

Q. How do you see the future nuclear politics in the region after Israel and US attacks on Iran?

I. Introduction

The June 2025 Israel-Iran conflict marked an unprecedented escalation in Middle Eastern Nuclear politics as Israeli forces, with US support, struck multiple Iranian nuclear facilities — including **Natanz, Fordow, and Isfahan** and targeted key scientists, triggering a brief but intense military confrontation. This event has profound implications for region's strategic stability, nuclear proliferation dynamics, and international non-proliferation norms.

II. Strategic Background of the issue :

• Nature of Attacks and immediate conflict

In June 2025, joint Israeli and US operations targeted Iran's nuclear infrastructure, with strikes designed to slow Tehran's ability to produce weapon-grade material. Iran retaliated with ballistic missiles and drones, instigating the **12-day war**, one of the most serious direct confrontations in decades between these states.



Source :
Middle east eye

• Breakdown of Diplomacy

Prior to the strikes, diplomatic negotiations — often mediated by Oman and other third parties — had been ongoing to manage Iran's nuclear programme. The military escalation stalled these channels, eroding a fragile basis for negotiated restraint.

III. Key Dynamics and Implications

• Shift from Diplomacy to coercion

The Israel-US attacks have marked a clear shift from diplomacy-based management of Iran's nuclear program to a more coercive military-driven approach. While strikes delayed Iran's nuclear progress, they also disrupted ongoing negotiations and undermined trust in diplomatic channels, showing that regional politics is increasingly influenced by force rather than dialogue.

• Strengthening of Hardline Forces in Iran

The attacks have empowered Iranian hardliners who argue that nuclear capability is essential for national security. This reduces the influence of moderates favouring compromise and increases the likelihood that Tehran will pursue nuclear options in the future.

• Heightened Regional Security Dilemmas

Neighbouring states now face increased uncertainty regarding Iran's nuclear intentions. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt may consider accelerating their own nuclear or military capabilities to hedge against potential threats, creating a more competitive and unstable regional environment.

IV. SWOT Analysis: Future Nuclear politics after US-Israel Attacks on Iran

STRENGTHS

- Reinforcement of Nuclear Deterrence logic
- Exposure of covert Nuclear realities
- Strategic clarity for regional states
- Deterrence stability among declared Nuclear states
- Inc. global focus on Nuc. risk mgmt

OPPORTUNITIES

- Possibility of Regional Arms-Control Dialogue
- Push for a Middle-East Nuclear-Weapon-Free zone
- Redefinition of Nuclear Doctrines
- Re-evaluation of NPT and JCPOA-type Frameworks

WEAKNESSES

- collapse of Trust in Non-proliferation regimes
- Absence of Regional Nuclear Stability Framework
- High Escalation and Miscalculation Risks
- Civilian Nuclear Facilities becoming legitimate targets

THREATS

- Accelerated Nuclear Proliferation
- Iranian Weaponization drive
- Saudi, Turkish, and Egyptian Nuclear hedging
- Normalization of Pre-emptive Nuclear strikes
- Global erosion of Non-Proliferation Norms.

A. Strengths

• Reinforcement of Nuclear Deterrence Logic :

The attacks reinforced the logic of nuclear deterrence by signalling that nuclear ambitions carry strategic consequences. States in the region now understand that overt or covert nuclear progress can trigger decisive responses, which strengthens the credibility of deterrence. President Trump publicly stated the strikes "obliterated" Iran's nuclear sites, aiming to prevent their weapons potential. This illustrates deterrence thinking.

X • ~~Exposure of Covert Nuclear Realities :~~

~~The operations revealed aspects of Iran's nuclear program which provides transparency to regional actors and allows them to better assess risks and adjust security policies.~~

• Strategic clarity for regional states:

After these attacks, multiple Gulf States and mediators (e.g. **Oman, Qatar**) publicly warned that escalation threatened regional stability, showing that neighbouring states recalibrated their security outlook in response to these attacks.

• Deterrence stability among Declared Nuclear States:

The actions reaffirmed that declared Nuclear powers, like Israel, will act to maintain regional stability. This strengthens deterrence frameworks and reduces uncertainty among other nuclear-armed states in the region.

