

THE IMPACT OF CONFLICTING MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC CULTURES ON THE GEOPOLITICS OF THE REGION

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Abstract

The contemporary Middle East's strategic culture is premised on conflicting historical legacies that are heavily influenced by multidimensional security issues. Iran's fixation with its historical, ancient civilization fixation, grandeur and Shia religious philosophy and on the other hand, Arab states' Sunni version of Islam has further deepened the religious-sectarian divide in Middle East. The Sunni Arab states are led by Saudi Arabia, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and other Middle Eastern states that are vying for the regional dominance. This has motivated Iran to gain indigenous military and technological capabilities in the realm of conventional, ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons. Iran is a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), but, it had breached its guidelines and gained full nuclear-fuel cycle capability without disclosing it to the International Atomic Energy Agency. Moreover, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was signed between the P-5+1 and Iran, which now in the perspective of Trump Administration have many loopholes. Presently, the Arab Sunni states and Washington are demanding amendment of the treaty. Furthermore, the regional proxy conflicts stretching right from Syria to Yemen and Bahrain are furthermore aggravating the security structure of the entire Middle East. In addition, the religious-sectarian and cultural divide has created a dangerous fault-line that is being fuelled by the regional/extra-regional states and the Non-State Actors (NSAs).

Keywords: Strategic Culture, Geo Politics, Proxy Conflicts, Non-State Actors, IAEA.

Introduction

It is argued that the Middle-Eastern strategic culture is primarily based on multidimensional security and sectarian facets, which were nurtured on narrow religious, sectarian, ancient civilization fixation, and nationalistic considerations between the Shia Iran, and the Sunni Saudi Arabia. The ruling elite of the key players of the Middle East had never inspired rest of the world with their collusive approach

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toward security. Correlation between many independent variables of Middle East, such as states' behaviour, history, geographical location, security, and economy has intensified debate amongst the scholars from the prism of security and strategic-culture. In fact, strategic culture is still loosely defined concept which has led to mushroom growth of literature on culture and strategy. For instance, Alastair Johnston writes that 'strategic culture is observable and falsifiable, and suggests a number of ways of conceptualizing its relationship to behaviour.'¹ He argues that 'different states have different predominant strategic characteristics that are 'rooted in the early or formative experiences of the state and are influenced to some degree by the philosophical, political, cultural, and cognitive characteristics of the state and its elites.' He elaborates that, 'Ahistorical or "objective" variables such as technology, polarity, or relative material capabilities are all of secondary importance.' Primarily it is the strategic culture that 'gives meaning to these variables.'² There are numerous other deep-rooted historical, identity, interests, policies, cultural, religious, ethnic, environmental and security factors that too influence states' responses or constraint their choices in a given geo-strategic situation. The debate itself is profound, and scholars expand the scope of the study from the nuclear domain to a cohesive security studies, including generational and the ongoing technological changes, particularly, the information and communication technologies that can impact the behaviour of policy-makers about various contemporary internal/external issues. The scholarly ideas of strategic culture connect security cultures of the complex Middle Eastern region like a web.

Strategic Culture and the Regional Security Dynamics

In the present-day Middle East, Israel is the only presumed nuclear weapon state, while Saudi Arabia and Iran remains historical rivals; however, both are connected with the Israeli nuclear capability that is having spill-over effect on the entire regional security structure. In fact, with the end of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's reign in 1979, led to the end of the most stable period in the Persian Gulf region since the Second World War. The revolutionary, pan-Islamist project led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini vowed to undermine the United States (US)-led regional order and overthrow various Arab governments allied with Washington,³ which transformed the entire geostrategic configurations of the Middle East and consequently divided it into two distinct groups. According to Paul Pillar, the ensuing Cold War between the US and Iran led to the evolution of latter's concept of 'Forward Defence' to strengthen its military and deterrence capabilities – especially in the wake of Tehran's 'beleaguerment' during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s.⁴ During this period, US in collaboration with its Arab allies established military command, and deployed naval forces in the region. Johnston observes that,

