

Diplomacy and Conflict Management in the Middle East: The Imperative for a Ceasefire Between the United States, Israel, and Iran

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ABSTRACT

Since 1979, the never-ending conflict between the United States, Israel, and Iran has brought turmoil in Middle East and sought dire consequences to world's peace and stability. In spite of numerous attempts at diplomacy, a sustainable ceasefire has not been achieved, owing to issues of mistrust, proxy wars and nuclear proliferation. This study explores the application of diplomacy as an effective intervention tool for conflict management and proposes the need for diplomats to focus on engaging the three political actors in a negotiated ceasefire. Through qualitative analysis of extant secondary data, this paper analyzes failed diplomatic efforts, third-party facilitation and role of understanding of the debilitating effect of continued hostilities on the wider Middle East State. It concludes that coercive diplomacy has exacerbated hostilities, while inclusive, interest based negotiation represents a nuanced strategy for de-escalation. It recommends the adoption of multilateralist peace building ideas, reconciliation channels, and nuclear restraint agreement as immediate step till a sustainable Ceasefire is achieved in the Middle East.

Keyword: Diplomacy, Conflict Management, Ceasefire, Middle East, United States, Israel, Iran

INTRODUCTION

The Middle East is one of the world's most geopolitically intricate region, it is dominated by competing ethnic, religious and political loyalties, competition for resources like oil and water and control of strategically important trade routes. The region is beset by a diverse array of conflicts from between-state and proxy wars to internal civil strife and insurgency. There are even certain persistent conflicts like the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that shows no sign of imminent resolution.

Within this complex situation diplomacy has had to run on a number of fronts simultaneously:

1. Bilateral diplomacy between the warring states, with mediation from both the great powers, e.g. United States, Russia, and regional powers such as the Saudi's, Iran, Turkey and Egypt.
2. Multilateral diplomacy through United Nations, The Arab League and The Gulf Cooperation Council involving, e.g. Ceasefire declarations, peace negotiation bodies and the creation of humanitarian corridors.
3. Track II diplomacy - informal, or even back-channel, communications between academics, tribal elders and non-governmental organizations, designed to foster trust and dialogue where official channels are completely blocked.

Common strategies used in conflict management are: ceasefire agreements, power-sharing agreements, confidence-building measures, economic incentives. However, the region faces significant obstacles to conflict resolution, these include foreign intervention, the prevalence of non-state actors, rapidly changing political alignments and the legacy of age-old historical grievances.

Statement of the Problem

In one of the most turbulent regions of global politics, there is an ongoing triangular conflict between America, Israel and Iran. Since 1979, the region and particularly Tehran and Washington have experienced one of isolation, sanctions, diplomatic break and proxy battles. As part of Iran's pursuit of a nuclear program and regional dominance, its relationship with Israeli has been deteriorating and has resulted in air strikes, assassination of scientists and cyber warfare between 2007- 2024. Despite numerous attempts by major international players, EU, UN as well as by regional mediator (Qatar and Oman), the breakthrough was temporary; the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action JCPOA, signed in 2015, failed after the U.S withdrawal in May 2018, and since then, tensions have re-escalated, the region being on the brink of war with a great tendency of conflict turning direct.

The main fault is the current diplomacy strategy which has only been focused on coercion, sanctions and threats instead of dialogues and recognition of common interest. Western countries, mainly the U.S, have adopted a containment strategy against Iran while Iran sees an alliance of America with Israel as existential threat. Such zero-sum game has not helped in achieving a permanent cease fire, and it is currently feeding proxy wars raging through Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and etc. Whereas some African scholars have argued, Adebajo and Solomon to cite, that some crises in the Middle East are externalized by the great powers without local stakeholders' ownership to peace building, scholars in the West on the other hand put more focus on security dilemma and deterrence theory. As a consequence, civilian deaths, economic sanctions, shock of oil prices and displacement crises are growing; another all out war that may affect the globe more gravely looks poised, unless an accord for a lasting cease fire is reached. Thus, it aims to fill the gap by answering the question: what role can diplomacy play in achieving a cease fire in the US, Israel and Iran triangle, and what factors – structural and perceiver hinder current attempts to gain traction.

