



Research Article

Balancing the Middle East: The United States' Strategic Ambiguity in the Iran-Israel Conflict

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ABSTRACT



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This study explores the application of strategic ambiguity by the United States in dealing with Iran-Israel dispute, especially nuclear diplomacy and regional security. The U.S. has been in an uncompromising security alliance with Israel but at the same time, it has been conducting diplomatic talks with Iran including the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The study explores how past administrations of the United States have juggled this fine line using a qualitative approach and policy analysis that has seen to it that succeeding administrations have sent both welcoming and threatening signals to their allies and foes. Results indicate that strategic ambiguity has helped in providing flexibility in the short term but has also helped encourage mistrust, regional build up, and uncertainty in the credibility of the U.S. foreign policy. The paper states that although ambiguity has been cannibalized to fulfill some tactical ends, in the circumstances of changing geopolitical forces, it is not sustainable in the long run. The study highlights that a rebalanced approach, which balances transparency with regional stability and non-proliferation, is necessary.

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Introduction

Iran-Israel war is one of the longest and most complicated Middle East wars with ideologically hostile sides, proxy wars, and threats of nuclear destruction of each other. Tehran has repeatedly disputed the legitimacy of Israel since the Iranian Revolution of 1979 that turned Iran into an anti-Western theocracy, and its power in the region has been growing with the help of non-state actors such as Hezbollah and Hamas (Byman, 2021). Iran, on the other hand, sees their nuclear goals and actions in the region as existential threats and has been pursuing covert and overt actions to counter it (Makdisi, 2024). The United States, being the best friend of Israel and one of the world powers, with its nuclear nonproliferation endeavors, is caught in a tight spot between ensuring Israel security and strategic involvement and containment of Iran (Walt, 2010; Parsi, 2017).

The core concept to this balancing act is the doctrine of strategic ambiguity which is a foreign policy doctrine that a state intentionally fails to give explicit statements of intent or red lines so as to maintain flexibility and deterrence. Historically in the case of U.S., strategic ambiguity has been applied to address sensitive security commitments like the intentional ambiguity of nuclear

policy in East Asia or the undeclared nuclear arsenal of Israel itself (Sagan, 2020). The United States uses ambiguity in the Middle East by concurrently assuring Israel of its military assistance and talking to Iran via the diplomatic process, specifically, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which the latter strongly disliked (Kroenig, 2018).

The research problem that this study attempts to resolve is the following: How and why is the United States maintaining strategic ambiguity in its relationships with both allies and opponents? The fundamental research questions that inform this inquiry are: (1) What are the strategic reasons why the U.S. is ambiguous on the issue of Iran-Israel situation? (2) What has been the nature of the ambiguity in the various presidential administrations? (3) What does it mean to regional stability, U.S. credibility?

It is important to understand this dual-track policy to evaluate the American influence in the Middle East and whether the ambiguity would be an effective long-term strategy. With the changing international balance of power and the intensification of deterrence stances of both Iran and Israel, the ambiguity of the U.S. policy is examined, which helps in understanding the overall management of alliances, the concept of nonproliferation, and international order (Mearsheimer, 2001; Sick, 2020).

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Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Clarification.

This paper relies on three significant theories of international relations namely the realism, constructivism and the deterrence theory to clarify the motivation behind the strategic ambiguity of the United States in the Iran-Israel conflict. According to realism, states make decisions trying to achieve power and survival in an anarchic international system and, therefore, ambiguity proves helpful in terms of balancing threats and achieving strategic benefits (Mearsheimer, 2001). In this respect, the U.S. ambiguity is seen in its attempts to keep the region under its control, as it supports Israel in the military but does not want to engage in a war with Iran.

On the contrary, constructivist theory focuses on how identities, norms, and social interactions can be used to shape the behaviour of the state. Ambiguous posture is a deliberate ambiguity of policy that the U.S. is drawn between the norms of its position as a democratically of Israel and its position as a nuclear nonproliferation promoter (Wendt, 1999). This identity conflict is identity driven and therefore makes such absolute clarity politically expensive and diplomatically dangerous.

