

Between a Nuclear Arrangement and Military Strike in Iran—Toward a Decision

Tamir Hayman and Raz Zimmt | May 6, 2025

Main Points

The talks that began in April 2025 between Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and the US Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff—with Oman's mediation—are bringing Iran, the United States, and Israel closer to critical moments regarding the future of Iran's nuclear program. The results of the negotiations will largely determine whether the direction will be toward a political-diplomatic settlement on the nuclear issue or toward a military strike (Israeli, American, or joint) against Iran's nuclear facilities. At this stage, it is clear that both the Iranian leadership, headed by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, and the American administration, led by President Donald Trump, prefer a diplomatic solution over military confrontation, the outcomes and consequences of which are difficult to foresee.

However, in the absence of an agreement that blocks Iran's path to nuclear weapons, and given a decision to resort to a military option, Israel must coordinate this with the United States—even if this does not guarantee active American participation in the strike. Coordination and cooperation with the United States are necessary for Israel to defend against an Iranian response, preserve achievements following the strike, and ensure American support in efforts to prevent the rehabilitation of Iran's nuclear program—whether by kinetic military means, covert operations, or diplomatic measures.

In any case, it is essential to emphasize the need for a comprehensive campaign against Iran and not solely against its nuclear program. A joint American–Israeli strike could provide the optimal solution to the challenge, provided it is part of a broader campaign against the Islamic Republic and should be planned accordingly. At the end of such a campaign, a complementary diplomatic move must be led, ensuring the achievement of all strategic goals against Iran, including blocking its path to nuclear weapons, dismantling the pro-Iranian axis, and imposing limits on its missile project.

The talks that began in April 2025 between Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and the US Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff—with Oman's mediation—are bringing Iran, the United States, and Israel closer to decisive moments regarding the future of Iran's nuclear program. The results of the negotiations will largely determine whether the path ahead leads to a political settlement on the nuclear issue or to a military strike—Israeli, American, or joint—against Iran's nuclear facilities. At this stage, it is evident that both the Iranian leadership, headed by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, and the American administration, led by President Donald Trump, prefer a political-diplomatic solution to the nuclear issue over military confrontation, the outcomes and consequences of which are difficult to predict. President Trump, while not ruling out the possibility of a strike against Iran's nuclear facilities, [has emphasized](#) on several occasions his preference to continue the diplomatic approach and to reach a political resolution with Tehran, provided that Iran is not allowed to develop nuclear weapons. Moreover, the renewal of negotiations between Tehran and Washington and the progress reported following the initial rounds of talks indicate a basic willingness of both sides to show flexibility in their positions.

Iranian leader Khamenei has had to retreat from the stance he presented in recent months: "[Neither war nor negotiations](#)." The change in Khamenei's position—who had until recently opposed negotiations with the United States and stressed the futility of talks—can primarily be attributed to the credible military threat posed to the Islamic Republic. Khamenei realized that Iran is vulnerable to military attack and that the chances of such an operation, previously considered very low, have significantly increased due to President Trump's unpredictability and because American restraints on Israeli action are now in question. The escalating threats from American and Israeli officials, including [President Trump](#), regarding a military option against Iran, the [substantial buildup](#) of American forces in the Middle East, the transfer of [US weaponry](#) to Israel, [joint military exercises](#) between Israel and the United States, [the military campaign against the Houthis](#) in Yemen, and the neutralization of Hezbollah's capabilities—built as Iran's deterrent and retaliatory arm against Israel—have all heightened Tehran's fear of an increasingly plausible military attack. This is occurring while Iran faces significant security challenges following the Israeli strike on October 26, 2024, which caused substantial damage to Iran's air defense systems and ballistic missile production capabilities. Additionally, the unprecedented weakening of the pro-Iranian axis in the region—due to blows sustained by Iran's proxies and allies in Lebanon, the Palestinian arena, and Yemen—and the collapse of the Assad regime in Syria have further exacerbated Iran's strategic vulnerabilities.

Meanwhile, some of the statements by senior American officials, including [Witkoff](#), and the progress in the negotiations reflect a willingness by the Trump administration to recognize Iran's right to maintain uranium enrichment capabilities and to continue enriching uranium to a low level of 3.67% (as permitted under the 2015 nuclear

agreement, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action [JCPOA]), while settling for significant limitations on the nuclear program that would prevent Iran from producing nuclear weapons—even without a complete dismantling of the nuclear infrastructure ([the “Libyan model”](#)). Moreover, most American declarations focus on Iran’s nuclear program and not on other challenges posed by Iran, such as its support for terrorism, its regional proxies, or its missile program—issues on which Tehran firmly refuses to negotiate.

