

Rethinking Iran's Post-Twelve-Day War Strategy Toward Zionist Entity

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Abstract

The foreign policy behavior of the Islamic Republic of Iran in dealing with regional security crises has largely been interpreted within the framework of defensive neorealist theory. Nevertheless, Zionist entity's hostile conduct during the Twelve-Day War has significantly challenged the explanatory and practical effectiveness of this framework. As a result, a reassessment of Iran's security doctrine has emerged as a strategic imperative. Using a descriptive-analytical approach and drawing on documentary sources, this study examines the necessity of transforming Iran's security doctrine and reconfiguring its crisis management strategies in the aftermath of the Twelve-Day War. Within Iran's security doctrine, the unique characteristics of regional crises have shaped crisis management policies primarily around the principles of self-help and the security dilemma. To date, Iran has pursued strategies focused on enhancing defensive capabilities, strengthening extra-territorial deterrence, engaging in balance-building, and containing perceived threats. Conversely, Zionist entity has sought to counter Tehran through the formation of regional alliances, the employment of covert balancing strategies, the development of advanced missile defense systems, and the strategic involvement of the United States in the region through the securitization of Iran—an approach that became evident in Zionist entity's recent aggressive military action.

With the intensification of security threats, the need for a profound reassessment of the Islamic Republic's security strategies has become increasingly salient. In this context, prioritizing the enhancement of offensive capabilities, reinforcing geopolitical leverage, managing controlled crises, and expanding regional strategic cooperation—particularly in the Persian Gulf and at extra-regional levels—assumes growing significance. Furthermore, an emphasis on maritime-based geopolitics, extra-territorial balancing, multi-layered and triadic deterrence, and the utilization of advanced non-nuclear technologies can simultaneously strengthen Iran's defensive and offensive capacities.

Keywords: Islamic Republic of Iran, offensive neorealism, maritime-based geopolitics, extra-territorial balancing, complex deterrence.

Introduction

West Asia has long been regarded as one of the most unstable focal points of the international order due to the simultaneous concentration of geopolitical, security, and identity-based factors. In recent decades, this instability has entered a more complex and multi-layered phase as a result of cascading crises, the expansion of proxy wars, interventions by extra-regional powers, and the intensification of competition among regional actors. Within this context, the Gaza crisis and the developments following Operation Al-Aqsa Flood not only disrupted the existing balance of power but also paved the way for the emergence of a new phase of security conflict in West Asia, the culmination of which can be observed in the Twelve-Day War between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Zionist entity.

The Twelve-Day War can be considered a critical turning point in the transformation of regional patterns of security and strategic confrontation. Far from being a limited military engagement, this conflict signaled a transition in the regional security order from the logic of classical deterrence toward more complex forms of hybrid warfare, controlled confrontation, and multi-level balancing. In addition to exposing the fragility of the regional order, the war demonstrated that the conflict between Iran and Zionist entity has moved beyond indirect and proxy competition into a phase of overt yet calculated confrontation—one in which emerging technologies, competing alliance structures, and intensified securitization play a decisive role in shaping actors' behavior.

Within this environment, the Islamic Republic of Iran—whose management of regional crises had previously been largely structured around the doctrines of defensive neorealism, self-help, and extra-territorial deterrence—encountered conditions during the Twelve-Day War that posed serious challenges to the effectiveness of its traditional approaches. Simultaneously, Zionist entity's efforts to leverage regional alliances, employ covert balancing, and engage the United States heightened the risks of a form of "strategic loneliness" and a new pattern of security encirclement for Iran. Nevertheless, the war also created opportunities for redefining Iran's role within the emerging regional order and for rethinking the country's security and diplomatic strategies. The Twelve-Day War should therefore be analyzed not merely as a military event, but as a structural variable in the redistribution of power, the transformation of security discourse, and the evolution of crisis management patterns in West Asia—one that has further underscored the

necessity of a profound reassessment of the Islamic Republic of Iran's security doctrine and foreign policy strategies.

