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Middle East Geopolitics Under Trump’s Second Presidency: Implications for Iran’s Nuclear Program

ABSTRACT

The resurgence of Donald Trump’s presidency in 2025 has introduced new complexities into U.S.–Iran relations and global nuclear diplomacy. This article examines the strategic implications of the Trump administration’s renewed “maximum pressure” policy on Iran’s nuclear program. Building on the precedent of Washington’s 2018 withdrawal from the JCPOA, the research investigates how coercive diplomacy, military threats, and intensified sanctions influence Tehran’s nuclear trajectory and regional security dynamics. It considers how the U.S. approach, characterized by strict enforcement of sanctions and diplomatic pressure, may affect Tehran’s nuclear activities, regional security, and the functioning of multilateral negotiation mechanisms. The analysis also explores the role of regional actors and international institutions in shaping the evolving strategic landscape. The main objective of this study is to assess the impact of Trump’s second presidency on nuclear diplomacy with Iran and to evaluate the potential consequences for regional and global security architecture.

Keywords: Iran, nuclear program, Middle East, regional security, United States, foreign policy, nuclear diplomacy.

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INTRODUCTION

The longstanding and consistent objectives of U.S. foreign policy have been to curb nuclear proliferation, maintain stability within the region, and limit Iran's strategic reach. The limitations of existing diplomatic efforts, the failures of negotiations, and variable geopolitical realities demonstrate that a broader and longer-term strategic approach is required. Within this framework, the U.S.'s Middle East policy needs to be restructured based on a more multilateral and nuanced strategy that encompasses not only Iran's nuclear program but also its regional activities. Such a policy should constrain Iran's ability to make concessions while ensuring security.

An assessment of the Trump administration's impact on Iran's nuclear program and bilateral relations concludes that its "maximum pressure" policy was counterproductive. This article explores the effect of Trump-era policies on Iran's nuclear activities and U.S.–Iran relations. The decision to withdraw from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is cited as diminishing U.S. regional influence, exacerbating diplomatic tensions, and stimulating the advancement of Iran's nuclear capabilities (Smith, 2019). The resulting decrease in Iran's nuclear breakout time to just a few weeks has now provoked a severe crisis.

With Trump's re-election in 2025, U.S.–Iran relations entered a new phase of tension. The Trump administration returned to a hardline policy aimed at deterring Iran's nuclear ambitions, which continues to increase the risk of confrontation in the region. The leaking of classified information from the Pentagon to the press, suggesting that U.S. strikes against Iran were not very successful, indicates growing internal contradictions within the White House.

Despite Israeli attacks, Iran's nuclear arsenal has not been destroyed, and Tehran remains intent on developing its nuclear program. It is likely that in the next phase, Iran will attempt to strengthen its weak points – such as the penetration of its internal security structures by Israeli intelligence (Mossad), the transfer of critical information to adversaries, and vulnerabilities in its air defense system. The U.S. stance on Iran has significant implications for regional stability.

A broader and more multilateral Middle East policy may have implications for managing Iran-related challenges, preventing escalation, and addressing strategic competition. Such a policy should be long-term and limit Iran's alternatives for making concessions. If Iran's nuclear issue remains unresolved, nuclear proliferation in the Middle East could become inevitable. In such a scenario, the nuclear ambitions of countries like Türkiye, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia could also materialize, potentially leading to an entirely new and uncontrolled arms race in the region.

In this context, the article aims to clarify how Trump's potential second-term agenda could reshape the strategic setting of Iran's nuclear file. The study seeks to identify which specific policy tools—such as economic pressure, military deterrence, or regional alliances—are likely to influence Tehran's calculations. It also examines the gaps left by earlier research, particularly regarding the interaction between U.S. coercive measures and Iran's adaptive strategies. By linking these questions to the broader geopolitical environment, the article aims to offer a coherent analytical framework

for explaining possible escalation trajectories. Ultimately, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the risks, constraints, and diplomatic openings that may define the next phase of the nuclear standoff.

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative and analytical methodology to examine the evolving dynamics of U.S.–Iran relations and their implications for global nuclear diplomacy following Donald Trump's return to the presidency in 2025. The study is based on a comprehensive analysis of primary and secondary sources, including official government statements, policy documents, international agreements, think tank reports, and peer-reviewed academic literature. A historical-institutionalist approach is applied to contextualize the roots of the current tensions, particularly focusing on the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018 and its long-term effects on Iran's nuclear trajectory.

