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A DIPLOMATIC BREAKTHROUGH
QATAR: A STRATEGIC MEDIATOR IN IRAN-ISRAEL CEASEFIRE

By Abu Horairah (M.A, Sem- III)

On the brink of escalation of full-scale war, the skies of West Asia, yet once again illuminated with missiles making global headlines of breaking news shows seemingly intractable conflicts and deep-seated issues can be resolved not through threats or destructive patterns but with negotiation, diplomacy and carefully chosen words. Israel-Iran conflict called 12 days war by US President Trump in which both countries between 14 june and 24 June 2025 engaged in a deadly 12-day direct confrontation with exchange of missiles after Israel targeted air strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities. Iran responded with missiles including an attempted direct attack on the U.S. Airbase, Al Udeid situated in Qatar. The world held its breath for the worst and it was Doha that entered into the conflict not as a superpower but as a plausible meditator.

Qatar's PM Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani entered a position few would, to facilitate back-channel negotiation between Washington, Tehran, and Tel Aviv. In response to Iran's missile attack on Al Udeid in which most of the missiles were intercepted, President Trump invited Qatar to negotiate a ceasefire, the White House said. Qatar brokered a ceasefire in 48 hours after Iran attacked on US airbase in Qatar, Doha negotiated with U.S. and Israel also convinced Iran to follow suit. On June 24, Trump declared the ceasefire would be phased with Iran would cease fire first, followed by Israel in 12 hours, and a full halt would be implemented within 24 hours. In contrast to old-style heavyweights, Qatar takes recourse to quiet diplomacy—low-key, determined, and highly networked. It has been hosting negotiations with Taliban leaders, arranging hostage deals, and acting as a middle ground where opposing ideologies can sit on the same table.

This time, its reputation as a professional mediator served it well. Even though the symbolic ferocity Iran showed in its Al Udeid strike, it was not followed further by escalation. The message from Qatar was clear: beyond this point, the further escalation could isolate Tehran internationally and Doha's conduits with Washington could be the last exit ramp open.

Qatar's role went beyond logistics. It crafted a face-saving path for all sides: For Iran, it meant resisting appearing submissive. For Israel, the ceasefire enabled a return to deterrence without long-term entanglement. And for the U.S., it avoided a potentially disastrous full-scale war months before its presidential election.

Following the truce, Qatar expanded its efforts, engaging with Egypt and the UN to push for a Gaza ceasefire. Spokesperson Majed Al Ansari called it a "window of opportunity for lasting peace."

Critics argue that Qatar's ties with groups like Hamas, and its open diplomacy with Iran, make its neutrality questionable. Yet others believe this is exactly what makes it effective. In a region of hard lines, Doha's ambiguity allows it to connect dots that others can't or won't.

From hosting a major U.S. military base to simultaneously maintaining ties with Iranian leaders, Qatar's balancing act is delicate. But if this war has proven anything, it's that when bombs fall, Doha dials—and sometimes, people listen. Qatar did not stop the war alone, and the ceasefire may not last forever. But in those 12 tense days of June, it played a crucial role which few others could, moving two rivals towards de-escalation and conflict resolution not loudly and forcefully but effectively through mediation and negotiation.

AUTHORITARIANISM IN SISI'S EGYPT

By Moin Aftab (M.A, Sem- III)

Since the military coup in 2013, Egypt has been experiencing harsh and exclusionary kind of authoritarianism under Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, former military officer and current president of Egypt. It has distinguished Egypt from its past as an autocracy. With military having complete power and authority in government. This governmental setup has led to systematic repression, weak economy and limited role and say of independent institutions in undemocratic regime.

Since his presidential elections, Sisi led government has always prioritize military rule and personal gain over public interest. Tarek Masoud writes in "The Autocrat-in-Training: The Sisi Regime at 10" that Sisi's style of government is "marked by autocratic trial-and-error governance and the prioritization of personal desires and instincts over the needs of the Egyptian people." Masoud says that the expansion of state-led mega-projects like new cities and a new Suez Canal, all run by the military, was not a real economic strategy. Instead, it was a way to use big infrastructure to get "tremendous publicity and project an image of modernity," which made Sisi's personalist style of rule seem more legitimate and made him look like a national saviour.

