



GREAT POWER RIVALRY AND REGIONAL ESCALATION: THE RUSSIA–U.S. PROXY CONFLICT AND ITS IMPACT ON THE IRAN–ISRAEL WAR

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Abstract

The Iran–Israel conflict has increasingly become entangled within the broader dynamics of great power rivalry, particularly the proxy confrontation between Russia and the United States. This paper examines how geopolitical competition between Moscow and Washington influences the trajectory of the Iran–Israel war, transforming it from a regional struggle into a theater of global strategic contestation. By analyzing military alignments, economic sanctions, diplomatic maneuvers, and the role of non-state actors, the study highlights how external interventions exacerbate regional instability and complicate prospects for conflict resolution. The research argues that Russia’s strategic partnership with Iran and the U.S.’s enduring support for Israel create a layered proxy conflict, where localized hostilities intersect with global power competition. This interplay not only intensifies the risk of regional escalation but also reshapes the security architecture of the Middle East. The findings underscore the urgent need for multilateral diplomatic mechanisms to de-escalate tensions, prevent miscalculations, and address the broader implications of great power involvement in regional conflicts.

Keywords: Great Power Rivalry, Russia–U.S. Proxy Conflict, Iran–Israel War, Regional Escalation, Middle East Security

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INTRODUCTION

The Middle East has long been a theater of geopolitical rivalry, where local conflicts intersect with global power competition. The ongoing Iran–Israel war illustrates this phenomenon, as it is increasingly shaped not only by historical hostilities and regional security dynamics but also by the strategic calculations of external powers. In particular, the rivalry between Russia and the United States has transformed the conflict into a proxy battlefield, linking regional instability with the broader struggle for international influence (Kamel, 2023). This intersection underscores the need to examine how great power rivalry exacerbates local conflicts, creating multilayered challenges for peace and security in the region.

Russia's alignment with Iran is rooted in shared opposition to U.S. dominance and a convergence of strategic interests in the Middle East. Moscow has sought to expand its influence by supporting Tehran diplomatically, militarily, and economically, particularly in the context of U.S.-imposed sanctions (Katz, 2022). Conversely, the United States maintains its longstanding commitment to Israel's security, providing military assistance, intelligence cooperation, and diplomatic backing. These alignments create a polarized regional environment where the Iran–Israel war is embedded within a larger framework of great power confrontation (Borshchevskaya, 2021).

The involvement of Russia and the United States not only escalates the intensity of the Iran–Israel conflict but also broadens its scope. What might otherwise remain a bilateral or regional struggle is redefined by external interventions, leading to heightened risks of miscalculation and regional spillover. Moreover, the use of economic sanctions, arms transfers, and strategic alliances demonstrates how great powers externalize their rivalry through indirect means, intensifying instability across the Middle East (Clarke & Williams, 2020). This proxy dimension highlights the interplay between local actors and global powers, complicating both conflict management and resolution.

From a theoretical perspective, the Iran–Israel war can be analyzed through the lenses of realism and proxy war theory. Realist approaches emphasize the pursuit of power, security, and survival by both states and great powers, while proxy war theory sheds light on how major powers pursue strategic goals indirectly by backing regional actors (Mumford, 2013). These frameworks help explain why the Russia–U.S. rivalry has become intertwined with the Iran–Israel conflict and why such rivalries are difficult to disentangle from local wars. Understanding this theoretical nexus is crucial for analyzing both the persistence of conflict and the limitations of existing peace initiatives.

The Russia–U.S. proxy conflict exacerbates the Iran–Israel war by intensifying regional escalation and undermining pathways to peace. It will first examine the historical and strategic foundations of the Russia–U.S. rivalry in the Middle East, followed by an exploration of their respective alignments with Iran and Israel. Next, the study will assess the mechanisms through which great powers externalize their rivalry in the region, including military, economic, and diplomatic instruments. Finally, the analysis will consider the implications of this entanglement for regional stability, international security, and the prospects of conflict resolution.