The research design relies on three main stages. First, a descriptive analysis outlines the key political developments, diplomatic interactions, and policy shifts between Washington and Tehran. Second, a comparative analytical framework evaluates the similarities and differences between Trump's first and second terms in office, particularly regarding coercive diplomacy, sanctions regimes, and strategic communication. Third, a scenario-based assessment explores the potential outcomes of the renewed “maximum pressure” policy for both regional security and international nuclear governance.

This study also incorporates discourse analysis of official statements by U.S. and Iranian leaders, supported by data from international organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations. By combining these methods, the research seeks to provide a multi-dimensional understanding of how strategic decisions and external pressures influence Iran's nuclear ambitions. The methodological approach allows for a critical evaluation of diplomatic behavior, policy rationales, and geopolitical consequences, offering insights relevant to both academic research and policy formulation.

RESULTS

Donald Trump's Second Presidency and Iran's Nuclear Policy

In 2020, President Trump stated during his presidency that Iran would never be allowed to possess nuclear weapons. According to Trump, Iran remains the leading sponsor of terrorism, and its attempts to acquire nuclear weapons threaten the civilized world—something he would “never allow” (The White House, 2025a). With Donald Trump's return to the White House in 2025, U.S.–Iran relations once again intensified. Trump reinstated his “maximum pressure” policy aimed at preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Through a National Security Presidential Memorandum (NSPM) signed on February 5, 2025, Trump reinforced measures against Iran's nuclear activities, malign

foreign influence, and support for terrorism. The document portrays Iran as the leading state sponsor of terrorism and accuses it of supporting groups such as Hezbollah, Hamas, the Houthis, the Taliban, and Al-Qaeda. Furthermore, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is recognized as a “Foreign Terrorist Organization,” and it is emphasized that Iran poses a serious threat to regional and global stability (The White House, 2025b).

The Memorandum stipulates that Iran’s nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles must be denied, its terror network neutralized, and its aggressive development of missiles, as well as other asymmetric and conventional weapon capabilities, must be countered (The White House, 2025a). The Memorandum notes Iran’s multifaceted threats against U.S. citizens. These threats, particularly those carried out via the IRGC, include cyber espionage as well as physical attacks, kidnappings, and assassination attempts. Iran’s activities are directed not only within U.S. territory but also against Americans in other countries, indicating the global expansion of its operational network.

“Hezbollah’s Islamic Jihad Organization” is one of Iran’s main proxy groups in the Middle East. These examples indicate that Iran operates not directly, but through groups it supports, employing a “proxy warfare” strategy. Thus, Iran’s sphere of influence has expanded globally to target U.S. citizens. The memorandum’s claim of “planting sleeper cells in the homeland” is considered a serious warning about Iran’s potential to create a terrorist threat inside the United States. This raises concerns that the threat could originate domestically rather than from abroad, and by condemning Iran’s activities, it lays the groundwork for harsher measures. The memorandum includes the following statements expressing the main concerns and strategy of U.S. policy toward Iran:

Regional Aggression and Support for Terrorism:

- Accusation regarding the October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks: It is alleged that Iran bears direct or indirect responsibility for these attacks. While official evidence has not been widely disclosed, this accusation aims to demonstrate Tehran’s support for regional terrorist activities.
- Emphasis on Iran’s support for the Houthis in Yemen, which has consequently endangered international shipping in the Red Sea. This indicates that Iran’s sphere of influence is not limited to land but extends to maritime routes.
- Highlighting Iran’s readiness for missile attacks against Israel in 2024 shows it has become a military power that destabilizes the region.

Human Rights and Citizen Security:

- Iran’s detention of U.S. citizens on false charges strengthens accusations of hostage diplomacy.
- The statement “The United States stands with the Iranian women subjected to the regime’s daily violence” indicates Washington’s focus on human rights issues within Iran, especially women’s rights. However, this stance is perceived by Tehran as interference in internal affairs.

Nuclear Program and Violation of International Obligations:

- Iran’s enrichment capabilities are assessed as an “existential threat” to U.S. and global security.

- Iran's concealment of nuclear facilities and materials from the International Atomic Energy Agency is presented as a violation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, setting the stage for international legal pressure.
- The "all pathways to a nuclear weapon" formula aims to close not only technical capabilities like enrichment but all technological and political avenues leading to Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons.