Sisi's method is not just a streamlined version of strongman rule; it is also institutionally weak and very unsafe. In an interview with the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, German analyst Stephan Roll says that Sisi "depends entirely on the military and General Intelligence not only to support his rule, but also to run the country and the economy." Roll says that Sisi "cannot allow individual officers to hold their command positions for long periods of time, lest they build patronage networks loyal to themselves and thus become potential alternative power centers that could replace Sisi." This is to protect against the rise of other power centers. This constant change at the top strengthens his autocratic hold but weakens the depth of bureaucratic or civilian institutions.

The effect on civil society and dissent is huge. Amr Magdi of Human Rights Watch says that Sisi's government has "systematically reversed the fragile gains of the country's 2011 uprising, jailing tens of thousands and squeezing the last remaining spaces for freedom of expression and assembly." Magdi says that most estimates say that more than 41,000 people have been imprisoned since 2013. "About 29,000 of those jailed are members or supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood," he says, "while others are government critics from a wide range of political groups." As Amnesty International has pointed out, the end result is a "open-air prison" for people who disagree, where independent activism and journalism are almost non-existent.

Aidan Lewis from Reuters, who represents the international media, points out the contradiction in Sisi's government: some people praise it for improving Egypt's infrastructure, "driving an army-led infrastructure binge," but it comes at a huge cost to political freedoms. People often call Sisi's model "authoritarian efficiency," but Johannes Späth calls this a myth in his OIIP policy paper, "Flawed by Design: What al-Sisi's Egypt Reveals About the Myth of Authoritarian Efficiency." The

Egyptian system is now based on informal networks, unclear laws, patronage, and military-controlled service delivery.
Maged Mandour, an author and analyst, says in his Arab Reform Initiative interview that Sisi's Egypt is not just a return to the authoritarianism of the Mubarak era, but a whole new model: "a chronology of the devastating political, economic, and social consequences of direct military rule... Egypt has been pushed to the brink of the abyss and... this will change the country for decades to come." Mandour and other experts say that this order is kept in place by a dangerous it is for Egypt's long-term stability and the more it will cost to fix the future." Sisi's reputation as an autocrat, always afraid of what happened to Mubarak, seems likely to make the political, economic, and social problems that could bring down the state he wants to control even worse.

HAMID DABASHI: DEFINITIVE IRANOLOGIST; DISSIDENT POSTCOLONIALIST

By Ali Ahmed (M.A, Sem- I)

With the renewed conflict between Iran and Israel the society, culture and politics of that country once again have come under the microscope and western media is brimful with din of caricaturish characterisations of that region and its people. Amidst these orientalistic headwinds the scholarship of Hamid Dabashi stands as an unrelenting pole of considered, thoughtful, complex and counter-cultural narrative of Iran in all its hues, at once taking on the superficiality of the dominant western narrative as well as the excesses of those in power in Iran.
Born in 1951, in Pahlavi Iran, he studied in Iran and the United States earning a PhD in Sociology of Culture and Islamic Studies from University of Pennsylvania and is a professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. His work covers a wide gamut: with books on Iranian history, literature, society, cinema to postcolonial theory. His work as an Iranologist covers the many facets of Iran–from its literary epics to its revolutions; and unlike the standard narrative on Iran which casts the layered and complex societal fabric of Iranian society into a simplistic dynamic of religiously zealous men and meek women he offers a rich and deep exploration of Iranian societal dynamics and histories that form their context. His history and study of the ideologues of contemporary-modern Iranian history, “Iran: A People Interrupted” and “Theology of discontent” respectively, contextualises the tumultuous events that often essentialise Iran in popular imagination with the larger backdrop in which they occurred, pieces of detail absent when Iran is brought up.
He has contributed immensely to the field of Iranian cultural history: in his “The Shahnameh: The Persian Epic as World Literature” he undertakes a study of the impact this piece of epic literature has had and continues to have on the Iranian psyche and places it alongside other great works of ancient epic literature. He follows this thread of Iranian cultural production, tracing it in the contemporary era, manifested in the medium of cinema, in his study of Iranian cinema i.e., “Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future”, and studies how that industry developed alongside the socio-political history of modern Iran, how Iranians absorbed the outside world through film and then reflected back their reality through their cinematographic output, surprising audiences whose visions of Iran are marred by western-media curated perceptions of Iran.
In his seminal postcolonial study “Brown Skins, White Masks” he expounds upon the idea of a “Native Informer” i.e., an intellectual from the colonised world who operates in the imperial core and through their work seeks to absolve the imperialist power and justify any and all violence enacted by it. To this end this character of the native informer indulges the imperial society in orientalist caricatures and fantasies of oppressed women, predatory cultures and barbaric societies in need of saving. Dabashi conducts a searing, thoughtful and expansive study of this character and the role they have played in the post-9/11 era. Far from leaving his analysis here Dabashi digs deep and unearths the systematic forces of capital behind this farce: at the end of the day capital is concerned with itself and least bothered by the state of human rights in these societies; it casts and recasts its chief villains from jew to muslim, black to brown, african to arab to suit its interests and proliferation; and this category of individual is but a disposable tool in its arsenal. This articulation is not novel; it has antecedents in Fanon, but carries immense utility to