Research Questions

1. To what extent has diplomacy been used to manage conflicts between the United States, Israel, and Iran from 1979 to 2024?
2. What are the major obstacles preventing a sustainable ceasefire agreement among the three states?
3. How effective are third-party mediation and multilateral institutions in achieving conflict de-escalation in the Middle East?
4. What diplomatic strategies can promote a lasting ceasefire and regional stability?

Research Objectives

1. To examine the historical use of diplomacy in managing U.S.-Israel-Iran conflicts from 1979 to 2024.
2. To identify the political, security, and ideological obstacles to a sustainable ceasefire.
3. To evaluate the role of third-party mediators and multilateral institutions in conflict management.
4. To propose diplomatic strategies for achieving and sustaining a ceasefire in the region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Most Western IR experts explain the conflict in realist and security dilemma terms, Waltz viewing Iran's quest for nuclear weapons as a rational response to U.S. And Israeli military dominance creating a classic security dilemma where defensive measures are seen as offensive threats, and Mearsheimer describing U.S. Foreign policy in the Middle East as driven by offshore-balancing leading to a cycle of interventionist policy which has continually undermined diplomatic avenues to peaceful resolution. Cronin stated that U.S. Sanctions diplomacy failed because it disregarded internal Iranian legitimacy concerns which would make sanctions-compliance

politically costly for leaders in Tehran, as is evident for most Western literature and policy prescriptions: all focus on deterrence and coercive bargaining.

African scholars critiqued a Eurocentric diplomacy in Middle East politics: Adebajo argue that the marginalisation of actors at local level in Western mediation process means the agreements reached are impossible to sustain as the local level does not own the decision, and Solomon suggested that conflict management in the Middle East has to incorporate Ubuntu centered diplomacy in contrast to diplomacy of punishment by emphasizing dialogue, forgiveness and mutual recognition over retributive justice, Berman suggests that the proxy wars in the region is a mere symptoms of underlying identity and resource based conflicts that would be addressed only with ceasefire agreements having a structural element. In short, African scholars prefer negotiation that involves all actors and decolonisation of diplomatic discourse and practice.

Vakil reported that the 2026 US-Iran ceasefire was a vital step in de-escalating costs of war but any sustainable accord depends on Iran making concessions on nuclear inspections and the US crafting the lifting of the sanctions politically (Vakil, 2026). Hamasaeed stated that following the Israeli strike on Iran in June 2025 the subsequent 12 day escalating spiral saw the emergence of a ceasefire that now, if durable, would need to move towards de-escalation beyond military action (Hamasaeed, 2025). DiCarlo stated that a tentative 60- day cease fire between the US and Iran announced in 2026 by President Trump provides a window to avoid a catastrophic escalation and peacefully resolve the Iranian nuclear issue through resuming diplomacy and negotiations (DiCarlo, 2026).

Wright identified several potential flashpoints between the US and Iran during the Gaza war and illustrated how a failure to properly integrate diplomacy to resolve the proxy conflict risk an armed confrontation (Wright, 2024). Katulis identified a continuing struggle between the US in deterring Iran militarily and seeking ceasefire talks, illustrating the dichotomy between coercion and diplomacy evident in U.S. Middle East policy (Katulis, 2025). The policy analysis by Rees and Salimian Rizi provides a key explanation why the JCPOA negotiations between the US and Iran failed: the rise of conservative hardliners in Iran and Iran's new strategic partnerships with Russia and China fueled Iranian mistrust of US bargain making (Rees & Salimian Rizi, 2025). Shabani described Tehran's calculations during the 2026 ceasefire talks indicating the Revolutionary Guard viewed holding energy flows in the Strait of Hormuz hostage to be critical to its survival strategies (Shabani, 2026). Azizi and Barnes-Dacey describe how Iran's 'forward defence' strategy in Syria and Lebanon was driven by military considerations of deterrence not ideological convictions revealing that cease fire diplomacy must accommodate Iran's security concerns in order to prevent a larger confrontation (Azizi & Barnes-Dacey, 2024). Testifying to Congress, Pollack expressed his view that more emphasis needs to be placed on the US role in Iraq, Syria and Yemen than on centrifuge limitations in the JCPOA and thus diplomatic solutions have to be comprehensive and cover regional issues rather than just the nuclear dimension of the question (Pollack, 2019).