In this context, examining the foreign policy behavior of the Islamic Republic of Iran in competition with other regional actors—particularly in light of its distinct discursive orientation in foreign policy and especially vis-à-vis Zionist entity as a source of threat and crisis—is of significant scholarly importance, given its direct implications for regional security processes, balance of power, deterrence, and geopolitical advantage. This is especially salient in view of Zionist entity's escalatory actions during the Twelve-Day War and the preceding security developments, which point to an increasing level of threats and the growing necessity for revising Iran's strategic approaches.

From a theoretical perspective, the Twelve-Day War can be analyzed within the framework of a confrontation between the logics of defensive neorealism and offensive neorealism. While Iran's security strategies in recent years have largely been oriented toward maintaining deterrence, managing crises, and preventing escalation, Zionist entity's behavior during the war revealed tendencies aligned with offensive neorealism—characterized by preemptive action, the expansion of the scope of confrontation, and efforts to shift the balance of power in its favor. The clash between these two strategic logics has not only deepened the regional security dilemma but also suggests that continued reliance solely on a defensive model, without the redefinition of limited and controlled offensive instruments, may increase Iran's strategic vulnerabilities within the evolving security order of West Asia.

The central research question is whether the current crisis management strategies within Iran's security doctrine require reconsideration and transformation. Drawing on the theoretical lens of neorealism—particularly the distinction between defensive and offensive variants—this study analyzes the strategic patterns of both Zionist entity and Iran in their regional confrontation, evaluates the implications of the Twelve-Day War, and proposes a framework for transitioning Iran's security doctrine toward a more offensive-oriented approach.

1. Zionist Entity's Regional Conduct in Confronting Iran

In recent years, Zionist entity's security-oriented foreign policy—centered on the enhancement of its power—has been structured around specific propositions in its regional foreign policy, particularly in its confrontation with Iran. The most significant of these

propositions include deterrence based on United States security guarantees, shifting the geopolitical theater of conflict, regional balancing through the formation of a Middle Eastern security regime, preemptive operations doctrine, weakening the resistance axis, and economic geopolitics in service of power balancing.

Zionist entity's security doctrine, even prior to the Islamic Revolution, was defined on the basis of the Ben-Gurion Plan, with a strong emphasis on the concept of deterrence. Given Zionist entity's particular geographical conditions and persistent regional threats, the adoption of a deterrence strategy has been unavoidable. This strategy rests on four main pillars: deterrence, preemptive operations, decisive action, and security self-reliance, all of which have been continuously updated and rearticulated in response to regional developments. As an illustration, the doctrine of the "Campaign Between Wars," implemented following the Syrian crisis in 2011, pursued a specific objective: preventing the expansion of Iran's and Hezbollah's influence in Syria and Lebanon. This doctrine was based on conducting covert and limited operations aimed at neutralizing threats before the outbreak of a large-scale war. In the same vein, the doctrine of countering asymmetric threats emphasizes confronting Iran's nuclear program through cyber operations. Moreover, within the doctrine of "control over strategic areas," dominance over the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and other sensitive regions has been highlighted as a security shield and an instrument of deterrence against adversaries' attacks (Inbar & M, 2021).

Despite the Zionis security doctrine's formal emphasis on mutual deterrence and the balance of terror, what is observed in practice is the application of extended deterrence (Freedman, 2004). This concept refers to the expansion of Zionist entity's security guarantees through the United States in the face of shared threats, such that any threat of aggression against Zionist entity is regarded as a threat against the United States itself and may provoke a U.S. response, potentially through nuclear means. Within this framework, Zionist entity exploits extended deterrence and U.S. support to strengthen its military capabilities and to establish regional alliances such as the "Abraham Accords," with the aim of containing direct threats and reducing rivals' power in the region through psychological and political pressure. In particular, one of Tel Aviv's key strategies vis-à-vis the Islamic Republic of Iran has been its effort to create a regional air defense coalition involving the United States, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Specifically, on

June 20, 2022, Zionist entity announced its role in facilitating the formation of such a U.S.-led coalition to counter Iran-related threats (Rezaei & Shariati, 2022, p. 247).