Despite the fundamental preference in both Tehran and Washington for a diplomatic settlement over a military option, the negotiations could end in failure within a relatively short time due to deep distrust between the sides, the limited window for reaching an agreement, and the significant gaps that must be bridged on various contentious issues—both regarding the nuclear program and the sanctions regime against Iran. The short timeline stems from several main constraints: First, the 60-day [ultimatum](#) set by President Trump for the conclusion of the negotiations. Even if the countdown started with the first meeting between Iranian and American representatives in Oman (on April 12, 2025), and even if President Trump might postpone the deadline, it is doubtful whether the US administration would agree to prolong the negotiations significantly, especially in light of Iran’s ongoing nuclear advancements. Furthermore, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is expected to publish its quarterly report on Iran’s nuclear program status in June 2025, which is anticipated to be comprehensive and highly critical of Iran, given its continued violations of the 2015 nuclear deal and further entrenchment on the nuclear threshold. During his visit to Tehran in mid-April 2025, Rafael Grossi, the director-general of the IAEA, [warned](#) that Iran is not far from developing nuclear weapons.

Additionally, on October 18, 2025, the [Snapback](#) mechanism—allowing for the reimposition of all UN sanctions against Iran under [UN Security Council Resolution 2231](#)—will expire. Triggering the mechanism, which does not require Russia or China’s consent, necessitates preparation by the signatory countries about three months earlier, that is, by July 2025 at the latest. Activating Snapback and returning Iran’s nuclear file to the UN Security Council could prompt [Iran to withdraw](#) from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and lead to further escalation. Delaying the expiration of Snapback would require a new UN Security Council resolution, which would depend, at the very least, on significant progress in the negotiations between Iran and the United States.

Given these circumstances, the outcome of the Tehran–Washington talks will be determined within the coming weeks—whether they hold potential for a diplomatic breakthrough (a new nuclear deal or at least an interim agreement) or escalate toward military confrontation with Iran.

Strategic Purpose

Preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons has always been—and remains—the central goal for preserving and strengthening Israel’s national security. Israel cannot accept a nuclear weapon in the hands of a radical regime committed to its destruction. The options available to Israel to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons are a nuclear agreement, a military strike, or regime change. To maximize the benefits and address the risks inherent in all three options (as will be detailed later), a new integrated strategic purpose is required, which can be formulated as follows: The use of military power—either as a threat or through actual force—aims to compel Iran to sign an agreement that denies it the ability to develop nuclear weapons, while maintaining for the international community and Israel the ability to continue a comprehensive military, political, and economic campaign against Iran, with the goals of weakening the Islamic regime, limiting its harmful regional activities, and curbing its missile capabilities.

To achieve this complex purpose, three possible courses of action can be pursued, each combining elements of diplomacy, military power, and pressure on the regime:

- A course of action centered on a political settlement.
- A course of action centered on a military option (either an Israeli operation or an American-led one).
- A combined course of action: a signaling strike intended to lead to an agreement.

Scenario of a Political Settlement

A nuclear agreement better than the 2015 deal would require Iran’s leader to sign under harsher conditions and with an American administration led by a president who withdrew from the original deal and reimposed sanctions. To compel Iran to accept an improved agreement, a credible military threat is necessary—one that convinces the leadership that not only is its nuclear program threatened, but also the very survival of its regime. Given the current window of opportunity (US backing for Israel, Iran’s weakening position, and the possibility of a strike without significant fear of regional war escalation—especially after the removal of Hezbollah’s retaliatory threat), a credible military threat can be pursued. The differing approaches between Israel (determined to strike Iran) and the United States (determined to achieve a diplomatic settlement) might actually serve the strategic purpose, by increasing Iran’s motivation to compromise, as its leadership realizes that the collapse of negotiations would provide Israel with the opportunity to carry out its intentions.