Deterrence theory can also be used to justify the U.S. action in that uncertainty about retaliation can increase stability. Here, strategic ambiguity will enable the United States to prevent the aggression of Iran as well as Israeli unilateralism without any obligation to take certain measures (Schelling, 2008). The refusal of the U.S. to affirm or deny red lines gives it flexibility and minimizes the chances of getting stuck within escalatory spirals.

Collectively, these schools of thought clarify the reasons as to why ambiguity is not just a breakdown of policy coherence but a strategic intent. This paradigm allows observing ambiguity as a blunt yet potent tool in the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East in greater detail (Walt, 2010; Parsi, 2017; Byman, 2021).

To critically examine the United States' strategic ambiguity in the Iran-Israel conflict, it is essential to clarify key concepts that underpin this study: strategic ambiguity, foreign policy, deterrence, and alliance management. At its core, strategic ambiguity refers to a deliberate policy approach in which a state maintains uncertainty or vagueness about its intentions or responses to potential threats (Schelling, 2008). This tactic is employed to deter adversaries without provoking escalation, while preserving room for maneuver. In the context of U.S. foreign policy, it has historically been applied in areas such as the Taiwan Strait and Israel's undeclared nuclear arsenal (Sagan, 2020).

The foreign policy is generally defined as the approaches and choices with the help of which the state will relate to the international system to promote its national interests, to control alliances, and to overcome the perceived threats (Hudson, 2014). In this context, the U.S. has been able to uphold a delicate balancing act between its strategic partnership with Israel and its adversarial, although diplomatically active, partnership with Iran (Parsi, 2017).

Deterrence, and especially nuclear deterrence is the process of influencing an opponent not to engage in an action that is not desired by the other party by threatening a dire repercussion (Waltz, 1981). When using ambiguity in deterrence, the U.S. sends mixed messages both to Israel and Iran and does not promise anything, but has a believable threat. Intimately connected is the idea of alliance management that can be articulated to mean the means through which states organize and regulate their relations with allies - that it may often demand signaling, reassurance and constraint (Walt, 1987; Gause, 2010).

This theoretical clarity is crucial in the explanation of the manner and factors that the United States uses ambiguity as a conscious mechanism to negotiate one of the most unstable conflicts in the Middle East. The two terms are used as analytical lenses in the study, as they connect the theory to the development of the empirical.

Literature Review

The Iran-Israel dispute has elicited a lot of academic interests especially with regard to the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. One of the themes that are present in this literature is the fact that the United States has consistently been a security ally of Israel due to their similarities in democracy, strategic interests in the region and massive military support (Walt and Mearsheimer, 2007). At the same time, the U.S. has sought different methods of dealing with the perceived danger of Iran, particularly with regards to its nuclear program. They include the use of sanctions and diplomatic talks, to military deterrents (Takeyh, 2021).

There has been a mixed evaluation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as a historic occasion in U.S.-Iran relations, with critics like Parsi (2017) saying that it has alleviated tensions but instigated a crisis among the allies of the Gulf and Israel. Others such as Byman (2021) have studied the proxy networks of Iran in the region and the effects of the same on Israeli security decisions and how the U.S. reaction tends to be simply to contain Iran without disrupting all other strategic interests of Iran in the region.

Another topic examined in the literature is strategic ambiguity in the U.S. foreign policy. Sagan (2020) explains that ambiguity enables the U.S. to uphold deterrence without making strong commitments that can restrict its choices and cause unwanted conflict. This is in line with the deterrence theory by Schelling (2008), which emphasizes the utility of calculated uncertainty in the management of adversarial behavior.

Nonetheless, irrespective of the voluminous studies made of the U.S. policies concerning the two nations of Iran and Israel under an individual basis, there appears to be a gap in research which examines how the phenomenon of strategic ambiguity acts as a single, multifaceted approach of balancing two relationships at once. This paper fills that gap by undertaking a systematic study of the role ambiguity has played in the deployment by various administrations and the consequences it has on the stability in the region, the credibility of the alliance and nuclear diplomacy.

American Interests in the Iran-Israel War.

