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RESEARCH PAPER

Shifting Sands: From Alliance to Adversity Tracing Iranian-Israeli Relations before the Islamic Revolution and Envisioning Future Prospects amidst Political Transformation

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the shifting dynamics of Iranian-Israeli relations, focusing on the transition from cooperative ties before the 1979 Iranian Revolution to the antagonistic stance that followed. Initially, under the Pahlavi regime, Iran and Israel shared diplomatic and economic connections, driven by mutual interests in regional stability. However, the revolution marked a turning point, embedding ideological conflict and intensifying geopolitical tensions between the two nations. Using historical data and contemporary analysis, The findings suggest that Iran's post-revolution ideology has fueled hostilities, while regional conflicts have widened the divide. A regime shift could open pathways for dialogue or further strain relations, depending on evolving priorities. To foster future diplomatic prospects, the article recommends engaging in backchannel diplomacy and utilizing third-party mediators to facilitate understanding and reduce conflict risks in this volatile region.

| **KEYWORDS** | Conflict Resolution, Cultural Ties, Geopolitical Tensions, Historical Diplomacy, Ideological Conflict, Iranian Revolution, Middle East Politics, Pahlavi Regime, Strategic Calculations |

Introduction

The intricate tapestry of Iranian-Israeli relations is marked by a complex interplay of historical, political, and ideological factors. This article delves into the evolution of these ties, particularly before the transmigrating 1979 Islamic Revolution, and explores the potential trajectories of the relationship in the event of a regime change in Iran. Before the revolution, Iran, under the Shah's regime, maintained a pragmatic foreign policy that often aligned with Western interests, including those of Israel. The two nations shared concerns about Soviet expansionism and sought to counterbalance Soviet influence in the region. This strategic convergence led to covert cooperation in various fields, including intelligence sharing and military assistance. However, this period of relative cordiality was disrupted by the 1979 revolution, which ushered in a radical shift in Iran's foreign policy. The Islamic Republic, founded on principles of anti-imperialism and anti-Zionism, established a hostile relationship with Israel. The two nations became sworn enemies, engaged in a proxy war through various regional conflicts. This adversarial dynamic has persisted for decades, fueled by mutual animosity and ideological differences. As Iran faces domestic challenges and international isolation, speculation about a potential regime change has intensified. Such a change could fundamentally alter the landscape of Iranian-Israeli relations. A post-revolutionary Iran may adopt a more moderate foreign policy, seeking normalization of ties with regional adversaries,

including Israel. However, deep-seated historical grievances and ideological divides could hinder such a rapprochement.

Our previous study delves into the multifaceted world of Iran-Israel relations, where history, politics, and socio-economics converge to shape not only regional but global dynamics. Since 1985, the two states have engaged in a proxy conflict significantly influencing Middle Eastern geopolitics, deeply rooted in ideological and political discord. This research employs a qualitative literature review to investigate the trajectory of Iranian and Israeli relations, particularly their military clashes, examining how their relationship transformed from cooperative ties pre-1979 to enduring enmity in the post-revolution era. Our findings reveal the intricate layers of these relations, marked by historical alliances that shifted dramatically following Iran's 1979 revolution. The study carefully explores the emergence of political antagonisms, regional power struggles, and socio-economic factors underscoring their complex interactions. As global attention increasingly focuses on Iran-Israel tensions, this research offers a detailed analysis of these shifting dynamics, contributing valuable insight into their impact on broader Middle Eastern stability (Bukhari, et al., 2024).

This research is continuation of our previous study. This article will examine the historical context of Iranian-Israeli relations, analyze the factors that shaped their trajectory, and explore the potential implications of a regime change in Iran. By understanding the past and present of this complex relationship, we can gain valuable insights into its future prospects and the broader geopolitical implications for the Middle East.

Literature Review

Since Israel's establishment in 1948, the relationship between Iran and Israel has transformed significantly, primarily due to regional strategic interests rather than ideological alignment. Initially, in the 1970s, both nations cooperated closely, with Israel supplying military equipment to Iran, which acted as a regional ally against threats like Arab nationalism and Soviet influence. However, the 1979 Iranian Revolution marked a turning point, leading to a rapid deterioration in relations as Iran shifted its focus to supporting groups opposed to Israel, notably Hezbollah in Lebanon, and providing arms and funding to Palestinian factions. By the early 2000s, Iran's pursuit of nuclear capabilities further strained the relationship, raising Israeli concerns about an existential threat. Historically, Iran had previously aided Jewish refugees from Iraq post-1948, and during the Pahlavi regime, Israel nurtured close ties with Iran, emphasizing collaboration in defense and agriculture. This complex history illustrates how geopolitical changes can significantly shift alliances and adversarial dynamics between the two nations (Khan, et. al., 2019; Muzaffar, et. al., 2018; Cohen, 2017).

