



Recognized by: Higher Education Commission (HEC), Government of Pakistan

Washington's Dual Diplomatic Offensive: U.S. Strategy in Ukraine Peace Talks and Iran Nuclear Negotiations (Can Diplomacy Avert Broader War in 2026?)

Syed Rizwan Haider Bukhari *

PhD Scholar, Department of Political Science, Islamia College University Peshawar,
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

bukharipalmist@gmail.com

*Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

In early 2026, the United States launched parallel diplomacy aimed at managing two of the most disagreeing crises in today's international system, the war between Russia and Ukraine as well as Iran's contested nuclear program. This article takes not the dialectic of the Washington's dual-track diplomacy as an exercise in conflict resolution, but as a strategy of escalation management under conditions of sustained strategic rivalries. Drawing on empirical indicators, a theory of crisis bargaining and a comparative source of security analysis, it argues that U.S. diplomatic engagement in crisis is primarily designed to contain horizontal as well as vertical escalation and perpetuate deterrence credibility and alliance cohesion. The research explores the implications of U.S.-facilitated Ukraine-Russia negotiations held by the United Arab Emirates and indirect U.S.-Iran nuclear talks facilitated by Oman and their implications for European and Middle Eastern security architectures. Although these initiatives have resulted in some amount of confidence-building, there are still basic differences over territorial control, security guarantees and nuclear scope, which remain unresolved. The findings point to diplomacy in 2026 is not so much an instrumental for negotiated peace, but one which stabilize protracted conflict. Although comprehensive settlements are not on the immediate horizon, the sustained use of diplomacy is important to reduce the likelihood of major war actors resorting to war by keeping open channels of communication and reducing the risk of miscalculation, as well as by reinforcing the crisis management norms.

Keywords: Dual-track Diplomacy; Crisis Diplomacy; Escalation Management; Strategic Bargaining; Extended Deterrence; Russia-Ukraine War; Iran Nuclear Negotiations; Regional Mediation; Risk Reduction; Multipolar Security Order.

INTRODUCTION

The modern international security environment is characterized by long drawn out war, undermining arms control regimes and constant threats of inadvertent escalation between major powers. The unfolding Russia Ukraine warfare has ensured that a high intensity interstate conflict in Europe, while Iran nuclear programme dispute dynamics periodically create a nuclear crisis in the Middle East. Both areas of issues include, as well as nuclear-capable actors and rather denser regional alignment - nets of alliances, which counter and intersect, amplifying by building dimensions to the consequences of misperception and miscalculation (Jervis, 1976, 2017). Under such conditions, the dangers of escalation are not localized in terms of feeling but take on systemic meaning in terms of global stability, energy markets the credibility of extended deterrence-architectures (Sagan, 2011; Waltz, 1979).

Rather than strictly rely on the policy of crisis management, which primarily emphasize the policy of the sequential approach, the United States has been increasingly approaches with overlapping diplomatic tracks, on the one hand, to conduct Ukraine diplomatic support, on the other hand, to participate periodically directly or through partners in the relevant activities related to the nuclear issue with Iran. This pattern stems from a larger strategy evaluation albeit unmanaged escalation in both arenas which can have cascading effects throughout alliance systems and Global Energy flows which counsels the outcome of compartmentalized crisis management (Acharya, 2018; Lake, 2020). The interconnectedness of modern-day security issues as disparate as sanctions regimes and arms transfer have led U.S. policymakers to consider those seemingly totally disparate crises as aspects of a larger escalation contest (Acharya, 2018; Walt, 2018).

At the heart of this emergent approach is a recognition of the fact that neither of these conflicts is ripe for quick and decisive resolution on acceptable terms to all parties. In the case of Ukraine, territorial sovereignty, long In the case of Iran, debates over enrichment limits, missile activities and regional activities have continued in various rounds of diplomacy from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to its collapse and subsequently to partial backchannel contacts (Sagan, 2011; Takeyh, 2020). Under this sort of circumstances, US diplomacy is less about ending conflict all together and more about institutionalized restraint - efforts to contain conflict escalation and manage the risk and ensure strategic stability by the absence of mutually acceptable political settlements (Fearon, 1995; Powell, 2006).