However, any attempt to reach a political settlement within the current negotiations will have to take into account Tehran's "red lines," especially its adamant refusal to completely dismantle its nuclear infrastructure. Given these circumstances—and Iran's significant progress in uranium enrichment and nuclear R&D—it will not be possible to restore the one-year "breakout time" that was achieved under the 2015 agreement. Even if Iran were to roll back most enrichment activities, and even if significant restrictions were imposed (such as limits on centrifuge production, the number of operating centrifuges, the types of centrifuges installed at enrichment facilities, and the amount of fissile material Iran is allowed to accumulate), the knowledge and experience Iran has gained [would enable it to "break out"](#) to a nuclear weapon much faster than before. [According to nuclear expert David Albright](#), head of the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS), even if Iran holds less than 5% of its current enriched uranium stockpile, without the destruction (not merely dismantlement) of its advanced centrifuges, it would require only 25 days to accumulate enough weapons-grade uranium (WGU) for one bomb, and two months to accumulate enough for four bombs.

In addition, a political settlement could, at least in the short term, strengthen the Iranian regime, mainly due to the significant economic benefits that Tehran would receive under a future agreement. These benefits would economically strengthen Iran and reopen it to the world, including to Western countries. Iran could exploit these economic resources to bolster its military capabilities, expand its malign regional activities, and reconstitute the pro-Iranian axis (although regional developments over recent months have significantly hampered efforts to revive it). Moreover, the more concessions and guarantees demanded from Iran as part of the agreement, the more likely Iran will seek significant reciprocal guarantees, relief measures, and economic incentives, such as the removal of primary American sanctions and not just secondary ones. It cannot be ruled out that, unlike previous US presidents, President Trump—who places great importance on a business-oriented approach to international relations and diplomacy—may be willing to consider this favorably.

While a strengthened Iranian regime poses serious risks, it also underscores a broader strategic imperative: the necessity of fundamental change within Iran itself.

[Regime change](#) in Iran is a worthy goal not only for Israel, the region, and the West but also for the Iranian people themselves. It is reasonable to assess that there is no way to fundamentally change the damaging policies of the Iranian regime without replacing it, as the current regime is unlikely to abandon its ideological commitments, hostility toward Israel and the United States, or its ambitions to entrench regional influence and acquire nuclear weapons. However, regime change largely depends on factors beyond Israel's control and on mechanisms whose timing and activation cannot be predicted.

Scenario of a Military Strike

A military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities holds several potential advantages for Israel (assuming the operation succeeds):

First, it would allow for the partial or full neutralization of Iran's nuclear capabilities, particularly in uranium enrichment (including infrastructure) and possibly also in weaponization—achievements that would be hard to secure through a diplomatic settlement. In addition, it could provide Israel with an opportunity to strike at the missile program as well, which is unlikely to be addressed within the framework of a future settlement.

Second, a military strike at this time could capitalize on Iran's unique and deteriorated vulnerabilities: Iran's weakened air defense and missile production capabilities (damaged in the Israeli strike of late October 2024), and the weakened pro-Iranian axis, particularly Hezbollah, which has for now largely lost its ability to respond effectively to an Israeli strike on Iran. At present, it appears unlikely that Iran and its proxies, led by Hezbollah, will be able to rebuild their military capabilities in the foreseeable future in a way that would allow for meaningful retaliation against an Israeli strike. In contrast, Iran may gradually rebuild and upgrade its air defense arrays and missile production components. Reports in recent months indicate significant Iranian efforts to rehabilitate and improve these systems, aided in part by China and Russia. In February 2025, Western intelligence sources [revealed](#) that a Chinese supply ship carrying 1,000 tons of sodium perchlorate—a key chemical component in solid rocket fuel production—had docked at Iran's Bandar Abbas Port. In late March 2025, [reports](#) indicated that an Iranian cargo ship was suspected of transporting missile components from China to Bandar Abbas. In parallel, additional [reports](#) have suggested that Iran, with some assistance from Russia, has been working to rebuild its air defense systems that had been damaged in the Israeli strike.

Third, even if a military strike does not eliminate Iran's nuclear program (as will be elaborated further), it could pave the way for renewed negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program under terms more favorable to Israel and the United States. Furthermore, a significant delay (of many months or even years) in Iran's nuclear program could be utilized by the United States and the international community to forge regional political arrangements and security mechanisms that would assist in future confrontations with Iran, including on the nuclear front.