Overall, the memorandum reflects four main pillars of the U.S. "maximum pressure" policy against Iran: support for terrorism, regional aggression, human rights violations, and the nuclear program. The tone of the text is harsh and accusatory, demonstrating a stance that considers Iran's behavior unacceptable. The U.S. evaluates these activities as a threat to its national interests and considers it expedient to continue maximum pressure against the Iranian regime to limit its nuclear program, halt ballistic missiles, and cut off support for terrorist groups. The Memorandum reflects the main pillars of U.S. foreign policy toward Iran:

- Prevent Iran from possessing nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles.
- Neutralize Iran's regional aggression network and campaign.
- Prevent and weaken the IRGC and its proxies' access to resources that enable them to continue their destabilizing activities.
- Prevent the aggressive development of Iran's missiles, other asymmetric, and conventional weapon capabilities.

Preventing Iran from possessing nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles is the most central objective of U.S. policy toward Iran. This indicates a readiness to use diplomatic pressure, sanctions, and military options to prevent Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Intercontinental ballistic missiles are noted as a means to deliver nuclear warheads over long distances.

Neutralizing Iran's regional aggression network and campaign targets groups supported by Iran in the region (e.g., Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, including Hezbollah and the Houthis). The U.S.'s goal is to limit the activities and influence of these groups. The term "neutralize" signifies a strategic objective to completely negate the effectiveness and influence of this network.

Preventing and weakening the IRGC and its proxies' access to resources directly targets the IRGC, Iran's core military and ideological institution. The IRGC and its proxies refer to entities that carry out Iran's political and military operations abroad. The goal is to cut off their financial, arms, and other supplies, disrupt their activities, and weaken their power.

The U.S. objective to prevent the "aggressive development" of Iran's weapons extends beyond its nuclear program to encompass a full spectrum of military capabilities. This includes ballistic missiles, as well as asymmetric weapons such as UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles), mortars, and naval craft that are cost-effective yet potent, in addition to conventional arms. This broad focus reveals a U.S. perception of Iran as a multifaceted military threat, not merely a nuclear one. The specific use of the term "aggressive development" underscores the rapid, assertive, and destabilizing nature with which Iran is advancing these diverse programs, solidifying its status as a dominant regional military power.

The statement thus affirms that U.S. policy is designed to confront the full spectrum of challenges posed by Iran, integrating concerns over its nuclear program with efforts to check its conventional military power, missile development, and regional influence. This integrated approach embodies a strategy of simultaneous deterrence and coercive pressure.

Article 2 of the Memorandum concerns the application of maximum pressure against the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Memorandum outlines the responsibilities of the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of State, the U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN, the Secretary of Commerce, and the Attorney General.

Responsibilities of the Secretary of the Treasury include:

- Taking immediate action on sanction violations related to Iran.
- Conducting a continuous sanctions campaign to block financial resources of the regime and its proxies.
- Revoking or modifying existing concessions (licenses, guidelines).
- Issuing updated warnings to relevant business sectors about the risks of sanction violations.
- Promoting the implementation of the “know your customer’s customer” principle in financial institutions.

Responsibilities of the Secretary of State include:

- Revoking economic concessions, including those related to Chabahar Port.
- Coordinated action to reduce Iran’s oil exports to zero.
- Internationally isolating the IRGC and other terrorist entities.
- Preventing Iran from evading sanctions through Iraq and Gulf countries.

Responsibilities of the U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN include:

- Reactivating the anti-Iran “snapback” sanctions mechanism.
- Holding Iran accountable for violations of its NPT obligations.
- Regularly bringing Iran’s threats to international security onto the UN agenda.

Responsibilities of the Secretary of Commerce include:

- Strengthening export controls to limit Iran’s access to military-purpose technologies.

Responsibilities of the Attorney General include:

- Detecting and prosecuting Iran-related financial and operational networks in the U.S. and abroad.
- Confiscating illegal Iranian oil shipments.
- Identifying Iranian assets and ensuring compensation for U.S. citizen victims.
- Pursuing indictments and extradition efforts against Iran-related terrorist groups.
- Taking legal measures against Iran’s espionage and cyber activities.