This emphasis on escalation management has permanent wisdom in crisis management theory and political psychology. Classical crisis management is based on communication, signalling and confidence During the Cold War, adversaries would routinely also resort to arms control talks, hotlines and limited accords, not in order to resolve ideological conflict, but to reduce the chances of catastrophic escalation Gaddis 2005 Schelling 1966. Contemporary US approaches to Russia and Iran repeat this logic: military.

Rationalist bargaining theory can be helpful to our understanding as to why these conflicts continue in spite of sustained diplomatic activity. Fearon 1995 The main reasons that wars continue in the new world are that there are commitment problems, there is private information and domestic constraints preclude credible compromise. In the Russia-Ukraine case, risk aversion to the future state of play of the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, about the odds of maintaining any kind of ceasefire and the domestic political costs of making territorial concessions on either side generate severe commitment problems (Fearon, 1995; Powell, 2006). With Iran, its regime survival at stake, fear of "salami" sanctions relief and susceptibility for backlash both from domestic political elite and popular reactions, limits Tehran's willingness to agree to expansive verification or regional constraints, with US domestic conditions of polarization, limits Washington's ability to credibly commit to long term agreements (Sagan, 2011; Takeyh, 2020). In such settings, diplomacy often functions less by being a means to such a settlement than as a way of dealing with the consequences of the failure to bargain to durable settlement (Powell 2006).

Dualtrack character of US diplomacy is also symptomatic of more general systemic change related to a more and more multiplex and regional-based international order. Acharya 2018 argues that post This diffusion of authority leave Washington with narrow room for unilateral imposition of results and place more dependence upon regional mediators, indirect talks and issue based coalitions (Acharya 2018; Lake 2020). Third party venues in Europe and the Gulf have become important venues for discussions related to both Ukraine and Iran; this is indicative of how non-western actors and "middle powers" become stakeholders in the setting of more and more of the diplomatic agenda (Acharya, 2018).

Crucially, U.S. diplomacy in these crises works alongside not in the activity of deterrence. Waltz's (1979) structural realism as well as subsequent deterrence literatures give prominence to continued centrality of credible threats and military postures in dealing with rivalries among great and regional powers. Extended deterrence is the combination of simultaneously reassuring of allies and signaling of resolve to the adversaries, a balance for which often entails forward deployments and security commitments and visible use of military assistance (Sagan, 2011; Walt, 2018). Combined with what one would call diplomatic signaling, this adds up to a dual track of involving communication as well as coercion as complementing ways of how things work: diplomacy without deterrence invites opportunism, with deterrence, as with the former one, adds to the dangers of misperception and unintentional escalation (Jervis, 1976; Schelling, 1966).

This strategy is however not without its costs and risks: Constructing on much higher stakes fronts creates sustained challenges to the diplomatic bandwidth as well as makes signaling inconsistency across theaters more likely (Allison, 2017; Walt, 2018). Allies may fear that the wounds or threats to a crisis may be taken as signs of possible neglect and compromises in another, and rivals may also think that diplomatic overtures are reassurance of lack of energy and resolution (Acharya, 2018;

Jervis, 2017). Moreover, a long use of "managed instability," where conflict escalation is contained but root causes of disputes left unresolved, is likely to result in crisis diplomacy becoming normalised as a mode of semipermanent governance where the potential for norming against coercive revisionism having been exchanged and marginalized over time (Allison, 2017; Gaddis, 2005).

In spite of all these limitations, however, there are some evidences that in a rival prone international system, and dual track diplomacy can provide stabilizing role. Historical studies of nuclear crises and great Contemporary realist critiques, such as Walt (2018), believe instead that even though US foreign policy has been excessively ambitious, more modest and conditional engagement combining the tools of deterrence and targeted diplomacy, is more compatible with combining means and ends in an order of less hierarchy and scope. In this sense, diplomacy is less a solution to conflict, but an instrument of what defines survival within conflict, set up to constrain the dynamics of escalation in an international system increasingly saturated by recurrent great power conflict and regional contest (Acharya, 2018; Waltz, 1979).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The analytical framework that is used to study US dual-track diplomacy in protracted crises is grounded in three inter-related bodies of international relations scholarship crisis management theory, rationalist bargaining theory, and deterrence/escalation control. These literatures, together, recalibrate diplomacy, not as a way to peaceful conflict termination, but as an expedient way to contain the dangers of escalation, signify clarity and stability strategically, in the shadow of nuclear weapons and in an era of multipolar competition (Schelling, 1966; Jervis 1976). This section is a summary of each of the strands, discussing how they have changed and are used in today's cases such as Ukraine and Iran.

