

**RESEARCH PAPER****The Nuclear Paradox: Assessing Asymmetric Strategies in Iran and North Korea's Nuclear Programs****<sup>1</sup>Muhammad Sheharyar Khan and <sup>2</sup>Dr. Saddaf Sultaana**

1. BS - International Relations, Department of Political Science and International Relations (DPSIR), University of Management and Technology, Lahore
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science and International Relations (DPSIR), University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan

**\*Corresponding Author** sheharyark202@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

The objective of this research is to assess the asymmetric strategies in Iran and North Korea's nuclear program. The proliferation of nuclear weapons represents one of the most complex challenges to global security, with Iran and North Korea as two key actors. Both states have developed nuclear programs that reflect not only their quest for deterrence but also their regime survival strategies. This research employs descriptive and comparative analysis to examine historical, theoretical, and strategic aspects of nuclear proliferation in both states. The analysis reveals that Iran and North Korea have utilized their nuclear programs as key tools for deterring external threats and maintaining regime stability. The findings call for a reassessment of current policy approaches towards them, emphasizing the need for refined strategies that consider the unique deterrence and survival motivations behind their nuclear programs. It also recommends policy adjustments to address the challenges posed by their nuclear quest to enhance regional and global security.

**Keywords:** Asymmetric Approach, Iran, North Korea, Nuclear Deterrence, Nuclear Programme, Nuclear Proliferation, Regime Survival Tactics, Regional Hegemony

**Introduction**

In an era of geopolitical tensions and strategic posturing, the spread of nuclear capabilities across nation-states remains an issue of international concern. Among the countries developing nuclear weapons actively, two countries are recognized by the nature of their approaches and motives: Iran and North Korea. The Iranian program turned out to be asymmetric in strategy, trying to increase influence in its region and, hence neutralize adversaries at its borders. On the other hand, North Korea's motives for gaining nuclear capability and armoury are based more on imperatives imposed by the survival of their regime (Muzaffar, Khan, & Yaseen, 2017). In this context, the nuclear pursuits by both states have underlined the complexities and challenges of nuclear proliferation dynamics. While Iran is trying to prove power and claim sovereignty in a turbulent region over numerous other issues, North Korean nuclear programs are equivalent to a survival strategy of the regime for claiming international recognition and security guarantees. The nuclear ambitions of Iran and North Korea extend beyond the development of nuclear weapons within their regions.

Consequently, the determination of the motivations, strategies, and implications of both Iranian and North Korean nuclear programs becomes very significant. Thus, by examining historical development, strategic objectives, and available means of deterrence, this research thrives in finding the underpinning dynamics at work in contemporary nuclear proliferation and deterrence in the world's geopolitical arena. This paper focuses on the consolidation and analysis of case studies to inform the development of evidence-based policy responses in furthering the peace and security agenda in regions of strategic importance.

## Literature Review

### Iran's Nuclear Programme

In the 1970s, the Iranian nuclear programme embarked under the ambitious eye of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was on a very ambitious path of expanding the nuclear industry in Iran. Before this, the programme had already been oriented towards peaceful scientific exploration. Then, of course, after the Iranian Revolution of 1979, all cooperation had stopped. From there on, Iran had been pursuing its nuclear programme, though now secretly. The nuclear programme in Iran has always been a global concern, while Iran underlines its energy security and technological development needs, others have always questioned the programme for its possible military dimensions. That programme was initiated in the 1970s with the support of the Shah of Iran, who was influenced by Western notions of modernity and sought to showcase Iran's scientific advancements. (Khan, Muzaffar, Khan, 2019; Matamis, 2023) Both Iran and North Korea see nuclear weapons as central to their national security interests. The threat for Iran is the perceived possible threats against Iran being created by the United States and Israel. (Akram, 2024)

