

Iran's Nuclear Ambitions and Implications for India's West Asia Policy

Introduction

Iran's nuclear program has developed quickly over the last few years, changing the whole West Asian strategic equation. Until mid-2025, [Tehran](#) has maintained its development of uranium enrichment capacity while negotiating its ambitions with tense talks with the United States (US) and global powers. Diplomatic attempts to revive a nuclear deal (a replica of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) have been ongoing, but conciliatory positions and distrust have inhibited progress. The US during the Trump administration undertook direct negotiations with Iran, promising sanctions relief in return for restricting Iran's nuclear program. [Iranian](#) negotiators have, however, required firm assurances that sanctions will be lifted and Iran's 'Sovereign Right' to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes will be recognised. In closed door [briefings](#), US government officials have urged Iran to stop enriching uranium altogether, while Iran has firmly declined to give up enrichment as an 'Attack on its national sovereignty'. Recent negotiations (facilitated by Oman) have generated proposals but no breakthrough, for instance, in May 2025, Reuters cited Iranian sources as saying that Tehran could temporarily suspend enrichment for a year—exporting some of its enriched inventory or [burning](#) it down into fuel plates—if the US accepted Iran's right to peaceful enrichment and unfroze Iranian oil revenues (valued at USD 6 bn) frozen under sanctions. Iran's foreign ministry quickly dismissed this report, asserting again that 'Enrichment in Iran is a non-negotiable principle'.

Iran's Strategic Motivations and Regional Ambitions

[Iran's](#) quest for nuclear capacity needs to be understood in the context of its security situation and regional policy. The Islamic Republic of Iran has always claimed that its program is intended to ensure energy independence and deterrence, but external commentators suggest that strategic considerations impel Tehran too. Iran's leaders proudly invoke deterrence against perceived threats—particularly Israel and the US—as a primary driver for nuclear development. An Israeli study gauges that Iran's [objectives](#)

include the deterrence of its enemies, regional influence aspirations, and support for domestic legitimacy, even suggesting the weapons' potential use as a last measure against enemies. Iranian authorities themselves have talked as though there is already a nuclear 'Threshold'. Iranian commanders were reported by the media as saying that Iran "Have all the technical ingredients" for a bomb and that if Iran is attacked, it would get nuclear weapons, hailing the deterrent value of such status already gained. In parliament, hardliners have openly discussed making a bomb, suggesting that nuclear capability is becoming viewed as a bargaining tool and a deterrence against attack.

[Analysts](#) also highlight that Iran's nuclear ambitions are part of broader regional ambition. An Iranian nuclear capability would profoundly alter West Asia's power dynamics, possibly consolidating Tehran as a significant pole of influence. Iran's network of alliances—from Hezbollah in Lebanon to the Shia militias in Iraq, to the Houthis in Yemen—constitute a so-called 'Axis of Resistance', which [Tehran](#) employs to project influence. Nuclear status might make Tehran's backing for these allies bolder and discourage outside interference. Saudi and Emirati rulers quite understandably see a nuclear Iran as unacceptable, threatening that it would generate an arms race or even war. Saudi Arabia's rulers (at King Salman's initiative) recently, for example, sent an urgent message to [the supreme leader](#) of Iran, stating that 'Take the US deal seriously' or face war with Israel. This rude threat adds emphasis to the dread that Iran's nuclear breakout could trigger Israeli military or broader war. In brief, Iran's nuclear program is motivated by a [combination](#) of deterrence thinking, regional power projection, and domestic politics: it gives Tehran diplomatic leverage and national pride, even as it unsettles the strategic balance in the region.

Impact on India's Foreign Policy, Defence, and Energy

Iran's nuclear path has far-reaching consequences for Indian policy in West Asia, involving foreign policy, defence strategy, and energy policy. [New Delhi](#) has traditionally had pragmatic relations with Iran—a leading partner in energy as well as connectivity—but has also sought to develop close ties with the US, Israel, and the Gulf Arab states. A nuclear Iran will challenge India's capacity to manage these relationships and safeguard its interests.