understand the machinery of imperial subjugation in WANA.
Thus, with his wide-scoped studies and robust critiques of imperialism's machinery of desolation Dabashi cements himself as a pioneering voice in postcolonial studies in an era where dissent to empire's excesses gets all too little space in popular media and mood of the inhabitants of the imperial core is swayed by those who don the "White Masks".

THE MUGHAL EMPIRE AND WEST ASIA: A STUDY OF POLITICAL, CULTURAL, AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS

By Md Arif (M.A, Sem- III)

The Mughal Empire (1526–1857) was deeply connected with the Islamic world and particularly West Asia. These relations were shaped by political, religious, commercial and cultural relations. The Mughals within a trans regional network of power and legitimacy.
The Political and Diplomatic Relations were shaped by conquests and contests. Akbar's conquest of Kandahar in 1595 strengthened Mughal frontiers, but the city was lost to Shah Abbas of Persia in 1622 during Jahangir's reign. Even with competition, embassies and diplomatic relations were repeated. With the Ottoman Empire, relations were friendly, ottomans acknowledged Mughals as Sunni rulers and also capture the same idea of official and religious acceptance between the empires. At times, Ottomans moderate between the Mughals and Safavids, and peak the integrated nature of Islamic politics. The annual Hajj pilgrimage strengthened religious and cultural relations with Mughal emperors financing ships from Indian ports like Surat and Cambay (Khambhat) to transport pilgrims to Mecca and Medina. Transportation facilities were also provided to shrines in Najaf, Karbala, and Mashhad.
Sufism remained a crucial medium of connection with West Asia. The Naqshbandiyya order (Silsla), originating in Central Asia, became highly influential at the Mughal court, especially during the reign of Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Alongside this, the Qadiriyya order (Silsla), founded by the Famous Sufi saint Abd al-Qadir Jilani of Baghdad, also flourished in Mughal India. Prominent Qadiri saints such as Mian Mir of Lahore enjoyed imperial respect and patronage, serving as spiritual links between India and West Asia. Through these orders, the Mughals engaged with the spiritual centers of Baghdad, Iran, and Arabia, strengthening their Islamic legitimacy. Culturally, Persian language transmitted through Iran became the court language of the Mughals, influencing literature, art, and historiography. Architecture styles such as miniature paintings in famous monuments built by Mughal emperors across India exhibit Persian and West Asian style.
Trade of Spices, gem stones and Indian textiles from India to Persian Gulf and west Asian markets and import of West Asia import horses, luxury goods, manuscripts from West Asian region to India fostered economic and commercial exchanges between two regions with rich civilizational histories.Mughal ports like Surat and Masulipatnam served as gateway of India with Ottoman and Safavid trade networks.
The Mughal relationship with West Asia was both competitive and cooperative. While territorial rivalry with the Safavids reflected power struggles, religious, cultural, and commercial exchanges underscored shared civilizational bonds. Through Sufi networks like the Naqshbandiyya and Qadiriyya, the Mughals maintained spiritual ties with West Asia, while trade and diplomacy enriched both regions. These connections not only strengthened the Mughal Empire's legitimacy in the wider Islamic world but also placed it firmly within the global networks of the early modern period.

