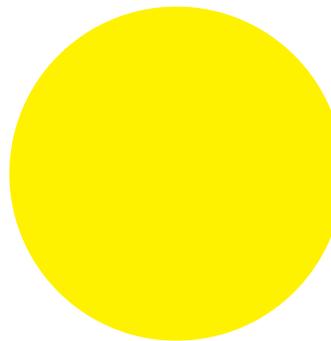


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Global powers in Middle East: a strategy of containment, not war

Emphasizing US role & its crisis-management approach



By Janvi Sonaiya

Journalist

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

In a geopolitical analysis, the most consequential shift in the Middle East's security environment is the steady erosion of clear deterrence thresholds. For much of the late twentieth century, regional stability rested on a limited number of predictable fault lines and relatively rigid state behavior. That architecture has weakened. Today, the region operates in a condition of persistent low intensity confrontation, where coercion is continuous but escalation is carefully managed.

Data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project indicates that while the frequency of direct interstate wars has declined, incidents involving non-state actors, militias, and proxy forces have increased steadily since the mid-2010s. This reflects a strategic preference among regional powers to operate below the threshold of full-scale war. Security calculations are now shaped less by ideology and more by cost benefit analysis, domestic political constraints, and reputational signaling. Alignments are therefore fluid rather than fixed. States cooperate on specific interests such as intelligence sharing, energy logistics, and maritime security while remaining adversaries on other fronts. This is not bloc formation in the classical sense. It is a form of tactical convergence designed to reduce vulnerability rather than resolve conflict.

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The result is a fragile equilibrium that depends heavily on restraint and constant recalibration.

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Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (2nd L) takes part in the National Congress on the Islamic Republic's Foreign Policy in Tehran on February 8, 2026. MIZAN



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