In today's interconnected world, the geopolitical dynamics of Iranian-Israeli relations profoundly influence both regional stability and global economic landscapes, especially concerning infrastructure development. The historical transition from cooperation to enmity between these two nations has been further complicated by ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, particularly in Palestine and Ukraine. These conflicts create complex challenges for key economic corridors like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the India-Middle East Economic Corridor (IMEEC), disrupting trade routes, shifting investment patterns, and reshaping regional alliances. To effectively navigate this intricate landscape, it is essential to understand the interactions between military actions, geopolitical tensions, and economic initiatives. Leaders must prioritize dialogue over conflict and cooperation over division to foster

lasting peace and stability. By promoting mutual respect and understanding among all nations involved, they can enhance global trade and pave the way for a more prosperous future in the region (Bukhari, et al., 2024).

The situation between Iran and Israel deteriorated significantly during the 2006 Lebanon War, when Hezbollah's attacks on Israel escalated military conflict and extended Iranian influence to Israel's borders. Following this, Israel's concerns intensified over Iran's nuclear program, particularly due to statements from Iranian leaders questioning Israel's right to exist. By 2010, fears escalated further, prompting the Israeli government to consider military strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities while also seeking international support to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. The relationship between the two countries is driven by strategic calculations amid broader geopolitical trends: Israel seeks to protect itself from perceived Iranian threats, while Iran aims to assert its power and challenge Israel's existence. This ongoing tension indicates that their adversarial relationship is likely to persist, especially if the current Iranian government remains in power (Simon, 2010).

The Israel-Palestine and Lebanon conflict is a crucial factor in the evolving Iranian-Israeli relations, rooted in a history of grievances and human suffering. A sustainable resolution is vital for both regional stability and global security. The ongoing violence highlights the need for collective action and dialogue, especially given Iran's strategic ties to the Palestinian cause. Addressing root causes, such as promoting Palestinian self-determination and fostering communication, is essential. Recognizing Palestinian statehood and encouraging Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories could pave the way for coexistence and reduce tensions with Iran. The international community must reaffirm its commitment to a two-state solution, enhance humanitarian efforts, and promote regional cooperation. By prioritizing justice and human dignity, there is potential to transform conflict into hope, positively influencing future Iranian-Israeli relations and creating a peaceful future for Israelis, Palestinians, and Lebanese (Bukhari, et al., 2024).

Indonesia's economy, heavily reliant on international markets, may face significant challenges if a direct conflict arises between Iran, Israel, and Arab nations. To mitigate the economic impact, several strategies are crucial. First, maintaining financial stability is essential; coordinated efforts by Bank Indonesia (BI) and the Financial Services Authority (OJK) should focus on effective monetary and macroprudential policies to support the rupiah, prevent market panic, and attract foreign investment. Second, Indonesia must diversify its energy sources to secure stable supplies and reduce dependence on imported oil, especially as global oil prices could surge due to conflict. This can be achieved by promoting efficient petroleum use and investing in renewable energy technologies like solar and wind. Finally, active diplomacy and international cooperation are vital; Indonesia should advocate for peace between Iran and Israel while collaborating with neighboring countries and international organizations to seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict (Lituhayu, et al., 2024).

Recent military actions by Israel and its allies against Iranian threats, coupled with U.S. military dominance, may push Iran to pursue nuclear weapons for security, despite no current evidence of advancing its nuclear program. Tensions surrounding Iran's nuclear activities are rising, with retired General Frank McKenzie warning that this could lead countries like Saudi Arabia and Turkey to consider similar nuclear capabilities, potentially sparking an arms race. The recent exchanges of strikes highlight Iran's increasing military confidence and willingness to engage in direct conflict, raising regional tensions. Additionally, Iran's military presence in Syria has become

unsustainable, revealing vulnerabilities in its air defense systems. While the U.S. has enhanced the defensive capabilities of regional partners, doubts remain about Israel and its allies' effectiveness in responding to a large-scale missile attack from Iran. Overall, the situation calls for a reassessment of diplomatic and military strategies amid growing unpredictability in the region (Mahmoudian, 2024).

The relationship between Iran and Israel is a complex and contentious element of Middle Eastern geopolitics, marked by a history of ideological conflict and strategic rivalry since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. Animosity has characterized their interactions, fueled by Iran's support for Palestinian causes and its anti-Western stance, with Israel viewing Iran's revolutionary fervor and its alliances with groups like Hezbollah and Hamas as existential threats. The rivalry intensified with the onset of a protracted proxy conflict starting in 1985, leading to direct confrontations, such as the 2006 Lebanon War and a 2018 Iranian attack on Israel in retaliation for an Israeli strike. The ongoing discord is underpinned by various historical, political, and socioeconomic factors, including competing geopolitical ambitions and deep-rooted ideological differences, alongside complexities related to trade and energy. This research aims to illuminate these dynamics and their implications for regional stability and global geopolitics, focusing on how the aftermath of the 1979 Iranian Revolution has transformed Iran's foreign policy, fostering anti-Western sentiments and a commitment to Palestinian causes, thereby solidifying its enmity toward Israel (Bukhari, et, al., 2024).