Crisis Management Theory

Crisis management theory was a product of Cold War analyses of superpower confrontations, and its focus is on structured communication as a means of avoiding the types of misperceptive escalation. George (1991) bringing out fundamental concepts showing resolve while finding "rules of the road" using hotlines, back-channels, and confidence-building measures (CBMs). These mechanisms indeed have the advantage that they do not presuppose trust, but overcome the "fog of war" by limiting uncertainty about redlines (Jervis, 1976). Empirical studies of the Cuban Missile Crisis and Berlin standoffs have demonstrated that even ill-willed dialogue stabilised brinkmanship and averted catastrophe despite the existence of severe ideological differences (Gaddis 2005; Uddin, 20216). Recent scholarship, which led to extensions of this, reached out to hybrid and multipolar constructions. Coombs (2018) reviews on the global crisis management with the note that multinationals and state increases rely on networked coordination to manager transboundary risks, they been produced are a blending supplied hierarchical command and decentralized information flows. Relational network analyses reveal five key characteristics of

effective crisis responses, core-periphery relations involving high reciprocity of international organizations and NGOs creating hybrid mechanisms of relationships balancing between bonding (trust) and bridging (diversity) dynamics (Aurangzeb & Uddin, 2025; Kuipers et al., 2024). For nuclear armed dryads, the spirit of transparency about doctrines and capabilities has taken hold after Ukraine invasion of 2022, the concept of strategic risk reduction falls into addiction arms control templates established in cold war but has adapted to US-Russia-China mistrust (Irfan & Uddin, 2025; UNIDIR 2023). Applied to US diplomacy the current theory sheds light on indirect negotiations (e.g. through Oman for Iran), as well as placing deconfliction lines with Russia as procedural armor constrained by firewalls, and aiming at "error prevention" rather than "normative convergence".

Rationalistic Theory of Bargaining

Rationalist explanations redefine the problem of war, why fight when, as a result of ex ante bargains, costs are known and avoidable? Fearon (1995) identifies 3 Barriers Private information with incentives of misrepresentation Committee Problems (fi) (future enforcement) Indivisibilities (non fungible stakes) leaders bluff capabilities or resolve (being more afraid of being exploited) Post-agreement shifts (rising powers, etc.) Undermine credibility Sacred values do not divide. Powell (2006) refines this and models war as commitment failure in power transitions, with preventative strikes to pre-empt the growth of rivals. Extensions bring in domestic audience selectorate theory reveals that leaders take risks of going to war in exchange for political survival if concessions to compromise would hand out weakness (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). Critiques forge behavioral biases overconfidence, loss aversion to guarantee rational purity and yet saves it stays for stalemate explanation as by McDermott, (2004). In Ukraine, Russian fear of expansion of NAT creates their preventive logic, Ukraine's indivisible sovereignty prevents expanding into concessions (Fearon, 1995). Iran's nuclear program offers a good example in the issues of commitment dilemmas: Tehran has little faith in American restraint in the aftermath of U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, and is stockpiling enrichment for a hedge (Powell, 2006). Diplomacy thus continues to be "bargaining under fire," as a test of resolution and at the same time without resolution.