The Iranian Islamic Revolution, based on religious democracy (*mardom salari dini*) and the rule of jurisprudence (*velayat-e faqih*), has always opposed the interests of great powers, challenging the existing order in the world. Opposition resulted in strategic challenges, with a start made during the Iran-Iraq War and carried forward by the war on terrorism and proxy wars within the region. The feeling of being under threat, above all by the United States and Israel, has been enhanced manifold by American military bases and naval forces located nearby. This geopolitical fact has obliged Iran to improve its deterrence capabilities continuously, considering the experience gained during the war with Iraq. (Eslami, 2024)

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), a landmark agreement between Iran and six major international powers, was signed in 2015. The agreement significantly limited Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief. Under the JCPOA, Iran destroyed thousands of uranium enrichment centrifuges, transported tonnes of low-enriched uranium to Russia, and agreed to modify a reactor using heavy water that can produce plutonium. With the justification that it had not succeeded in curtailing Iran's missile project and its influence in the region, the United States withdrew from the JCPOA in 2018. Iran responded by starting to disregard the limitations on its nuclear programme, raising questions about the agreement's survival and the possibility of a nuclear catastrophe. (Robinson, 2022) The post-JCPOA developments have raised questions about the effectiveness of the agreement and the prospects for addressing concerns about Iran's nuclear.

### North Korea's Nuclear Programme

The nuclear programme of North Korea has its origins in the 1990s, driven by a combination of factors, including a desire for energy security, regional influence, and regime survival. North Korea started building a nuclear arsenal in the 1990s after losing the support of the Soviet Union and suffering economic losses as a result of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. (Wertz, 2018) Motivations include several reasons, such as the need for energy security, regional influence, and regime survival, which motivated North Korea's nuclear program. The North Korean government sought security by pursuing nuclear weapons and making diplomatic gains with the United States after learning from the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. (Wakefield, 2010) The evolution of nuclear proliferation and deterrence strategies of North Korea are rooted in fed threats from history, one of them being the Korean War. Therefore, they view possessing nuclear capabilities as essential for deterring potential adversaries and ensuring their security. (Akram, 2024)

North Korea has taken many diplomatic initiatives with the US and other countries to address its nuclear program. Mutual mistrust and differences of opinion on the steps relating to this problem have put the talks at failure. (Wertz, 2018) The United States has imposed a large number of sanctions on this country with the hope that these would pressure North Korea to give up the project. However, North Korea did not change its behaviour with these actions. The sanctions have reached many different sectors of the North Korean economy, including their energy, financial services, and exports. (Editors, 2022)

The nuclear program of North Korea is very tightly connected to the survival of the regime and its quest for leveraging international relations. The regime regards its nuclear arsenal as a deterrent to foreign military intervention and is insistent that it wants to avoid the kind of example to which other countries have been subjected to the regime change. (Wertz, 2018) Nuclear weapons have long been regarded by the North Korean leadership as a means to ensure regime survival vis-à-vis U.S. military power and, finally, as a coercive tool in bringing about the realization of unification on its terms of the Korean Peninsula. (Wendy, 2017)

All this has put the North Korean nuclear programme at the very centre of the regime's ideology and approach to national security. In other words, it has almost become an integral part of the regime. The ideology and approach of national security of North Korea are challenging for the Korean Peninsula to be denuclearised in any international effort. (Vucich, 2023)

### **Rational Choice Theory and Asymmetric Strategies in Iran-North Korea Nuclear Ambitions**

North Korea needs to seek security assurances and have a form of deterrence from its perceived threats by the United States. According to the game theory models that investigate the cost-benefit analysis of this rational choice, becoming a nuclear-armed state is the most rational choice for North Korea in maximizing its security interests. (Hamilton, 2017) The pursuit of nuclear capability by Iran is rational because it raises its security and strategic standing against threats. The acquisition of nuclear arsenals is considered as deterrence from probable aggression, ensuring the geopolitical interests of Iran. The actual geopolitical environment in Iran perfectly fits the case theory of security rationale for nuclear weapons. (Abbott, 2013)