A review of the research evidence indicates that the geopolitical balance or the expansion of strategic depth in Iran's border regions, including Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, through the arming and encouragement of terrorist and separatist groups such as Komala, Democratic Party, and PJAK, as well as the deployment of advanced intelligence and radar systems and eavesdropping bases in Azerbaijan (Omidy & Kheyri, 2016, p. 152; Mohammadi, 2017, p. 67; Ghasemi Heidari, Azadari & Masoumi, 2020, p. 87), with the aim of generating crises in Iran's border areas due to ethnic-religious fault lines, and pressuring Iran to withdraw from the peripheral geopolitical zones of Zionist entity, has been among Tel Aviv's most important security directives in its confrontation with Tehran. The Islamic Republic of Iran has consistently expressed concern over the strategic and deep cooperation of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Iraqi Kurdistan with Zionist entity (Van Veen & Touval, 2024; Rajabi, 2023; Vira, Erin & Brandon, 2012, p. 23). Extensive security-intelligence, political, and military cooperation between the two countries has made Azerbaijan heavily reliant on Zionist entity and has led its authorities to act on behalf of Zionist entity, particularly in sabotage operations against the Islamic Republic of Iran (Van Veen & Touval, 2024; Omidy & Kheyri, 2016).

Normalization of relations between Zionist entity and some Arab states, including the UAE and Bahrain, has been based on their shared understanding of Iran's influence in the region through the Resistance Axis and its geocultural impact. Accordingly, with the intent of enhancing national security and altering the balance of power in their favor and to the detriment of Iran and the Resistance Axis, they have pursued normalization and synergy in security, military, and economic relations (Ekhtiari Amiri, Safavi Homami & Mohammadi, 2024; Dehghani Firouzabadi, Karimi & Vakili, 2021). In other words, the central premise of this normalization can be seen as targeting the weakening and containment of the Islamic Republic of Iran's power and Zionist entity's extensive presence in the Persian Gulf. The peak of these initiatives occurred with the announcement of the Abraham Accords and the expansion of security, economic, political, and commercial relations between Zionist entity and the Gulf Arab states, the consequences of which are observable in Zionist entity's active, direct, and crisis-inducing actions in the Persian Gulf. These developments facilitated regional instability,

militarization, altered the political-security positions of actors cooperating with Zionist entity, and intensified internal and regional security competitions (Ekhtiari Amiri et al., 2024; Lotfi & Nourmohammadi, 2023, p. 220). From the perspective of some realist scholars, the difference between a security regime and a formal military alliance may only lie in structural emphasis. Formal alliances usually involve cooperation defined through treaties or the creation of established institutions such as NATO. In security regimes, cooperation is based on shared interests and unwritten rules that reduce excessive competition and focus on mutual gains (Jervis, 1982).

Zionist entity's strategic security documents have designated Iran as the most significant source of threat; according to the 2015 top-security document, "Israel Defense Forces Mission", Palestine was identified as the primary threat to Zionist entity, while Iran, Hezbollah, and Syria were considered secondary priorities. In the 2018 update of this document, Iran was elevated to the top priority (Taghizadeh Salari et al., 2021, p. 82). Under the "War Between Wars" strategy, direct confrontation and engagement with forces perceived as threats to Zionist entity's security interests are central. While the primary aim of this strategy ultimately targets Iranian military positions, it is designed to employ specific tactics to manage and limit threats. Notably, the "Light Footprint" tactic is a key principle, wherein military operations occur in gray zones—areas where events unfold quickly, unexpectedly, and covertly, and no actor claims responsibility. Zionist entity employs this strategy to strengthen deterrence, delay the onset of a full-scale conflict, and create a sense of vulnerability in the adversary (Lappin, 2018). Within the framework of this doctrine, preventing the establishment of offensive drone bases in Syrian territory by Iran, dismantling land corridors connecting Iraq to Syria, and blocking the transfer routes of weapons and equipment to Iranian-backed militias are key objectives (Lappin, 2019). All of these actions fall under the preemptive operations strategy. Preemptive operations address Zionist entity's lack of strategic depth or inability to engage in prolonged wars. In other words, any attack on Zionist entity could rapidly threaten its territorial integrity; thus, Zionist entity engages in preemptive action to prevent such an occurrence (Ghorashi & Pourhossein, 2021, p. 150).