This article indicates that the U.S. is mobilizing legal, financial, and diplomatic tools within a unified strategy in its Iran policy (The White House, 2025b). Iran’s progress in uranium enrichment has brought the country closer to a “point of no return.” Tehran has stated that it does not consider this

progress a subject for negotiation, creating a serious disagreement with Washington. This situation has also provided additional diplomatic and strategic leverage for Israel.

IAEA Reports and Iran's Nuclear Progress

Recent reports from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) indicate a significant increase in Iran's enriched uranium stockpile. The latest report, released in February, noted a 92.5 kg increase since the November report. This material is now only a short technical step away from reaching weapon-grade levels of 90% enrichment (Table 1). According to IAEA data, approximately 42 kg of 60% enriched uranium is theoretically sufficient to produce one atomic bomb if further enriched to 90% (Liechtenstein, 2025).

By May, this figure had increased to 409 kg of enriched uranium, which would be enough for approximately ten nuclear bombs. Iran's total enriched uranium stockpile stands at 8,294.4 kg (18,286 lbs), representing a substantial increase of 1,690.0 kg (3,725.8 lbs) since the last report in November. However, in March 2025, the Director of National Intelligence, Tulsi Gabbard, stated that U.S. intelligence "assessed that Iran is not building a nuclear weapon and that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has not authorized such a program" (Illmer, 2025).

Table 1. Iran's 60% Enriched Uranium Stockpile (kg), February 8, 2025

	August	November	February	May
2024	164.7	182.3		
2025			274.8	409.0

Source: Liechtenstein (2025)

Trump's Letter and Military Warning

Assessing the current situation, President Donald Trump sent a letter to Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, in March 2025, demanding the conclusion of a new nuclear agreement within two months (Ravid, 2025). The letter was sternly worded, threatening Iran with military consequences if negotiations failed. Trump also informed regional allies, including Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, about this development. This scenario represents a potential turning point in U.S. policy toward Iran and highlights several significant points:

1. The harsh tone of Trump's letter to Khamenei and the two-month deadline for a new nuclear agreement indicate the sharpness of the U.S. stance on Iran. This approach emphasizes the use of pressure alongside diplomatic measures. The statement that "Iran was threatened with military consequences if negotiations failed" underscores that this pressure is at its highest level, and that the U.S. is keeping the option of military intervention on the table. This approach

differs from that adopted during the Joe Biden administration, which prioritized diplomacy and multilateral engagement.

2. Trump's informing of regional allies such as Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE suggests that this action is being carried out not only with U.S. support but also with the backing of key regional partners. These countries are seriously concerned about Iran's nuclear program and regional activities and support a firm U.S. stance. This indicates that a broad regional consensus against Iran has formed or is in the process of forming. Informing allies could also serve as a preliminary step to ensure their support during a potential military operation.

The writing of this letter was not a random act; rather, it is an integral part of a coordinated set of measures and preparations. Preparation for this process involved gathering detailed information about Iran's nuclear capabilities, military potential, and regional activities; defining the parameters of a new agreement; preparing potential sanctions or strengthening existing ones; establishing the legal framework for military intervention; developing military plans, identifying targets, and assessing resources; and undertaking diplomatic efforts to gain the support of regional allies.

Consequently, this letter from the Trump administration indicates that the U.S. has adopted a more assertive policy approach toward Iran, considering a military option and taking this step in coordination with regional allies. These measures affected Iran's strategic options and have significant implications for regional stability.

Initial Political Reaction and Negotiation Process

Despite Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei's initially strong reaction to Trump's letter, a softening of Iran's stance emerged due to internal compromise and international pressure. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian sent an open message signaling willingness for indirect negotiations. The first round of indirect nuclear talks between the U.S. and Iran concluded on April 12, with the fifth round wrapping up on May 25. Proceeding in an atmosphere of deep uncertainty and mutual distrust, the talks failed to produce a new accord before the two-month deadline expired. This failure led to Israel's military intervention against Iran, supported by the United States, while Iran's resistance further escalated the situation.

U.S. Position: Contradictory Demands and Pressure Politics

Initially, President Donald Trump stated that preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons was his primary goal. However, he later demanded the complete dismantling of the program, although he did not rule out allowing a civilian nuclear program under strict restrictions. The Secretary of State, meanwhile, insisted on a complete halt to uranium enrichment, cessation of long-range missile production, and an end to support for terrorist groups. Simultaneously, some within the administration advocated for allowing limited enrichment to avert war.