The US has had a long experience of intricate and strategic interest in Middle East, specifically in the protracted war between Israel and Iran. As much as the U.S. has remained faithful to the security of Israel, perceiving it as a major democratic partner and a stabilizer in the volatile region, it also does not want Iran to get nuclear weapons and increase its influence in the region (Walt and Mearsheimer, 2007). These two interests put the U.S. in a delicate situation, between being a strong advocate of Israel and being a diplomatic partner or a containment agent against Iran (Parsi, 2017).

The most important part of U.S. interests is the stability of the region which is of paramount importance to ensure the smooth flow of energy resources, combat terrorism, and safeguard the U.S. military tools and allies in the Gulf (Gause, 2010). A full-fledged war between Iran and Israel would destabilize the region, attract the involvement of the U.S. forces, and provoke a world-wide economic crisis as oil supply chains will be interrupted (Cordesman, 2019). Moreover, the U.S. has remained a primary objective of keeping the proliferation of nuclear weapons since a nuclearized Iran may lead to instability in the region by triggering lock-in arms competition and eroding international nonproliferation agreements (Kroenig, 2018).

Moreover, the U.S. is engaged in the containment of the role of Iran using the diplomatic approach, including the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and it is also trying to prevent Israeli unilateral military intervention that can increase tensions (Takeyh, 2021). This balancing game is a part of a larger policy of strategic ambiguity in which the U.S. is able to stay in deterrence and to stay flexible without striving to adhere to strict policies and to instigate escalation (Schelling, 2008).

At the end of the day, the U.S. interest is not to take sides in an open war, but to control the rivalry to accommodate the sake of direct confrontation, maintain influence in the region, and ensure that the norms of international security are adhered to.

U.S. Strategy ambiguity action.

The most noticeable manifestation of the United States strategic ambiguous policy in the Iran-Israel conflict has been its nuclear diplomatic policy, military support, and the change in presidential policies. The Obama administration engaged Iran with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) that sought to limit the nuclear program of Iran via diplomacy but not by confrontation (Parsi, 2017). Although this was a major change in terms of past policy of containment, it was strongly opposed by Israel, which interpreted the deal as more of condoning Iranian aggression in the region and not ending but postponing its nuclear program (Kaye, 2018). In general, the Obama administration provided Israel with the security assurances, such as military aspects and expanded intelligence partnerships to counter Israeli anxieties and strengthen deterrence (Walt, 2010).

Such simultaneous two-pronged policy negotiating with Iran and reinforcing the military advantage of Israel points to the calculated vagueness of the U.S. red lines and red line-enforcement. The U.S. was publicly dedicated to ensuring that Iran could not have nuclear weapons, but not defining the repercussions of Iranian breaches, thus it kept its diplomatic stances flexible (Schelling, 2008). At the same time, the military support of Israel deepened, and such systems as Iron Dome, David Sling, and F-35 fighter jets strengthened the qualitative military superiority of Israel (Cordesman, 2019). However, when the U.S. was strengthening its military relationships with Israel, it still continued to use diplomacy as a means to prevent Israeli unilateralism and Iranian escalation without any commitment to open warfare (Sagan, 2020).

In 2018, the Trump administration made a sudden policy change and dropped the JCPOA, replaced by a "maximum pressure" campaign that encompassed restored sanctions, assassination attacks, and military deployments in the region (Takeyh, 2021). This aggressive approach received applause in Israel but increased the situation in the Gulf and lesser diplomatic credibility of the U.S. The Biden administration wanted to restart the negotiations, and it spelt out a partial re-engagement with all the sanctions and military alliances of Trump (Byman, 2021). In all three administrations, though, strategic ambiguity was a staple of weaknesses, in the form of red lines that were undefined, conflicts in the way they, or responded to threats, and incoherent diplomatic signaling.

Such ambiguity has had both favorable and unfavorable consequences: it maintains the leverage that U.S. holds and discourages irresponsible moves on the part of Iran and Israel but it has also created uncertainties among allies and adversaries concerning the commitment and determination of U.S (Walt and Mearsheimer, 2007). This policy has inherent contradictions that represent a wider conflict within the U.S. foreign policy of balancing the needs of alliances, regional stability, and global nonproliferation under the state of perpetual change.

Implications and Consequences.