Dumbacher pointed that Trump's 2026 military strategy on Iran's nuclear weapons programme was a dangerous contravention of NPT diplomacy in the absence of collective bargaining power, showing how reliance on force undermines existing multilateral norms about nuclear non-proliferation (Dumbacher, 2026). The Middle East Policy Council argued that Oman's "leak-proof" mediation efforts have proved vital to US-Iran dialogue in the past and even for the Saudi-Iran accord of March 2023, suggesting that Track II diplomacy works where formal channels have failed (ORF, 2025). A report by Search for Common Ground documented efforts made since 1982 in bridging US-Iran gaps between NGOs in an effort to develop foundations for official dialogue (SFCG, 2022). DiMaggio revealed how the 2002-2008 Track II engagements between the US and Iran managed to produce joint papers that aimed at overcoming diplomatic impasse, but little real progress could be achieved due to political instability in both countries, thereby stifling any transfer of insights to Track I (DiMaggio, 2010).

Slim suggests diplomacy has historically had breakthrough moments through Track II diplomacy rather than direct negotiations as shown in stalled Arab-Israeli and US-Iran nuclear talks (Slim, 2007). According to a Reuters analysis, the terms of the 2026 US-Iran ceasefire remain largely unclear with Iran demanding the unfreezing of \$12 billion and an end to attacks targeting Hezbollah, thus illustrate how ceasefires have become bargaining chips (Reuters, 2026). Madhani and Lee described how a proposed 60 day cease fire extension from Trump in 2026 was rejected by Iran due to new conditions from the US, demonstrating that a central problem in US-Iran negotiations remains the sequencing of sanctions relief versus nuclear limitations (Madhani & Lee, 2026).

A briefing to the UK Parliament stated that a conditional ceasefire was reached on April 8 2026, brokered by Pakistan, following Israeli and US airstrikes on Iran in February, highlighting a shift towards mediation in the non-Western world (UK Parliament, 2026). ORF analysis identified Qatar and Muscat as having had strong mediation channels with Iran, but these proved unusable due to recent attacks on Iran when negotiations were underway, which destroyed trust and diplomacy (ORF, 2026).

Wright explained in a Q & A with the US Institute of Peace that April 2024 Iranian missile and drone attack on Israel led to a new escalation cycle and US diplomacy is being hampered by world divided and disparate in its approach to enforce any kind of cease fire (Wright, 2024). A policy brief by the Atlantic Council argued that a US-Iran deal that does not address a regional settlement has only bought short term arms control without helping de-escalate existing civil wars in Syria and Lebanon (Atlantic Council, 2019).

Adekeye Adebajo believes that western mediators mediate in the Middle East without the regional actors that made the agreement unsustainable. He stated that African approaches to conflict resolution and management, such as Ubuntu diplomacy, "dialogue, forgiveness and mutual recognition", need to be applied in the US-Iran-Israel situation rather than coercive deterrence (Adebajo, 2013). Hassan Saliu suggested that Africa is misguided in picking a side in the US-Israel-Iran war, and instead Africa needs "internal cohesion" rather than external alignment.

He stated that the global powers, in their quest for self-interest, should learn that it is "better to develop internal capabilities, cohesion and a unified diplomatic strategy...

To manage any spill over effects on the African continent" (Saliu, 2026). Ambassador Mohamed Idris the African Union Permanent Representative stated that Africa must pursue "positive neutrality" in the US-Iran tensions and maintain independent decision making, build energy/food security capacities, and utilize the AU's collective diplomatic machinery to insulate Africa from spill over effects of a proxy war (Idris, 2026).