'Although strategic culture is instrumental' factor, however, 'it does not come out of the pockets of political and military elites.'⁵ This is not necessarily a permanent factor; it invariably varies from state to state.⁶ 'But since there is a radical de-linkage between strategic culture and behaviour, and since the latter is the reflection of the interests of a hegemonistic group, strategic choice is constrained by these interests rather than by strategic culture.'⁷

The initial concept of strategic culture was developed during the strategic rivalry between the US and the former Soviet Union from 1945 to 1991, and by the end of the Cold War, it matured into its present state. Jack Snyder defined strategic culture as 'the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behaviour that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and share with each other with regard to nuclear strategy.'⁸ Snyder's concept of strategic culture centres on state's security and nuclear strategy, particularly to interpret the Soviet Union's nuclear doctrine and behaviour during the Cold War. In the case of Middle East, Israel is the only player with nuclear weapons capability. On the other hand, Iran has gained a full nuclear fuel-cycle capability and has technological potentials to develop nuclear weapons if it so desires in future.⁹ Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey also have great potentials to become nuclear weapon states.¹⁰ But Snyder's idea of strategic culture cannot explain or discuss the variety of other factors behind the probable nuclear arms race in Middle East. Although, the concept of strategic culture stretches back to the classical writings of Thucydides, Sun Tzu, and Carl Von Clausewitz, who had associated it with the moral and physical factors, including language, values, norms and belief, which in essence, means that culture is a historically communicated patterns of symbols, a system of inherited conceptions and attitude towards life.¹¹

Israel-Iran Nuclear Competition

After the devastating nuclear attacks by the US on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, the claim was proven that there is no effective defence to stop a nuclear offence or 'to win wars' under a nuclear overhang, but the only logical effort should be 'to avert' them.¹² States were left with only two options: either to absorb enemy's nuclear strike and survive, or to develop their own nuclear arsenals to establish a credible nuclear deterrence with design to retaliate. Israel had developed nuclear weapons with a plan to ensure its survival in a host of hostile neighbouring Arab states.¹³ On the other hand, Arab states considered Jews aliens to their homeland and declared Israel's existence illegal, therefore, unacceptable.¹⁴ Thus, wars between the Arabs and Israel in the twentieth century motivated the latter to develop nuclear weapons capability for its security and to deter the rival states. Israel developed its unannounced nuclear weapons capability and successfully established

a nuclear deterrence against its regional rival states. To strengthen its security/defence, the Israeli policymakers had apparently worked on a three tier approach: (1) refrained from signing the NPT; (2) to meticulously keep in view the existence of anarchic nature of the world politics and; (3) to remain cognizant of transient nature of international pattern of amity and enmity.

On the other hand, Iran had a long historical legacy associated with its *past* grandeur, honour, identity, norms, and behaviour since the time immemorial. Particularly after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Iran relied on the support of the then Soviet bloc (which in 1991 became Russian Republic) and is still associated with Kremlin.¹⁵ The Iranian tilt towards Russia had benefited it in many ways. First, Iran started challenging the US supremacy in the Middle East and presented itself as a solid opposition to Washington's policies pertaining to region. Competing with the sole superpower had accorded Iran a sense of superiority in line with its historical legacy. Competition with the US furthermore instilled a feeling of being a significant player in the regional geopolitics. The development of a competitive Iranian clout in the post-revolutionary period, opposed all initiatives that were floated by the West, including nuclear non-proliferation. Though Iran is a signatory of the NPT, but after the revolution, ostensibly it did not showed any serious attitude toward its commitments under the non-proliferation regime. Iran received economic and military aid from the anti-Western states, which had indirectly facilitated it in mastering a critical nuclear fuel-cycle capability. Hence, Iranian foreign and security policies were accordingly tailored to support the Russian strategic interests in Middle East. Moreover, Iran ignited its traditional Persian aspirations of being a great power and ancient civilization; therefore, it introduced its old hegemonic policies in the region. At first, Iran expanded its strategic influence in neighbouring states, and subsequently subtly started interfering and influencing in their internal and external affairs. Syria, border areas of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Azerbaijan are the prime examples of such penetration of Iranian influence. Last, but not the least, Iran considered Shia dominant states as facilitators and subordinate to its religious clergy. The Shia belt stretches right from the borders of Israel, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen to Bahrain. In a broad preview, Iran not only takes Israel as a challenging regional rival along with the Sunni Arab states, Pakistan, and Turkey as a credible threat.¹⁶ In essence, international politics is primarily shaped by states' potentials, including military, 'egoistic desire for power, security, or wealth'¹⁷ largely under the influence of national power and interests and international politics. In this context, Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane conceptualizes that the ideas does matter, but, the 'variation in policy across countries, or over time, is entirely accounted for by changes in factors *other than* ideas'¹⁸ – essentially by power and interests. On the other hand, some scholars are of the viewpoint that culture, identity and ideology