Fourth, a military strike could buy time for internal political change in Iran, or at the very least until the death of Iran's Supreme Leader Khamenei (currently aged 86), which could offer another opportunity to advance significant political shifts within the Islamic Republic. Additionally, a major military strike—particularly one that damages vital national and economic infrastructure—could undermine the regime's stability. However, it is difficult to predict the [impact of a military strike on regime stability](#).

Some argue, including staunch regime critics, that an Israeli strike on Iran could rally the Iranian public around the regime and strengthen internal cohesion. Nevertheless, the legitimacy crisis facing the Iranian regime and the weakening of [collective Iranian identity](#) cast doubt on the regime's ability to fully mobilize public support, even during national emergencies or external threats. At the same time, one should not underestimate Iranian patriotism, which could, in the event of a military strike, prompt public support for the regime and temporarily bolster it.

Limitations of the Military Option

Alongside the potential advantages of a military strike, several key considerations must be taken into account, at the very least raising doubts about the potential effectiveness and benefits of the military option:

First, the cliché that “war is the realm of uncertainty” holds true. Israel can strike Iran, can act alone—although it would need to coordinate such action with the United States—and can likely achieve many tactical objectives with considerable success. One of the lessons from Israel's campaign against Hezbollah in the summer of 2024 is the need to avoid underestimating the operational capabilities of the IDF and overestimating the capabilities of the adversary—both defensively and offensively. Still, it is important to recognize the limits of power and not to extrapolate from Israel's operational successes against Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon regarding the challenges of a military operation in Iran, which is much farther away and more than 150 times larger than Lebanon. A military action is highly likely to trigger regional escalation, with consequences for Israel, the United States, and the region that are hard to predict. Furthermore, an unsuccessful strike—due to intelligence gaps, operational failures, or technical malfunctions—could leave Iran with significant nuclear capabilities and even result in severe outcomes, including the capture of Israeli soldiers.

Second, the success of a military strike—whether Israeli, American, or joint—in blocking Iran's path to nuclear weapons is not guaranteed. It is difficult to assess the damage that would be inflicted on Iran's nuclear program without detailed knowledge of operational capabilities, the types of weaponry available, and the methods intended for the operation. However, it is clear that this would be a [highly challenging](#) mission due to the characteristics of Iran's nuclear program (resilience, dispersal, redundancy, fortification, and possibly secrecy) and its current advanced state (nuclear threshold). In any case, the knowledge and technology possessed by Iranian scientists cannot be destroyed and would allow Iran to attempt to rebuild its program after a military strike. Even a few hundred centrifuges, a limited amount of fissile material, and small-scale production facilities—some of which could survive the strike or be hidden beforehand—would enable Iran to use residual capabilities covertly and achieve nuclear breakout relatively quickly.

An American-led operation would pose the ultimate threat to Iran and might destabilize the regime. However, such a campaign would be costly and could end in undesirable escalation, especially from the American perspective, as US attention and focus are concentrated on other issues, particularly domestic affairs and the rivalry with China. Consequently, if the United States hesitates to lead a military move against Iran, Israel may have to act independently (even if coordinated with the United States and relying on American assistance for defense against Iranian retaliation). Such a solo Israeli strike would likely only delay Iran's nuclear program for a limited period. A recent [American intelligence report](#) (whose conclusions can, of course, be debated) estimated that an Israeli strike would delay Iran's nuclear program by only a few months at most. According to an April 2025 [New York Times](#) report on talks between the US administration and Israel's prime minister regarding potential strikes on Iran's nuclear sites, Israeli plans recently developed aim to set back Iran's nuclear capability by a year or more. However, the report also emphasized that nearly all of these Israeli plans require American support—not only to defend against Iranian retaliation but also to provide military assistance during the strike itself. The *New York Times* noted that, due to the inability to integrate special forces into the operation in the coming months, Israel proposed bombing Iran's nuclear facilities—with American assistance—over the course of an entire week, while simultaneously defending against a massive missile assault, in order to delay Iran's nuclear breakout capability by more than a year.