Nuclear weapon energy is released through four main mechanisms: thermal radiation (30-50%), fallout radiation (5-10%), blast effects (40-60%), and ionizing radiation (5%), with variations depending on weapon design and detonation conditions. Thermal energy, measured in calories per square centimeter, increases with yield, potentially igniting fires in urban areas, especially when fluencies exceed 10 cal/cm², although the exact threshold for mass fires is debated. Factors like cloud cover can further enhance thermal radiation and fire risks. Ionizing radiation is released immediately, with fatal doses affecting areas up to 1,500 meters for lower-yield devices and 2,500 meters for larger ones. Fallout radiation creates a downwind plume influenced by atmospheric conditions, while blast effects cause severe structural damage and injuries from shock waves and flying debris, with injury estimates varying widely even at low pressure (Dallas, et al., 2013).

The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), established in 1921, is an independent, nonpartisan organization that provides resources and insights on international issues for government officials, business leaders, and the public. It facilitates expert discussions, conducts independent research, publishes *Foreign Affairs*, and supports task forces for policy recommendations without taking institutional positions. CFR's Center for Preventive Action addresses potential crises affecting U.S. interests. A recent memo from CFR discusses Israel's possible military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities due to concerns over its uranium enrichment and plutonium production. Key targets would include sites in Isfahan, Natanz, and Arak. While Israel has the military capability to execute such strikes, the operation would be complex and fraught with diplomatic and military risks, particularly concerning airspace over hostile neighboring countries (Simon, 2022).

This study examines the complex U.S.-Iran relationship, particularly the lasting effects of the 1953 CIA intervention, which led to the overthrow of Prime Minister Mossadegh and the rise of the Shah, fostering anti-American sentiment that culminated in the 1979 Islamic Revolution. It also addresses post-revolution developments, including the Iran hostage crisis, nuclear negotiations, and regional power struggles. By analyzing contemporary discourses, the study suggests theoretical frameworks and policy

directives to promote dialogue and reduce tensions. In the broader context of "Shifting Sands: Allies to Adversaries," understanding the historical roots of U.S.-Iran relations is essential, as the ideological shifts post-revolution have influenced Iran's interactions with both the U.S. and Israel. The ongoing legacy of anti-Western sentiment continues to shape the dynamics of Iranian-Israeli relations, highlighting the need for constructive engagement to achieve sustainable peace in the Middle East, where the interactions between Iran, Israel, and the U.S. are critical (Bukhari, et, al., 2024).

Iran has consistently condemned Israel's military operations in Gaza, reflecting its longstanding opposition rooted in the Palestinian issue. The two nations are often seen as adversaries, with Iran warning that Israel's actions could escalate tensions with Hamas and affect the broader region. Historically, Iran and Israel had a cooperative relationship during the Pahlavi dynasty, with Iran initially recognizing Israel in 1948 and advocating for a federative solution to the Palestinian conflict. However, this relationship soured with the rise of anti-Zionist sentiment, particularly under Prime Minister Mosaddegh, and deteriorated sharply after the 1979 Iranian Revolution. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict revolves around territorial disputes, leading to cycles of violence where Hamas attacks Israel, prompting military retaliation, resulting in significant casualties on both sides (Anwar & Abbas, 2024).

The Syrian war has entered a new phase, with Bashar al-Assad's regime strengthening and increasingly relying on Iran, which Israel considers its primary adversary. In response, Israel seeks to restore its strategic position while facing challenges from Iranian-backed groups like Hezbollah and various militias established in Syria, supported by Russia. Despite U.S. efforts, countering Iran's advances remains difficult. Israel is particularly concerned about southern Syria, aiming to prevent Hezbollah and allied militias from setting up offensive positions near the 1974 armistice line, which could threaten Israel and Lebanon. Currently, a de-escalation zone established by Jordan, Russia, and the U.S. has kept these groups at bay, but recent territorial gains by regime forces raise concerns of a potential breach. Israel has imposed strict limits on Iranian military infrastructure in Syria and disrupted its establishment, complicating military operations further due to militia integration into the Syrian army. The risk of miscalculation leading to conflict is heightened, especially with an assertive U.S.-Saudi strategy against Iran. While neither Hezbollah nor Israel seeks significant escalation, broader hostilities remain a possibility. Russia plays a crucial role in mediating agreements to prevent escalation, with an ideal outcome being limited Iranian military assets while maintaining influence in Syria. However, a return to the pre-2011 status of limited Iranian presence seems unlikely, and further escalation would harm all parties involved and destabilize the region. A gradual stabilization process is essential for a lasting resolution (Peace, 2018).

The Copenhagen school suggests broadening securitization theory beyond military threats, but this expansion risks over generalization due to the varying nature of "existential" threats across contexts. This study highlights the impact of uncertainty about a threat's existence on the securitization process, emphasizing the importance of context in framing security issues. It notes that personal attributes of leaders, such as beliefs and emotions, significantly influence the effectiveness of securitization narratives, despite being difficult to quantify. Historical cases, like Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's election and Israel's actions during the 2006 Lebanon War, illustrate how context shapes leaders' strategies. The study calls for refining securitization theory to account for how leaders manage uncertainty and seek support for extraordinary measures, introducing the concept of "populist securitization." This framework examines how leaders invoke perceived existential threats to advance their agendas, blending academic theory with

political philosophy and illustrating the interplay between rhetorical appeals and public response during crises (Leslie, 2019).

