1979 Reversed? The Geopolitics of a Post-Islamic Iran

Emmanuel Navon / 5 March 2026

Executive Summary

The joint U.S.–Israeli military campaign against the Islamic Republic of Iran is not merely a confrontation with a hostile regional power. It may mark the beginning of the end of the geopolitical era inaugurated by the Iranian revolution of 1979. For nearly half a century, the Islamic Republic served as the ideological and strategic center of political Islam, transforming Islamist movements from opposition forces into instruments of state power. It built its influence through a distinctive strategic architecture: a revolutionary security state anchored in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, a nuclear and missile program designed to deter the West and threaten Israel, and a transnational proxy system able to exert pressure across the Middle East.

The possible collapse of this system would have consequences at three levels. At the ideological level, it could signal the exhaustion of political Islam as a governing model. The Islamic Republic has been the most durable and powerful state built on Islamist revolutionary doctrine; its downfall would deprive the broader movement of its principal source of inspiration, financing, and strategic coordination. At the regional level, the weakening or dismantling of Iran's proxy architecture—from Hezbollah in Lebanon to the Houthis in Yemen—would transform the strategic

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ıe Middle East, opening a period of uncertainty but also of potential realignment.

The implications would also be global. Iran has become an important component of a loose strategic alignment with China and Russia aimed at constraining the Western-led order. Its weakening or collapse would disrupt sanctions-evasion networks, complicate Chinese energy and logistical planning, and expose the limits of the revisionist axis. At the same time, the war underscores the operational resilience of the U.S. alliance system, strengthening the credibility of American security guarantees from the Mediterranean to the Indo-Pacific.

If the Iranian revolution symbolized the rise of revolutionary Islamism in international politics, the fall of the Islamic Republic could mark the beginning of its historical decline.

Introduction: A Turning Point in the Middle East

The Iranian revolution of 1979 was one of the defining geopolitical events of the late twentieth century. By overthrowing a pro-Western monarchy and establishing an Islamic republic under clerical rule, the revolution created the first modern state explicitly founded on Islamist revolutionary doctrine. Its impact quickly extended far beyond Iran's borders. The new regime presented itself not merely as a national government but as the vanguard of a broader ideological project: the political mobilization of Islam against what it portrayed as Western domination and moral decadence.

Over the following decades, the Islamic Republic constructed a strategic system that allowed it to project influence across the Middle East while confronting its principal adversaries, Israel and the United States. Through a network of allied militias and political movements stretching from Lebanon and Syria to Iraq, Gaza, and Yemen, Tehran developed a system of indirect power projection capable of

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ure across multiple fronts. At the same time, the regime invested stic missile and nuclear capabilities intended to deter external intervention and challenge Israel's strategic superiority. These instruments were

coordinated by a revolutionary security state dominated by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which gradually became the central institution of the Iranian political system.

Yet the Iranian revolution was not merely a regional development. It represented the most successful attempt to transform political Islam from a current of ideological opposition into a governing system capable of wielding geopolitical power. At a time when secular revolutionary movements—from Arab nationalism to Marxist socialism—were losing credibility across the Middle East, the Islamic Republic offered an alternative model: a fusion of religious authority, revolutionary mobilization, and state power. For nearly half a century, this model shaped both the ideological landscape of the Muslim world and the strategic balance of the Middle East.

Today, that system faces its most serious challenge since its creation. The ongoing military campaign against Iran by the United States and Israel is targeting not only the regime's military infrastructure and nuclear program but also the strategic foundations of the revolutionary state itself. Should the Islamic Republic ultimately collapse—or even suffer a decisive strategic defeat—the consequences would extend far beyond Iran's borders. The dismantling of Tehran's regional network of proxies would transform the balance of power in the Middle East, while the weakening of a key partner of China and Russia would reverberate across the global geopolitical order.

This paper argues that the current war must therefore be understood in historical perspective. The Iranian revolution inaugurated a geopolitical era in 1979, one defined by the rise of political Islam as a revolutionary ideology and by Iran's emergence as its most powerful state sponsor. Nearly half a century later, the confrontation with the Islamic Republic may mark the beginning of the end of that era.

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I. 1979: The Revolutionary Moment

The Iranian revolution of 1979 did not occur in a vacuum. It was part of a broader transformation that reshaped international politics at the end of the twentieth century. In that year, a series of seemingly unrelated events signaled the exhaustion of the secular ideologies that had dominated global politics since the Second World War and the re-emergence of religion as a powerful force in public life. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan triggered a jihadist mobilization that would eventually outlast the Cold War itself. Pope John Paul II's visit to Poland energized a faith-driven opposition to Communist rule in Eastern Europe. In China, Deng Xiaoping initiated the economic reforms that would transform the country into a global power. And in Iran, the collapse of the Pahlavi monarchy brought to power a revolutionary movement that sought to fuse modern state institutions with a radical interpretation of Islamic doctrine.