[India's](#) foreign policy has always prioritised strategic autonomy and equidistance. Iran is, on the one hand, a good ally: New Delhi has fostered cooperation in infrastructure and trade (primarily through Chabahar port and the North-South Transport Corridor) and has found Iranian oil useful in the past. Conversely, India is an ally of the US and Israel on security issues and has increasingly fostered close relations with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other Gulf states. In practice, India has tended to tread the fine line. For instance, India voted against Iran in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 2005 at the US prompting but also [emphasised Iran's right](#) to peaceful nuclear energy. India today continues to stand by the philosophy of non-proliferation without publicly confronting Iran. India will probably stress diplomatic measures [and the IAEA](#) oversight as much as possible, instead of supporting coercive action. [New Delhi](#) would likely go along in the back room with global anxieties—urging restraint and backing sanctions relief only after rigorous verification—without cutting diplomatic relations with Tehran. In fact, in May 2025, India invited Iran's foreign minister for a high-level Joint Commission Meeting, reaffirming collaboration on trade, connectivity, and regional issues. This implies that India wants to keep the lines open.

A nuclear Iran would make [India's diplomatic](#) balancing act more difficult. India could be pressured by the US and Israel to take a tougher line—e.g., by backing snapback sanctions or reducing economic engagement but risk losing Iran (and, therefore, other Asian and Muslim allies) in the process. Within the foreign ministry, Indian analysts advocate a 'Pragmatic' stance: engage with all parties. India has tried to 'Prioritise its national interest without getting directly involved in the [regional politics](#)' by developing close relationships throughout the region. Washington, which sees India as an ally, will look to India to support diplomatic action to contain Iran's nuclear ambition, but may also tacitly accept India's own strategic initiatives (such as Chabahar), provided they do not openly challenge sanctions. In all, India's foreign policy will probably reiterate the vision of a nuclear-free Middle East but in a quiet [hedging manner](#) by diversifying alliances.

India's defence interests are [overshadowed](#) by the dangers on its northern and western perimeters, yet events in West Asia do have security implications. A nuclear-armed Iran may increase the potential of regional hostilities spreading into India's domain,

for instance, if Israel or the US pre-emptively attacked Iranian installations, or if Iran hit back by attacking shipping routes. [India](#) could be required to enhance its naval stance in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea to safeguard its sea interests. Already, India's navy guards off the Gulf of Aden and Horn of Africa to safeguard trade, and a troubled [Persian Gulf](#) could necessitate more escort and monitoring. India would also be [vulnerable](#) to potential danger to its Gulf diaspora: millions of Indians are employed in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf states, and any war in the region would put them in danger. New Delhi would need solid contingency plans for evacuation as well as crisis management.

Strategic Risks and Opportunities for India

The primary risk is strategic destabilisation. A nuclear or near-nuclear [Iran](#) would provoke a regional arms race. Saudi Arabia and Egypt have made statements that they would seek nuclear weapons if Iran did so, and Turkey's aspirations have also been mentioned. Such proliferation would significantly reduce stability in the region and increase the likelihood of conventional or nuclear war. In the [near term](#), any military conflict over Iran's program (say, Israeli bombing of Iranian reactors) would put Indian ships or citizens at risk. Indian national security strategists fear disruptions in the Persian Gulf: even a single incident can drive up oil prices and pose a threat to Indian merchant shipping. Terrorists could use regional tensions as a cover to strike at Indian targets.

Conversely, a [diplomatic resolution](#) to Iran's nuclear problem may present opportunities for India. If Iran were to accept constraints on its program, relief on sanctions might restore trade and investment. India would quickly jump at the chance to [resume](#) some Iranian oil imports, taking advantage of its long-standing commercial relationship. Indian firms might invest in Iranian energy and infrastructure ventures again. The Chabahar Port project, for example, could speed up with less political resistance. Stable Iran would also benefit India's Afghanistan and Central Asia connectivity policy.

Conclusion

Iran's [fast-tracked](#) nuclear ambitions have become a pivotal variable redefining the geopolitical landscape of West Asia, with profound implications for India's foreign policy,

security profile, and energy policy. As Iran moves closer to [nuclear status](#) in the face of stalling diplomatic talks and rising regional tensions, India is confronted with the tricky challenge of protecting its multidimensional interests in the highly polarised context. A nuclear-armed Iran portends the threat of regional proliferation, raises the danger of military confrontation, and destabilises key energy arteries—all of which have immediate implications for India's economic security and expatriates in the Gulf.

Mohammad Taha Ali is currently pursuing Masters in Conflict Analysis and Peace Building at Jamia Millia Islamia. Prior to this, he completed a Bachelor's degree in History from Delhi University. His academic journey reflects a deep-rooted interest in understanding geopolitical dynamics, conflict studies, and historical perspectives. Through his coursework and research, he aims to contribute to the field of peace and conflict resolution

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