

ifiable limits on Iran's levels of enrichment. Iran demonstrated its willingness to comply with this non-military solution when it agreed to those verifiable limitations in the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Program of Action (JCPOA) nuclear agreement. Eleven consecutive International Atomic Energy Agency reports verified that Iran was completely and consistently in compliance with the commitments made under that agreement. A military solution to America's concerns about Iran's civilian nuclear program is absurd because the US has historical evidence that the non-military solution works. The military solution is not only absurd because it is unnecessary, it is even more absurd because it risks, not only war with Iran but a wider, regional war. The US has begun moving military equipment into the region, including aircraft carriers, bombers, and air defense systems. While presented as preparation for the possibility of intensified war with the Ansarullah (Houthis), US officials have privately said "that the weaponry was also part of the planning" for a potential "conflict with Iran". Even just that "buildup of American weaponry," according to a new intelligence assessment provided by Tulsi Gabbard, "could potentially spark a wider conflict with Iran that the United States did not want". Iran has stated that US

military action against its civilian nuclear program will elicit a military response from Iran against US bases in the region. Iran's Parliamentary Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said, "If they threaten Islamic Iran, then, like powder kegs, America's allies in the region and US bases will be made unsafe." A military solution risks a war with Iran and, potentially, even a wider, regional war. The fifth reason is that for all the risk of war with Iran and, perhaps, even a wider regional war, the assessed benefit is not worth it. In a striking line that has received little attention, The New York Times reported that the goal of military plans to bomb Iran's civilian nuclear sites being discussed by the US and Israel "was to set back Tehran's ability to develop a nuclear weapon by a year or more". Absurd is an understatement for risking war with Iran, and even a wider Middle East war, to set Iran's nuclear program — a nuclear program the US knows Iran does not have — to set the program back by only a year. All of this calculation of costs and benefits and risks of war is absurd because we know that the diplomatic path can work. We know it can work because it did 10 years ago with the successful solution of the JCPOA nuclear agreement. There is reason to hope that, a decade later, it can work again. In the first round of



Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei (c) tours an exhibition showcasing Iran's latest peaceful achievements in the nuclear industry. The exhibition was held in the Imam Khomeini Hussainiyah in Tehran, Iran, on June 11, 2023.
● khameneiLir

talks in Oman on April 12, Iran insisted that future direct talks would be contingent on the success of the current indirect talks. The first round in Oman successfully led to a second round in Rome, and the second round has

now led to a third round because the second round was constructive. And, finally, talk of a military solution by the nation that claims leadership of a world order based on international law

is absurd because a pre-emptive strike on Iran without Security Council approval would be a violation of international law. Diplomacy has a real chance of defusing the long and volatile standoff between the US and

Iran. Threats of war are not only unnecessary, they contribute only to making diplomacy more difficult.

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Trump's theatrics of peace, machinery of war

By Peter Rodgers
Scholar
O P I N I O N

The Middle East has once again become a zone of turmoil, and with Donald Trump's return to the political arena, a chaotic and contradictory foreign policy has emerged. On one hand, he claims to be brokering a cease-fire in Gaza and is attempting to revive the Abraham Accords, aiming to bring Israel and Saudi Arabia closer. On the other hand, his threats of military action against Iran and intensified bombings in Yemen have pushed the region to the brink of war. This contradictory approach is not only incoherent but resembles a sinking ship — one that is frightening even its allies, including Arab states and Israel. Is this policy merely a spectacle designed to gain global recognition or is it a sign of deeper strategic confusion? Trump outwardly presents himself as working toward a Gaza cease-fire, but this move seems more like a bid for global attention than a genuine step toward peace. Simultaneously, he is push-

ing to revive the Abraham Accords, which were forged during his first term between Israel and several Arab countries like the UAE and Bahrain. His current goal is to bring Saudi Arabia into the fold, but the plan faces serious obstacles. As a key regional actor, Saudi Arabia is unlikely to sign on without guarantees of regional stability and progress on the Palestinian issue. Ongoing border tensions and long-standing distrust make these efforts precarious. The cease-fire in Gaza, while attractive in rhetoric, is undermined by Trump's other aggressive moves, leaving it with minimal chance of success. Ignoring the Palestinian perspective and relying on political pressure only deepens the divide. Ultimately, these policies seem more like tools of political posturing than genuine paths to peace. Trump's aggressive stance toward Iran and Yemen paints a chaotic picture. By repeatedly threatening military action against Iran and continuing his "maximum pressure" strategy, he not only provokes Tehran but also unnerves his allies. The intensification of air strikes on (Ansarullah) Houthi positions in Yemen, sup-

posedly aimed at curbing Iranian influence, has left even supporters like Saudi Arabia and the UAE vulnerable to the consequences of regional instability. Israel, too — fearing retaliation from Iran and its regional allies — watches with growing unease. This strategy, rooted in power projection rather than prudence, has brought with it waves of unrest and uncontrollable tension. Traditional US allies in the region, such as Jordan and Egypt, find themselves bewildered, unsure how to balance loyalty to Washington with the protection of their national interests. Iran, in response, continues to expand its military capabilities, intensifying the cycle of confrontation. Meanwhile, in Yemen, the relentless targeting of civilians has dealt a severe blow to the moral credibility of this policy and has deepened the humanitarian crisis. Rather than showcasing strength, this aggressive foreign policy has bred fear and distrust, even among friends, and pushed the region closer to catastrophe. This stark duality in Trump's policy may stem from his deep-seated ambition for global prestige — perhaps even the hope that

peacemaking theatrics and diplomatic performances could earn him the Nobel Peace Prize. On one hand, through initiatives like the Abraham Accords, he has tried to present himself as a peacemaker, highlighting the normalization of ties between Arab states and Israel as a historic breakthrough. On the other hand, he leans heavily on aggressive policies and displays of military might, aiming to project strength and send a clear message to rivals and potential adversaries. These two seemingly contradictory approaches — a theatrical display of peacemaking and a practical embrace of war — may appear to be part of a complex strategy. But in practice, this contradiction has proven fragile and unstable, producing results opposite to what was intended. The idea of achieving peace through war is fundamentally flawed as war rarely resolves the roots of conflict. Instead, it sows destruction, rage, and mistrust, laying the groundwork for new cycles of violence. Lasting peace demands diplomacy, inclusive dialogue, and structural justice, while war tends to eliminate those opportunities. Using force to impose peace inspires resis-

tance and revenge among those defeated or harmed. America's military interventions in the Middle East, and Trump's renewed belligerence, have fueled extremism, worsened humanitarian crises, and squandered resources that could have been used for reconstruction and trust-building. This is a mistake Trump made during his first term — and now appears to be repeating with even greater urgency. Trump's new Middle East strategy, launched with claims of a Gaza cease-fire and a revival of the Abraham Accords, has in practice become a wreck. With threats against Iran and bombings in Yemen, he has alarmed even his allies. While he may seek a Nobel Peace Prize through diplomatic posturing, his warmongering approach mocks that very goal. The Arabs and Israelis who were expected to benefit from his policy now find themselves adrift in a worsening crisis he helped engineer. This contradiction not only undermines his credibility but has also pushed the region further into instability.

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● PAUL SPELLA/THE ATLANTIC



A MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter hovers over the USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier while operating in the Middle East on April 12, 2025.
● NATHAN JORDAN/US NAVY