Israel usually has the upper hand in its conflicts with Iran and its allies, but the surprise attack on October 7, 2023, raised doubts about the effectiveness of Israeli intelligence, especially from Mossad and Aman. This analysis looks at the Israeli-Iranian conflict by examining divisions within Iran and how decisions are made between the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Iranian government. One key event was the Israeli airstrike on April 1, 2024, which targeted the Iranian Consulate in Damascus. This strike was intended to provoke an Iranian response so that Israel could test its defense systems and gather intelligence on Iran's military strategies. Tensions escalated after two significant Iranian missteps: a large retaliatory strike on April 13 that ultimately backfired and a threatening public statement from the Iranian President. In light of these developments, Israel is likely to respond cautiously, focusing on intelligence gathering while trying to avoid significant casualties. Iran might retaliate by targeting U.S. interests in the Hormuz Straits, likely using its naval forces. Israel's military options include submarines, ballistic missiles, and advanced fighter jets. The timing of any Israeli response will depend on intelligence assessments and discussions with the U.S. government, with potential targets including key Iranian nuclear facilities.

The relationship between Israel and Iran has shifted from initial cooperation to deep hostility. In the early years, both nations shared geopolitical interests, particularly concerns about Arab nationalism and Soviet influence, leading to a pragmatic partnership. Even after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, cooperation continued as Israel saw Iran as a counterbalance to Iraq. However, by the 1990s, the relationship deteriorated due to Israel's Periphery Doctrine, which sought alliances with non-Arab nations. Iran's new regime rejected Israel's legitimacy, increasing animosity, especially under leaders like Ahmadinejad. Iran's support for groups like Hezbollah and Hamas raised Israeli fears about its nuclear ambitions and regional dominance. Ayatollah Khamenei's characterization of Israeli civilians as enemies highlights the entrenched hostility, making Iran a significant security threat to Israel today (Kumar, 2024).

Israel's energy development has been significantly challenged by ongoing conflicts, particularly in the strategically important Negev region. Historically reliant on energy imports, Israel's landscape began to shift after the peace treaty with Egypt, leading to the establishment of a gas pipeline in 2000, although it faced setbacks from terrorist attacks. Recent natural gas discoveries off Israel's coast have transformed regional relationships, enabling exports to Egypt and Jordan by 2019 and enhancing diplomatic ties. However, Iran's support for Hamas complicates Israel's energy status, while tensions over transport routes, especially through the Strait of Hormuz, involve broader regional conflicts. The Abraham Accords of 2020 have positioned Israel as a potential energy corridor for Saudi oil, but plans are hindered by resistance from groups like Hamas targeting Israeli energy infrastructure. Current infrastructure projects, including a pipeline to Cyprus and an electricity interconnector with Greece, are still under assessment for feasibility. (Dekel, 2024).

Literature on international relations views conflict as a fundamental aspect of global interactions, rooted in historical and geopolitical contexts. Geopolitical scholar Colin S. Gray emphasizes that conflicts are central to geopolitics, citing Sir Halford Mackinder's Heartland Theory to illustrate how geography influences conflict risks. Concepts like shatterbelts and checkerboards reflect regional tensions and rivalries. The dynamics in the Middle East, South Caucasus, and Central Asia significantly affect the Iran-Israel conflict, often leading to proxy wars. Recent developments, including the U.S.

invasion of Iraq and the Arab Spring, have diminished traditional Arab powers and U.S. influence, allowing Iran to expand its regional role. As the geopolitical landscape evolves, regional players and global powers seek solutions that align with changing realities while protecting their interests (Adel, 2019).

The mutual nuclear relationship between superpowers evolved from the early 1950s to the end of the Cold War, progressing through phases of developing stable mutual deterrence. Initial efforts to enhance nuclear stability, including second-strike capabilities and arms control, began in the late 1950s. While there were periods of relative stability, the 1960s and 70s saw crises that nearly escalated to nuclear conflict, often due to misinterpretations of intentions among rivals. Factors such as political relations, historical contexts, regime stability, and technical systems contributed to deterrence stability, though debates continue regarding its applicability to regional dynamics, exemplified by India and Pakistan. Both nations developed nuclear capabilities in the late 1980s, with their interactions marked by crises, especially over Kashmir. During a 1990 crisis, Pakistan's nuclear advancements were seen as a deterrent but did not significantly influence India's decisions, with American diplomacy aiding in de-escalation. In later crises, like the Kargil conflict, both nations miscalculated each other's nuclear capabilities. Regarding Iran, its leadership views threats from nuclear powers like the U.S. and Israel, driving its nuclear program for deterrence and regional dominance. Although Iran denies seeking nuclear weapons, its actions, influenced by limited capabilities and an ideological rivalry with Israel, raise tensions. The prospect of Iranian nuclearization is seen as an existential threat by Israel, prompting military and diplomatic responses. The likelihood of Iran employing first-use nuclear strategies is complicated by the risks of severe retaliation from Israel and the U.S., making such a scenario unlikely even for an ideologically extreme regime (Evron, 2008).

