

## **Reconfiguring Power: Domestic Politics, Energy Security, and Multipolarity in U.S.–Iran–UK Relations**

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### **Introduction**

Geopolitics in the early twenty first century is marked by the intertwining of domestic politics, regional rivalries and shifting global power structures. In the Middle East, the United States and the United Kingdom have long exercised influence over energy markets, while Iran has navigated between revolutionary ideology and pragmatic statecraft. Recent years have added new layers of complexity: renewed hostilities between Iran, Israel and the United States in 2025, a resurgence of nationalist policymaking in Washington, a surge of out migration from Iran, and the rapid ascent of China as a global player. These events illustrate how decisions made in capitals far apart shape outcomes across the Persian Gulf and beyond. This essay offers an integrated analysis of these dynamics, drawing connections between energy security strategies, domestic economic agendas, foreign policy doctrines and the emergence of a multipolar order.

### **Energy Security and Strategic Infrastructure**

The Persian Gulf remains central to global energy supplies, and its narrow sea lanes continue to inform policy choices in Washington and London. The Strait of Hormuz, a vital

maritime chokepoint, still handles roughly one fifth of the world's petroleum flows. Although no major blockade occurred during the 2025 Iran–Israel confrontation, markets reacted swiftly to heightened risk, underscoring the strait's strategic sensitivity. To reduce vulnerability, regional producers have expanded pipeline networks that bypass the strait—Saudi Arabia's East–West pipeline and the United Arab Emirates' line to Fujairah provide alternative routes for millions of barrels per day. Iran's own Goreh–Jask pipeline is less consequential but signals Tehran's interest in diversifying its export routes. Beyond oil, Gulf States are investing heavily in liquefied natural gas infrastructure and low carbon technologies, positioning themselves as hubs for artificial intelligence and digital energy management. These developments reveal an emerging energy technology nexus that could reshape alliances; the United States sees both economic opportunity and security risk in deepening AI partnerships with Gulf monarchies, while China's Belt and Road Initiative offers alternative sources of capital and technology; perhaps there is a mixture of racial, ethnic and energy factors that is complicating the discords in this region.

### **Think Tanks, Economic Policy and Domestic Discontent**

Domestic politics in the United States both reflect and influence external strategy. Think tanks have become crucial nodes in this process, translating donor preferences into policy blueprints. Conservative institutions such as the Heritage Foundation and more progressive outfits like the Center for American Progress provide ready-made legislation and personnel pipelines for partisan administrations. The Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 epitomises this trend: a comprehensive blueprint for reorganising the federal government along nationalist lines, curtailing reproductive and civil rights, and centralising executive power. Liberal analysts warn that this plan would erode checks and balances and entrench cultural divisions. Meanwhile, public surveys show that many Americans perceive economic hardship and blame the Trump administration, corporations and congressional Republicans for rising costs of living. A 2025 poll by the Century Foundation found that a majority of respondents were forced to skip meals, accumulate debt or tap savings, and more than six in ten believed that after six months in office, the administration had harmed their

purchasing power. Such economic anxieties drive political mobilisation and shape the reception of foreign policy initiatives, blurring the line between domestic and international agendas.

### **Trump's Second Term and the Persistence of Unilateralism**

Donald Trump's return to the presidency has rekindled debates about America's role in the world. During his first term, the so-called Trump doctrine blended Jacksonian nationalism, selective engagement and transactional diplomacy. These elements remain. At the Munich Security Conference in February 2025, Vice President J.D. Vance chastised European allies for insufficient defense spending, signaling a reversion to burden sharing rhetoric. Concurrently, new tariffs on European steel and aluminum underscored the administration's willingness to weaponise trade policy. Immigration restrictions continue, presented as security imperatives, and the administration has revived plans for border walls and travel bans. This continuity suggests that the Trump doctrine is not an aberration but a durable strain in American foreign policy that privileges sovereignty and unilateral action over multilateralism.

### **Iran–United States Relations: Escalation and Diplomacy**

Iran–U.S. relations oscillate between confrontation and cautious engagement. After the United States withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2018, sanctions intensified. Negotiations resumed tentatively in early 2025, mediated by Oman, but they faltered amid mutual distrust. Iran insists on its right to maintain a civilian nuclear fuel cycle and demands comprehensive sanctions relief; Washington seeks deeper caps on enrichment, restrictions on missile development and more intrusive inspections. The impasse worsened when U.S. airstrikes damaged Iranian nuclear facilities in June 2025, prompting Tehran to fire missiles at U.S. bases in Qatar. Although both sides soon agreed to a ceasefire, the episode illustrated how quickly diplomacy can give way to brinkmanship. Regional actors such as Israel and Saudi Arabia oppose any deal they perceive as legitimising Iran's nuclear activities, while Russia and China advocate for Tehran's right to peaceful nuclear technology. The European Union attempts to broker compromise but faces internal divisions and limited leverage.