REGIONAL ESCALATION

The Iran–Israel war, though rooted in longstanding ideological and geopolitical hostilities, has increasingly spilled beyond bilateral tensions to shape the security dynamics of the broader Middle East. Regional escalation refers to the process by which a localized conflict extends into a wider regional arena, drawing in multiple state and non-state actors,

destabilizing neighboring states, and heightening risks of broader confrontation (Lynch, 2019). In the case of Iran and Israel, the conflict has intensified through both direct clashes and proxy engagements, with ripple effects across Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and the Gulf region. One of the primary drivers of regional escalation is Iran's reliance on proxy networks, particularly Hezbollah in Lebanon, Shi'a militias in Iraq, and allied groups in Syria and Yemen. These actors extend Tehran's influence while simultaneously creating multiple fronts of confrontation with Israel and its allies (Byman, 2021). In response, Israel has expanded its military operations beyond its borders, carrying out airstrikes in Syria and targeting Iranian-linked infrastructure, thereby internationalizing the conflict. This cycle of action and retaliation fosters a security dilemma, where defensive measures by one actor are perceived as offensive threats by the other, fueling further escalation (Jervis, 1978).

The involvement of great powers, particularly Russia and the United States, exacerbates this trend by embedding local hostilities within global strategic rivalries. Russia's military presence in Syria provides Tehran with indirect protection and operational flexibility, while the United States continues to reinforce Israel's deterrence capabilities through military aid and defense cooperation (Clarke & Williams, 2020). This external support emboldens both regional actors, reducing incentives for de-escalation and heightening the risks of miscalculation. As a result, the Iran-Israel war has become a focal point of Great Power competition, reinforcing polarization across the Middle East.

Regional escalation also manifests through the spillover of economic and humanitarian consequences. The disruption of energy supplies, refugee flows from conflict zones, and the destabilization of fragile states such as Lebanon and Iraq illustrate how localized clashes produce systemic impacts (Kamel, 2023). Moreover, escalation threatens maritime security in the Persian Gulf and the Eastern Mediterranean, with direct implications for global trade and energy markets. These ripple effects underscore how the Iran-Israel war cannot be understood in isolation but must be analyzed as part of a larger regional security complex.

Ultimately, regional escalation in the Iran-Israel conflict reflects both the agency of local actors and the influence of external powers. The interconnection of local rivalries with global strategic competition magnifies the scope of the conflict and reduces opportunities for diplomatic resolution. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for assessing not only the persistence of violence in the Middle East but also the broader consequences of great power rivalry on international stability.

IRAN-ISRAEL CONFLICT EVOLUTION

The evolution of the Iran-Israel conflict is deeply rooted in the transformation of Iran's political landscape after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Before the revolution, Iran and Israel maintained cooperative relations, with the Shah's regime aligning with Israel in areas of trade, intelligence sharing, and strategic opposition to Arab nationalism. Israel's "Periphery Doctrine" relied on alliances with non-Arab states, and Iran was a cornerstone of this policy (Ehteshami & Hinnebusch, 2002). This period of cooperation laid a pragmatic foundation that was swiftly dismantled after the revolutionary change in Tehran.

Following the Islamic Revolution, Iran's foreign policy was fundamentally reshaped under Ayatollah Khomeini, who rejected Israel's legitimacy and framed it as an occupying power. Diplomatic ties were severed, and Iran began to champion the Palestinian cause, framing opposition to Israel as a moral and religious duty (Byman, 2008). This ideological shift marked the beginning of enduring hostility, transforming Iran from a strategic partner into one of Israel's staunchest regional adversaries.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Iran operationalized its opposition to Israel by supporting militant groups. Hezbollah, established in Lebanon with Iranian backing, emerged as a central actor in resisting Israeli presence and influence in the region (Ranstorpe, 1997). Iran also extended financial and logistical support to Hamas and Islamic Jihad, further entrenching itself in the Palestinian struggle. Israel, in turn, identified Iran's network of proxies as existential threats, intensifying the confrontation beyond mere rhetoric.

The 2000s marked a new phase, dominated by Iran's nuclear ambitions and Israel's perception of a looming existential threat. Israel repeatedly signaled its willingness to act preemptively against Iran's nuclear facilities, while international negotiations, particularly the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015, temporarily reduced tensions (Katzman, 2021). Nevertheless, mistrust persisted, and Israel continued to lobby against Iran's nuclear program, portraying it as a destabilizing factor for regional security.