Moreover, a military strike intended to halt Iran's nuclear project would likely need to go beyond targeting the nuclear facilities alone, necessitating a broader campaign of strikes against additional military capabilities and objectives—including ballistic missile production and launch sites, as well as air defense systems. Unlike Israel, the United States has significantly greater capabilities to operate far from its own borders in a sustained and continuous manner. Additionally, targeting military assets related to the missile program—and even more so, Iranian national infrastructure (such as oil and energy facilities) in an effort to inflict economic damage and deter retaliation—would particularly require American involvement and perhaps even regional participation, given the scale and complexity of such an operation. Nevertheless, even for the United States, such a campaign carries a high risk of dangerous escalation, potentially diverting American focus and resources away from other priority arenas—especially China—and back toward the Middle East, drawing the United States into a broader conflict with uncertain outcomes.

Third, a military strike against Iran would almost certainly trigger an Iranian retaliation against Israel, following a similar—but likely more severe—pattern than that witnessed during Iran's two attacks on Israel in April and October 2024. Although the threat could be partially mitigated during the operation itself by targeting Iran's ballistic missile forces, it is doubtful that Israel—particularly in a scenario of an

independent strike without American support—would be able to fully neutralize the missile threat, given Iran’s vast territory and the extensive tunneling project used for missile storage across the country.

Fourth, an Israeli or American military strike could lead the Iranian leadership to conclude that only acquiring nuclear weapons would provide it with effective deterrence in the future, thus encouraging a breakout toward nuclear armament or serving as a pretext for withdrawal from the NPT. In such a case, Iran would likely work swiftly to rebuild its nuclear program, dispersing and concealing its assets at alternative underground sites and within civilian infrastructures—all likely without IAEA oversight, since Iran would probably deny the agency’s inspectors access to its territory.

Under these circumstances, while a strike on nuclear facilities may be desirable, it would likely constitute only the opening phase of a prolonged campaign against Iran, ultimately requiring a political settlement to consolidate any military gains. Absent such an agreement, [a comprehensive, sustained, and multidimensional campaign](#)—combining kinetic strikes and covert sabotage operations—would be necessary to prevent Iran from reaching nuclear breakout. Such a campaign would demand high-quality intelligence to identify and strike enriched uranium stockpiles and hidden nuclear assets, alongside the sustained deployment of operational capabilities. It would also require full and ongoing coordination with the United States—something that cannot be guaranteed over time given potential political changes in Washington or shifting US strategic priorities, such as a major escalation with China, which could impair its ability or willingness to assist Israel.

It may be possible to deter Iran from seeking to restore its nuclear program after a strike by making it clear that doing so would inevitably lead to further attacks on critical infrastructure, military targets, and regime symbols—threatening the very stability of the Iranian regime. However, Tehran’s decision would be influenced by various factors, including its own assessment of whether it could rebuild the program undetected and the perceived determination of Israel and the United States to sustain long-term military pressure.

An alternative option would be to conduct a limited military operation (by Israel or the United States) as part of the negotiation process—either after negotiations reach a deadlock or fail altogether. Such an operation would aim to force Iran back to the negotiating table through limited military pressure—for example, by destroying one nuclear site and eliminating its air defense capabilities. Following such a strike, Iran would be confronted with a choice: to return to negotiations or to escalate significantly, potentially threatening the survival of the regime itself. This type of limited strike could reduce the risk of broad escalation and thus offer a degree of risk management. However, it remains doubtful whether such action would indeed

persuade Iran to return to negotiations, as it may be perceived by the Iranian leadership as a dangerous sign of weakness.

Between Military Strike and Arrangement: Recommendations and Possible Courses of Action

Preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons has been and remains the primary objective for preserving and strengthening the national security of the State of Israel. The events of October 7 have further demonstrated that a regime with revolutionary and Islamist ideological views, striving for Israel's destruction, must not be allowed to possess capabilities that pose a threat to it—especially not a potential existential threat through weapons of mass destruction. Israel cannot accept nuclear weapons in the hands of the Islamic Republic that seeks its annihilation.