The intensity of the competition to shape a new geopolitical order in West Asia after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the Islamic Awakening—sometimes referred to as a regional and

Islamic Cold War (Menezes & Nasser, 2024)—reached its peak with the Syrian crisis. The emergence of the Resistance Axis led by Iran prompted Zionist entity to perceive itself as encircled by a multi-faceted threat from armed Shia and Sunni groups, compelling it to consolidate a security ring with Egypt and Jordan, relying on the United States to ensure qualitative military superiority and seeking new partners in the Persian Gulf to contain Iran's influence (Ghorashi & Pourhasan, 2021, p. 156). Consequently, Zionist entity has pursued multiple objectives regarding Syria, including reducing Iran's presence and influence in the country, preventing the transfer of advanced weapons to Hezbollah, weakening the legitimacy of Syrian claims over the Golan Heights, and attempting to transform Syria into a neutral actor to facilitate the process of Palestine-ization (Taghizadeh Salari et al., 2021, p. 95). Following the Gaza crisis and the collapse of the Assad government, Zionist entity exploited this opportunity to destroy Syrian military infrastructure and weaponry in the Golan Heights, achieving full control over the area. This strategy is considered part of Zionist entity's broader policy to weaken Iran's regional influence and compel Tehran to retreat from its adjacent geopolitical spheres.

One of the significant developments in Zionist entity's regional policies in recent years has been the focus on establishing economic corridors, particularly aimed at strengthening Zionist entity's trade and security relations with regional and global partners. This strategy seeks not only to enhance Zionist entity's economic position in global markets but also to link the security of the occupied territories with the security of regional countries, while reducing the economic and military costs of Iran and the Resistance Axis's actions in the region. A key project in this regard is the establishment of the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC). This corridor aims to create a commercial and transit network connecting India, Middle Eastern countries, and Europe, positioning Zionist entity as a pivotal "commercial hub" connecting Asia and Europe (Katz, 2021). Alongside economic projects, Zionist entity has leveraged multilateral agreements such as the I2U2 cooperation framework (Zionist entity, India, the United States, and the UAE). In recent years, especially following the Abraham Accords, this agreement has served as a strategic tool to enhance Zionist entity's economic and security relations with regional countries (Kaufman, 2022).

2. Iran's Regional Approach to Zionist Entity

In order to preserve its independence, territorial integrity, and national security, the Islamic Republic of Iran has consistently adopted a defensive neorealist approach in its foreign policy outlook toward regional and international issues (Khalqi et al., 2023; Bagheri & Abdollahi, 2023). Accordingly, in addressing conflicts and responding to confrontational actions by Zionist entity, Iran has relied on strategic frameworks including active and multilayered deterrence, asymmetric warfare, missile capability, and maritime geopolitical advantage.

The eight-year Iran–Iraq War, the demonstrated ineffectiveness of conventional weapons compared to unconventional ones, and the stark disparity in the international community's treatment of nuclear-armed North Korea versus Iran led the Islamic Republic to two key conclusions. First, deterrence is a critical instrument for restraining aggressive state behavior; second, nuclear deterrence represents the highest level of military deterrence (Vishwanathan, 2017). On this basis, Iran pursued a comprehensive strategy across multiple military domains: enhancing missile and drone capabilities within the framework of conventional deterrence; developing and strengthening the Axis of Resistance as a component of psychological and proxy deterrence; and advancing nuclear technology as a dimension of nuclear deterrence. In the military sphere, priority was given to the development of domestic defense industries and the implementation of advanced research in weapons technology, missile systems, and military equipment (Sen & Alemdar, 2024). Consequently, the acquisition of advanced missiles, unmanned aerial systems, and nuclear technology vis-à-vis regional powers—particularly Zionist entity—has functioned as a mechanism of mutual deterrence, contributing to Iran's enhanced regional standing and deterrent capacity (Amouzadeh et al., 2022; Sen & Alemdar, 2024; Thomas, 2024).