are distinct from power and interests and they play a causal role in social life.¹⁹ In Middle East, revolutionary Iran has created destabilizing vibes due to variety of ideational, historical, cultural, and religious variances, which has put the inter-state relations on conflicting trajectories.

The alleged Iranian violation of the NPT and its quest for the nuclear technology is also one of the key factors in the Middle Eastern strategic culture. Iran is the only NPT state that has developed a full nuclear fuel-cycle capability and has a capability to make a nuclear weapon in a very short span of time.²⁰ Other oil producing states are aware of Iranian nuclear development, and would tend to balance the nuclear imbalance. Keeping this scenario in mind, the Western policymakers apparently do not want to push Iran toward the point of no return. As a result, concessions and dialogue initiatives were initiated to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapon capability.

The US patronization of Israel in Middle East is a vital reason for Iran to tailor its strategic goals against Israel.²¹ The idea of state's behaviour based on its historical experience explains Iranian bid of power projection in Middle East. As it was discussed earlier that Iran's opposition to US, in essence, is a rationale as how to carry out its historical legacy in region. Israel is simply a stairway to achieve this goal. To achieve this objective, an offensive posture was required, both politically and militarily, which was successfully adopted by Iran against Israel. Alleged Iranian involvement in proxy wars right from its land to the Israeli border gave a stretch to regional security and successfully shaped its traditional character of being a hegemonic state since the time immemorial.²² Though this long stretch gave some power projection to Iran in region, but, simultaneously it weakened its ability to confront the growing challenges especially in the economic and international relations domain.

The ostensible Iranian antagonism toward Israel has many dimensions, including sectarian, religious, strategic, and geopolitical.²³ Iranian clergy has presented Israel as the worst enemy of Islam and revolution.²⁴ Iran took Israel's nuclear weapons capability as a direct threat to its land and people and accorded it a rationale to develop its indigenous ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons technologies.²⁵ Consequently, it gave justification to Israel for retention of its nuclear capability supposedly for peaceful purposes in accordance with the NPT norms and guidelines. This confrontation in essence assisted both Israel and Iran to justify their nuclear weapon programmes. But unfortunately, Iran and Israel are not the lone nuclear aspirants in the region; there are many other states such as, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirate. The growing nuclear competition is consequently transforming the Middle Eastern strategic cultures.

In the past few decades, Iran and China projected that the US policy was an intervention into the Middle Eastern countries.²⁶ Same debate also cemented the Sino-Iranian collaboration as anti-hegemonic struggle to save the region from US influence. President Hassan Rouhani in April 2015 characterized Iran's defence doctrine - 'defensive.' He stressed that its military strategy was based on 'active deterrence for establishment of peace and security in Iran and the regional countries.'²⁷ That Iran's military strategy was premised on a 'no-first-strike doctrine' primarily to prevent the prospects of foreign interventions. This strategy in essence would ensure Iran's security and survival through infliction of heavy punishment on the aggressor in the case of any breach of its sovereignty or imposition of a war. According to M. Nuruzzaman, The Iranian doctrine is distinctive in many ways. 'Unlike the military doctrines of many regional and global powers, Iran's defence doctrine is heavily premised on the idea of "defensive defence," that is, the development of military capabilities aimed at protecting Iran from foreign aggression, not to jeopardize the security of neighbouring or distant states.'²⁸ Furthermore, Iranian strategic culture is heavily influenced by the perceived external threats and variety of historical, strategic and political factors. At the heart of this threat perception, Iran's self-image, strategic centrality is largely influenced by its fierce nationalistic determination to resist foreign intervention not only into Iran but also in the region.