The nuclear programme of Iran is commonly viewed as a method of preventing potential foreign risks. Iran aims to bolster its regional influence and achieve a strategic equilibrium with prospective enemies through the development of nuclear technology. Iran may consider its nuclear programme as a strategic tool to counteract perceived nuclear threats from other states in the area. Attaining nuclear capability is regarded as the means to discourage possible hostility and safeguard its geopolitical interests. (Balassi, 2020)

The survival of North Korea's regime is closely connected to its pursuit of nuclear weapons. North Korea aims to discourage foreign intervention and strengthen its negotiating power in international discussions by acquiring nuclear capability. North Korea has constantly presented its nuclear arsenal for deterring pre-emptive military attacks. The dictatorship asserts that the existence of nuclear weapons acts as a deterrence, dissuading rivals from considering military incursions. (KooLee, 2001)

### **Material and Methods**

This descriptive and comparative study involves an analysis of deterrence policies by Iran and North Korea based on primary and secondary sources in the form of scholarship, policy documents, and expert interviews. The problem at hand is to comprehensively

analyse the multifaceted motivations behind nuclear pursuits in Iran and North Korea and to devise effective strategies to mitigate proliferation risks while fostering stability and advancing non-proliferation efforts.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Iran's Strategic Objectives**

Many believe that Iran's nuclear programme is a way for it to balance the strength of its regional rivals, especially Saudi Arabia, and establish its influence in the region of the Middle East. Iran's influence in the Middle East has been the topic of extensive scrutiny and concern. The country's pursuit of nuclear capability is considered a strategic tool to increase its regional influence and deter prospective enemies. (Levite, 2021) Following the 1979 Iranian Revolution, relations between Iran and the United States deteriorated significantly. Iran accused the U.S. of supporting the previous regime, which it deemed as a puppet government. Additionally, the alliance between the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and Israel in the region further heightened Iran's sense of insecurity. This geopolitical landscape, coupled with Sunni-Shia tensions, has motivated Iran to pursue nuclear capabilities as a means of regional balance and safeguarding its interests. (Akram, 2024)

According to the research briefings of the UK Parliament on 'Iran's influence in the Middle East,' without stability and with weak states in the region, taking countries as examples like Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen, Iran can establish coalitions that would support further influence. This illustrates the complex interplay between regional instability, alliances, and Iran's nuclear programme in shaping its influence in the Middle East. (Loft, 2023)

The report "Deciphering Iran's Nuclear Strategy" by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which said to support the fears of the United States and its allies: Tehran is believed to think of holding a nuclear arsenal and weapons to keep enemies at bay and at the same time gain more influence in the region. This is the combination of paranoia and grandiosity that drives Iran's program for nuclear weapons. Iran had always aspired to be a nuclear power. It is thus trying to spread its bets by improving its capabilities whenever it can, making tactical concessions when it needs to, and gathering the domestic resources to cross the nuclear threshold if necessary for Iran. (Levite, 2021)

Its nuclear program is deemed a reaction to its perceived threat from Israel and the United States. This is in the view to the extent that it is believed that with the acquisition of a nuclear weapon, there would be deterrence by this state from waging war against Iran. The strategic objective of deterrence for Iran is essentially the increase of regional influence and, under the current framework, the deterrence of a likely adversary who mostly focuses on the United States and Israel. Such a means includes further development of nuclear programs, a formidable arsenal of missiles, and support to Shiite militias within the region. (Kam, 2023)

The revival of the Iran nuclear programme in the latter stages of the 1980–1988 war with Iraq has enormously important ramifications on how the state has been understood to drive Iran's domestic political landscape. The move to revive the nuclear programme is portrayed as a response to the wartime experience, particularly in the guard against such potential threats like Iraq's use of chemical weapons.