Numerous studies reveal a troubling pattern of human rights violations faced by Palestinians under Israeli occupation, significantly affecting their social, economic, and psychological well-being. Key mechanisms of oppression include military actions, such as checkpoints and raids, leading to civilian casualties and property destruction, alongside the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements that encroach on Palestinian land, resulting in land confiscation and community displacement. Administrative detention allows for imprisonment without charges based on undisclosed evidence, impacting thousands of Palestinians, including children. Restrictions on movement severely limit access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities, exacerbating socio-economic disparities and entrenching poverty. These violations disrupt family ties, hinder livelihoods, and induce trauma, especially among children. The systematic oppression constitutes serious breaches of international law, underscoring the urgent need for accountability and justice. Despite extensive documentation, Palestinian voices often go unheard, and calls for accountability remain largely unaddressed, perpetuating a cycle of impunity. The humanitarian crisis worsens due to Israeli military operations, while human rights groups face political pressure and legal constraints, leading to insufficient international responses hindered by political interests and power dynamics, limiting effective action to address the root causes of the conflict and ensure accountability for violations (Bukhari, et al., 2024).

Material and Methods

The research methodology will utilize a mixed approach, combining both primary and secondary sources to analyze Iranian-Israeli relations. Primary sources will include diplomatic cables, memoirs of key policymakers, official documents, and contemporary news articles, while secondary sources will consist of academic books, journal articles, and

historical analyses for contextualization. The study will compare significant historical events, focusing on the evolution of foreign policy objectives before and after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, influenced by domestic and international factors. A theoretical framework based on realism, liberalism, and constructivism will guide the analysis of power dynamics and national interests. Scenario analysis will explore potential outcomes of regime change in Iran, considering domestic politics and regional shifts. Archival research will also be conducted to identify key themes and trends in Iranian foreign policy strategies over time.

Results and Discussion

Jews Relations with Persians

The relationship between Jews and Persians spans thousands of years, marked by both cooperation and conflict. It began with the Israelites' enslavement in Egypt and their Exodus, during which they received the Torah, foundational to their governance. In the 1st Millennium BCE, under Kings David and Solomon, the Israelites established a thriving civilization and built Solomon's Temple. However, following Solomon's death, the kingdom split, leading to instability, the Assyrian conquest, and subsequent Jewish diasporas. Prominent figures like Daniel and Esther served in the Achaemenid courts, promoting Israelite beliefs among diverse cultures. This era influenced major Eastern religions, with ethical themes in Buddhism and Confucianism resonating with biblical teachings. Scholars suggest connections between Jesus and Eastern philosophies, positing that figures like Siddhartha may have origins linked to the Lost Tribes of Israel. The text suggests further exploration of these interconnections and Eastern interpretations of biblical prophecies.

Islamic Conquest and Medieval Period

The Islamic conquest of Persia in the 7th century significantly altered the status of Jews, who were recognized as "People of the Book" and permitted to practice their faith under specific laws, albeit with some restrictions. During this time, the Safavid Empire emerged amidst conflicts with the Ottoman Empire, particularly under leaders like Ismail I and Muhammad Khudabanda. The Safavid forces faced fierce opposition from Sunni neighbors, resulting in frequent territorial shifts in cities such as Herat and Mashad. The Ottomans, under Selim, decisively defeated the Safavids at the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514, expanding their control over regions like Kurdistan and Baghdad. Although the Safavid Empire, particularly under Abbas I, saw a resurgence and reclaimed lost territories, sectarian tensions between Shia Safavids and Sunni Ottomans persisted. These historical sectarian roots, stemming from early Islamic leadership disputes, continue to influence contemporary conflicts, such as the ongoing tensions in Yemen. The Sunni position within the Ottoman Empire evolved over time, shaped by earlier teachings and the Abbasid era, complicating democratic governance in the Islamic world. Throughout the medieval period, Jews in Persian cities thrived, contributing to commerce, science, and philosophy, and developing rich cultural traditions influenced by Persian literary forms (Manan & Taran, 2020).

Modern Period

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Jews in Persia experienced escalating pressure and persecution amid rising nationalism and social reforms, prompting many to emigrate to the United States and Europe. Despite these challenges, they preserved their distinct identity and culture. The Pahlavi era (1925–1979) marked a period of

improved status for Jews under Reza Shah and his son, Mohammad Reza, as modernization and secularism benefited minority groups. However, the growth of nationalism also revived anti-Jewish sentiments among certain factions. The text contrasts the Islamic and Western worlds, highlighting figures like Khomeini, who branded the U.S. as the "Great Satan" and portrayed the Iranian people as "soldiers of God." Khomeini's revolutionary rhetoric, backed by Shia clerics and media, emphasized themes of martyrdom and national identity, as underscored by Article 152 of Iran's constitution, which prioritizes the nation's Islamic identity (Shah & Din, 2019).

