

Middle East in 2025

Regional reactions to US-Iran talks

International Desk

In the spring of 2025, with Donald Trump's return to the White House, the Middle East has once again taken center stage in global geopolitics. Ongoing negotiations between Tehran and Washington — mediated by Oman in Muscat and Rome — have sparked speculation about a potential security-economic deal. Unlike Trump's first term, marked by the US withdrawal from the JCPOA and "maximum pressure" policy, his second-term pragmatism — aimed at countering China, managing energy crises, and reducing military costs — has opened up space for dialogue with Iran.

However, in a region where every diplomatic shift has multi-layered consequences, how are neighboring countries reacting to these talks? From Baghdad to Baku, Kabul to Doha, states are weighing up the opportunities and threats of a potential deal. Below is an analysis of regional perspectives:

Iraq, caught between Tehran and Washington, is keeping a close eye on the talks. A deal lifting sanctions could boost Iranian energy, electricity, and consumer goods exports to Iraq, aiding Baghdad's fragile economy. However, Trump's "America First" policy may scale back US military presence, creating a power vacuum that could favor Iran or draw in rivals like Turkey.

The Taliban-led Afghanistan, isolated globally, cautiously follows the talks. Sanctions relief could allow Iran to serve as Afghanistan's transit gateway via Chabahar Port and the North-South Corridor. However, ISIS-K

threats and lack of US-Taliban engagement hold back progress. Pakistan sees both promise and risk. A revived Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline could cut down its reliance on expensive fuels, but closer Iran-US ties may upset Islamabad's traditional balancing act with Washington, especially vis-à-vis India. Security concerns in Balochistan further complicate matters.

Baku views a stronger Iran as a

threat to its Zangezur Corridor ambitions. With Russia's influence waning post-Ukraine war, Iran may step up as a mediator in Armenia-Azerbaijan tensions, unsettling Baku.

Yerevan welcomes a potential deal, hoping for enhanced trade and reduced isolation via Iranian transit routes. However, it must juggle relations with Russia, which may look unfavorably on Tehran's Western outreach.

Ankara watches the talks closely. Reduced tensions could bring about energy and transit cooperation, but a stronger Iran complicates Turkish ambitions in Syria, Iraq, and the Caucasus. Ashgabat eyes economic benefits, such as revived gas exports via Iran to Europe, while staying out of geopolitical rivalries.

Riyadh is worried that a stronger Iran may upset the Persian Gulf balance in favor of Iran but may team

up with Tehran on OPEC policies. The UAE seeks trade opportunities but sticks with its ties with the West. Qatar and Oman could mediate economically and diplomatically. Bahrain, being close to Saudi Arabia and the US, views the talks as a threat to its national security. Tel Aviv sees Iran as an existential threat and may lobby Washington to limit any deal while ramping up military cooperation with the Persian Gulf states.

The 2025 Tehran-Washington talks represent a potential turning point for the Middle East. Success hinges on Iran's ability to balance regional rivalries while engaging globally. Neighboring states must decide whether to embrace diplomacy or push back — a choice that will shape the region's future.

The article is a summary of an op-ed published on Sad Online.



The illustration shows the US President Donald Trump (c), his advisor Massad Boulos (l), and a number of regional leaders.

THE ARAB WEEKLY

Seven reasons why it's absurd to bomb Iran



Iran's new drone aircraft carrier Shahid Bagheri is seen in the Persian Gulf.

SEPAH NEWS



By Ted Snider
Columnist

ANALYSIS

"There are two ways Iran can be handled," US President Donald Trump has said, "militarily, or you make a deal." National Security Adviser Mike Waltz advocated for the military solution; Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard and Vice President JD Vance advocated for diplomacy. Trump has opted for diplomacy. But all options are still on the table, and if the diplomatic path fails, Trump says "the other will solve the problem."

But there are several reasons why all options should not be on the table and why bombing Iran to prevent it from acquiring a nuclear bomb would be absurd. Here are seven of them.

Most importantly, and the only one that really needs to be said, is that Iran is not pursuing a nuclear bomb. In 2003, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of Iran, issued a fatwa, an official religious ruling, that declared nuclear weapons to be forbidden by Islam. The 2025 Annual Threat Assessment, which "reflects the collective insights of the Intelligence Community," clearly states that US intelligence "continue[s] to assess Iran is not building a

nuclear weapon and that [Ayatollah] Khamenei has not reauthorized the nuclear weapons program he suspended in 2003." That assessment maintains the 2022 US Department of Defense Nuclear Posture Review that concludes that "Iran does not today possess a nuclear weapon, and we currently believe it is not pursuing one." The most absurd reason for bombing Iran to prevent them from pursuing a nuclear bomb is that the US knows Iran is not pursuing a nuclear bomb. Since Iran is not pursuing a nuclear weapons program, the second reason why it is absurd to bomb Iran is that it has every legal right to its civilian nuclear program. As a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran has "the inalienable right to a civilian program that uses 'nuclear energy for peaceful purposes'". The US does not believe Iran has an illegal nuclear weapons program, and it would be absurd to bomb them for having a legal civilian nuclear program.

Thirdly, Iran has already demonstrated that a military solution is not necessary for the Trump administration to achieve its goal of ensuring that Iran does not enrich uranium to weapon-grade levels. America's concerns, well-founded or not, can be satisfied by establishing ver-

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