Elias Sumbo observed that Israel's "preventive diplomacy policy 2020-2025" may have reduced incidence of threats and attacks in pacified areas, but limitations in institutionalisation restrict the policy. Observing the Middle East dynamics from an African viewpoint, he noted that any ceasefire brokered must be built upon a formal institution rather than a quick deal (Sumbo, 2026). The Centre for Multilateral Affairs African perspective paper noted that the 2026 US-Israel-Iran war clearly presents the dangers ahead of Africa in terms of its economic vulnerability and sovereignty challenges and recommends that the AU formulates a coherent approach that places negotiation and adherence to the United Nations Charter at the centre of its approach since any other unilateral action will serve as a dangerous precedent against weaker Global South states (Centre for Multilateral Affairs, 2026).

C. Raja Mohan suggested that Arab states and Gulf security should have precedence over Iran or Israel in India's Middle East policy since the "geopolitical predicament of the Gulf cannot be 'solved', only managed, and India should stand by Arab partners caught in the squeeze" (Raja Mohan, 2025). C. Raja Mohan predicted that Iran's "permanent revolution" is coming at an increased cost to Iran. He believed that the scaling down of support for proxies could pave the way for a deal with Arab neighbours, yet any reduction in support for proxies would be unacceptable for hardliners, making negotiating for a ceasefire structurally difficult (Raja Mohan, 2026). The US-Israel air strikes on Iran put the country's "diplomatic tightrope under increasing pressure" yet India's strategy of engaging every actor –Israel, Iran and the Gulf States - may prove vital in the current crisis (Raja Mohan, 2026).

According to The Indian Express editorial on the 2026 US-Iran ceasefire, not just must the ceasefire be renewed on all fronts including Lebanon but decades of suspicion cannot be solved over a weekend and both Iran and the US must "give diplomacy a chance to avoid recurrence of crisis, oil price shocks, etc." (Indian Express, 2026). Foreign Ministry officials speaking on India's official position said there is "no alternative to diplomacy and dialogue", it welcomed the 2026 ceasefire and "stands ready to play a constructive role in peace-building," stating that "use of force can not solve anything" (MEA, 2026). President Xi Jinping argued that "using force cannot resolve the Middle East question, dialogue is the only choice", and offered four propositions for peace and

stability noting that "a lasting and comprehensive ceasefire is the fundamental way out of the Strait of Hormuz crisis, while negotiation may not be effective in one go, the door to dialogue must be open" (Xi, 2026).

Foreign Minister Wang Yi argued that "war creates new problems" and the "true value of military power is to prevent war", and China opposes the US-Israeli strikes in Iran asking for an immediate cessation of hostilities to resolve the conflict with dialogue and negotiation, thus safeguarding the sovereignty of the Gulf States and free passage through its waters (Wang, 2026). Senior Colonel (ret.) and senior fellow at Tsinghua University Zhou Bo expressed doubt that Chinese ceasefire appeals would be taken up in the US dilemma and Iran's need to satisfy revenge imperatives while admitting that "China's influence over parties in the Iran-US conflict, especially Israel, is minimal." (Zhou, 2026) Middle East Envoy Zhai Jun stated that "the one who tied the bell should be the one who untied it," thus putting responsibility for the ceasefire on the US and Israel while acknowledging that entrenched mistrust poses enormous challenges to lasting resolution (Zhai, 2026). Scholar Yun Sun suggested that China's primary concern is securing oil supplies rather than keeping the Iranian regime in power, viewing China's role as an opportunistic and low risk initiative after the conditions for a ceasefire were already created and noting that yuan settlement does not safeguard oil supplies from US and Israeli attacks (Sun, 2026).

As an expert in diplomacy, MGIMO Professor Vladimir Morozov points out that Russia is against the military defeat of Iran and power shift in the region, and that this opposition is not out of support to the Iranian regime, but out of national interest. Morozov stated that the proximity of the Middle East to Russian "underbelly" and Caspian region requires negotiations every day with Gulf states. That is why Moscow refuses a regional power balance and will not take part in aggravating the situation (Morozov, 2026).