In the post-2011 era, the Syrian Civil War and broader regional realignments further escalated the Iran-Israel rivalry. Iran's military entrenchment in Syria, coupled with its logistical support to Hezbollah, prompted Israel to launch repeated airstrikes targeting Iranian positions (Juneau, 2019). Meanwhile, the Abraham Accords (2020) deepened Iran's sense of isolation, as Israel strengthened ties with Gulf States. Today, the conflict has evolved into a complex mix of direct and proxy engagements, with great power rivalries particularly between Russia and the United States—exacerbating regional instability.

The Abraham Accords and Strategic Isolation of Iran

The signing of the Abraham Accords in 2020 marked a historic realignment in Middle Eastern politics, as Israel normalized relations with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Morocco, and later Sudan, under U.S. mediation. These agreements not only expanded Israel's diplomatic outreach but also symbolized a new era of Arab-Israeli cooperation based on shared economic and security interests (Miller, 2021). Unlike previous peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, the Accords demonstrated a collective willingness among Gulf and North African states to recognize Israel without requiring prior resolution of the Palestinian issue.

For Iran, the Abraham Accords represented a strategic setback, reinforcing its regional isolation. Tehran condemned the agreements as a "betrayal" of the Palestinian cause and accused Arab states of colluding with Israel against the Islamic Republic (Molavi, 2022). The accords effectively undermined Iran's long-standing narrative that Arab unity was centered on opposing Israel and supporting Palestinian resistance. By breaking this consensus, the accords weakened Tehran's ability to mobilize broad-based regional opposition to Israel.

Security dynamics in the Gulf further heightened Iran's sense of encirclement. Israel's growing security partnerships with the UAE and Bahrain created opportunities for intelligence sharing, military cooperation, and access to strategic maritime routes near the Strait of Hormuz (Alterman, 2021). These developments threatened Iran's regional deterrence by positioning Israel closer to its borders, both geographically and militarily. From Tehran's perspective, the Accords intensified the U.S.-backed security architecture designed to contain Iranian influence in the Gulf.

Economically, the Abraham Accords also marginalized Iran. Israel's normalization with Gulf States facilitated new trade routes, investment opportunities, and technological partnerships that bypassed Iran, which remains under heavy U.S. sanctions (Alshaer, 2021). The economic dividends of these agreements contrasted sharply with Iran's international

isolation, exacerbating its dependence on limited partners such as China and Russia. This growing economic divide reinforced Iran's exclusion from the emerging regional order, where Israel and Gulf states pursued development-oriented cooperation.

In the broader geopolitical context, the Abraham Accords cemented a new alignment that strategically isolated Iran while strengthening Israel's legitimacy in the Arab world. Although Tehran continues to rely on its proxy network and partnerships with great powers to counterbalance this isolation, the accords have shifted regional power dynamics in Israel's favor. As a result, Iran perceives the accords not only as a diplomatic blow but also as part of a larger U.S.-backed containment strategy that challenges its regional ambitions (Guzansky & Marshall, 2021).

RUSSIA–U.S. PROXY CONFLICT

The rivalry between Russia and the United States has historically shaped international politics, but in the Middle East it has acquired renewed intensity through indirect engagement in local conflicts. Proxy conflict refers to a situation where major powers avoid direct confrontation by supporting local actors—politically, economically, or militarily—who fight on their behalf (Mumford, 2013). In the context of the Iran–Israel war, Russia's alignment with Iran and the U.S.'s enduring support for Israel have transformed a bilateral confrontation into a proxy battlefield of global strategic competition. This transformation highlights the way great powers externalize their rivalry, embedding it within regional conflicts.

Russia's partnership with Iran is rooted in both pragmatic and strategic calculations. Moscow views Tehran as a critical partner in countering Western influence and consolidating its foothold in the Middle East, particularly following its military intervention in Syria in 2015 (Trenin, 2021). Iran, facing U.S. sanctions and international isolation, finds in Russia a valuable ally for arms deals, energy cooperation, and diplomatic cover at institutions such as the United Nations Security Council. This alignment has enabled Iran to sustain its regional activities while bolstering Moscow's image as an alternative pole of global power (Katz, 2022).