The 1979 Islamic Revolution drastically changed the status of Jews in Iran, leading to heightened scrutiny despite the government's claims of support for religious minorities. While many Jews emigrated, a small community persists, navigating their identity within a predominantly Muslim society. The relationship between Israel and Iran has since evolved into a nuclear arms race, with Iran transitioning from peaceful nuclear development in the 1950s to pursuing weapons after the revolution. Israel, which developed its nuclear capabilities in the 1960s, perceives Iran's backing of proxy groups like Hezbollah and Hamas as a serious threat. The potential use of nuclear weapons by Iran or its proxies would trigger a strong Israeli response, raising concerns about the future of Zionism and deterring Jewish immigration. Additionally, Iranian-supported groups pose a threat to Israel's national security, with Israeli leaders fearing that lifting sanctions under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) could bolster Iran's military capabilities and further destabilize the region.

Iran Relations with Israel before Revolution

Before the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Iran and Israel maintained a strategic partnership marked by diplomatic, military, and economic cooperation, especially under Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Formal diplomatic relations began in 1950, fueled by shared concerns over Arab nationalism and Soviet influence. Israel provided military training and modern weapons to Iran's armed forces, while Iran supplied oil to meet Israel's energy needs. Economic ties flourished with trade across various sectors, and cultural exchanges, including agricultural projects, were common. However, as anti-Shah sentiment surged in the late 1970s, these strong ties began to deteriorate, culminating in a complete severance of relations after the Islamic Revolution, which dramatically reshaped the region's geopolitical landscape (Lenczowski, 1970).

Cultural and Social Interactions

Sports events such as the 1968 Asian Cup and the 1974 Asian Games in Tehran highlighted the complex dynamics between Iran and Israel, with Israel viewing these occasions as mere competitions while Iran perceived them as national confrontations, reflecting deeper tensions. The emigration of Iranian Jews to Israel, especially after the establishment of the Israeli state, added a cultural dimension to their relationship, influencing interactions between the communities. Despite a cooperative nature in Iran-Israel relations before the 1979 Islamic Revolution, underlying tensions, shaped by regional politics and public perceptions, became increasingly pronounced. The revolution marked a significant turning point, fundamentally altering Iran's foreign policy and resulting in a sharp decline in relations with Israel, driven by ideological shifts and the new regime's opposition to Israel's existence, in stark contrast to the earlier era of pragmatic cooperation.

Growing Hostilities between Iran and Israel

The hostility between Iran and Israel grew significantly after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which marked a profound transformation in Iranian politics and ideology. Here are the key factors that contributed to the deterioration of relations:

- **Ideological Shift:** The 1979 revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini established an Islamic theocracy in Iran that rejected Western influence and secular governance, fundamentally opposing Israel, which was seen as a Western ally. The new regime adopted an explicitly anti-Zionist ideology, portraying Israel as an enemy of Islam and a colonial entity, marking a sharp contrast to the previous era of cooperation between the two nations.

- **Regional Dynamics:**   The Islamic Republic of Iran shifted its focus to supporting Palestinian liberation movements, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, further antagonizing Israel and positioning itself as a champion of the Palestinian cause. This conflict with Israel was framed in religious and ideological terms, contributing to the geopolitical rivalry between the two nations. Iran's ambition to expand its influence in the Middle East clashed with Israel's security interests, leading to increased tensions and proxy conflicts throughout the region.

- **Political Rhetoric- Hostile Statements**: Iranian leaders frequently issued inflammatory statements against Israel, including calls for its destruction. This rhetoric was a central part of the Islamic Republic's political discourse and served to rally domestic and regional support.

- **Military Engagements:**   Iran's support for militant groups like Hezbollah and Hamas has led to direct military confrontations with Israel, notably during the 2006 Lebanon War. The U.S. and its allies have countered by supporting anti-Iranian forces, creating a complex web of regional alliances and enmities. Iran's backing of these groups is often framed as a response to perceived aggression from the U.S. and Israel, a dynamic exacerbated by Western military involvement in the region. Additionally, Israel perceives Iran's nuclear ambitions as an existential threat, intensifying tensions and fears of military conflict. The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) aimed to curb Iran's nuclear program but was undermined by the U.S. withdrawal in 2018, leading to increased hostility from Iran toward both the West and Israel, which is seen as benefiting from these policies. Israel's concerns over Iran's nuclear aspirations have further entrenched hostilities, influencing the positions of the U.S. and European nations.

- **International Alliances :** Iran's alignment with states and non-state actors hostile to Israel, such as Syria and various militant organizations, has solidified its adversarial stance in the region. Recent normalization agreements between Israel and several Arab states, known as the Abraham Accords, have further positioned Iran as a common enemy, exacerbated by U.S. support for these initiatives that isolate Iran. Additionally, European engagement in Middle Eastern diplomacy often aligns with U.S. interests, creating a unified front against Iranian influence, which Iran views as a direct threat to its sovereignty and security.

- **Global Context :**   The shift in Iran's stance significantly impacted U.S.-Israel relations, with Iran emerging as a crucial factor in U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. Israel has lobbied against Iranian influence, seeking international support to counter it. The U.S. has provided substantial military and economic assistance to Israel, reinforcing its regional military superiority and escalating tensions with Iran, which views Israel as a primary adversary. U.S. backing in international forums often favors Israel, perceived by Iran as a direct challenge to its influence and security.

