture:**

Investigating inclusive security frameworks that unite adversarial nations and non-state entities under shared engagement guidelines is critically important.

### **Nuclear Non-Proliferation:**

Particular focus needs to be placed on Israel's Strategic ambiguity and Iran's nuclear trajectory, as well as how regional actors might prevent proliferation without raising tensions.

### **Role of External Powers:**

More research should look at how Chinese, Russian, and American tactics relate to regional problems and whether a multipolar strategy could strengthen rivalries or lessen conflict. In summary, the Middle East's larger geopolitical and security issues are reflected in the Iran-Israel confrontation. Its influence goes well beyond the two states; it affects diplomatic plans, military doctrines, and alliances throughout the region and beyond. The area can only hope to progress toward a more secure and cooperative future by tackling the underlying reasons, which include unresolved territorial conflicts, ideological polarization, external involvement, and strategic insecurity.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

Given the conclusions drawn from this thesis about the military conflict between Iran and Israel and its wider effects on the Middle East, the following suggestions are put up for decision-makers, regional players, and academics:

### **6.2.1. To Encourage a Framework for Regional Security Dialogue**

A more comprehensive regional security framework is necessary for a long-term resolution to the Iran-Israel conflict. Under international facilitation (e.g., UN, EU, or neutral states like Switzerland or Norway), policymakers should promote the creation of a Middle East Security Dialogue Forum that includes Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iraq, and others. Through direct lines of communication, cooperative military transparency projects, and crisis de-escalation techniques, the forum should seek to promote the development of trust. Regional actors may start tackling fundamental security issues, averting unplanned escalations, and lowering dependency on unilateral military action or proxy warfare by establishing an inclusive conversation platform.

### **6.2.2. To Boost Mechanisms for Nuclear Non-Proliferation**

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) needs to be revived or replaced with a more comprehensive regional framework immediately in order to avoid a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. Discussions concerning arms control and nuclear transparency should involve all parties, including Israel and the Gulf states. This is made more difficult by Israel's nuclear ambiguity policy, but mistrust can be decreased by taking small efforts toward strategic communication and reciprocal inspections.

### **6.2.3. To Address the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Peacefully (Recognition of Palestine as a State)**

Any effort to settle the rivalry between Israel and Iran must take into account the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which feeds regional ideological narratives. While Israeli settler colonialism and aggression in Gaza and the West Bank continue to elicit regional anger, Iran frequently uses Palestinian resistance as an excuse for its antagonism to Israel. Future regional peace initiatives ought to include regional players who can negotiate in a

credible way, such Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan, as well as Palestinian representation. Longer-term Israeli-Arab and Iranian-Arab reconciliation can be facilitated by endorsing a rights-based two-state solution or an alternative just framework, which can weaken extremist narratives.

#### **6.2.4. Constructive Involvement of People's Republic of China**

There are opportunities as well as challenges associated with China and Russia's expanding influence in the Middle East. To further regional stability, Western actors should coordinate their diplomacy with these powers instead of isolating them. Russia's military involvement in Syria and China's economic connections to Iran and Gulf nations can be used to pressure Iran and Israel to defuse their current situation. In addition to preventing proxy wars, a multilateral security structure involving the US, EU, China, and Russia might divide the cost of resolving disputes. By constructively including rising nations, great power competition is prevented from holding regional solutions hostage.

#### **6.2.5. Investment in Socio-Economic Stability and Development**

The Middle East's long-term peace is directly related to inclusive development and economic stability. Initiatives for employment, energy cooperation, and infrastructure that foster interdependence should be given top priority by regional governments working with international financial institutions. Investments in digital connection, water security, and cross-border trade may generate financial incentives that discourage violence. Support for governance and reconstruction in fragile nations like Yemen, Lebanon, and Iraq should be linked to significant advancements in political and disarmament change. Trade zones or regional energy networks are examples of economic incentives for collaboration that might reorient attention from military rivalry to shared prosperity.

#### **6.2.6. Supporting Academic and Track II Diplomacy**

Deeply ingrained disputes like the Iran-Israel rivalry have proven difficult for traditional diplomacy to settle. In politically delicate situations, encouragement of Track II diplomacy unofficial communication between academics, former military personnel, and leaders of civil society can aid in establishing lines of communication. Workshops on conflict resolution, collaborative research on regional security, and academic exchanges can foster understanding between parties and lay the groundwork for future discussions. These initiatives, which should be inclusive and representative, should be funded by governments and international organizations through universities, NGOs, and think tanks. Such discussions have the potential to lessen polarization, find workable solutions, and humanize the "enemy" over time.

#### **6.2.7. Countering Disinformation and Regulation of Information Warfare**

Regional stability is threatened and tensions between Iran and Israel are greatly increased by information warfare, which includes state-sponsored propaganda, deception, and psychological operations. Mechanisms to detect and stop hostile cyber influence efforts, provocation, and fake news must be developed by governments, media outlets, and international organizations. With assistance from the UN and specialists in digital policy, a regional code of conduct on responsible digital communication ought to be investigated. Misinformation can be stopped from escalating conflicts, extremism, or sectarianism by fostering media literacy, supporting independent journalism, and fostering cross-border communication among media workers. In a time when perception influences policy just as much as facts, fighting information warfare is essential.

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