The Iranian doctrinal restructuring is impacting, rather intimidating the Persian Gulf Arab states and the United States' perceptions about revolutionary Iran. Most significantly, Tehran's drive to augment its military capabilities with sophisticated high precision conventional weaponry systems along with a fleet of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles - is a major cause of security concern for the regional countries. It reflects that apparently Iran's defensive military strategy is subtly gaining offensive dimensions, as it is demonstrated in its cross-border military involvements and the alleged patronage of radical religious-sectarian outfits in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.

Saudi Arabia-Iran Historical Burden

History of the Middle East is full of transforming events, conflicts, and wars between the Persians and the Arabs.²⁹ In the post-revolution period, Persians never accepted the rule of the Arabs over the Persian land. The design of Persian-Islamic faith was also against the one that Arabs introduced and gradually transformed it into a clear different sectarian faith of Shia, a totally opposite version of Islam than of the Arab's faith of Sunnah.³⁰ Furthermore, Iran's 'self-perception against others has had a big influence on the origins and evolution of Iran's defence doctrine,' writes M Nuruzzaman. The Iranians considered themselves as 'the heirs of a rich and powerful

ancient Persian civilization—a civilization that wielded tremendous cultural and political influences across Central Asia, the Caucasus, Afghanistan, Pakistan and large parts of the Middle East,' and part of the Central Asia.³¹ In the post-1979 Iran, its threat perceptions have principally revolved around the US, which Ayatollah Khomeini called country's major ideological enemy and strategic threat.³² The US still remains Tehran's primary enemy state notwithstanding signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in July 2015. In addition, Israel is too considered an enemy state, a regional rival, and the US satellite state that targets the US-Israel's regional opponent states with aim to protect their identical geostrategic interests. In this geostrategic transformation, Iran is considered by the US-Israel as a front line state against their interests.

In contemporary regional geopolitics, Saudi Arabia is a staunch ally of the US, while Iran comes under the Russian influence. Coincidentally, both countries – Iran and Saudi Arabia are oil rich, and this dominance of natural resources makes them important for the world. Economic politics among both the countries is very much visible, especially race for oil market's monopoly, and control over the oil production and rates. During the last few decades, Saudi Arabia and Iran emerged as the key international players of economic politics, especially in Middle East. Recently, Saudi Arabia's over production of oil had lowered the international oil prices to a record low. Iran and Russia suffered with low oil rates during the negotiations for its long term international oil deals.³³ However, the recent US sanctions on Iran had drained its economy; particularly when Saudi Arabia refused to raise its oil prices under pressure from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Tehran accused Saudi Arabia of using 'oil as a weapon.'³⁴ These events further accelerated the dynamics of regional rivalries, and negatively impacted the strategic culture and further deepened the religious-sectarian divide between the majority Sunni Arab states and the Shia Iran and latter's compatriots in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq.

Already, the Non-State Actors (NSAs) have politically fractured³⁵ Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and even Libya, and destabilized them along with the Persian Gulf Sheikdoms. This is not a pessimistic scenario; rather it seems to be a real possibility in view of the external powers' sponsoring of radical elements to fuel the parochial and religious-sectarian trends in Middle East, and Northwest Asia. In this connection, Pakistan submitted a proposal to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to place Jamaat-ul-Ahrar's affiliate Khurasani on the UNSC Sanction Committee's Terrorists List, which was incidentally vetoed by US on a rationale that he was not in Afghanistan. According to one writer it indicated that 'US shielded a

known terrorist and risked being seen as playing a double game, a description Washington often uses for Pakistan.³⁶