### **North Korea's Strategic Objectives**

North Korea views its nuclear programme as a tool to both assure the regime's survival and combat outside threats. Regime survival is the NK's main strategic goal. NK's nuclear ideology is strongly ingrained in the possession of nuclear arsenals, which are used

to both maintain regime-state survival and mobilize domestic support by focusing on elite players within the country's heavily stratified population. North and South Korea have always been competing to show who is the rightful government of the Korean Peninsula. Because of this competition, North Korea has been hesitant to become more open to the outside world because doing so would mean admitting that its regime faces difficulties. This focus on staying in power greatly affects North Korea's decisions about its nuclear programme and its overall approach to national security. (Snyder, 2015) (Jeffrey Mankoff, 2019)

North Korea seeks to establish regional hegemony and assert its influence in the region because the nuclear programme of a state is seen as a means to enhance its regional power and prestige. (Kim, 2012) Firmly driving the underpinnings of all strategic objectives is the necessity for internal stability and the development of nuclear capabilities to manoeuvre within the complex dynamics of the region. (Lee, 2006) Kim Jong Un, the leader of North Korea, has declared that his nation will increase nuclear weapons manufacturing to scare the US. The nuclear taboo, which is already being threatened by nuclear proliferation and the public's conjecture about their potential use, is being further weakened by this downward spiral. The exchange of threats between Pyongyang, Washington, and Seoul, and additionally, Russia has made clear threats to use nuclear weapons to support its allies in the same region. (ICAN, 2023)

Deception plays an important role in warfare and international competition, not just in creating perceptions but also in altering main strategic functions. Historic examples of Germany's rearmament in the 1920s and 1930s or Adolf Hitler with his deceptions before World War II explicitly depict systemic deceptions concerning the adversary about a nation's real capabilities and intentions. In the context of nuclear proliferation, this deception has been instrumental in Israel, South Africa, India, Pakistan, and North Korea's programs meant to secretly create weapons of mass destruction against the prohibitive regime set up by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Anything less would be peripheral, a one-way direction: the several cases specifically show how central deception can let states pursue forbidden or controversial policy agendas while trying to avoid international detection and punishment. (Park, 2023)

The international world has been repeatedly misled by North Korea over its nuclear weapons project, and there is a search for leverage, with many looking to China for potential influence. (Weiqi Zhang, 2019) North Korea is likely to continue using its nuclear weapons status to support coercive diplomacy, and the country may consider increasingly risky coercive actions as its nuclear arsenal grows. The regime's nuclear weapons serve various purposes, including coercive, offensive, and defensive objectives. (Council, 2023) North Korea continues its development of the ballistic missile and nuclear weapon programs, reasserting an indication of the persistence of the regime in pursuit of nuclear ambitions under international pressure. (Tobin, 2023)

## **Deterrence Strategies Employed by Iran and North Korea**

### **Iran's Deterrence Strategies**

Iran's military strategy squarely focuses on discouraging the perceived threats of countries like the U.S. and its allies through defensive posture and not by aggression. This strategy also includes the use of asymmetric warfare, taking full advantage of the advantages Iran has against much more powerful adversaries. It focuses on developing niche capabilities befitting their strategic situation and geography, including their willingness to take risks and to be offensive by focusing on the vulnerabilities of the enemy. It is based mainly on its legacy and confidence in ballistic missiles. Iranian leaders learn from past conflicts and adjust their asymmetric capabilities. On such bases, they adapt techniques that allow for the exploitation of others' weaknesses. The country has been able to meet this

imbalance through a mix of proxies and irregular tactics, countering the advantages of their adversaries, at times much superior and at times much better technology. The military culture is intertwined with revolutionary, religious, and some American influences due to U.S. training of the Shah-era Iranian forces. (Connell, 2010) (Olson, 2016) (Ward, 2005)

The foreign military forces' presence in the region, possible adversaries in history, and outside intervention in their domestic affairs, cumulatively form their perception. Iran's deterrence strategies and its approach to regional security dynamics are informed by these threat perceptions. In this context, the Iranian regime has had a big toolbox that it has used to deter military, economic, and political challenges and threats. In formulating the foundation of this deterrence system, its threat perceptions have been influential. Iran's current military doctrine, now entrenched with a lot of emphasis on defence, is founded on principles such as deterrence and the capability to counterbalance external threats. The doctrine emphasizes a lot on asymmetric warfare, especially the use of proxy forces and unconventional strategies against foes who are many strides forward in terms of military technology. (Divsallar, 2021)