HISTORICAL FIGURE

THE BRIGHT LIGHT OF KNOWLEDGE AND RESEARCH - AL-BIRUNI

By Zafar Madni (M.A, Sem- III)

Several thousand years ago, a boy named Abu Rayhan al-Biruni was born in Central Asia. He was no ordinary child. His intrigued intellect allowed him to formulate deeper enquiry. He wanted to know how far the stars are, how big the Earth is, and why different civilizations tell different stories about the same sky. Born in Khwarazm (present-day Uzbekistan) in 973 AD, this boy became one of the most comprehensive scholars in history – an astronomer, mathematician, historian, and a traveller across the boundaries of thought.

Some of his experiments, which seem impossible without satellites, informed the world about them at that time. With proficiency in Islamic jurisprudence and an accomplished linguist, he was a proactive learner who stressed on practical experience and knowledge. He would build instruments himself, climb hills, and spend hours measuring. With a simple instrument, careful observation, and principles of geometry, he estimated the Earth's circumference, and his estimate is very close to modern calculations. Imagine, he achieved this feat when facilities like satellites did not exist. His efforts and research were not limited to the sky; later, when he visited the subcontinent with Mahmud Ghaznavi, he learned the customs, traditions and languages documented them as an open-minded thinker. His famous book, Kitab al-Hind, not only contained scientific information but also detailed analysis of Indian philosophy, mathematics, and religion. After coming to the subcontinent, he calculated time, examined different calendars, and translated countless books written in Sanskrit. In addition to being greatly influenced by his inventions, his working methods are a source of admiration for contemporary scientists.

He believed in the acquisition of knowledge irrespective of place and class, as according to him a learner has to be impartial to receive knowledge. These ideas and views of Al Biruni allowed him to contribute to anthropological understanding of cultures and societies. He believed that the qualities like truth, honesty, and goodness are not specific to any culture and society if we seek them honestly, they can be found in every part of the world. He read and studied Greek, Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit texts and then translated them. He emphasized on empirical knowledge, testing observations and verify the claims which later formed the foundation of science. As fundamental principles of scientific knowledge, enquiry and claims rely on empirical evidence.

COUNTRY HIGHLIGHT

THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA: HISTORY AND ITS TRANSFORMATION

By Shafaque
Postgraduate from Centre for West Asian Studies
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Saudi Arabia, officially known as Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), is located in the Middle East region and is bordered by Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, The UAE, Sultanate of Oman, Yemen. The country is surrounded by coastlines along the Red Sea, Gulf of Aqaba and Persian Gulf. The judicial system is based on Shariah Law (derived primarily from principles of Quran and Sunnah). It is the largest country in the Middle East; occupying around 80% of the Arabian Peninsula and ranks among top 15 largest countries in the world. Major part of Saudi Arabia is desert which is known as Rub' al-Khali (Empty Quarter). The kingdom of Saudi Arabia holds significant religious importance for Muslims around the world as the two holiest cities in Islam Mecca and Medina are

situated in Saudi Arabia. The kingdom is ruled by Kings, with King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud serves as the Head of the State.

History

The foundation of Saudi Arabia as a state was laid through the alliance between Muhammad Ibn Abd-Al Wahhab and Mohammad bin Saud. With the unification of tribes and its first king, King Abdulaziz, the modern Saudi Arabia was established in 1932 governed by absolute monarchy. Since then, the Kingdom has been ruled by the sons of King Abdulaziz (the power is passed horizontally to the sons of King Abdulaziz). With Mohammad bin Salman as the crown prince and designated heir of the kingdom; the line of succession has been shifted towards a vertical pattern. However, historically, the succession has remained horizontal among the sons of King Abdulaziz.

The country with rich tribal history and a major pilgrimage site was economically dependent on trade until the discovery of oil in 1938. The oil provided Saudi Arabia with revenues and international relevance which transformed the country's economic, cultural and social landscape. The country has become one of the largest oil producing countries with natural oil and petroleum reserves making it one of the world's top producers and exporters of petroleum.