The GCC states, including Saudi Arabia takes Iran as a credible threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity.³⁷ The alleged Iranian support to Houthis in Yemen's civil war is a critical challenge for the Saudi Arabia. Moreover, Saudi Arabia considers the historical perspective of Iranian strategic approach and the Iranian support to Houthi rebels as an open challenge to Riyadh's integrity. Same is the dilemma in the case of Bahrain. For instance, in Bahrain, majority of its population belongs to Shia sect, which has close ties with Iran. The government of Bahrain is run by the Sunnis that have close ties with the Saudis. Strategically, Bahrain gives a vital cushion to Saudi Arab against any misadventure from Iran. It also accords strategic cover to the Saudis in the GCC states' affairs. On the other hand, Iran considers both Yemen and Bahrain as disputed regions, whereas in the case of Bahrain - as one of its province. Conflicting claims over both the states challenge each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, while these are not disputed areas.

Presently, Middle East is in a state of turmoil. There are number of escalating wars in Syria and Yemen in parallel with political upheavals in Iraq, Lebanon, and Bahrain that indicates the persistence of regional polarization. This gives a perilous dimension to the geopolitical environment. In this transforming geostrategic environment, Saudi Arabia and Iran's struggle for dominance has furthermore created instability and fuelled conflicts in region. Both countries are employing proxies to support or oppose the respective NSAs, regimes, and religious-sectarian factions that have already fuelled chaos in Middle East.

It amply demonstrates deepening internal conflicts/civil wars thereby further dividing the societies and destabilizing regimes/governments in the region.³⁸ Max Fisher has divided the Middle Eastern proxy wars sponsored by Saudi-Iran into six phases: 1980-1988; 1989-2002; 2003-2004; 2005-2010; 2011-2014; and 2015-2016.³⁹ Iran's war with Iraq (1980-1988), for instance, had increased former's insecurity and invigorated Tehran's quest to achieve ballistic missiles preferably along with nuclear capability. In the second phase (1989-2002), Saudis capitalized on the Shia-Sunni divide. From 2003 to 2004, the US-led 2003 invasion and change of Iraqi government was considered hostile both to Saudi Arabia and Iran, which changed region's balance of power. In 2005-2010, Lebanon's weak democracy enabled Iran-Saudi Arabia to wage a new wave of proxy struggle there. Tehran patronized Hezbollah - the Shia militia against Israel, and Riyadh supported the Sunni Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in Lebanon. Saudis also urged the US to install a pliant Iraqi government with a view to fill the post-war vacuum. During the 2011-2014, Saudi Arabia feared spill-over effects of the Arab Spring that led to the downfall of pro-Riyadh governments

across the Middle East, and generated fear that Iran might try to fill the political vacuum. As a consequence, Saudis funneled billion of dollars into Jordan, Yemen, Egypt and other states to prevent further backlash. From 2015 to 2016, the US along with Saudi Arabia endeavoured to maintain a regional balance of power despite latter's actions in Egypt and Bahrain.⁴⁰ The US also provided different weapon systems, including Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) along with other related support, equipment and services to Saudi Arabia with an estimated cost of \$15 billion. Most significantly, during President Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia in May 2017, contracts worth \$110 billion were signed by the US companies for the supply of weapons. In addition, deals for various projects like energy and infrastructure development with \$350 billion spread over ten years were realized. On the other hand, in October 2017, King Salman of Saudi Arabia visited Russia and negotiated with President Vladimir Putin to 'discuss how a bilateral cooperation can be developed.'⁴¹ Incidentally, Russia and Saudi Arabia are rivals in the global energy market, especially in terms of fixing of oil prices. They too supported opposing sides in the Syrian civil war in which Russia patronized Bashar al-Assad regime.

The contemporary Iran's geostrategic interests stretches right up to Israel in which it has woven a web of extended network of proxies, including in Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and Syria. Therefore, Saudi response was an obvious reaction to this network of proxies that resultantly generated instability in Middle East. There are apparently half a dozen different NSAs operating under different banners and ideologies in Middle East. Almost all of these factions are funded by two main resources: Saudis and its Western allies vis-à-vis Iran and its allies. This covert warfare became worst in the case of Syria and other neighbouring states.