However, a critical question arises: why, despite the apparent success of Iran's mutual deterrence strategy and the expansion of its missile, drone, and nuclear capabilities, did the first "Operation True Promise" fail to prevent hostile actions by Zionist entity? This outcome indicates the design and implementation of a distinct and more advanced level of deterrence by Zionist entity—one that has introduced elements of vulnerability and fragility into Iran's security calculus. By moving beyond mutual deterrence and the traditional balance of terror, Zionist entity seeks to establish a more advanced phase of deterrence capable of sustaining relative and structural

superiority over the Islamic Republic of Iran. More precisely, Zionist entity aims to achieve a level of deterrence that reinforces strategic asymmetry against Iran, thereby constraining Tehran's retaliatory and counterbalancing capabilities. In the aftermath of the 2011 regional transformations and Iran's accelerated pursuit of mutual deterrence, Zionist entity has increasingly gravitated toward extended deterrence and denial deterrence strategies (Freedman, 2004). First, through denial deterrence, Zionist entity has deployed advanced missile defense systems such as the Iron Dome and emerging laser-based defense technologies to neutralize Iran's missile and drone capabilities. Second, Zionist entity has relied on asymmetric approaches to deterrence, including the use of advanced technologies in targeted operations such as assassinations and the physical elimination of Iranian scientists, military commanders, and resistance leaders.

The configuration and alignment of regional actors, alongside the specific distribution of power among them and the absence of a collective security system, have highlighted the element of self-help in the region more than in other areas. Therefore, one of the Islamic Republic of Iran's strategies for creating strategic depth in the region is to push security threats away from its borders and confront adversaries in foreign territories, which has led to the formation of resistance groups. Iran, having strategically experienced isolation during the years of the Iraq-Iran war, has realized that only through power superiority and the expansion of influence can it secure its territorial and border security (Cingoza et al., 2024). This strategic action is achieved conceptually and strategically through the establishment and strengthening of loyal groups, creation of military bases for resistance groups, enhancement of their military capabilities, and alliances with like-minded states (Javadi Arjmand, Mohammadi Masiri & Mokarami Poor, 2021). Although the United States and Zionist entity maintain conventional military superiority in the region, Iran's prominence lies in the extensive network of influence it has created through its geopolitical arms. This factor holds significant strategic importance, ultimately shaping many of West Asia's regional tensions in Iran's favor (Arghavani Pirsalami & Arayesh, 2022, p. 21).

Over the past three decades, Iran has significantly enhanced its missile capabilities, achieving a spectrum of short-range, medium-range, and even ballistic and intercontinental missiles (Gheysari & Khezri, 2016, p. 67). Weakness in missile power and the vulnerability it entails, Zionist entity's military superiority in air and

missile forces, the emphasis of Iran's defense doctrine on extraterritorial deterrence and asymmetric warfare (Arghavani Pirsalami & Pirankhu, 2017, p. 69), and understanding the obstacles and limitations caused by international sanctions in the defense sector, have all driven Iran to prioritize self-reliance in enhancing missile capabilities. Missile capabilities, compared to other defense weapons, provide advantages such as high maneuverability and rapid, surprise counter-strikes; effective impact without proportionate defense; access to distant targets with high precision; and cost-effective mass production (Alipour & Mirzajani, 2023, p. 237), which have made this power an effective deterrent. From Zionist entity's perspective, these Iranian military actions are particularly intended to target occupied territories and create insecurity in the geographical vicinity of Tel Aviv, aiming to trap Zionist entity in a geopolitical bottleneck. Conversely, regional Arab states believe that despite the substantial expenses for advanced weaponry, Iran's ongoing nuclear activities undermine the effectiveness of these arms (Brookes & Phillips, 2021).

Regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran, access to open waters, the Strait of Hormuz, and maritime routes constitutes critical geopolitical assets. Within the framework of Iran's strategic and action-oriented approach, and in the shift toward crisis resolution through active engagement, Tehran has sought to utilize all its geopolitical capacities to address regional and extra-regional crises. Accordingly, with particular attention to its ports and leveraging the Strait of Hormuz, Iran has attempted to significantly enhance its naval military power and, secondly, to benefit from strait monitoring and control during crises. The detention of law-breaking ships and tankers, or the blockade of commercial shipping routes to manage crises, falls within this strategic framework. In the ongoing Gaza crisis, Iran's control over water routes used by Western and Zionist ships, from origin to destination, has been aggressively exercised, successfully imposing economic pressure on Tel Aviv (Reisinezhad, 2021).