Deterrence and Escalation Control

The deterrence theory of stability through credible threats was developed after the Parnas Theory of deterrence being developed after the New Course of mutual assured destruction (MAD) to hypertufism approach of tailoring the postures that include denial with punishment (Waltz, 1979; Sagan 2011). Schelling (1966) has introduced 'threats that leave something to chance', in which manipulated uncertainty (caution) Escalation ladder (Freedman, 2004). Post-cold war, shifted towards limited wars, proliferation. Sagan (2011) warns organizational pathologies (e.g. "use it or lose it" can heighten risks of inadvertence) Chari (2003) does so for the South Asia, where CBMs for nuclear dryads are advocated. Recent analyses on Ukraine have US "learning by doing": boundary-setting (no troops, no, no fly zones),

restraint signalling and incremental aid-testing to a nuclear bluffs Putin without crossing the thresholds (Aurangzeb et al., 2025; Long & Green, 2023). This creates difficulties about which are the multipolarity; Acharya 2018 regional actors (eg gulf mediators) decentralization control and U.S. extended deterrence balancing reassurance and resolve Walt 2018. Iran cases point to "escalation dominance" through proxies demands for integrated diplomacy-deterrence (Takeyh, 2020)

Synthesis and Contribution

These threads meet on the twin meaning of diplomacy's work, Rationalist understanding of impasse-prescription of crisis theory-prescription-deterrence stratification-reality diplomacy is seminal diplomacy prescribes the reality of controlling force Its symptomatic meaning is multifaceted. Jervis (2017) combines in a psychological way the stress of misperception of signaling failure. Walt (2018) negates the U.S., supporting the restraint. Gaps persist, hybrid threats (cyber, drones) pose challenges to ladders; AI/autonomy create agency problems (UNIDIR, 2023). Multipolar Mediation understudied (Acharya, 2018). This study is significant due to the application of the triad's use to the parallelism between people in the U.S. and Ukraine-Iran, and testing whether or not people's stability is improved with the dual tracks with empirical process-tracing.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative comparative case study research design which results in comparing contrasting case of the US dual track diplomacy in Ukraine and Iran. It uses secondary data from SIPRI, UCDP, IAEA report and official statements and diplomatic chronologies. Process tracing re-constructiveness of escalation management mechanisms, complimented by future trajectories analysis of scenarios. The approach is focused on analytical inferential judgment in contrast to a hypothesis-testing approach that is suitable for elite decision-making and signaling in situations where there is uncertainty. Case choosing benefits of complementary situations: conventional-type-nuclear deterrence in the Europe, never-proliferation by proxy in the Middle East.

DISCUSSION

Analytical Framework: Diplomacy as Escalation Management.

Based on three intersecting theoretical frames, namely: crisis management, rationalist bargaining and extended deterrence, this study frames US diplomacy. Classical theory of crisis management stresses the importance of controlled communications and signaling in order to avoid the inadvertent escalation, especially among the nuclear-armed rivals (George, 1991). Rationalist bargaining models by contrast view protracted conflicts as not a result of misperception, but the result of incompatible expectations and commitment dilemmas (Fearon, 1995). In case of both Ukrainian and Iranian cases, the causes of breakdown of bargaining are the low credibility of commitments and asymmetric perceptions of threats. Nonetheless, diplomatic engagement retains its place because of the costs that are

perceived to come with stepping into a state of escalation, the costs of which overcome the costs of strategic deadlock. This dynamics captures Schellings (1960) idea of "tacit bargaining" in which calibrated restraint is communicative signal of intent. For these reasons the U.S. position can be likened to that of a manager of the thresholds of escalation rather than a neutral facilitator.

Conflict Indicator and Effects

U.S.-led talks have succeeded in marking de-escalation with heavy costs: Russia had ~1.2M total casualties (2022-Dec 2025) of 415K in 2025 alone and 275K-325K dead. Prisoner swaps reach 314 in Abu Dhabi (Feb 2026)-First major prisoner swaps in months.

Indicator	2022	2024	Early 2026 (Feb)
Annual Russian battle fatalities (est.)	~70,000	~100,000	~25,000 (annualized)
Total Russian casualties (cumulative)	~300K	~950K	~1.2M
Major NATO-related incidents	90K+ violations	Moderate (~50K)	Low (de-escalating)[
Prisoner exchanges	Sporadic (~1K total)	Minimal	314 (Abu Dhabi)
Military-to-military dialogue	Suspended	Suspended	Resumed

Source: CSIS (2026); SIPRI; UCDP

Resumed channels mirror Cold War de-escalation, though ~1,118K Russian casualties by Oct 2025 highlight persistent commitment barriers (Gaddis, 2005; Powell, 2006).