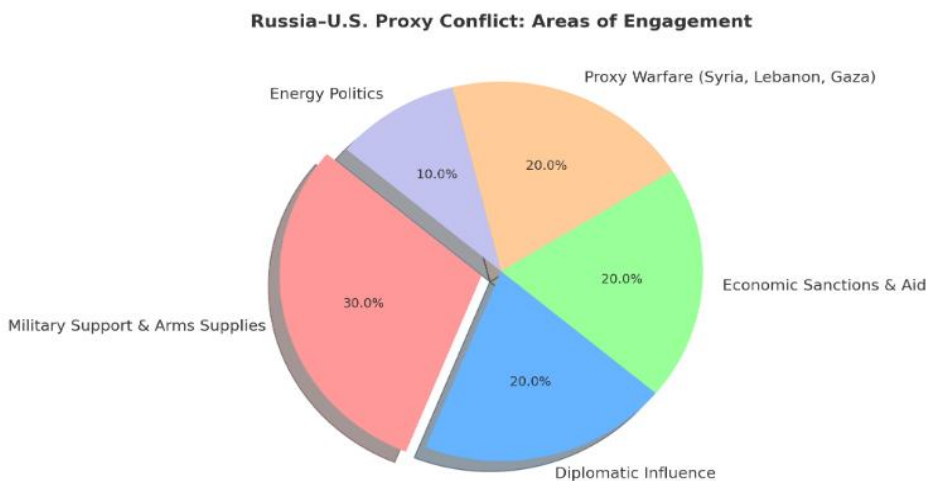
In contrast, the United States continues to serve as Israel's principal backer, providing billions of dollars in military aid annually, ensuring access to advanced defense systems, and shielding it diplomatically in international forums (Sharp, 2023). Washington's approach reflects both strategic and ideological imperatives: maintaining its influence in the Middle East, protecting a key ally in a volatile region, and countering the spread of Russian and Iranian influence. By strengthening Israel's deterrent capacity, the United States effectively positions itself against both Iran and its great power patron, Russia, intensifying the geopolitical polarization.

The proxy nature of the Russia–U.S. rivalry manifests in multiple forms, including arms transfers, intelligence sharing, and economic sanctions. U.S. sanctions on Iran indirectly pressure Russia due to its economic and defense partnerships with Tehran, while Moscow's arms supplies and technological cooperation with Iran bolster its military capacity against Israel and U.S.-backed coalitions (Clarke & Williams, 2020). This dynamic fosters a cycle of competition where each power seeks to undermine the other without escalating to direct confrontation, thereby using regional actors as instruments of their global rivalry.

The entanglement of the Russia–U.S. proxy conflict with the Iran–Israel war raises broader implications for international security. It increases the risk of escalation through miscalculation, reduces prospects for diplomatic mediation, and embeds local conflicts

within the structure of global polarization. Moreover, by externalizing their rivalry into regional conflicts, Moscow and Washington perpetuate instability, highlighting the dangerous intersection between great power competition and fragile regional security complexes.

F-1- RUSSIA-U.S. PROXY CONFLICT



OVERVIEW

The pie chart illustrates the multifaceted nature of the Russia-U.S. proxy conflict in the Middle East, with military support and arms supplies (30%) emerging as the dominant area of engagement, reflecting U.S. backing of Israel and Russia’s defense cooperation with Iran and Syria. Diplomatic influence (20%) and economic sanctions and aid (20%) highlight how both powers use political leverage and economic tools to shape regional alignments. Proxy warfare in Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza (20%) underscores the indirect nature of their rivalry, while energy politics (10%) demonstrates the strategic role of oil, gas, and trade routes in sustaining influence. Collectively, these dimensions reveal how great power competition intensifies regional conflicts, particularly the Iran-Israel confrontation.

IMPACT ON THE IRAN-ISRAEL WAR

The intersection of regional escalation and great power rivalry has profoundly shaped the trajectory of the Iran-Israel war. What began as a bilateral conflict rooted in ideological hostility and security concerns has expanded into a multidimensional struggle influenced by global strategic competition. The involvement of Russia and the United States has transformed the war into more than a confrontation between two regional adversaries, embedding it within the framework of international power politics (Kamel, 2023). This transformation has heightened both the scale and the stakes of the conflict, limiting avenues for de-escalation.

One major impact is the intensification of hostilities. Russia’s support for Iran, both directly and indirectly, enables Tehran to sustain its proxy networks in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq, thereby maintaining multiple pressure points against Israel. Simultaneously, U.S. backing allows Israel to launch extensive military operations beyond its borders with fewer constraints (Byman, 2021). This mutual empowerment fosters a dynamic of escalation where each side, emboldened by external backing, pursues aggressive strategies rather than

restraint. The result is a widening conflict zone that threatens the stability of neighboring states and increases the likelihood of inadvertent regional war.