This apparent shift from "preventing nuclear weapons" to demanding "complete dismantling of the program" suggests a lack of a unified and clear strategy in U.S. negotiations. Such contradictory signaling complicates the negotiation process and fosters distrust on the Iranian side. The United States

has escalated tensions by increasing its military presence in the Middle East, intensifying sanctions, and potentially supporting Israeli strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities (Staff & Magid, 2025). These measures reflect a strategy of coercive diplomacy.

Iran's Stance: Legal Grounds and "Red Lines"

Iran emphasizes its right to maintain a complete nuclear fuel cycle under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), asserting that its program is civilian in nature. It has declared that refusing to abandon uranium enrichment constitutes a "red line," though it remains open to discussions regarding "potential militarization." While Iran rejects talks on its missile and defense systems, it states it will not produce nuclear-armed missiles. Tehran invites the U.S. to invest in its nuclear energy program, stressing that negotiations would be mutually beneficial.

Regional Tensions and Responses to Pressure

In response to U.S. pressure, Iran has conducted ballistic missile tests, threatened "retaliatory strikes," and holds the U.S. responsible for Israeli attacks. Iran also exacerbates regional instability by supporting the Houthis and orchestrating provocations in Jordan. Israel is concerned about a nascent nuclear deal and advocates striking Iran's nuclear facilities. Gulf countries, however, consider a U.S.–Iran compromise vital for regional stability. China and Russia support negotiations, defending Iran's right to a civilian nuclear program and even offering mediation.

The main point of disagreement in negotiations is uranium enrichment. The U.S. states it will not permit any level of enrichment, while Iran's declaration of "refusing to abandon uranium enrichment" as a "red line" indicates its unwillingness to compromise. Although Iran has shown openness to increased inspections, the impending expiration of sanctions snapback mechanisms in October 2025 further heightens tensions. The Trump administration has threatened military operations with Israeli assistance if diplomacy fails and has acted on these threats. Iran, in turn, declares it will increase the likelihood of acquiring nuclear weapons if threatened.

Global and Regional Geopolitical Context

The expansion of U.S. sanctions against trading partners such as China suggests that the nuclear issue is also being used as a tool for economic leverage. Negotiations reflect the complex political, legal, and military dimensions of U.S.–Iran relations, extending beyond the nuclear program to encompass the regional balance of power and geostrategic interests.

In May 2025, the IAEA announced that Iran had accumulated 409 kg of 60% purity uranium, a level higher than required for civilian use ("How close is Iran to getting a nuclear bomb?"). In response, Iran announced it would build a third nuclear enrichment facility under IAEA safeguards (Liechtenstein et al., 2025; Lewis, 2025). On June 10, 2025, General Michael Kurilla, head of U.S. Central Command, testified to Congress, describing Iran as the "single greatest malign actor in the region." He warned that Iran was only a few steps away from reaching the 90% threshold for weaponization and that a "historic," "unprecedented," and unparalleled "window of strategic opportunity" had emerged for the

United States to secure its core interests in the region (Marcetic, 2025). If Iran made “rapid progress” in uranium enrichment, it could produce one nuclear weapon within a week and up to ten within three weeks.

However, producing a weapon also involves additional steps Iran has yet to achieve, such as carrying out a nuclear explosion or integrating an atomic warhead onto ballistic missiles. According to various estimates, considering these additional steps, Iran is seven months to a year away from building a weapon (“CENTCOM Warned”, 2025). The General added that Tehran’s acquisition of nuclear weapons could trigger a regional arms race, prompting other countries to seek nuclear missile capabilities either through production or acquisition for self-protection.

One day before the Israeli attacks, the IAEA determined that Iran had failed to comply with its nuclear obligations for the first time in 20 years (Murphy, 2025). The White House announced that the two-month deadline for Iran to reach an agreement had expired the day before Israel’s attacks (Balmer, 2025).

Following what IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi admitted was a biased and baseless report on Iran’s nuclear program, the IAEA Board of Governors adopted a condemnation resolution alleging Iran’s non-compliance. Hours after the resolution’s adoption on June 12, Israel launched large-scale air strikes against Iran’s nuclear and military facilities in the early morning of June 13. The attacks targeted Iran’s Natanz and Fordo nuclear sites and occurred in five waves, hitting approximately 100 targets. As a result, several Iranian military commanders, scientists, and civilians were killed (“Grossi Admits”, 2025). Israeli officials stated that the strikes also hit targets Tehran did not anticipate (Fabian, 2025).