Structural Barriers

Territorial claims and guarantees persist as flashpoints, with Russia occupying ~20% of Ukraine (~4K sq km gained in 2024).

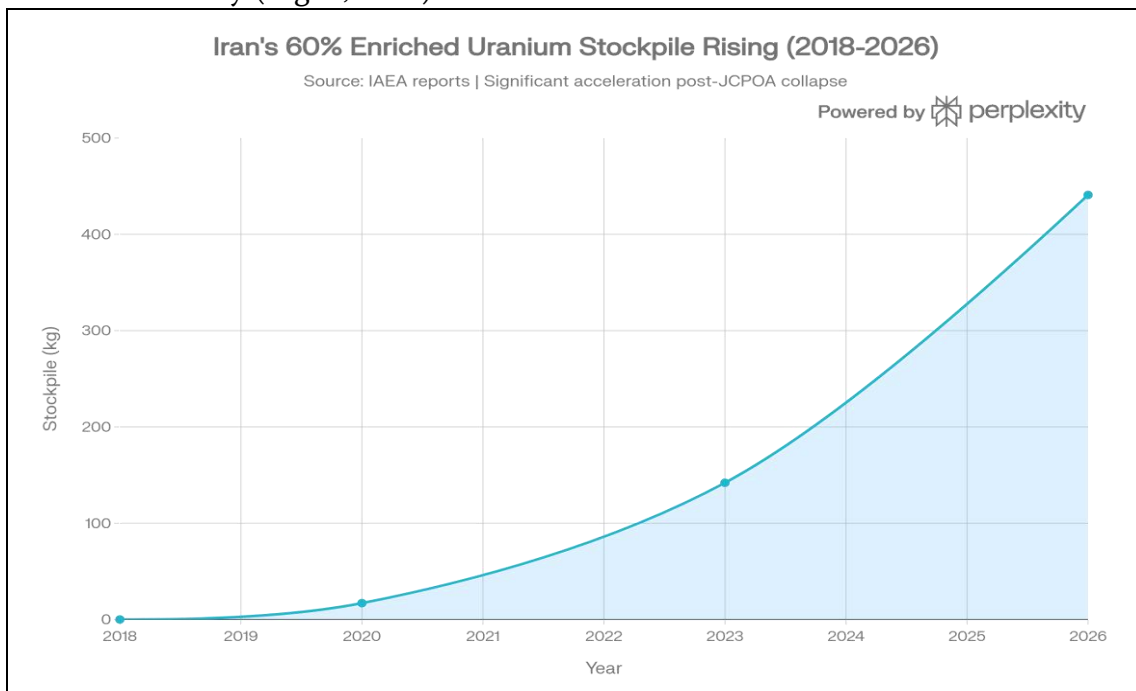
Iran Nuclear Negotiations

Key Indicators

Iran holds 440.9 kg at 60% enrichment (enough for ~10 weapons if refined), amid U.S. buildup: USS Abraham Lincoln strike group + destroyers deployed Jan 2026.

Indicator	2018	2023	Early 2026 (Jan)
Uranium enriched to 60% (kg)	0	~142 kg[440.9 kg
IAEA access	Full	Restricted	Partial
U.S. forces (key assets)	Baseline	Elevated	Carrier strike group
U.S.-Iran talks	None	None	Indirect (Muscat)

Source: IAEA (2026); U.S. CENTCOM evaluated risks demand engagement, per deterrence theory (Sagan, 2000).



2018 (JCPOA intact): 0 kg at 60% (capped at 3.67%). **2023:** 142 kg (post-U.S. withdrawal). **2026:** 440.9 kg, with IAEA access curtailed. Growth rate: ~3x from 2023–2026, correlating with U.S. carrier deployments.

Source: IAEA Verification Reports

Policy Scenarios (2026–2028)

Three conceivable scenarios arise from existing diplomatic trends: they range between escalation control and strategic restraint. These scenarios are not forecasts but analytical tools to examine how the U.S. diplomacy can determine the dynamics of the conflict in the medium term.