### **North Korea's Deterrence Strategies**

North Korea's military plan is mostly about attacking, not defending. It wants to use its military to forcefully reunite with South Korea in the Korean Peninsula if needed. Their strategy involves surprising the enemy, using a lot of firepower, and moving quickly. (Reed, 2002) The military strategy of North Korea is embedded to a large extent in the regime's military ideology, coupled with the firm admixture of Russian and Soviet military thought with the Korean nationalist movement's deep historical foundations of guerrilla warfare against Japanese colonialism. (Kwon, 2020)

The military doctrine of North Korea is to deter the aggression of the United States and South Korea. It contains the threats that make the United States and South Korea pay the costs and denies North Korea the benefits it seeks from them. (Morgan, 2006) North Korea's military doctrine is heavily influenced by the perceived threats posed by the United States, its ally South Korea, and historical tensions with Japan, all of which are aligned with the Western bloc. The U.S. extends its nuclear umbrella over South Korea and maintains a significant military presence in the region. As a result, North Korea's military doctrine prioritizes nuclear capabilities as a means of ensuring regime survival and deterring potential adversaries. (Akram, 2024) North Korea has a "military-first" policy; a grand military doctrine that stresses the development and maintenance of armed forces, especially nuclear forces, ahead of other national objectives. (Andrew Yeo, 2006)

North Korea has had much less interest in its diplomatic movement and more along the line of maintaining an isolated foreign policy that involves nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. It has always tried to sustain its isolation and not let any international efforts take the form that could strangle the country to force an abandonment of its nuclear arms program. North Korea has combined such a brinkmanship approach with threats and provocations to extract concessions from its adversaries. (Bennett, 2012)

The threat perceptions of North Korea take their origin from historical experiences like the Korean War and the division of the Korean Peninsula, combined with perceptions of the United States as a hostile power. (Park H. S., 2000) From the presence of foreign military forces in the region to historical adversaries, all have been viewed by North Korea as a threat to its national security. The threat perceptions of North Korea would be influenced by the changes in the security environment in their region, for example, the rise of China and increased tension between the U.S. and China. (MORGAN, 2006) (Kwon, 2020)

### **Assessing the Effectiveness and Consequences of Strategies of Iran and North Korea**

## **Efficacy of Iran's Deterrence Measures**

Iran's nuclear progress has helped balance against regional rivals like Israel and Saudi Arabia by demonstrating independence and military deterrents. Iran views its nuclear programme as a strategic counter to neighbours' air superiority and foreign alliances. The programme symbolizes an "insurance policy" to maintain deterrence in an unstable neighbourhood. (Huang, 2016)

In response to the question regarding the regional and global implications of Iran and North Korea's nuclear deterrence strategies, it is evident that Iran is covertly pursuing nuclear capabilities under the guise of a civil nuclear program, while unofficially seeking to establish itself as a nuclear power. With support from countries like Russia and China, Iran's nuclear ambitions have significant regional and global ramifications, particularly in its adversarial relationship with the United States. Similarly, North Korea, aided by Russia and China, is leveraging its military and nuclear program to assert its power, contributing to a destabilizing power imbalance regionally and potentially globally. Iran's nuclear program is advanced enough that it can rapidly develop a nuclear arsenal if it wants to (Diaz-Maurin, 2024)

Iran's nuclear program can cause a domino effect nuclearization of the region, as it is certain that other countries of the region would regard this way of armament as a way to maintain their security. Major regional adversaries to Iran including Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Israel think that JCPOA would not deter the hostile regional activities and interventions of Iran within their respective internal affairs. This automatically makes one think of the possibility of the country leveraging its position in the region to gain from a stronger, post-sanctions economy. (Bijan, n.d.) (Hussaini, 2021)