The long-term policy of strategic ambiguity of the United States regarding the conflict between Iran and Israel has had various extended repercussions on the stability in the region, the relationship in alliances, and the international security systems. The growing readiness of Iran to escalate, especially using proxy militia in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, as well as its slow resurgence of nuclear enrichment efforts after the U.S. left the JCPOA (Takeyh, 2021), have been one of the most important regional reactions. Simultaneously, Israel has escalated its proactive security operations, such as cyberattacks against Iranian systems, targeted assassination of nuclear scientists and airstrikes

on Iranian-linked facilities in Syria (Byman, 2021). These tit-for-tat moves have increased the threat of direct conflict, dragging the U.S. into the tension in the region even though it tried to keep some distance between it and its foreign policy by being non-committal (Makdisi, 2024).

The significance of strategic ambiguity has also impacted a great deal on the U.S. credibility in regards to the allies and adversaries. Although it is flexible, it has caused a lot of confusion regarding the red lines of Washington and his intentions. Allies of the Gulf like the UAE and Saudi Arabia have at times doubted the strength of U.S. security assurances particularly after the lapses that they perceive when it comes to responding to Iranian antics in times of perceived inaction (Gause, 2010). Equally, Iran has retaliated mixed messages with greater defiance, indicating that ambiguity can undermine deterrence unless supported by consistent instruments of enforcement (Kroenig, 2018).

In a bigger context, the policy makes the process of nuclear nonproliferation more difficult, because ambiguity compromises unequivocal promises to disarmament or containment. The increasing race of arms between Iran and Israel due to accelerated nuclear development and undeclared nuclear capabilities respectively, makes other states in the Middle East reconsider their nuclear options (Sagan, 2020). Conclusively, although strategic ambiguity offers temporary diplomatic and military benefits, in the long-term the result is questionable as insecurity increases, norms undermine, and the U.S. loses the leadership of nonproliferation regimes within the global sphere.

What are the consequences of the recent U.S.-Israel Attacks against Iran in 2025 and the implications this would have on the stability of the region and the world in general?

An example of a direct confrontation between all three countries in years involved coordinated military attacks allegedly by the United States and Israel on various Iranian nuclear and military facilities in early 2025, which the United States had claimed were some of the most direct in years. Washington and Tel Aviv, explained such actions as preemptive ones to stop the acceleration of the Iranian nuclear enrichment program and prevent the activities of its regional proxies (Byman, 2021; Kroenig, 2018). The attacks have heightened tensions throughout the Middle East to the point that the Iranian-supported forces in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq also fired retaliatory missiles, and the global community started to pay attention to the danger of the wider war in the region (Makdisi, 2024).

Politically, the strikes put a strain on the U.S. relations with its allies in Europe and those who were members of the UN Security Council, as most of them regarded the move as disruptive and possibly as a violation of the international norms of using force (Walt, 2010). Locally, the Iranian leadership interpreted the attack as an aggression and declared to increase its nuclear power in retaliation, therefore, undermining the diplomatic activities on nonproliferation (Takeyh, 2021). The strikes revived the fear of Iranian retaliation and cast doubts on the long-term dependability of American security guarantees in such countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (Gause, 2010).

Security wise, the incident has led to the rapid militarization of major flashpoints in the region and Israel has deployed its missile defense systems on high alert and the U.S. has also sent more naval weapons to the Persian Gulf. On the economic front, the attacks caused a drastic growth of oil prices worldwide as it reflected the fears of the market in encountering the issues of supply disruptions through the Strait of Hormuz and the overall instability within the energy-rich Gulf (Cordesman, 2019). These events underline the implications of U.S.-Israel military action against Iran which is far reaching, the weakness of regional deterrence and the risk of escalation and the pressing necessity of renewed diplomatic action to prevent the wider conflict.

International Response to the Israel-Iran War and US Two Sidedness.

The intensification of the conflicts between Israel and Iran has caused alarm throughout the world with most countries and global organizations denouncing the violence and demanding their restraint. On one hand, the western allies (such as the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) have been ambivalent in approving the right of Israel to defend itself, yet on the other hand, they have promoted de-escalation to avoid the escalation of the regional conflict (Makdisi, 2024). On the contrary, nations in the Global South like South Africa, Brazil, and other non-aligned states, have condemned these military measures of Israel, as well as what they believe to be a two-sided approach on the part of the United States on the resolution to the crisis (Walt and Mearsheimer, 2007). The U.S. has continually placed its stance as that of deterrence and support of its own close ally in the region, but has demonstrated little readiness to punish Israel concerning the use of disproportionate force, such as civilian deaths, and infrastructure attacks (Parsi, 2017).