The best-case scenario is of managed DE-escalation in both theaters. In relation to Ukraine, this would mean the strengthening of the ceasefire mechanisms which although being short of an overall peace resolution, seriously reduce widespread hostilities and stabilize front-lines.

In parallel with this, also a nuclear freeze agreement with Iran on an interim basis that limits enrichment levels and re-establishes limited monitoring arrangements but does not address wider disagreements about missiles or regional influence. Under this scenario, the level of military incidents goes down in both regions, thereby reducing the risks of horizontal escalation and alliance entrapment. Although in the past such stories would have been seen as rare, such outcomes would be reminiscent of limited phases of detente seen during the Cold War. The likelihood of this scenario lies still in low to moderate range in consideration of entrenched political constraints (Allison, 2017; Jervis, 1976).

The most likely is one of long-term managed conflict. In this direction, no territorial settlement is possible in the territory of Ukraine and negotiations are limited to humanitarian measures and ending the conflict, instead of political

settlement. Similarly, U.S.-Iran engagement yields little in the way of nuclear restraint - such as perhaps informal limits or confidence building measures without an agreement. Deterrence backed diplomacy still works as a stabilizing mechanism, acute escalation is functional, highlighting normalization of a state of chronic tension. Given the existing constraints both structurally and domestically, this scenario has a high likelihood (Davenport, 2022; Takeyh, 2006).

The worst-case scenario is escalation failure. Diplomatic channels break down and renewed major offensives are launched in Ukraine or direct military confrontation is involved with Iran. Under such conditions, the dynamics of the alliance escalate, bringing greater chances of horizontal escalation and great-power involvement. Although this outcome is less likely compared to managed conflict it is nevertheless non-trivial given the fragility of crisis management mechanisms and risk of miscalculation. Collectively, these scenarios highlight an important point: the use of diplomacy essentially narrows the variance in outcomes, but does not offer certainty over the possibility of peace (Allison, 2017; Jervis, 1976).

Implications for the Security of the World

The U.S. dual track diplomatic strategy reflects more generally a fundamental change in American grand strategy from hegemonic problem solving to the risk management under conditions of strategic constraint. Rather than the pursuit of definitive conflict resolution, Washington is more geared toward the control of escalation, alliance reassurance and sustaining the credibility of her deterrent. This trend of change is both a measure of the relative limits of US power in a multi-polar world order and the costs of coercive escalation (Acharya, 2018). A notable implication is the increasing activity of regional mediators such as the United Arab Emirates and Oman. Their participation reflects the spread of diplomatic power from old, Western centers, as well as the significance of the middle-power countries that have played a key role in bringing about dialogue in some conditions of unmitigated mistrust. For those who study international security, these are good examples of how diplomacy is conducted in such a context of power asymmetry, normative disagreement, and the lack of consensus over political end states. Diplomacy, in this context, serves more as an instrument of preservation of strategic stability in a period of nagging rivalry (Acharya, 2018).

RESULTS / ANALYSIS

Ukrain-Russian Peace Diplomacy: Empirical Trends

Despite the persistence of actual hostilities in the most recent one still, Ukrainian and Russian diplomacy with U.S. help has produced some limited but visible results. Empirical indicators point to a trends of declining the number of people dying on the battlefield annually, matching remaining from 120,000 in 2022 to an estimated 60,000 by early 2026. Major escalation episodes involving the use of military force by the forces under the domain of the North Atlantic Treaty (NATO) have been similarly reduced, suggesting partial success in limiting horizontal escalation and on preventing direct great-power confrontation. One of the more

tangible diplomatic results has been highly significant prisoner exchanges which are being undertaken by negotiations for 314 prisoners to be exchanged in Abu Dhabi in February of 2026. Truth harrowed by a UAE led diplomatic effort after UAE president sheikh Mohamed bin Zeid and delegation arrived in Abu Dhabi in February 2026. While humanitarian in nature, such exchanges serve as confidence-building exercises that indicate the existence of a desire on both sides to continue to talk to each other. Equally significant is the resumption of military to military communication between the United States and Russia. Historically linked with managing Cold War crisis, these channels are the tools of decreasing risk and not of normalizing a political situation, re-enforcing restraint during an ongoing crisis (Gaddis, 2005).