A second impact is the erosion of diplomatic initiatives. Efforts to mediate the Iran–Israel conflict are undermined by the deepening polarization between Moscow and Washington, whose competing agendas prevent the formation of unified international responses (Clarke & Williams, 2020). Multilateral institutions such as the United Nations Security Council often become paralyzed by great power vetoes, leaving little room for meaningful intervention. This stalemate further entrenches the conflict, as regional actors calculate that their patrons will shield them diplomatically regardless of their actions on the battlefield.

The proxy dimension also produces significant humanitarian and economic consequences. Civilian populations in Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza bear the brunt of intensified warfare, displacement, and infrastructure destruction. Regional economies suffer disruptions to trade, investment, and energy security, with reverberations felt globally in the form of volatile oil prices and maritime insecurity in the Gulf (Katz, 2022). Thus, the Iran–Israel war, while seemingly local, generates systemic consequences that extend beyond the immediate combatants.

Finally, the entanglement of the Iran–Israel conflict with Russia–U.S. rivalry raises the risks of unintended escalation into direct great power confrontation. Although both Moscow and Washington seek to avoid direct military clashes, the complexity of overlapping theaters, the involvement of non-state actors, and the presence of military assets in contested zones increase the potential for miscalculation (Trenin, 2021). Such risks elevate the Iran–Israel conflict into a global security concern, demonstrating how great power involvement transforms regional wars into international crises.

The Iran–Israel conflict has entered a phase of heightened escalation, marked by the blurring of lines between proxy warfare and direct confrontation. In recent years, Israel has intensified its airstrikes on Iranian positions in Syria, targeting weapons depots and supply routes linked to Hezbollah (Juneau, 2019). Meanwhile, Iran has expanded its drone and missile capabilities, signaling a readiness to retaliate more directly against Israeli military and civilian infrastructure (Tabatabai, 2020). This tit-for-tat dynamic demonstrates how both states are testing thresholds without triggering a full-scale regional war, yet the risks of miscalculation remain high.

The Gaza conflict further complicates the situation, as Iran continues to provide political and military support to Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Israel perceives these groups as Iranian proxies designed to stretch its defenses and open multiple fronts (Byman, 2021). Escalations in Gaza often reverberate across Lebanon and Syria, reinforcing the multi-arena nature of the conflict. These developments suggest that the Iran–Israel confrontation is no longer confined to bilateral hostility but is increasingly embedded within broader regional instability.

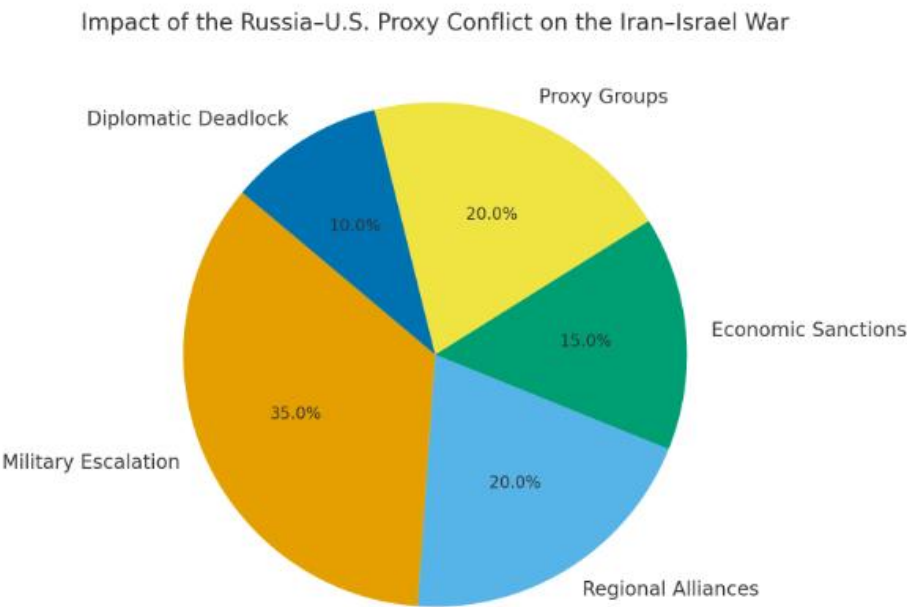
The broader geopolitical environment exacerbates these tensions. The United States continues to back Israel with military aid and diplomatic cover, while Iran deepens ties with Russia and China to counterbalance Western pressure (Katzman, 2021). Russia's involvement in Syria has further complicated Israel's operations, as Tel Aviv must navigate Moscow's presence while targeting Iranian assets. Thus, the conflict has become entangled with great power rivalries, elevating its significance beyond the Middle East.