It has created an impression of U.S. hypocrisy in the use of international law, particularly when compared to its very strong negative reaction to such behavior by other states, including the invasion of Ukraine by Russia or proxy warfare by Iran (Gause, 2010). The inability of the U.S. to advance a balanced peace agenda has further undermined its credibility with non-Western actors, many of whom deem the policies of Washington as further supporting a rules-based order with selective application (Byman, 2021). Additionally, the international community, which is intensified by the media, and the civil society have cast doubt on the ethical and legal aspect of the U.S. military support to Israel in its ongoing civil war (Kaye, 2018). The independent investigation of war crimes by international entities, such as the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), has further brought out the contradiction between multilateral diplomacy and American unilateralism (Takeyh, 2021; Schelling, 2008).

Not only does the U.S. double standard approach to this conflict undermine its position as a neutral intermediary in the Middle East diplomatic process, it also jeopardizes the validity of the overall foreign policy agenda of the U.S. especially in the realms of human rights, nonproliferation, and global governance.

The rise of the conflict between Israel and Iran with the use of covert operations, cyber warfare, and direct military actions between the two parties has attracted acutely critical international attention between 2020 and 2025. International reactions have been seen to be highly polarized geopolitically with the western powers, especially the United States, solidly supporting the right of Israel to defend itself but minimizing or excusing its preemptive attacks on Iranian assets in Syria, Lebanon, and Iran itself (Kaye, 2018). European Union countries have made more subtle reactions by stating they are worried about both the Israeli action and Iranian provocations, but they want them to exercise restraint and revert to diplomacy (Makdisi, 2024). Conversely, the Global South nations such as Non-Aligned Movement members and those of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) have denounced the perceived Israeli aggression which they deem disproportionate and have emphasized the hypocrisy of the U.S. foreign policy in the use of international law (Walt and Mearsheimer, 2007; Parsi, 2017).

The steady diplomatic and military support of Israel provided by the United States, billions in security aid, state-of-the-art weapons, and UN Security Council resolutions veto have only served to strengthen the perception of bias and selective moral attitudes in U.S. world leadership (Cordesman, 2019). Although Washington has been very critical on the influence of Iran via regional proxies and nuclear weaponization, it has hardly been critical on Israel whenever it causes casualties among civilians, assassinations, and breaches of international humanitarian law (Gause, 2010). This seemingly hypocritical nature has

compromised the credibility of the U.S. as a neutral actor to Middle Eastern, African, and Asian states that see American policy as favoring strategic allies over universal values (Byman, 2021).

Calls of impartial investigations and diplomatic intervention have been growing louder, as more and more UN member states, civil society groups, and human rights organizations seek to further reinforce demands to investigate the war impartially and intervene diplomatically in 2023-2025. But the United States being selective and not wanting to pressure Israel has only increased the divide between the Western and non-Western blocks, and questions the viability and validity of a U.S.-directed international order (Takeyh, 2021). Such trends are indicative not only of the weakness of international consensus over the Middle East peace, but also of the unresolved problem of balancing power politics and normative commitments in U.S. foreign policy.

The United Nations Organization (U.N.O) has been a key, but progressively limited, participant in the reaction to the rising military conflicts in Middle East, especially considering the rising tensions between Iran and Israel between the years 2020 to 2025. With the armed exchanges and targeted assassinations on the rise as well as the proxy warfare, the UN has always demanded the need to de-escalate, follow the international law, and safeguard civilians (Makdisi, 2024). Security Council has sat down several times in emergency meetings involving cross-border strikes and dangers to the stability of the region yet, these attempts to come up with the binding resolutions have usually been prevented by the permanent members, with the most notable being the United States, owing to geopolitical alliance as well as veto authority (Walt and Mearsheimer, 2007).