Additionally, U.S. strategies aimed at containing Iran, especially after the 1979 Revolution, have led to heightened hostilities, with support for regional allies like Saudi Arabia and Israel to counter Iran's influence in Iraq and Syria (Muzaffar, et., al., 2017). Economic sanctions imposed in response to Iran's nuclear program have further isolated Iran and fueled its animosity toward Israel, which is seen as a collaborator in these efforts.

Findings

The ideological divide between Iran and Israel is pivotal in shaping their relations. Iran's revolutionary identity emphasizes resistance to Zionism and Western influence, while Israel views its existence as a struggle against existential threats, notably Iran's nuclear ambitions and support for militant groups. This ideological rift, coupled with security dynamics—where Israel enhances its military capabilities to counter Iranian threats and Iran builds alliances with groups like Hezbollah—fuels ongoing tensions and proxy conflicts. However, potential pathways for dialogue exist, particularly as Israel normalizes relations with several Arab states, which could prompt Iran to reconsider its stance if it perceives mutual security benefits. Economic challenges facing Iran, worsened by sanctions, might also encourage a pragmatic approach, especially if a more moderate regime emerges. Cultural exchanges and grassroots movements advocating for peace present additional opportunities for reducing animosities. Furthermore, the internal political climate in Iran, particularly regarding human rights, will influence its foreign policy toward Israel. The involvement of major powers, especially the U.S., also significantly impacts Iran-Israel dynamics, as shifts in U.S. policy could alter the balance of power. Ultimately, the future of their relations remains uncertain, with deep-seated ideological differences and security concerns complicating potential reconciliation.

Challenges and Opportunities:

Stabilizing and neutralizing relations between Iran and Israel poses several significant challenges. These obstacles stem from deep-rooted ideological, political, and geopolitical factors. Here are some of the main challenges:

- **Ideological Differences :** The Islamic Republic of Iran's ideology is rooted in anti-Zionism, framing Israel as an enemy and making reconciliation unlikely. Iranian leadership uses anti-Israel rhetoric to unify domestic support, complicating normalization efforts. This existential conflict, which challenges Israel's legitimacy, is bolstered by cultural narratives that position Iran as a resistor of Western influence and Israel as a defender of survival. Historical grievances from events like the Iranian Revolution reinforce negative perceptions, while the religious dimensions of the conflict where Iran champions Palestinian causes and Israel justifies its actions for national security further hinder mutual understanding and cultural exchanges.
- **Regional Proxy Conflicts :** Iran's support for militant groups like Hezbollah and Hamas poses a direct military threat to Israel, complicating potential dialogue. Ongoing conflicts in Syria and Iraq, where both nations have vested interests, exacerbate security tensions, as Iran's military presence in Syria is perceived by Israel as encroachment. Additionally, Israel views Iran's nuclear program as an existential threat, prompting a heightened military posture, including potential preemptive strikes and extensive intelligence operations. This proxy warfare environment,

marked by Iran's backing of militant factions, leads to frequent escalations in violence and further complicates peace efforts.

- **Nuclear Concerns : I**srael views Iran's nuclear program as an existential threat, and until there is assurance that it is fully controlled, security concerns will overshadow any discussions of stabilization. Additionally, Israel's history of taking preemptive military actions against perceived threats raises the risk of escalation over diplomatic engagement.

- **Geopolitical Dynamics : U.**S. and European policies in the Middle East significantly complicate the Iran-Israel relationship, as Western support for Israel and sanctions on Iran create an adversarial environment. Additionally, the normalization of relations between Israel and several Arab states may heighten Iran's sense of isolation, further diminishing the likelihood of pursuing rapprochement with Israel.

- **Domestic Politics :** Iran's internal political landscape, characterized by factionalism, complicates its foreign policy, as hardline factions may resist any attempts at normalization with Israel, fearing it would threaten their power. Additionally, widespread anti-Israel sentiment in Iranian society means that any government perceived as too conciliatory toward Israel could encounter substantial domestic backlash, further hindering diplomatic efforts.

- **Historical Grievances :** U.S. sanctions on Iran significantly hinder its economic capabilities, limiting its regional influence and ability to engage economically, which has pushed Iran toward more aggressive foreign policy tactics. These economic difficulties force Iran to allocate resources to military and paramilitary groups, further exacerbating tensions with Israel instead of fostering stability or cooperation. Additionally, decades of conflict, propaganda, and military confrontations have entrenched deep-seated animosity between the two nations, making it a formidable challenge to overcome this historical legacy.

- **Mutual Distrust- Lack of Confidence-Building Measures**: There is significant mutual distrust, making it difficult to establish the confidence necessary for diplomatic engagement. Both nations view each other's actions with suspicion.