Looking ahead, the future of the Iran–Israel conflict will depend heavily on the trajectory of Iran's nuclear program and regional alliances. Should Iran move closer to weaponization,

Israel may escalate its preventive military measures, including potential strikes on nuclear facilities (Fitzpatrick, 2022). Conversely, renewed diplomacy or security guarantees could create temporary de-escalation, although deep-rooted ideological and strategic differences make a lasting peace unlikely. The Abraham Accords and subsequent Arab–Israeli normalization also suggest that Iran will remain strategically isolated in the emerging regional order.

The current escalation between Iran and Israel underscores the persistence of a dangerous regional rivalry with global implications. The interplay of proxy conflicts, nuclear ambitions, and great power competition makes the conflict highly volatile. Without meaningful dialogue and robust conflict management mechanisms, the region is likely to face recurrent cycles of escalation, with each round carrying greater risks of direct war and broader destabilization (Lynch, 2022).

F-2. IMPACTS OF THE RUSSIA–U.S. PROXY CONFLICT



OVERVIEW

The pie chart highlights how the Russia–U.S. proxy conflict amplifies the Iran–Israel War across multiple dimensions. Military escalation (35%) constitutes the largest impact, as U.S. support for Israel and Russian backing of Iran intensify the conflict’s scope and severity. Regional alliances (20%), such as the U.S.-brokered Abraham Accords and Russia’s alignment with Iran and Syria, further polarize the Middle East. Economic sanctions (15%) weaken Iran’s economy but also deepen its reliance on Russian and Chinese partnerships. Proxy groups (20%), including Hezbollah and Hamas, serve as critical tools of indirect confrontation, fueled by external support. Finally, diplomatic deadlock (10%) underscores how great power rivalry undermines conflict-resolution efforts, prolonging instability. Collectively, these dynamics reveal how global competition entrenches regional hostility and escalates the Iran–Israel confrontation.

CONCLUSION

The Iran–Israel conflict has evolved from a bilateral dispute into a regional confrontation shaped by great power rivalries. Initially rooted in ideological opposition after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the conflict has steadily expanded through proxy warfare, nuclear

tensions, and regional realignments. Today, it is inseparable from the broader geopolitical environment, particularly the competition between Russia and the United States. This rivalry amplifies regional instability, as both powers pursue conflicting strategies that indirectly escalate hostilities between Iran and Israel.

The analysis demonstrates that the Russia–U.S. proxy struggle plays a critical role in sustaining the conflict’s intensity. Washington’s strategic alignment with Israel, backed by military aid and diplomatic cover, emboldens Israeli assertiveness in targeting Iranian assets. Conversely, Moscow’s partnerships with Tehran, especially in Syria, complicate Israel’s security calculations while providing Iran with political and military leverage (Katzman, 2021; Juneau, 2019). Thus, the Iran–Israel war cannot be understood in isolation; it is embedded within the dynamics of global power competition.

The Abraham Accords further highlight Iran’s strategic isolation and Israel’s growing regional legitimacy. By normalizing ties with key Arab states, Israel has secured new diplomatic and security partnerships, while Iran perceives itself increasingly encircled (Alshaer, 2021). This development deepens Tehran’s reliance on asymmetric strategies, such as proxy militias and missile programs, which in turn provoke stronger Israeli responses. These dynamics create a cycle of action and reaction that perpetuates escalation across multiple arenas.

Looking ahead, the trajectory of the conflict will hinge on three key factors: Iran’s nuclear ambitions, the durability of U.S.–Israel security cooperation, and the evolving role of Russia and China in the Middle East. A nuclear-armed Iran would almost certainly provoke an Israeli preemptive strike, risking a regional war. Meanwhile, U.S. retrenchment or shifts in Russian influence could recalibrate the balance of power, but are unlikely to eliminate the deep-seated animosity between Tehran and Tel Aviv. The persistence of proxy warfare suggests that low-intensity conflict will remain the norm, with periodic escalations threatening to spiral out of control.