The U.N. Secretary-General and other agencies, such as the Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and Human Rights Council, have made firm statements on the issue of Iran assisting non-state armed groups and Israel using disproportionate force in populated regions (Byman, 2021; Takeyh, 2021). The organization has also underlined the necessity of renewed diplomacy and renewal of the Iran nuclear deal stating that a further escalation will result in the full-scale war in the region with disastrous humanitarian outcomes (Parsi, 2017). Through these efforts, the capability of the U.N. to compel accountability or create mechanisms of peace has been crippled by conflicting interests between major powers and strategic protection of relevant players in the region, particularly the U.S. with regard to protecting Israel (Gause, 2010).

Moreover, the U.N. has been weakened by the increasing belief, particularly among the Global South countries, that the organization is working on a dualistic platform, where strong measures are taken against certain violators of international law but others are not pursued (Sagan, 2020). This is a crisis of legitimacy that is indicative of the larger issue of multilateral diplomacy in an ever more fragmented world of geopolitical concerns taking precedence over collective security imperatives.

Major Findings Discussion.

Through the analysis, it is seen that the tactical and structural roles of the strategic ambiguity of the United States in the Iran-Israel conflict. To begin with, it will allow the U.S to afford maneuvering in a very volatile region without necessarily having to engage in military combat with Iran, as doing so would jeopardize the security structure in Israel. Nonetheless, such a latitude has been at the expense of credibility and consistency, manifested in the movement of red lines, non-enforcement of nuclear contracts, and unequal use of international law.

Second, the research concludes that vague incorporation is perpetuated by military assistance, diplomatic maneuverings and rhetoric restraint, as opposed to outright treaties or legally binding engagements. The period of the JCPOA with Obama, the period of maximum pressure with Trump, and the efforts of Biden to

enter the engagement once again are all manifestations of ambiguity, but none of it can provide an accurate answer to the relationships of conflict that underlie the whole picture.

Thirdly, the international reaction to the war has revealed geopolitical rifts that were significant especially on the issue of U.S. perceived double standards. As the U.S. upholds democracy and nonproliferation, its unbending support of Israel, despite controversial military activities, has attracted the wrath of its friends as well as enemies. Also, the shrinking effectiveness of multilateral diplomacy in solving deep-rooted Middle East conflicts is reflected in the weak influence of the United Nations.

Summary and Conclusion and Recommendation.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that strategic ambiguity has given the United States the ability to strike a balance between its interests between Iran and Israel, but its value is waning in the age of increased polarization, new alliances, and normative pressures. The policy has created short term deterrence and long term mistrust which has undermined the U.S. credibility as a mediator and a normative leader. The absence of transparency, accountability, and consistency does not only threaten the stability of the region, but also makes the world believe in biased and self-serving diplomacy.

Summary of Key Insights

- i. The strategic ambiguity is one of the understandings of the U.S. policy in the Middle East, changing in different administrations, though retaining its fundamental logic of deterrence without direct involvement.
- ii. Asymmetrical warfare, ideological hostility and foreign pressure, especially by the U.S., remain some of the factors that define the Iran-Israel conflict.
- iii. The reaction of the world shows that multilateral governance is in crisis such that institutions such as UN are unable to act in response to chaos in the face of intense great power rivalry.
- iv. The United States of America is becoming questionable as a global peace broker considering its selectivity in applying international norms.
- v. Recommendations**
- vi. America must re-strategize Strategic ambiguity: To deter war, change ambiguous red lines to more specific limits that are enforceable yet allow the U.S. to stay engaged in diplomatic approaches.
- vii. Balance security and accountability: Maintain the support to the Israeli defense but also making them accountable about their actions that contravene international law to maintain credibility.
- viii. The UN ought to enforce the enforcement: Build multi-lateral structures where only the violations can be investigated to ensure de-escalation without having the U.S. authorization.

- ix. Increase Diplomatic Visibility: Re-energize channels of dialogue like the P5+1 by incorporating more Global South views into it.
- x. The regional actors such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, UAE must contribute to regional security discussions: Have a Middle East Security Forum, which is dedicated to deconfliction and nonproliferation that is not superpower-sensitive.
- xi. It is necessary to increase multidisciplinary research: Encourage additional research on the nexus of ambiguity, identity politics, and deterrence, especially in multipolar conflict regions.

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