## **Understanding North Korea's Deterrence Dynamics**

The regional stability on the Korean Peninsula is a critical concern, specifically considering the possession of WMD (Weapons of mass destruction) by North Korea and its large conventional force. Regional stability in the Far East is extremely important to the United States, with specific goals for the Korean Peninsula that impact regional stability, including the denuclearization of the peninsula and the avoidance of the proliferation of missile and nuclear technology in unstable regions. The deterrent power of North Korea has the potential to greatly impact regional stability, and various strategies, have been offered that would help manage it, including engagement, isolation, and the use of economic sanctions. (PAUL B. THOMPSON, 2003) As such, the assessment of the effectiveness of North Korean deterrence relates closely to this rather broader objective of the maintenance of regional stability on the Korean Peninsula. (Lee, 2020)

Most centrally, the relentless pursuit of North Korea to attain nuclear weapons, intercontinental ballistic missiles, and different missile systems together form the core of its nuclear strategy for maximizing deterrence with a small arsenal. Under Kim Jong-un's leadership, North Korea conducted four nuclear tests from 2013 through 2017, significantly enhancing nuclear capabilities and creating a severe security threat to South Korea and possibly the US. There are reports that it has succeeded in miniaturizing nuclear warheads, and is well on its way toward a credible second-strike capability. It is estimated to have 20-30 nuclear weapons now, with capabilities for more. Its successful ICBM tests coupled with claims of hydrogen bomb development put North Korea clearly on any trajectory aimed at raising its war-fighting nuclear strategy. Under such a scenario, North Korea could challenge the U.S. commitment to defending its allies in the region. (Kwon)

Despite earlier agreements that were supposed to stop it from developing nuclear weapons, North Korea has been consistent in pursuing its nuclear weapons through clandestine means. The 1994 "Agreed Framework" with the United States froze North

Korea's plutonium-based program but did little to slow down a uranium enrichment program the latter was secretly developing with Iran and Pakistan. In 2002, the discovery of this program led to the breakdown of the agreement and follow-up diplomatic effort—chief among them the Six-Party Talks, which resulted in some very short-lived agreed documents. North Korea would later leave these negotiations to conduct several nuclear tests that would ramp up its nuclear capability. In 2013, North Korea finally succeeded in its third nuclear test where it publicly announced that it had successfully developed nuclear weapons. (Park, 2023)

The role of North Korea's nuclear programme in shaping diplomatic negotiations and outcomes, such as the Six-Party Talks and inter-Korean summits, has been significant. The Six-Party Talks in which Japan, China, Russia, North Korea, South Korea, and the United States participated, were initiated in 2003 and were a pivotal diplomatic initiative aimed at addressing the escalating concerns surrounding North Korea's nuclear programme. (Understanding the North Korean Nuclear Issue, n.d.)

North Korea's nuclear programme has had a profound influence on Inter-Korean Summits. In this regard, these summits were somewhat dominated by North Korea's nuclear program, more apparent in the 2018 engagements. The United States, South Korea, and North Korea reached decisive agreements. The high note struck by the inter-Korean summits since early 2018 was somewhat tempered by the outcome of the second *U.S.-North Korea Summit held in Hanoi* from February 27-28, 2019, which concluded without any substantive progress toward the denuclearization of North Korea. (Lee J. H., 2018) (Pak, 2019)

The perceptions by neighbouring countries of North Korea's nuclear deterrent in East Asia and its implications for regional security dynamics are subject to multifaceted considerations. The rationale behind North Korea's nuclear assertiveness is rooted in state security and regime survivability. The discernment of a pre-emptive strike threat on the Korean Peninsula justifies North Korea's nuclear status and its readiness to employ nuclear forces in regional crises, challenging the efficacy of U.S. extended deterrence in East Asia. (Khan, 2017) There is North Korea's Nuclear Threat Towards China that delves into Beijing's evolving threat perceptions vis-à-vis Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal, underscoring the strategic recalibration necessitated by the nuclear weapons programme of North Korea and its ramifications for regional security architecture. (Myers, 2023)