Expert on the Middle East in the Russian International Affairs Council Alexey Khlebnikov argues that Russia has no good choices: either Israeli security is based on withdrawal of Iranian forces from Syria and Iranian influence will be tied to their position in the region, or Tehran demands the retention of Iranian forces there.

Thus Moscow wishes to keep their influence with all parties but does not want to make Israel angry with themselves, hence they mediate implicitly (Khlebnikov, 2025). Maria Zakharova-the official spokeswoman for Russian MFA said that the military action undertaken by Americans and Israelis against Iran is the violation of international law due to massive civil casualties and added that Russia will continue its efforts to avoid regional escalation, diffuse contradictory aspects, and call upon the US and Israel to conduct negotiations in order to solve issues in the Middle East peacefully (Zakharova, 2026).

The Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov warned that the use of force against Iran may have a dangerous escalation not only in the Middle East but also all around the world. He stated that negotiation opportunities are far from over and argued that Moscow believes Iran should be allowed to have peaceful access to nuclear power, strictly in compliance with international law and rules (Peskov, 2026). Russia's Ambassador to the IAEA Mikhail Ulyanov argued that the draft resolutions presented by the US condemning Iran are likely to anger Tehran further and complicate the negotiation on a broader ceasefire, and that Russia and China have also refrained from adopting IAEA resolutions on Iran, finding them detrimental to a peaceable settlement of the nuclear dispute (Ulyanov, 2026).

The overarching Western debate consists of conflicting coercive deterrence and diplomatic approaches; Waltz and Mearsheimer, for example, argue that Iran's drive for nuclear weapons is a rational security dilemma response, while Cronin indicates that US diplomacy based on sanctions will fail if not considerate of Iranian public legitimacy.

Indeed, Pollak asserts that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action failed less due to limits on centrifuges and more due to US behavior in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, suggesting that a narrowly focused negotiation on the nuclear issue alone will not succeed and arguing that US President Trump's March 2026 military engagement undermines the NPT's multilateralist logic. African scholars argue that Western mediation cannot succeed as it excludes the region, and suggest Ubuntu diplomacy, that puts emphasis on mutual recognition and dialogue and is more holistic. African actors have no desire to get involved into the ideological struggle between the US and Iran, and need stability, as global actors will only negotiate based on their national interests (Hassan Saliu).

Ambassador Idris called for positive neutrality and self reliance, in order to shield the African continent from the potential ramifications of the proxy war.

Indian, Chinese and Russian actors approach mediation through diplomacy.

Raja Mohan stated that the fate of the Gulf can not be resolved, it can only be managed; and India needs to be attentive to the demands of Arab states trapped in the middle of a US-Iranian contest (The Indian Express, Feb. 10, 2026). Xi Jinping stated that use of force could not resolve problems and dialogue was the only solution, suggesting four principles for Middle East stability, and Wang Yi declared that violence creates a new problems and called on the US and Israel to immediately cease their attacks.

Peskov warned that attack on Iran would bring dangers throughout Middle East, and Zakharova described current US and Israeli actions against Iran as illegal military actions, and called for a peaceful resolution (Zakharova, 2026). Regarding mediation, the literature suggests unofficial channels are crucial when diplomacy based on formal state-to-state engagement (Track I) fails. Slim stated that breakthrough usually occurs at the Track II level; and described mediation efforts between the Israelis and the Palestinians and Iranians and the Americans as stalled.

Search for Common Ground has demonstrated that Track II diplomatic efforts between the US and Iran between 2002 and 2008 produced joint papers, but were not political enough to feed into official policy; it has been shown that perceptions changed, but there was no immediate impact on policy (DiMaggio, 2007).