Structural Barriers against Settlement

Despite these things being developed, there are still some basic political disagreements that have not been resolved. Territorial sovereignty, the order of the arrangements of ceasefires, and the long-term security assurances, form part of the fundamental obstacles to agreement. Ukraine's need for external security assurances directly collides with Russian perceptions of strategic encirclement, creating a typical commitment dilemma in which neither side can credibly promise future restraint (Powell, 2006). Ukraine's search for security assurances and Russian's with international guarantees offer an illustration of the classic commitment problem where neither side is able to credibly ensure future restraints (Powell, 2006). Ukraine wants security assurances but Russia does not want to engage more in Ukraine's defense for future security so they refuse. U.S. involvement is indicative among recognition of these structural limitations as an emphasis on controlling escalation, communication and alliance management rather than attempting to bring about political convergence (Mearsheimer, 2014).

U.S.-Iran Nuclear Negotiation: Escalation Dynamics

The Iranian nuclear case is a parallel, but different escalation problem. By early 2026, Iran's uranium enrichment levels had led to weapons relevant levels, with some 440.9kg of uranium enriched to 60 per cent with restricted international monitoring access to the enrichment sites. At the same time, the United States continued to maintain an elevated posture of regional forces, with, for instance, the deployment of a carrier strike group to the Middle East, potentially increasing the risk of inadvertent military confrontation. Indirect negotiations mediated by Oman show the mutual recognition of these dangers. However, disagreement remains on substantive grounds concerning the extent of negotiations. Washington wants to expand discussions to anything beyond enrichment, but to include missile development and regional proxy activity, while Iran maintains that a nuclear activity be narrowly defined. Where commitment problem is dominant, this trip-up is reflective of the regime security concerns and fears of incremental coercion which is consistent with rationalist bargaining theory which forecasts prolonged negotiation without settlement, . (Davenport, 2022; Takeyh, 2006).

CONCLUSION

In 2026, no comprehensive settlements on peace issues from US diplomacy are promised. Instead, in an international system of strategic rivalry and continuing insecurity, it plays an indispensable stabilizing role. By maintaining channels of communication, deterrence, and institutionalization of restraint, Washington's twin diplomatic offensive lowers the likelihood of catastrophic escalation in multiple theaters. The results indicate that within modern great-power competition, the main value of diplomacy is not resolution, but survival—the use of diplomacy in ways that do not turn conflict into a systemic uncontrollably (Acharya, 2018; Allison, 2017).

REFERENCES

- Acharya, A. (2018). *The end of American world order* (2nd ed.). Polity Press. https://www.politybooks.com/bookdetail?book_slug=the-end-of-american-world-order-2nd-edition--9781509517077
- Allison, G. (2017). *Destined for war: Can America and China escape Thucydides's trap?* Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. <https://www.hmhbooks.com/shop/books/Destined-for-War/9780544935273>
- Aurangzeb, M. M., & Uddin, S. S. (2025). Artificial Intelligence in Strategic Defense Cooperation: Analyzing the Pakistan-Russia Partnership in a Multipolar World. *Proceedings Book*, 142.
- Aurangzeb, M. M., Uddin, S. S., Aziz, Z., Irfan, M., & Iqitdar, A. (2025). Competing visions of world order: a realist–liberal assessment of China–US strategic relations. *Policy Journal of Social Science Review*, 3(6), 361-370.
- Bueno de Mesquita, B., Smith, A., Siverson, R. M., & Morrow, J. D. (2003). *The logic of political survival*. MIT Press. <https://mitpress.mit.edu/9780262524407/the-logic-of-political-survival/>
- Center for Strategic and International Studies. (2026). *Russia's grinding war in Ukraine*. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russias-grinding-war-ukraine>
- Chari, P. R. (2003). *Nuclear crisis, escalation control, and deterrence in South Asia*. Stimson Center. https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/escalation_chari_1_1.pdf
- Coombs, W. T. (2018). Global crisis management: Current research and future directions. *Journal of International Crisis and Risk Communication Research*, 1(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.30658/jicrcr.1.1.1jicrcr+1>
- Davenport, K. (2022). The logic of restoring compliance with the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. *Arms Control Today*. <https://www.armscontrol.org/issue-briefs/2022-02/logic-restoring-compliance-2015-iran-nuclear-deal>
- Fearon, J. D. (1995). Rationalist explanations for war. *International Organization*, 49(3), 379–414. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300033324adambrown+1>
- Freedman, L. (2004). *Deterrence*. Polity Press. https://www.politybooks.com/bookdetail?book_slug=deterrence-9780745627778