3. The Twelve-Day War and Iran's Strategic Shift

On October 7, 2023, Hamas' military wing, in response to the crimes of Zionist entity, launched a surprise attack on the occupied territories along the Gaza border. Following this, with Zionist entity's comprehensive assault on Gaza and the killing of civilians, particularly children, global public opinion and some countries protested. Beyond the type of combat and on-field events, the onset

of a crisis in West Asia implies the capacity to alter the balance of power, the formation or escalation of security threats, and the emergence of new alliances in the region.

In line with Zionist entity's confrontational policies and alongside the expansion of the military scope and depth of the war in Gaza, Tel Aviv faced three simultaneous crises: a legitimacy crisis within its own borders, with growing protests from Jewish residents of the occupied territories; pressure from certain countries to halt the war; and international public opinion protests in support of the people of Gaza, alongside regional concerns over the resistance axis joining the war and potentially broadening the conflict. Although Arab leaders in the region remained largely passive, their perspective on the Abraham Accords was marginalized, and due to domestic public pressure, their economic relations with Tel Aviv, similar to Turkey, were minimized.

As a result of this isolation, Zionist entity, aiming to restore its military strength and secure victory in the war with the objective of expanding the conflict vis-à-vis Iran, undertook overtly hostile actions against Tehran. These included targeting Iranian advisory forces in Syria, missile strikes on Iranian military positions in Syria, missile destruction of the Iranian consulate building in Syria, the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, and ultimately, the assassination of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, amounting to a declaration of direct war against Iran. To obtain military aid and support from Western countries, particularly the United States, Zionist entity sought to involve major powers in the battlefield, pressure Gaza into accepting a peace accord favorable to itself, and eliminate Hezbollah and Hamas, thereby drawing Iran into the conflict. By violating Iran's sovereignty, it aimed to escalate the war and destroy Hezbollah.

Iran's Operation "True Promise" was conducted to enhance deterrence by targeting Zionist military positions and yielded significant regional achievements for Tehran. Expansion of regional cooperation, particularly in neighborhood policies (Saudi Arabia), the willingness of rival countries to engage more with Iran, and the opening of interactions (Egypt, Tajikistan, Bahrain, and even Pakistan) demonstrate the effectiveness of Iran's deterrence power. However, Zionist entity's assassination of Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran became a symbolic display of power. This act, occurring after Operation "True Promise," indicated that reciprocal deterrence and retaliatory action were insufficient as policies against Zionist entity. From a symbolic perspective, the assassination of a resistance leader

in a core resistance country could consolidate Zionist entity's discourse influence within its borders and in regional relations. Zionist entity also demonstrated its capacity to escalate confrontation even in a protracted war, thus undertaking preemptive actions.

Zionist entity's actions and efforts to extend the crisis to Lebanon and escalate regional tensions—particularly schemes such as Syria's collapse, the destruction of all military infrastructure, and the occupation of strategic territories like the Golan Heights—demonstrate Tel Aviv's intention to exploit asymmetric gaps in Iran's capabilities, including intelligence superiority, extended deterrence, and latent balance. The goal of these measures is to increase Iran's security costs and weaken its power through a sequence of crises within the resistance axis.

In contrast, the Islamic Republic of Iran, in its operations during the Twelve-Day War, demonstrated an approach aimed at systematizing the battlefield and remaining within the framework of reciprocal deterrence and continuity of previous strategies. It appears that Iran's confrontational policies and retaliatory actions, both before and after the war, have not compelled Zionist entity to behave rationally or in accordance with its national interests. In this context, and given recent developments in Syria that have specifically led to a power vacuum for Iran in the Levant, with Hezbollah in need of restoring its material and symbolic capabilities to rebalance against regional threats, the continuation of crises and escalation of tensions in the region remains likely. Particularly, Iran's behavior, even in the event of another war, remains predictable from Tel Aviv's militaristic logic. Therefore, the Islamic Republic of Iran must employ innovative and advanced policies to move beyond defensive neorealism toward enhancing offensive capabilities and advancing its long-term objectives.