• Increased Global focus on Nuclear Risk Management:

The attacks drew international attention to the risks of nuclear escalation in the Middle East. International reactions (e.g. **Condemnation by Russia and China** for violating international law) reflect global concern over nuclear risk governance and escalation.

B. Weaknesses

• Collapse of Trust in Non-Proliferation Regimes:

Military Action against Iran has eroded confidence in the non-proliferation system. Selective enforcement raises doubts about whether international agreements like the **NPT**

reliably protect states, undermining the credibility of global nuclear governance.

- **Absence of Regional Nuclear Security Framework:**

The Middle East lacks a formal regional nuclear security architecture. This absence increases vulnerability to misperceptions, miscalculations, and arms races, as states rely on unilateral or ad-hoc strategies rather than cooperative frameworks.

Security-level letters to the UNSC reveal Iran condemned Israel's strikes as a "large-scale act of aggression", accusing both Israel and US of violations under International law.

- **Civilian Nuclear Facilities becoming Legitimate Targets:**

The targetting of facilities not explicitly weaponized signals that civilian nuclear sites may be treated as legitimate military objectives. This raises ethical concerns and increases the risk to non-combatants while complicating compliance with international law.

C. Opportunities

- **Push for regional Dialogue and Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone:**

International responses emphasized diplomacy, with Gulf states urging restraint to avoid catastrophic consequences, creating political space for renewed arms control and consultation channels. Such a framework could provide security guarantees while curbing proliferation incentives across the region.

- **Redefinition of Nuclear Doctrines:**

States have an opportunity to revisit their nuclear doctrines, balancing deterrence with stability. Lessons from the crisis could inform policies that reduce miscalculation and limit the role of preventive strikes.

- **Re-evaluation of NPT and JCPOA-type Frameworks:**

Global and regional actors may re-examine existing agreements, such as the NPT and JCPOA, to improve compliance, monitoring, and dispute resolution. This could enhance trust and create more durable governance structure.

- **Accelerated Nuclear Proliferation cascade:**

There is a risk that other states in the region may pursue nuclear capabilities if Iran is perceived to be close to weaponization. This could trigger a regional arms race and increase the complexity of nuclear management.

- **Iranian Weaponization Drive:**

Iran may accelerate efforts to develop nuclear weapons in response to external pressure. This could increase regional tensions and prompt defensive postures from neighbouring states.

- **Saudi, Turkish, and Egyptian Nuclear Hedging:**

Countries in the region may pursue hedging strategies, including nuclear or advanced military capabilities, to counter perceived Iranian threats. This intensifies regional competition and instability.

- **Normalization of Pre-emptive Nuclear strikes:**

The precedent of targetting Nuclear facilities could encourage future preventive or pre-emptive strikes. This normalization heightens risks and undermines confidence in peaceful dispute resolution mechanisms.

- **Global Erosion of Non-Proliferation Norms:**

Military Action against a nuclear-capable state risks weakening global non-proliferation norms. If states perceive that treaties and agreements can be bypassed, it may reduce compliance and encourage clandestine nuclear programs worldwide.

V. Great Power Competition and Strategic Alliances:

→ US-Israel Nuclear strategy

Washington's participation in strikes signalled a strong alignment with Israel in containment policy. However, such actions also expose the US. perceptions of escalation responsibility, making future diplomatic leadership more complex.

→ Russia and China's role:

Iran may seek closer ties with Russia and China for technological and strategic support.

VI. Iran's likely Strategic recalibration:

Rather than immediate Nuclear testing, Iran is more likely to expand enrichment quietly, harden and disperse facilities, reduce cooperation with IAEA, rely more heavily on asymmetric deterrence (Hezbollah, Houthis etc)

Conclusion :

The Israel-US attacks on Iran have produced long-term strategic risks. While they delayed nuclear progress, they weakened diplomacy, strengthened hardline politics, and increased regional proliferation dangers. The future of Nuclear politics in the Middle East will depend on whether military coercion is followed by inclusive diplomacy and stronger international institutions, or whether the region slides into sustained nuclear rivalry and instability.