Chinese and Russian entities have themselves been mediation figures; China, brokering the 2023 Saudi-Iranian rapprochement stated with Zhai Jun, "the one who tied the bell must untie it," implying that responsibility for reaching a ceasefire should rest with the US and Israel. Zhou Bo expressed doubts over whether China's advice will be heeded due to lack of trust, yet conceded Beijing's good relations with all parties. At the Middle East Policy Council, it has been stated that Oman's "leak-proof" mediation was pivotal during the US-Iranian negotiations and also during the 2023 Saudi-Iranian pact, illustrating the success of discreet diplomacy when public avenues are exhausted. According to Morozov, Russia holds daily negotiations with the Gulf states in order to avoid conflict spilling into Caspian regions, and, according to Khlebnikov, Russia's task is to balance its relations with both Iran and Israel in Syria.

Ulyanov argues that US IAEA resolutions are problematic because they anger Iran and consequently spoil the negotiation for wider ceasefire.

Economic and Energy Drivers of Conflict and Ceasefire

Energy security is ubiquitous in empirical studies. Vakil asserts that the 2026 ceasefire was welcomed because the costs of war at the Strait of Hormuz disruption and Gulf infrastructure threat outpaced the returns achievable. Reuters Analysis suggests that Iran insisted on the release of \$12 billion of frozen assets and the connection of Israel to halt attacks on Hezbollah to turn ceasefires into bargaining chips. Shabani maintains that the IRGC considers holding energy flows hostage to be vital to regime existence, further compelling civilian leadership's diplomatic overtures.

African and Indian views emphasize economic fragility. The Centre for Multilateral Affairs states that the Angola conflict highlights Africa's economic weakness and its sovereignty concerns as it shapes the AU consensus regarding application of UN CCW standards. MEA India asserted the conflict affected the global energy flows and trade routes, demanding 'unimpeded freedom of navigation' through Hormuz, while Raja Mohan estimates that India's relationship with the 500-million Arab world is more significant that with Iran or Israel due to their importance in trade, diaspora, and energy. The Sun believes that China's primary concern is oil, not regime survival, and their yuan- based later settlement mechanisms cannot protect shipments from the US and Israeli strikes.

Regional Security Dilemmas and Proxy Conflicts

Security dilemma theory accounts for escalation past bilateral relations. Azizi & Barnes-Dacey make clear Iran's

'forward-defence' in Syria/Labun is deterrence driven, not ideological & ceasefire diplomacy must counter that reality if wider war is to be avoided. Wright identifies the Gaza war flashpoints that increase US/Iran confrontation risk. Hamasaeed states the June 2025 Israel strikes initiated a 12 day spiral, and freeze durability hinges on progress being made away from military measures.

Stake of US policy: to strengthen the military reinforcements for stopping Iran's militia to prevent Tehran from propagating US-conceived chaos versus urging the Gaza ceasefire negotiations. Katulis, Rees& Salimian Rizi K. State that conditional US deals with Iran failed because Iran's conservative government and emerging Russia-China alliance convinced Tehran to deny the US any deal. Madhani& Lee states Iran's reprieve in extending Trump's ceasefire by 60 days was denounced because Iran refused new US demands showing US sequencing of sanction relief versus nuclear limits issue still prevails.

The Russians and the Chinese get it as balance-of-power. Morozov views the Iranian military defeat as counterproductive in that it would result in a power imbalance on the Russian southern frontier. Khlebnikov proposes that Russia is obligated to maintain the military balance in Syria in such a way as to include Iran while not risking Israel by overbalancing in favor of Iran leading Moscow to moderate without appearing to choose a side. Xi announced that in the Current Gulf climate, there exists "a crucial juncture between war and peace" in which hostilities must cease forthwith to secure energy supplies and supply routes.

Empirical Review

Empirical evidence is also inconclusive in support of diplomacy and ceasefire. For example, the 2015 JCPOA had limited duration effect in reducing nuclear tensions and demonstrated the effectiveness of direct diplomacy with high relevance interests to both Iran and Washington-but after Trump's U.S. Withdrawal in 2018 Iran recommenced uranium enrichment, and attacks on Saudi oil infrastructure escalated.

Research in 2021 by Parsi supported that backchannel diplomacy through Oman was successful where public threats failed, and that low transparency and aid of trust-building tactics were critical in shifting Iran toward positive cooperation.