4. Recalibrating Iran's Regional Security Strategy

Considering the aforementioned points and the specific conditions of West Asia, the necessity for the Islamic Republic of Iran to transition from strategies based on defensive neorealism to offensive approaches in crisis management has become even more pronounced. Accordingly, these policies must be designed to strengthen deterrence, protect Iran's geopolitical interests, counter external threats, and maintain Iran's position within the regional order. For this purpose, the following strategies should be prioritized in the security doctrine of the Islamic Republic.

First, employing hybrid warfare is essential for Iran's power

projection in the new regional order. This requires strengthening economic, technological, and public diplomacy capabilities. This approach aligns with the perspective of offensive neorealists regarding the integration of hard and soft power and can help Iran expand its capabilities across multiple domains alongside its military strength. Economic, technological, and even cultural influence ensures that Iran's security becomes interlinked with the security of other regional actors. In this context, by forming tactical collaborations and adopting flexible policies, Iran should establish and enhance a network of multidimensional cooperation with influential regional countries such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Qatar, thereby reinforcing its position amid complex regional developments.

Second, enhancing Iran's deterrence across all dimensions is critical. Given Zionist Regime's continuous exploitation of its advanced military capabilities, strengthening Iran's missile, drone, and defense systems, including air defense, missile, and cruise systems, can act as an effective factor in bolstering Iran's deterrence. Operations such as "True Promise" and the subsequent Twelve-Day War yielded critical intelligence regarding the vulnerabilities of Zionist Regime's Iron Dome and other defense systems. Therefore, producing next-generation weapons with artificial intelligence capabilities and utilizing operational battlefield data can further enhance Iran's deterrence. Moreover, by addressing deficiencies in defense systems, Iran can become more resilient against potential Zionist air and missile attacks in the future. Additionally, strengthening intelligence capabilities, which created asymmetry between Iran and Zionist Regime during the Twelve-Day War, is crucial, as intelligence influence can serve as an effective tool to exert pressure and disrupt Zionist Regime's programs. Advances in the information domain have complicated the battlefield, and Iran's and the resistance axis's capacity to leverage this domain can significantly reduce Zionist Regime's deterrence (Khajeh-Sarvi & Sourì, 1402, p. 163).

Third, strengthening and expanding Iran's geopolitical arms in the region is of particular importance. The most significant factors that have disrupted the threat balance against Zionist Regime have been Iran's geopolitical arms, especially Hezbollah and the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), which have constrained Zionist initiative and limited the expansion of Tel Aviv's interests in the region. Furthermore, by activating certain groups aligned with the resistance axis, Iran can extend the geographical scope of its

regional geopolitical arms. Supporting key groups within various countries, such as the Houthis in Yemen, can establish and sustain power structures centered around these groups.

Fourth, managing conflict levels and engagement in controlled crises is a strategic imperative. The rationality of actors possessing a significant level of power leads to the formation of a strategic rationality approach in crisis situations. Offensive neorealists argue that great powers always manage the levels of tension and conflict and avoid entering wars where costs and benefits are balanced, seeking instead to confine competition to latent arenas such as cyber and hybrid warfare or to play a role in controlled regional crises. This implies that, by avoiding direct involvement in Syrian affairs and leveraging groups present in Syria to confront Zionist Regime, Iran can render Zionist operations insecure. Strategic miscalculation through indifference in the Syrian crisis would undermine Iran's regional achievements (Gharaei Ashtiani & Roshan-Nazar, 1402, p. 98).

Fifth, strengthening strategic, economic, and diplomatic cooperation with major powers such as China and Russia is essential. Iran's maritime geopolitics, especially in the Persian Gulf, requires an active and intelligent role. In this regard, enhancing economic initiative and developing maritime trade, particularly with Iran at the center, requires substantial and immediate investment. Rather than focusing solely on military and security competition in the Persian Gulf, Iran can leverage the potential capacities of maritime economic powers such as China and Russia. Strengthening economic and diplomatic cooperation with these countries can position Iran prominently in international trade and maritime routes as a key actor. Such cooperation not only consolidates Iran's economic position in the region but also enables the utilization of energy resources and the development of port and maritime infrastructure. Furthermore, this policy can serve as a deterrent tool against external threats and for safeguarding Iran's national interests globally.