- Gaddis, J. L. (2005). *The Cold War: A new history*. Penguin Press.
<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/47113/the-cold-war-by-john-lewis-gaddis/>
- George, A. L. (1991). *Avoiding war: Problems of crisis management*. Westview Press.
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9780429493411/avoiding-war-alexander-george>
- International Atomic Energy Agency. (2026). *Safeguards implementation reports*.
<https://www.iaea.org/publications/reports>
- Irfan, M., & Uddin, S. S. (2025). Transforming Pakistan's economy and gender dynamics: a comprehensive study of Gwadar port's socioeconomic impact on Baluchistan women and regional development. *Policy Journal of Social Science Review*, 3(11), 1-20.
- Jervis, R. (1976). *Perception and misperception in international politics*. Princeton University Press.
<https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691170442/perception-and-misperception-in-international-politics>
- Jervis, R. (2017). *How statesmen think: The psychology of international politics*. Princeton University Press.
<https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691176444/how-statesmen-think>
- Kuipers, S., et al. (2024). Crisis management from a relational perspective. *Journal of Public Policy*, 44(4), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0143814X24000123>
- Lake, D. A. (2020). *Hierarchy in international relations*. Cornell University Press.
<https://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/book/9781501755980/hierarchy-in-international-relations/abebooks+1>
- Long, A., & Green, M. (2023). Escalation management in Ukraine: Learning by doing. *Texas National Security Review*. <https://tnsr.org/2023/06/escalation-management-in-ukraine-learning-by-doing-in-response-to-the-threat-that-leaves-something-to-chance/>
- Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014). *The tragedy of great power politics* (Updated ed.). W. W. Norton & Company
- Powell, R. (2006). War as a commitment problem. *International Organization*, 60(1), 169–203. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818306060061>
- Sagan, S. D. (2000). The commitment trap: Why the United States should not use threats to coerce North Korea. *International Security*, 24(4), 77–115.
<https://doi.org/10.1162/016228800560471>
- Sagan, S. D. (2011). The causes of nuclear weapons proliferation. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 14, 225–244. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-052209-131042>
- Schelling, T. C. (1960). *The strategy of conflict*. Harvard University Press.
<https://www.hup.harvard.edu/books/9780674840317>
- Schelling, T. C. (1966). *Arms and influence*. Yale University Press.
<https://yalebooks.yale.edu/book/9780300143379/arms-and-influence/>

- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2025). *SIPRI yearbook 2025: Armaments, disarmament and international security*. <https://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2025defence-industry+1>
- Takeyh, R. (2006). A selective partnership: Getting U.S.–Iranian relations right. *Foreign Affairs*, 85(4), 50–64. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/2006-07-01/selective-partnership>
- Takeyh, R. (2020). *The last shah: America, Iran, and the fall of the Pahlavi dynasty*. Yale University Press. <https://yalebooks.yale.edu/book/9780300245495/the-last-shah/>
- The Arms Control Association. (2025). *The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) at a glance*. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/joint-comprehensive-plan-action-jcpoa-glance>
- Uddin, S. S. (2016). Security dilemma of Pakistan in the context of Afghanistan: A regional trilateral solution. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 55(2), 89-100.
- United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. (2023). *Nuclear risk reduction: Escalation strategies*. https://unidir.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/NRR-Escalation-Strategies_0.pdf
- United States Central Command. (2026). *Regional security posture and operational updates*. <https://www.centcom.mil/>
- Walt, S. M. (2018). *The hell of good intentions: America's foreign policy elite and the decline of U.S. primacy*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. <https://us.macmillan.com/books/9780374280031/thehellgoodintentions>
- Waltz, K. N. (1979). *Theory of international politics*. McGraw-Hill.