## **Proxy Networks and Iran's Demographic Crisis**

Tehran's regional influence rests partly on a network of non-state actors in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen. These proxies allow Iran to project power asymmetrically and deter adversaries. Yet the strategy is double edged: it invites counter interventions, contributes to state fragility and strains Iran's resources. Internally, Iran faces a mounting demographic and economic crisis. A June 2025 report on migration revealed that over 100 000 Iranian students were studying abroad, with less than one percent expected to return. Many cited economic hardship, political repression and lack of opportunity as reasons for leaving. Officials admitted that even teenagers are prioritising emigration. The departure of physicians, engineers and academics deprives the country of vital human capital, limiting the state's capacity to sustain economic growth and social services. This "irretrievable flight" fosters disillusionment among the remaining populace and may eventually challenge the social contract underpinning the Islamic Republic.

## **Declining Hegemony and Multipolarity**

The erosion of U.S. primacy is both cause and consequence of shifting Middle Eastern dynamics. The 2025 Munich Security Conference, long a platform for transatlantic consensus, instead became a stage for diverging narratives. European leaders expressed anxiety about Washington's commitment to NATO, while Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi promoted a vision of a multipolar world based on mutual respect and orderly cooperation. The conference's report acknowledged implicitly that the unipolar era is over. In practice, U.S. allies are hedging Gulf states maintain security ties with Washington but deepen economic and technological engagement with Beijing, including AI research partnerships and digital infrastructure investments. Russia seeks to leverage energy markets and arms sales to expand its influence. The result is a fluid and competitive environment in which no single power can dictate outcomes.

## **UAE's Assertive Diplomacy**

The United Arab Emirates exemplifies how middle powers navigate this multipolar moment. Since 2018, Emirati leaders have shifted from traditional Arab solidarity to

an activist foreign policy that includes participation in Arab–Western alliances and the Abraham Accords with Israel. They aim to counter regional rivals, assert leadership within the Arab and Islamic worlds, secure maritime routes and diversify the economy. Policies range from mediating conflicts and de-escalating tensions to launching feminist reforms and signing trade agreements with India, Britain, Turkey, South Korea, Ethiopia and Indonesia. The UAE seeks to become a hub for artificial intelligence and renewable energy, aligning with U.S. initiatives while courting Chinese investment. These choices highlight how non great powers leverage global competition to advance their own agendas.

### **Obstacles to Negotiation and Enduring Discord**

The obstacles to a durable Iran–U.S. agreement go beyond nuclear technicalities. Mistrust stems from historical grievances, ideological differences and domestic political pressures on both sides. American policymakers often frame negotiations in terms reminiscent of Libya’s one-sided disarmament, while Iranian leaders recall decades of intervention and insist on reciprocal concessions. Meanwhile, broader regional discord persists. Sectarian narratives obscure underlying drivers such as unemployment, corruption and governance deficits that fuel unrest from Baghdad to Beirut. Proxy groups respond not only to Tehran’s directives but also to local grievances. U.S. strategies oscillate between coercion and engagement without addressing structural causes, and Iranian policymakers face a shrinking pool of human capital with which to enact reforms; although there has been successful examples of negotiations between Iran, the U.S and other allies (JCPOA) but the future still remains in a state of vagueness and un-certainty

### **Conclusion**

The interplay between domestic politics and international strategy defines contemporary Middle Eastern geopolitics. Energy security concerns tie the fates of the United States, the United Kingdom and Gulf monarchies, while technological innovation adds new dimensions to these relationships. Ideologically driven think tanks and populist economic policies shape U.S. decision making, influencing both domestic welfare and foreign alliances. Iran’s pursuit of regional influence through

proxies is undercut by a severe demographic crisis that erodes its human capital. The decline of American hegemony and the rise of China create a competitive environment in which middle powers like the UAE pursue diversified partnerships and assert independent agendas. Collectively, these trends suggest that durable stability will require not only negotiated agreements but also reforms that address economic inequity, political accountability and inclusive governance across the region.

**Disclaimer:** *the contents are analysis of previous exiting materials and they don't reflect the author's personal political/social perspectives by any means.*

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