Sixth, developing and strengthening the discourse of resistance against Zionist hegemony worldwide is a strategic necessity. Global public sensitivity to the killings in Gaza has facilitated the widespread dissemination of anti-oppression discourse and support for the Palestinian cause by Iran. In fact, the fundamental value of supporting liberation movements has been a cornerstone of Iran's foreign policy for decades and has gained broad recognition globally. Therefore, the strategic position of the Islamic Republic of Iran in maintaining the spirit of resistance and transforming it into the central core of the resistance discourse at regional and trans-

regional levels must be emphasized. In this context, Iran can leverage the media capacities of allied countries on the Palestinian issue, such as Algeria.

Conclusion

The present study, with a forward-looking perspective, aimed to analyze the crisis management strategies of the Islamic Republic of Iran in its confrontation with the Zionist regime and to address the research question of whether the current crisis management strategies within Iran's security doctrine require reconsideration and transformation. The analysis of the findings indicated that Iran's foreign policy patterns during regional crises and vis-à-vis Zionist entity, prior to the military operation of October 7, lacked the capacity to adequately respond to the increasing tangible threats posed by Zionist entity against the Islamic Republic. Based on the findings of this research, the current strategies of the Islamic Republic of Iran in dealing with Zionist entity, which are primarily based on defensive neorealism, appear inefficient in addressing complex and evolving regional crises. Although these strategies have been able to mitigate certain security threats, the rapid changes in the regional order, the escalation of crises, and Zionist entity's preemptive behaviors make a revision of Iran's security doctrine imperative.

The findings indicate that Iran's defensive neorealism doctrine, based on deterrence and limited confrontation, has been unable to prevent Zionist entity's strategic initiatives. This doctrine has proven insufficient in responding to measures such as Zionist entity's enhanced extensive deterrence, utilization of advanced technologies in targeted operations, and the formation of regional alliances such as the Abraham Accords, and therefore requires a shift toward offensive neorealism. In other words, merely relying on deterrence strategies and pursuing relative security cannot provide Iran with the upper hand in its confrontation with Zionist entity. To take a broader step, Iran's strategies must be oriented toward expanding influence and increasing power logic in conflict resolution processes, guided by an offensive neorealism approach, under a strategy of enhancing offensive capabilities and modifying the country's defensive security doctrine, so as to repel attacks and position Iran advantageously in its confrontation with Zionist entity.

In explaining this finding, it can be argued that although the Islamic Republic has, over the past decades, relied on defensive neorealism strategies such as balancing, deterrence, and geopolitical advantage to preserve security, given the actions of Arab countries,

Zionist entity, and terrorist groups, as well as uncertainty regarding their aggressive intentions and the existence of regional coalitions and alliances—from the Gulf Cooperation Council to the Abraham Accords, which are based on reducing Iran's security—the rational response of one state to increase its power and security inevitably constitutes a threat to another, compelling the latter to take measures to enhance its own power. Therefore, Zionist entity's current approaches necessitate that the Islamic Republic shift its strategic orientation from seeking security to enhancing power under an offensive strategy.

Compared with previous studies, this research emphasizes for the first time that the transition from a defensive to an offensive doctrine is not merely a choice but a strategic necessity for Iran. Contrary to studies that have stressed the efficacy of defensive deterrence, the present study demonstrates that only by elevating the offensive dimension of the security doctrine—through strengthening geopolitical capabilities, leveraging hybrid warfare, and managing controlled crises—can Zionist entity's security threats be sustainably managed. In other words, according to the findings of this study, the transition to offensive neorealism is significant from several perspectives and offers the following advantages:

- Increasing offensive capability and multidimensional deterrence:* By advancing missile, drone, and cyber technologies, Iran should enhance its capacity for proactive and preemptive responses to threats.
- Strengthening geopolitical arms:* Expanding the role of resistance axis groups and managing their presence more effectively in critical areas can shift the balance of power in favor of Iran.
- Managing conflict levels:* Iran must develop the ability to manage limited and controlled crises to prevent these crises from escalating into protracted wars.

This research demonstrates that adopting offensive neorealism can help the Islamic Republic of Iran not only maintain deterrence against ongoing threats but also leverage emerging opportunities to expand its strategic influence and consolidate its role as a powerful actor in West Asia.

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