### **Global Impact of Nuclear Proliferation**

The nuclear strategies of Iran and North Korea make a big difference in international security and non-proliferation efforts. If they get atomic arsenals, they will pose direct threats to the U.S., its allies, and regional stability by slowly escalating conflicts and undermining international treaties like the NPT. Where there are similarities, each program poses special problems to regional security, requiring special policy responses. The continued acts of wilful defiance by such states in the face of international sanctions merely underline the need for increased coordination at the global level to address instances of non-compliance and to safeguard the framework aimed at preventing proliferation.

### **Recommendations**

Restoring the JCPOA can help in preventing a nuclear-armed Iran by returning to strict monitoring and verification. The urgent worry about work on uranium enrichment at Fordow and stockpiles of highly enriched uranium suggests that an urgent policy is necessary. What is needed is an engaged, agile diplomatic strategy for containing the threat that is growing bigger, far beyond isolation and punitive measures. On the level of treaties, cooperation in strengthening the international nuclear regime by way of enforcement is very instrumental in promoting non-proliferation and peaceful applications of nuclear



energy. Decision-makers have to undertake an in-depth analysis of the reverberations of Iran's nuclear program at the regional and global levels on security, diplomacy, and non-proliferation efforts. (Davenport, 2023; Brewer, 2021)

North Korea's nuclear proliferation containment cannot be met with a multidimensional response, which reduces the risks of conflict and further stabilizes the Korean Peninsula. There is reason to believe that new approaches are needed to bridge differing views with Pyongyang, Washington, and Seoul to ensure an avoidance of escalation. Current strategies have existed to no avail toward denuclearization while seeking alternative options in strengthening deterrence and securing U.S., South Korean, and international community security interests. The nuclear programs of both states pose a significant danger to regional and global security. In particular, it means the need to adopt a comprehensive approach that would include effective diplomacy, tough sanctions, and strategic deterrence. Hence, policymaking must focus on reinstating the JCPOA, enhancing the global nuclear regime, and developing new strategies for North Korea's nuclear challenge.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study discussed above in great detail the nuclear proliferation strategies of Iran and North Korea. That was a comparison between the two nuclear programs and their impact on international security. The discussion highlighted some points by comparing historical evolution, strategic objectives, deterrence, and effectiveness.

First, a comparison of the nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea, therefore, demonstrates that their approach is quite different from each other. Where Iran aims to enhance its influence and deter threats from its enemies asymmetrically through nuclear capability, North Korea wants to guarantee regime survival and use its efforts as international leverage. Hence, the differences in objectives of the policy inform the differences in the specific deterrent strategies: Iran focuses on diplomatic initiatives and military doctrines to get the job done, while North Korea bases its strategy on isolation and threat perception.

Second, the successes that these deterrence policies run by Iran and North Korea sometimes have huge implications, varied in nature, and tilted by runs of various factors such as regional dynamics, international responses, and threat perceptions. However, the efforts of Iran to deter its enemies, challenged by regional adversaries and international sanctions against it, have shown a completely different perspective from that of North Korea, which has left the international reaction very nuanced, filled with diplomatic outreaches and many times punitive actions.

Third, the implications of Iranian and North Korean approaches to nuclear proliferation are not only regional; instead, they are global in security dynamics and far-reaching in the impact on the non-proliferation of atomic armaments worldwide. The diffusion of nuclear capabilities poses problems for the nature of threats; the existing regime for non-proliferation is leaving the need for multilateral cooperation and diplomatic initiatives in addressing nuclear threats pressing.

In conclusion, this research accounts for a full explanation of all the intricacies behind nuclear proliferation and strategies of deterrence by Iran and North Korea to be informed both in policy and scholarly practice, hence promoting peace, security, and disarmament of the world, as it provides insight into motivations, purposes, and implications of their nuclear programs.

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