Culture

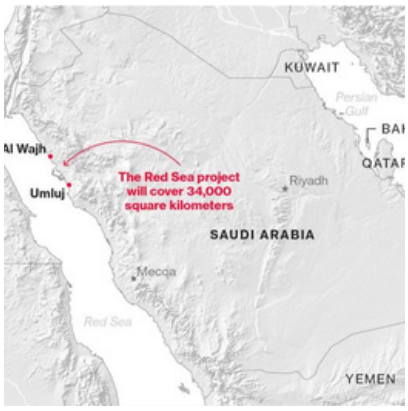
The social and cultural landscape of Saudi Arabia is significantly influenced by tribal societies and Islamic values and traditions. The kingdom however, has now adopted major reforms aimed at modernising the country and enhancing its position on global stage. For instance, earlier cinemas and concerts were banned by the kingdom, and women were not allowed to drive. Since 2017-18 women have gained the right to drive and the ban on cinema was lifted. These reforms under the rule of King Salman aim to boost its economy and strengthen its stance on the global order. Rather than just depending on the Oil, Saudi Arabia is trying to explore other dimensions to diversify its economy through tourism, infrastructure, technology.

Arabic is the official language of Saudi Arabia and traditional dress for men is Thobe while women can be seen wearing Abaya.

Economy

Saudi Arabia's economy heavily relied on oil, with revenues gained from oil exports, the country flourished. The Vision 2030 is an initiative to reduce the dependency on oil and diversify the economy. Mega projects including NEOM and The Line are expected to transform the kingdom's economy and provide impetus to its tourism sector.

Tourism has long been centred around Hajj and Umrah Pilgrimages, the foundation of various projects such as NEOM and Red Sea project are a part of country's modernising plans. Saudi Arabia hosts a large number of expatriate population including around 2.4 million Indians, making the country holding one of the largest expatriate communities.



Facts

- **Riyadh is the capital of Saudi Arabia**
- **Monarchic system of governance**
- **The current Crown Prince is Mohammad bin Salman**
- **Saudi Riyal is the national currency**
- **Arabic is the official language**
- **Islam is the religion of the state**

GAZA CRISIS: THOUSANDS OF AID TRUCKS BLOCKED, FAMINE LOOMS

By Nadeem Alam
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Gaza – July 26, 2025 – It's a truly desperate situation in Gaza. Despite urgent global pleas for a ceasefire and open access for aid, help meant for the territory is simply piling up at its borders. We're talking about a staggering 6,000 trucks loaded with food and medicine, stuck in Jordan and Egypt, unable to get in for over four months now.

This isn't just a setback; it's pushing an already horrific crisis to the brink of full-blown famine. The numbers are heartbreaking: over 100 people have reportedly died from malnutrition, and many of them are children. In some parts of Gaza City, a staggering one in five young children is now severely malnourished. And tragically, simply trying to get aid has become a death sentence for over 1,000 people since May.

Despite strong calls from international groups and many countries to open all routes and let aid in, these pleas have largely gone unheard. Aid agencies keep saying that getting supplies in by truck is the easiest and most effective way, but those land crossings remain shut. If these thousands of trucks can't get into Gaza soon, the suffering will only get worse, with devastating and irreversible consequences for the people trapped inside.

WITKOFF AND THE IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL: A KEY MOMENT IN GLOBAL DIPLOMACY

By Nehal Jawed
Research Scholar
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Aligarh Muslim University

As 2025 moves forward, tensions over Iran's nuclear program have reached a very important stage. Steve Witkoff, the U.S. Special Envoy, has become one of the main figures in the talks. His role, along with the White House's strategy, is shaping the world's debate on stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and the chances of peace in the Middle East.

Background of the Talks

The current round of U.S.–Iran talks began in April 2025, when President Donald Trump's government restarted negotiations after direct contact with Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei. Both sides set a sixty-day window to reach a deal, but as discussions went on, the urgency grew. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported that Iran had increased its uranium enrichment to more than 400 kg at 60% purity. This level is very close to weapons-grade material, causing global concern.

Witkoff's Role and Ideas

Witkoff has been leading the U.S. side of the talks. In late May, he presented a "detailed and acceptable plan" to Iranian officials. The proposal, given in Oman with the help of Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi, tried to find middle ground. Witkoff's ideas included:

- Creating a regional nuclear consortium for peaceful energy, monitored by the IAEA and the U.S.
- Allowing Iran some limited enrichment rights, but only if it stopped its current enrichment program and accepted very strict monitoring.