Complete Dismantlement of the Nuclear Program: An Ideal Solution for Israel but Unattainable Through Negotiations

The complete dismantlement of Iran's nuclear program ("the Libyan model") is the ideal solution for Israel, particularly given Iran's past efforts to develop nuclear weapons. However, this goal cannot be achieved in the current reality through negotiations and a political arrangement with Iran, which views the dismantling of its nuclear infrastructure as a "red line." Khamenei has never retreated from his position that the nuclear program is merely a pretext used by the West to pressure, isolate, and weaken Iran as a prelude to achieving the main strategic goal: changing the Islamic regime. The consent of former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi to dismantle his country's nuclear program in 2003—which ultimately did not prevent his overthrow by Western countries—was presented by Khamenei as proof of the righteousness of Iran's path, which refuses to yield to Western demands in exchange for Western benefits. Moreover, [interpretations](#) published in recent months in Iran may reflect a growing perception among decision-makers in Tehran that a military strike—especially a limited Israeli strike on nuclear facilities, which does not threaten the regime's survival—may be preferable to surrendering to US dictates, foremost among them the complete dismantlement of its nuclear capabilities.

Military Option: Feasible and Highly Valuable, but Only Within a Comprehensive Campaign

A military strike is feasible and highly valuable, but it is important as a component within a broader framework that would enable an excellent nuclear deal (up to the dismantlement of the nuclear program or at least the absolute denial of Iran's ability to develop nuclear weapons in the future) and even the weakening of the regime, damaging its military capabilities, and further undermining Iran's proxy network. Past experience (such as that of South Africa and Libya) proves that the most reliable way

to eliminate a nuclear threat is through the voluntary relinquishment of nuclear capabilities by the state—either due to external pressure or internal change processes. To achieve this goal, Iran must be pushed in that direction.

The Danger of a Military Strike Without US Coordination

Nevertheless, even a military strike—especially if carried out without active American participation—would be limited and would likely succeed in delaying Iran’s attainment of nuclear weapons (“breakout time”) by about a year. Israel’s operational successes over the past year do not necessarily guarantee similar success against Iran. A limited Israeli strike could accelerate Iran’s nuclear project and, if not coordinated with the United States, could even disrupt a coordinated Israeli–American effort to achieve the same objective. Moreover, the need for full coordination with the United States is crucial, especially because an Israeli strike could lead to direct war with Iran, which would require American backing.

Political Arrangement: Not to Oppose Automatically but Not at Any Cost

There should not be automatic opposition to a political arrangement, provided it effectively blocks Iran’s path to nuclear weapons. Israel’s automatic opposition to the nuclear agreement is unhelpful and results in its professional position being disregarded during negotiations. The American desire for a political arrangement should be channeled toward achieving the best possible agreement for Israel by delving into details and integrating restrictions and guarantees into the agreement, ensuring that Iran will never possess nuclear weapons. This should be done within a framework of Israeli–American dialogue that guarantees that any political arrangement—if achieved—will optimally address Israel’s vital security interests. In any case, even in a scenario of an arrangement, Israel must continue to maintain and enhance its military capabilities against Iran to ensure it retains the ability to take effective military action if necessary.

Guiding Principles for a Possible Arrangement

How Can Iran’s Path to Nuclear Weapons Be Blocked?

Although one cannot expect an arrangement that leads to the complete dismantlement of Iran’s nuclear program, it is possible to block Iran’s path to nuclear weapons even without a complete relinquishment of all its nuclear capabilities. Since the breakout time to nuclear weapons is expected to be shorter compared to 2015, [significant restrictions and guarantees](#) are required in the fields of uranium enrichment, weaponization, supervision, and missiles. Furthermore, efforts should be made to eliminate the sunset clauses established in the original nuclear agreement, or at the very least to significantly delay them or replace them with a mechanism

allowing for the renewable extension of restrictions imposed by the agreement on the nuclear program.

In the Field of Uranium Enrichment

Given the significant progress Iran has achieved in uranium enrichment in recent years, it will be impossible to return it to its previous status as in 2015. The nuclear agreement then focused on limiting enrichment capabilities (the number of centrifuges, the type of centrifuges, and the accumulation of fissile material), and these restrictions must be renewed and made even more severe—for example, regarding the number of centrifuges or the quantities of fissile material—but this will not be sufficient. Thus, a future nuclear agreement will need to impose and enforce more substantial restrictions that do not focus solely on enrichment capabilities.

In the Field of Weaponization

There is a need to strengthen enforcement and supervision over potential weaponization components included in [Section T](#) of the nuclear agreement, including specific activities relevant to the development of a nuclear warhead, such as prohibitions on the production of metallic uranium, a critical component in building the core of a nuclear weapon; activities related to the development and use of computer models that could serve for research and development of nuclear weapons; and experiments with neutron initiators—a critical component used as a detonator in a nuclear bomb.