- **Opportunities**

- **Economic Cooperation : I**n a more favorable political climate, potential trade between Iran and Israel could thrive, particularly in sectors like technology, agriculture, and water management. Israel's advancements in agricultural technology could assist Iran in addressing its food security challenges. Furthermore, opportunities for regional economic integration, potentially facilitated by third-party nations like the UAE, could encourage dialogue and collaboration between the two countries**.**

- **Changing Geopolitical Landscape :** The normalization of relations between Israel and several Arab states could reshape regional dynamics, potentially prompting Iran to consider dialogue over confrontation. Additionally, both nations share concerns about extremism and instability in neighboring countries like Afghanistan and Iraq, which may provide opportunities for indirect cooperation.

- **Public Sentiment and Grassroots Movements :** Despite the ongoing conflict, segments of the populations in both Iran and Israel desire peace and stability, potentially leading to grassroots movements advocating for dialogue. Cultural exchanges through art, music, and academia also present opportunities to humanize each side and foster mutual understanding, despite official hostilities.

- **Collaborative Solutions to Global Challenges - Shared Global Issues**: Iran and Israel, like many nations, face challenges such as climate change, water scarcity, and public health crises. These common concerns could be a starting point for collaboration, moving beyond political divides.

Conclusion

The relationship between Iran and Israel has dramatically transformed over the decades, shaped by historical events, ideological shifts, and regional dynamics. Before the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the two nations maintained a surprising alliance based on shared interests, particularly against threats like Arab nationalism and Soviet communism, with collaboration on military, intelligence, and economic fronts fostering stability. However, the revolution marked a turning point as the Islamic Republic, led by Ayatollah Khomeini, rejected Israel's legitimacy, adopting an anti-Zionist, anti-imperialist stance that led to decades of hostility characterized by proxy wars and existential fears. Looking ahead, the future of Iranian-Israeli relations remains uncertain, as a potential regime change in Iran could open avenues for dialogue and a more constructive approach, particularly if reformist elements gain power and prioritize economic development. Yet, internal challenges from hardline factions resistant to rapprochement could complicate these efforts. Regional dynamics, including the influence of proxy groups and the normalization of ties between Israel and Arab states, will also impact the relationship. Despite the official animosity, grassroots movements advocating for peace may foster dialogue and cooperation beyond governmental hostility, suggesting that while challenges persist, there is hope for a pragmatic approach that recognizes the value of diplomacy and cooperation in a complex geopolitical landscape.

Recommendations

In case there were a regime change in Iran leading to the return of Ali Reza Pahlavi or a similar monarchy, the dynamics of Iran-Israel relations could shift significantly. A few potential outcomes include:

- **Improved Relations**: Ali Reza Pahlavi has previously expressed more moderate views compared to the current regime. A return to a more secular monarchy might open avenues for dialogue and cooperation with Israel, especially given shared interests in countering regional threats. Geopolitical Realignment: The change could influence alliances in the Middle East. A pro-Western Iranian government might align more closely with Israel and other Western nations, potentially reshaping regional power dynamics.
- **Public Sentiment**: The historical enmity between Iran and Israel might still linger among the populace, even if a new government is more open to cooperation. Public opinion could complicate official relations. The future of Iran under a potential regime change led by modernist elements could vary significantly, influenced by a range of factors including political, economic, and social dynamics.
- **Political Landscape**: A modernist regime might prioritize democratization, leading to the establishment of a more pluralistic political system. This could involve greater political freedoms, electoral reforms, and the inclusion of diverse political voices. A shift towards modernist governance could foster improved relations with Western countries, especially if it involves a commitment to human rights and regional stability. This might lead to the lifting of sanctions and increased foreign investment.

Modernists may face resistance from hardline factions within the country. Struggles for power could lead to instability, protests, or even violent clashes as competing groups vie for influence.

- **Economic Implications:** Modernist leaders may implement economic reforms aimed at diversifying the economy, reducing reliance on oil, and attracting foreign investment. This could include embracing technology and innovation sectors. If relations with the West improve, Iran could experience an influx of foreign capital and technology, stimulating economic growth. Sanction relief could enhance trade relations and lead to a more robust economy. While economic reforms could foster growth, there may be challenges in addressing social inequalities. Modernization efforts need to be inclusive to ensure that benefits are widely shared among different socioeconomic groups.

- **Social Dynamics:** A modernist regime might promote cultural liberalization, allowing for greater freedom of expression, artistic endeavors, and access to information. This could lead to a vibrant civil society and an empowered youth demographic. A commitment to human rights could result in the release of political prisoners, freedom of the press, and the protection of minority rights, improving the overall quality of life for many Iranians. If modernist leaders can effectively address public grievances and aspirations, they may gain widespread support. Conversely, failure to meet expectations could lead to disillusionment and protests.

- **Regional Relations:** Shifts in Alliances: A modernist Iran might seek to recalibrate its foreign policy, potentially reducing hostilities with neighboring countries and engaging in diplomatic efforts to stabilize the region. Changes in government might affect Iran's support for proxy groups in the region. A modernist regime may choose to prioritize diplomatic solutions over military involvement, impacting regional power dynamics. Enhanced relations with neighboring states could lead to economic partnerships, addressing mutual challenges such as water scarcity and trade barriers.

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