The Main Disagreements

The biggest problem is still Iran's uranium enrichment. Witkoff has made it clear that any deal must stop Iran from enriching uranium. This matches Trump's strong position. But Iran's Foreign

Minister, Abbas Araghchi, says enrichment is a matter of sovereignty and necessary for energy. This clash has blocked progress.

The U.S. has also sent mixed signals. Witkoff and some officials have hinted that Iran could be allowed low-level enrichment under heavy monitoring. But Trump, under pressure at home and abroad, has repeatedly said Iran must shut down its enrichment entirely. These conflicting messages have made trust even harder.

Why It Matters

The outcome of these talks will affect many areas:

- Regional security: Without a deal, the risk of war grows, as seen in Israel's threats and U.S. military build-up.
- Global nuclear rules: This agreement could set an example for future nuclear negotiations.
- Economy: Iran has offered major reactor projects to attract U.S. business, showing that money is also at stake.

What Comes Next

Both sides are standing firm, with Witkoff's proposals at the center of the debate. If a basic deal is reached, it could greatly improve U.S.–Iran relations and ease years of sanctions and unrest. But if talks fail, it could mean more conflict and a setback for global diplomacy. In the next few weeks, Witkoff will need to carefully balance U.S. security needs, Iran's sense of pride, and the world's trust—a very difficult task, but one that may decide the future of peace.

UAE'S CONTROVERSIAL ROLE IN SUDAN'S CONFLICT: ARMS SUPPORT, ECONOMIC INTERESTS, AND INTERNATIONAL LEGAL CHALLENGES

By Noufil Farooq
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UAE has been criticized for giving funds and arms to the Rapid Support Forces during the conflict that started in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the RSF. The UAE says these claims are false. However, sources suggest that the UAE has helped the RSF with weapons, logistics, and money. The Atlantic Council says that "a wide range of government officials, human rights groups, and multilateral and investigative press sources" say that the UAE has delivered weaponry to the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The UAE's alleged involvement has aroused severe concerns about violations of international humanitarian law and the UN arms embargo on conflict areas in Sudan, especially in Darfur. People say that RSF troops have broken a lot of human rights laws, like perpetrating war crimes and ethnic cleansing, which could be seen as acts of genocide. In 2025, Sudan went to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and said that the UAE was guilty of genocide because it backed the RSF. Sudan called for "temporary measures ordering the UAE to do everything it can to stop genocide and related crimes" (Columbia Journal of Transnational Law). The UAE, on the other hand, has questioned the Court's authority because it has problems with the Genocide Convention. The ICJ needs to decide if it can even consider the case, which makes it tougher to hold people accountable.

The UAE's strategic interests in Sudan go far beyond only military engagement. They include important economic and geopolitical factors, especially because the UAE controls Sudan's gold trade and port facilities. The UAE was the biggest importer of Sudanese gold in 2024, buying around 97% of the country's gold exports (ECFR). Some deals between Sudan and the UAE have been called off because of worries over the UAE's controversial participation in the conflict. However, the UAE is still making a lot of investments in Sudan, including a $6 billion plan to build ports and farms. Reports say that money made from Sudan's gold trade with the UAE has been used to support armed organizations, which has made the conflict worse.

Because the UAE is involved in diplomacy in the region and works with other countries on matters like the Gaza conflict and Iran's policy in the region, other countries have been careful in their responses to its actions in Sudan.

Many people have accused the UAE of making the horrible conflict in Sudan worse, but Western governments have been hesitant to directly challenge the UAE, which has allowed it to continue its actions. Amnesty International has asked for an immediate stop to weaponry deliveries to the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), saying that the UAE is breaking arms embargoes. In addition, secret expert reports from the United Nations have highlighted "new concerns about the UAE's role in the Sudan war," showing how hard it is to enforce international law in these kinds of situations (The Guardian).

The UAE's engagement in Sudan has effects that transcend beyond the country itself. It also has effects on how international law applies to how governments act in war zones. The UAE says it doesn't give direct military support to the RSF, but evidence and suggestions show that this is not true. This raises serious doubts about whether the UAE is following international humanitarian law and the Genocide Convention. The changing legal and diplomatic responses to the UAE's actions will have a big effect on how the crisis in Sudan goes and could set important examples for how to enforce international law rules about how outside countries can get involved in armed conflicts.

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