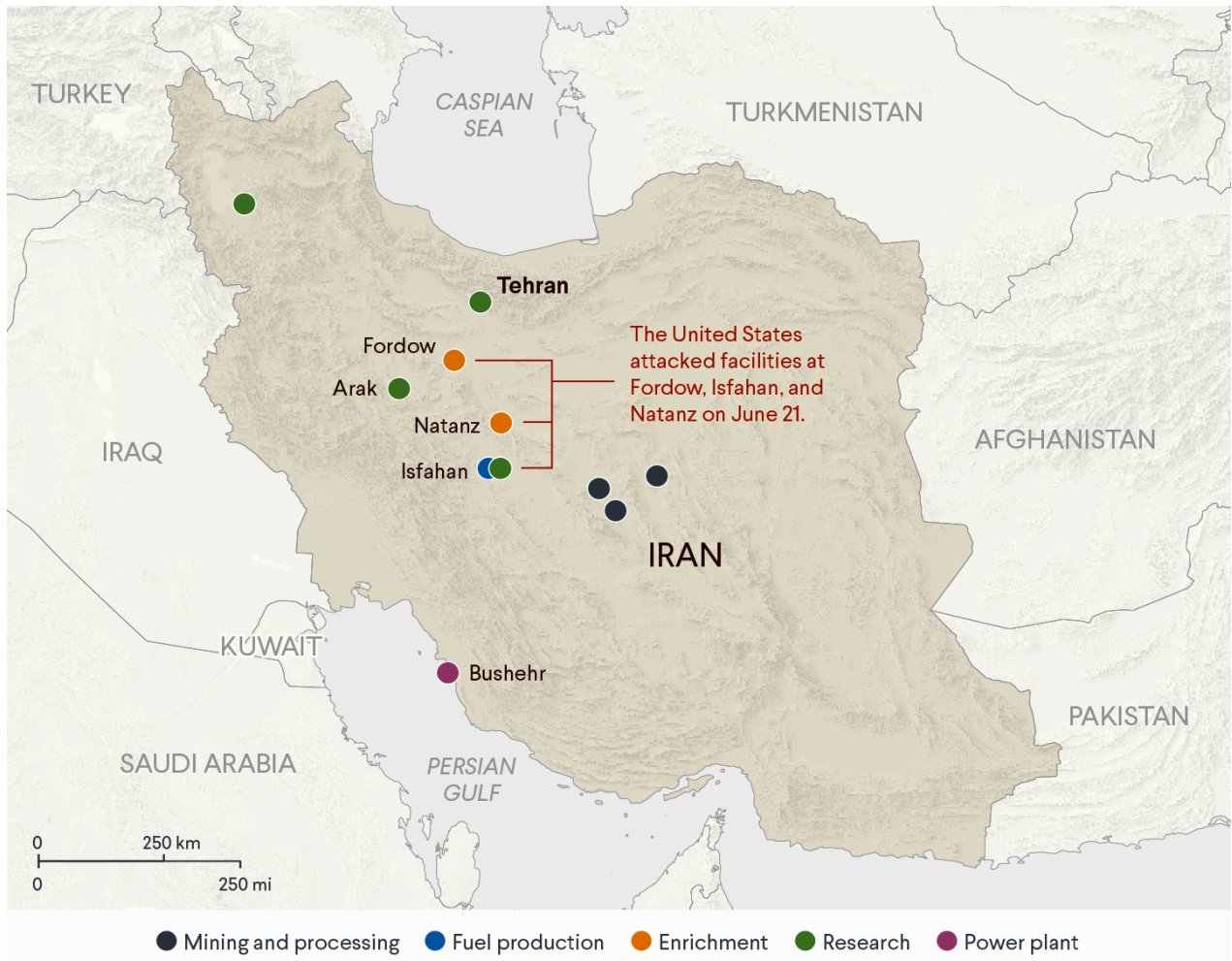
Contradictory Statements and Escalation in the Middle East

Despite escalating tensions, CNN’s chief journalist Christiane Amanpour reported that IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi explicitly stated that the international body had no evidence of a systematic effort by Iran to produce nuclear weapons. Grossi reportedly said, “We have reported and reported that we had no evidence of any systematic effort to produce nuclear weapons – as some of the sources you cited coincided, we had no such evidence” (“Grossi Admits”, 2025). Furthermore, Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has repeatedly affirmed the existence of an Islamic fatwa (legal ruling) prohibiting the development of nuclear weapons, deeming it forbidden under Islamic law (Gallagher, 2025).