Competition for the regional hegemony between the two oil rich rivals, Iran and Saudi Arabia, is not limited to the conventional and proxy warfare; but to Iranian nuclear ambition to acquire nuclear capability. It can be fathomed from Iran's violations of International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) safeguards guidelines. Moreover, Iranian acquisition of a complete nuclear fuel-cycle had made it easier to advance its indigenous nuclear technological programme. Saudis though have shown commitment with the nuclear non-proliferation regime up till now; however, it is quite difficult for the Saudis to achieve similar capabilities in short span of time due to different factors, including non-availability of scientific expertise, technological base, and research and development (R&D) institutions to undertake nuclear-related research. Saudis also faces challenge in the shape of advanced Iranian ballistic missile programme. The JCPOA was agreed and signed in July 2015 by the six major powers, also known as P5+1 and Iran with a view to prevent the latter from producing nuclear weapons. As per JCPOA, if Iran complies with the

treaty, the UNSC, US, and the European Union (EU) will lift all nuclear-related sanctions. In the case of any violation, all sanctions will be re-imposed.

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA's) Anomalies

Though JCPOA was declared a comprehensive plan of action, but it did not address few very pertinent issues, which were/are basically the core concerns of the international community: (1) Iran's development of warhead delivery systems; (2) nuclear weapons are of no use if a credible means of their delivery to the targets is not available; (3) there were no check over the current nuclear black market that is available with its all supplies for any aspirant states, including Iran; (4) the treaty is silent over the acquisition of such technology from the nuclear black market, which could enable Iran to advance its covert nuclear installations or development of nuclear weapons and; (5) the treaty therefore cannot justify the special treatment of Iran vis-à-vis the other NPT states. Under the NPT every member state is treated equitably and impartially. Iran had signed and ratified the treaty before the Islamic Revolution. However, after the revolution, Iran had options to quit the regime or to remain part of it; but, in parallel Iran maintained a covert nuclear R&D programme that was vivid breach of the NPT. However, JCPOA has failed to address the concerns of the NPT members and the neighbouring states. The question of NPT regime's future after JCPOA's favourable leaning toward Iran will be a challenge for the international community.

Conclusion

The present-day Middle East's strategic culture is premised on conflicting cultural, sectarian, ethnic, fixation with ancient civilization grandeur, and historical legacies. Iran's fixation with its historical grandeur and Shia religious philosophy and the Arab states' Sunni version of Islam has further strengthened the religious-sectarian divide between the two. This has additionally aggravated the geostrategic landscape of the region and consequently has led to sponsoring of proxy conflicts. This has created a perilous fault-line that is being fuelled by the regional/extra-regional states that had led to proliferation of NSAs' activities.

Presently, the Persian Gulf Arab states are not ready to trust Iran as they hold it responsible for the terrorist activities throughout the region. Muhammad Abdul Ghaffar, the Bahraini Ambassador to the US once expressed Arab states' distrust about Iranian intentions in these words: 'With Iran's involvement in terrorism, we cannot include Iran in a regional security agreement. Countries need to build confidence, which is not possible under the current regime in Tehran.'⁴² Whereas Iran wanted to keep all its options open with a view to create more leverage

over the regional and Western powers. On the other hand, strategically Iran wants its assets to be released from the sanctions, and to achieve its long term strategic objective to become a nuclear power. Soon after the confirmation of the JCPOA by the US Congress, Iran conducted numerous ballistic missile tests both for the delivery of conventional and nuclear weapons. It galvanized international concerns regarding Tehran's increasing missile capability. A joint letter by the US, British, French, and German governments to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon had expressed concern over the missile tests. The letter stated that the Iranian tests were 'inconsistent with' and 'in defiance of' the UNSC Resolution 2231, which clearly urges full implementation of the JCPOA as per the laid-down timetable that calls on Iran not to conduct any activity related to development of ballistic missiles, which may extend Iran's strategic outreach over the region. However, in May 2018 President Trump withdrew from the JCPOA after citing variety of its alleged flawed clauses. This development is expected to intensify the divergent trajectories of the Middle Eastern strategic cultures that would exacerbate its entire geopolitical fabric for years, if not decades, to come.

NOTES

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