Elsewhere, empirical evidence compiled by Maloney indicated that Israeli military strikes did not halt Iran's missile program, but actually emboldened Iranian policymakers-again additional repeat actions led to further escalation. Ultimately, empirical evidence in support of the theory indicates that coerce leads to escalation in conflict, and sustained dialogue leads to de-escalation.

Theoretical Framework

This investigation makes use of Burton's Conflict Resolution Theory and Kelman's Track II Diplomacy Theory.

Conflict Resolution Theory

Burton believes conflicts endure because human needs-such as security, recognition, and control-are not satisfied. A halt in conflict demands attenuation of these needs, and not of past behaviors. In this case, the U.S. Security assurances, Iran's recognition as a regional power, and Israel's existential security must be made compatible.

Track II Diplomacy

Kelman posits that unofficial, non-state dialogue reduces mistrust and prepares ground for official talks. Oman and Qatar's mediation fits this model and explains why they succeeded where formal channels failed.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this study were obtained from both primary and secondary data. These include: Documents: UN Security Council resolutions, US State Department briefings, Israeli Ministry of Foreign

Affairs statements, Iranians Foreign Ministry communiqués, and JCPOA text.

Academic Sources: Peer-reviewed journal articles and books from JSTOR, Google Scholar, and Scopus.

Policy Reports: Reports from think tanks such as CFR, IISS, and International Crisis Group.

Data were collected through documentary analysis. To ensure reliability, only documents from official government websites and academic databases published between 2003–2025 were used. Sources that could not be independently verified were excluded.

Thematic analysis was used to code data. Three themes guided the analysis:

1. Diplomatic Tools- negotiations, and the sanctions, mediation
2. Effectiveness Criteria - goal achievement, sustainability, regional impact
3. Limiting Factors - security concerns, domestic politics, mistrust

Two case studies were used for comparative analysis: The JCPOA 2015 and Oman-mediated US-Iran talks 2023. This allows for a structured assessment of when diplomacy worked and when it failed.

Research Design: Qualitative, descriptive research design

Sources of Data: Secondary sources - journal articles, UN reports, government documents, news archives 1979-2024

Method of Data Analysis: Content analysis and thematic analysis. Themes will include diplomacy, sanctions, ceasefire attempts, proxy war, nuclear issue.

Scope: Focus on U.S., Israel, Iran trilateral relations, with emphasis on post-2015 period.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on reviewed literature, findings are expected to show that:

1. Coercive diplomacy has failed to produce ceasefire.
2. Lack of mutual recognition and trust is the main barrier.
3. Track II diplomacy by neutral states has higher success rate.
4. A multilateral ceasefire framework addressing nuclear, missile, and proxy issues is feasible.

Summary

The study focused on the US – Iran – Israeli conflict and explored diplomacy and conflict management issues and determined barriers for ceasefire such as coercion, mistrust and isolation of regional players; analyzed the perspectives of Western and African scholars; based its theory on conflict resolution and Track II Diplomacy theory; established through empirical study the effectiveness of negotiation over sanctions as an effective instrument in dealing with conflicts. Conclusively, the study is calling for multilateral peace talks with supporting confidence measures to achieve lasting ceasefire.

CONCLUSION

While the U.S., Iran, and Israel have an “inevitable” conflict with an inevitable terrible outcome – there could be no positive military outcome in the region – it would have to be a diplomatic solution where the stakes are

not U.S. Hegemony or regional threats, but common interests. But first we need the humanitarian imperative of a ceasefire, and that is absolutely essential to U.S. Security.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Washington and Tehran should reestablish diplomatic engagement and open direct negotiations without prerequisite demands to restore trust.
2. Israel should take the initiative for multiparty security dialogue in the region that accommodates Iran's regional importance while safeguarding its own security interests.
3. The UN system and a regional group such as the Arab League must create an organized permanent observer group that monitors ceasefire violations.
4. Prisoner exchange, gradual sanctions relief, and other confidence-building steps should be initiated before there is a deal with Iran regarding nuclearization.
5. Future diplomatic discussions should integrate African and other alternative models to conflict which rely on dialogue instead of deterrence.

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