However, the situation escalated sharply on June 22, when the United States officially joined the conflict on Israel’s side, launching B-2 bomber strikes against key Iranian nuclear facilities, including Fordo, Natanz, and Isfahan (Figure 1). In response, Iran proposed closing the Strait of Hormuz, a vital oil shipping lane, and reportedly blocked vessel traffic (Tekesh, 2025). The following day, June 23, the Iranian military launched attacks on U.S. military bases in Qatar and Iraq (“Iran, Katar”, 2025).

On June 24, U.S. President Donald Trump announced a 12-hour consecutive ceasefire. However, Israeli Defense Minister Yisrael Katz opposed the agreement, stating that attacks on Tehran would continue. Trump later confirmed that an accord on a ceasefire had been reached.

Figure 1. Regional Conflict Map



Source: Ferragamo (2025)

The "Trump Doctrine" in Action

This series of events is considered the first application of the "Trump Doctrine," a concept regarded as a manifestation of the Trump administration's "peace through strength" principle (Holland & Brunnstrom, 2025). However, Israel's rejection of the ceasefire further complicated the situation, creating uncertainty regarding the future of conflict and peace in the region. U.S. Vice President J. D. Vance elaborated on the core principles of this doctrine, marking a new phase in U.S. foreign policy:

- Clearly define American interests.
- Attempt to resolve issues through diplomacy first.

- If diplomacy fails, apply immediate and overwhelming military force, but withdraw without allowing the conflict to prolong.

This doctrine suggests a decisive, yet limited, use of force to protect U.S. interests, aiming for swift resolution rather than protracted engagement. Vice President Vance has characterized this approach as a power-based foreign policy model that avoids prolonging wars. The U.S. administration views these actions as a clear manifestation of President Trump's "peace through strength" principle. According to White House spokesperson Anna Kelley, President Trump and Vice President Vance form an "ideal tandem" due to their shared belief in this principle.

Donald Trump's actions against Iran represent not merely a military operation but a strategic shift in U.S. foreign policy. This approach, dubbed the "Trump Doctrine," transcends standard geopolitical frameworks and establishes new rules of engagement. In essence, Trump's strike on Iran is more than a military maneuver; it marks the inauguration of a new strategic concept in U.S. foreign policy. This unexpected move, reflecting Trump's governing style, has set new political ground rules encompassing a comprehensive spectrum of international relations. It also suggests that Trump's policy targets not only adversaries but also challenges the expectations of allies and traditional cooperation models.

CONCLUSIONS

Donald Trump's "maximum pressure" policy and his unilateral withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear agreement reportedly accelerated Iran's nuclear program and heightened regional tensions. Upon his re-election in 2025, Donald Trump reinstated the "maximum pressure" policy aimed at preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Through the National Security Presidential Memorandum of February 5, 2025, the U.S. portrayed Iran as a regime that supports terrorism, develops a ballistic missile program, and destabilizes regional stability. The Memorandum outlined four main objectives: the dismantlement of Iran's nuclear program, the cessation of ballistic missile development, the restriction of the IRGC's access to resources, and the limitation of Iran's regional influence. The document indicated that the U.S. considers Iran's behavior unacceptable.

However, Iran defends its right to a civilian nuclear program under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and considers abandoning uranium enrichment a "red line." The contradictory demands and pressure tactics from the U.S. complicated negotiations, ultimately leading to Israel's air strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities on June 13, 2025, followed by the U.S. joining the conflict. These events have been seen as the application of Trump's "peace through strength" doctrine. Israel's rejection of the ceasefire further complicated the situation.

Consequently, to achieve an effective and lasting agreement, it is crucial to consider not only nuclear issues but also Iran's regional activities and security concerns. The Iranian regime primarily needs security guarantees. On the other hand, mutual distrust and 'enemy-like' rhetoric among political leaders have intensified since the 12-day war, complicating prospects for a diplomatic resolution. If the nuclear problem remains unresolved, the risk of nuclear proliferation in the region will increase.

With Israel recently bombing the Syrian General Staff, the nuclear ambitions of countries like Türkiye, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia are now becoming increasingly relevant, potentially leading to an entirely new and uncontrolled arms race in the region.

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