In the Field of Supervision

Given the advancements in Iran's nuclear program in recent years, expanding the powers of the IAEA's verification and supervision regime becomes particularly crucial as part of the effort to prevent any future Iranian breakout toward nuclear weapons. In this field, a series of measures should be taken to strengthen the IAEA's inspection regime regarding the implementation of a new nuclear agreement, including requiring Iran to ratify the Additional Protocol under the NPT, allowing the IAEA to exercise its broad inspection rights under this protocol, including inspections at undeclared sites and surprise inspections. Expanding the IAEA's powers would allow for repeated inspections of facilities suspected of conducting activities related to nuclear weapons development, as revealed by the nuclear archive obtained by Israel in early 2018.

The ambiguity in the 2015 nuclear agreement regarding clauses dealing with supervision at [suspected military sites](#) must be resolved. The original demand by the powers to require Iran to agree to inspections “anytime, anywhere” when there is suspicion of prohibited nuclear activity was reflected in complicated and ambiguous clauses in the agreement, which at the very least allow Iran to delay such inspections. Moreover, continuous monitoring should also be enabled on technologies and activities related to weaponization (not just uranium enrichment), and the use of

[online technological](#) monitoring (Online Enrichment Monitor, or OLEM) by the agency's inspectors should be expanded.

In the Field of Missiles

During the negotiations that led to the nuclear agreement in the summer of 2015, Iran insisted on excluding missiles from the nuclear talks. Even today, Iran firmly opposes any discussion on this issue. Moreover, Iran currently attributes greater importance to its missile arsenal due to the weakening of the pro-Iranian axis, which for years was considered a central component (alongside its strategic missile and UAV forces) of its [deterrence strategy](#). Nonetheless, any effort to prevent Iran from acquiring military nuclear capability must also address missiles capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. In this context, the emphasis should [not be only on missile range](#)—since medium-range missiles are sufficient to cover Israel's territory—but also on relevant missiles—both ballistic and cruise missiles, medium- and long-range—that could carry a nuclear warhead. It is appropriate to integrate into negotiations with Iran the standard set by the [Missile Technology Control Regime](#) (MTCR), which defines any missile with a range over 300 km and the capability to carry a warhead over 500 kg as a “dangerous missile,” and to demand that Iran join this international framework, even though it is voluntary in nature.

Implications for Israel

Given the severe and immediate threat posed by Iran's continued entrenchment at the nuclear threshold and the growing Iranian calls to reconsider the nuclear doctrine and contemplate a breakout to nuclear weapons, it is appropriate to focus on blocking this threat. The challenges Israel faces from Iran are not limited to the nuclear program. Moreover, there is a connection between the various threat components (specifically nuclear capabilities, military build-up in ballistic missiles and UAVs, regional subversion and support for terrorism, and cyber warfare). However, it is preferable to address each of these components separately and through different means. A comprehensive deal that seeks to address all aspects of Iran's multi-dimensional challenge is unrealistic, does not necessarily serve Israel's interests, and may even distance Israel from achieving its primary goal: preventing nuclear weapons in Iranian hands. This assessment, which was valid in the past, is even more relevant today because the developments in the region over the past year—most notably the weakening of the pro-Iranian axis—provide Israel and the United States with better and more effective tools to counter Iran's efforts to re-establish its regional influence and rebuild the capabilities of the axis.

In the absence of the ability to achieve an arrangement that blocks Iran's path to nuclear weapons, and given a decision to resort to the military option, Israel must coordinate this with the United States (even if this does not guarantee active American participation in the strike). Coordination and cooperation with the United States are necessary to defend against an Iranian response, preserve achievements after a strike, and support efforts to prevent the rehabilitation of the nuclear program (whether through kinetic military means, covert means, or diplomatic efforts).

In any case, it is important to emphasize the need for a comprehensive campaign against Iran, not just a campaign against Iran's nuclear program. An American–Israeli strike could provide an optimal solution to the challenge, provided it is part of a broader campaign against the Islamic Republic, not limited only to several nuclear sites, and it should be planned accordingly. At the conclusion of such a campaign, a complementary diplomatic move must be led, ensuring the realization of all strategic goals regarding Iran, including the dismantling of nuclear capabilities, dismantling of the pro-Iranian axis, and imposing restrictions on the missile project.