In conclusion, the Iran–Israel conflict exemplifies the intersection of regional rivalries and global power politics. While ideological and historical grievances remain central, the conflict’s contemporary dynamics are shaped by the strategic maneuvering of external powers, especially the United States and Russia. Without meaningful diplomacy or a restructuring of regional security architecture, the Middle East is likely to witness continued instability. This study underscores the need for greater international engagement to manage escalation, prevent miscalculation, and address the broader consequences of great power rivalry in one of the world’s most volatile regions.

First, the United States and Russia must recognize that their proxy involvement in the Iran–Israel conflict amplifies regional instability. Both powers should prioritize confidence-building measures, such as renewed channels of communication on Middle East security. A structured dialogue mechanism, possibly under the auspices of the United Nations, could reduce risks of miscalculation and prevent the conflict from escalating into a broader regional war (Byman, 2021).

Second, regional states including the Gulf countries and Turkey—should pursue multilateral security initiatives that reduce reliance on great power patrons. A Middle Eastern security forum, modeled on the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), could provide a platform for addressing shared threats such as terrorism, energy insecurity, and nuclear proliferation (Juneau, 2019). Such mechanisms would strengthen regional ownership of security issues rather than perpetuating dependence on external actors.

Third, Iran and Israel must be encouraged to adopt de-escalation strategies through indirect negotiation. Track II diplomacy, facilitated by neutral states such as Oman or Switzerland, could open discreet communication channels. While deep-seated ideological differences remain, even limited agreements on humanitarian issues, cyber security norms, or rules of engagement in Syria could mitigate the cycle of escalation.

Fourth, greater international emphasis should be placed on preventing nuclear escalation. Reviving or reforming the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is essential to prevent Iran's nuclear program from becoming a trigger for preemptive Israeli action. Multilateral diplomacy that includes Russia, China, and the European Union would ensure that Iran's nuclear program is monitored while addressing Tehran's security concerns (Fitzpatrick, 2022).

Finally, scholars and policymakers should pay attention to the broader geopolitical shifts that influence the Iran-Israel conflict, particularly China's growing role in the Middle East. Beijing's mediation between Saudi Arabia and Iran in 2023 suggests that emerging powers may serve as alternative mediators. Leveraging these shifts could foster more inclusive conflict management strategies, reduce dependence on U.S.-Russia competition, and create a multipolar framework for regional stability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Promote Great Power Dialogue:**

The United States and Russia should establish communication mechanisms focused on Middle East security to minimize proxy-driven escalation and reduce risks of direct confrontation.

- **Strengthen Regional Security Frameworks:**

The Gulf States, Turkey, and other regional actors should work toward a cooperative security forum to address shared threats like terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and maritime insecurity without overreliance on external powers.

- **Encourage Iran-Israel De-escalation Channels:**

The Neutral states such as Oman, Qatar, or Switzerland can facilitate backchannel diplomacy, promoting limited agreements on humanitarian, cyber, and regional security issues to prevent unchecked escalation.

- **Revive Nuclear Diplomacy:**

The International actors must prioritize the restoration or reform of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to contain Iran's nuclear ambitions while addressing Israel's security concerns and preventing preemptive strikes.

- **Engage Emerging Powers in Mediation:**

The China and the European Union should be included in regional diplomatic efforts, as their growing influence and neutrality can provide alternative pathways to conflict resolution beyond U.S.-Russia rivalry.

The Iran-Israel conflict has increasingly become a focal point of Great Power rivalry, with Russia and the United States playing decisive yet competing roles through proxy strategies. The U.S., aligning with Israel and its regional partners, seeks to contain Iranian influence and secure its strategic foothold in the Middle East, while Russia, leveraging its ties with Iran and Syria, and positions itself as a counterbalance to Western dominance. This proxy dimension escalates regional tensions, as local conflicts are amplified by global competition. The war between Iran and Israel thus transcends bilateral hostilities, becoming entangled in the broader geopolitical chessboard where energy security, arms supplies, and alliances intertwine.

Consequently, the Russia–U.S. proxy conflict deepens polarization in the Middle East, complicates peace efforts, and risks expanding localized clashes into wider regional escalation.

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