These developments reflected what the French political scientist Gilles Kepel later described as the "revenge of God": the return of religious identities and beliefs to the center of political mobilization in societies that had been expected to follow the secularizing path of the West. Nowhere was this phenomenon more consequential than in the Middle East, where the Iranian revolution transformed political Islam from an oppositional ideology into the governing doctrine of a state. By establishing an Islamic republic under clerical authority, the revolution created the first modern regime that openly grounded its legitimacy in religious law and revolutionary theology.

The emergence of this model was closely linked to the decline of secular Arab nationalism. During the 1950s and 1960s, Arab nationalist regimes—most prominently that of Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser—had promised to unite the Arab world, defeat Israel, and modernize their societies through a mixture of socialism, anti-imperialism, and centralized state power. For a time, this vision appeared to offer a compelling alternative to both Western capitalism and Soviet communism. Yet the crushing defeat of Arab armies by Israel in the Six-Day War of

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conflict exposed the limits of nationalist rhetoric and opened a space for new ideological challengers.

Islamist movements were among the primary beneficiaries of this shift. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, which had been harshly repressed by Nasser's government, emerged as a prominent voice of opposition by presenting Islam as the authentic foundation of political legitimacy. The intellectual figure most closely associated with this transformation was Sayyid Qutb, whose writings argued that contemporary Muslim societies had fallen into a state of *jahiliyya*, i.e. a condition of moral ignorance comparable to the pagan era preceding the rise of Islam. According to Qutb, only a revolutionary reassertion of Islamic principles could restore justice and authenticity to the Muslim world. His ideas would become deeply influential across a wide range of Islamist movements, both Sunni and Shiite.

The Iranian revolution translated these ideological currents into a new form of state power. Although Iran was not part of the Arab world and belonged to the Shiite branch of Islam, its revolutionary leaders were deeply influenced by the broader currents of political Islam that had developed in the Sunni sphere. The writings of Qutb were translated into Persian and circulated among Iranian clerical circles, including those around Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Khomeini's political thought blended Shiite religious traditions with the revolutionary activism characteristic of Islamist movements elsewhere in the region. The result was a distinctive ideological synthesis: a regime that combined the authority of religious leadership with the mobilizing power of revolutionary politics.

The overthrow of the Shah in early 1979 thus represented far more than a domestic political upheaval. It marked the birth of a new type of state, one that sought to organize political life around a religiously defined conception of justice and legitimacy. In contrast to traditional monarchies in the Muslim world, which had generally sought to preserve stability and accommodate existing power structures, the Islamic Republic defined itself as a revolutionary project. Its leaders believed that their mission extended beyond Iran's borders and that the revolution should

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From its earliest days, the new regime therefore adopted an explicitly internationalist outlook. Iran's leaders denounced both the United States and the Soviet Union as enemies of the Islamic revolution, portraying their struggle as part of a broader confrontation between authentic religious values and the corrupting influence of secular modernity. At the same time, Tehran cultivated relationships with militant groups and political movements throughout the Middle East. The creation of Hezbollah in Lebanon during the early 1980s, with direct support from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, illustrated the regime's ambition to export its revolutionary model and challenge the regional status quo.

Over time, these policies transformed the Islamic Republic into the ideological and strategic center of political Islam as a geopolitical force. Islamist movements across the region looked to Iran not only as a source of inspiration but also as a provider of financial support, training, and strategic coordination. The revolution thus reshaped the Middle Eastern balance of power, introducing a new axis of conflict that combined religious ideology with state-sponsored militancy.

For nearly half a century, the system born in 1979 defined the strategic landscape of the Middle East. The Islamic Republic survived war, sanctions, and repeated internal crises while steadily expanding its influence through a network of allies and proxies. Yet the durability of this system should not obscure its historical contingency. The revolutionary order that emerged from the upheavals of 1979 was the product of a specific ideological moment, one in which religious mobilization filled the vacuum left by the decline of secular revolutionary movements. As the current confrontation with Iran demonstrates, that moment may now be approaching its end.

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Republic's Strategic Architecture

The endurance and influence of the Islamic Republic cannot be explained by ideology alone. While revolutionary Islamism provided the regime with its intellectual foundation, Iran's leaders translated that doctrine into a coherent strategic system that enabled the country to project power far beyond its borders. Over time, the Islamic Republic constructed an architecture of influence combining state institutions, military capabilities, and transnational networks designed both to preserve the revolution at home and to expand its reach abroad.

Three pillars sustained this system: the rise of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as the regime's central power structure; the development of a nuclear and missile program intended to secure strategic deterrence; and the creation of a regional network of allied militias and movements capable of projecting Iranian influence throughout the Middle East.

The first pillar was the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Established in the aftermath of the revolution to defend the new regime against both internal and external threats, the IRGC rapidly evolved into far more than a conventional military organization. Unlike the regular Iranian armed forces, which had been inherited from the monarchy, the Revolutionary Guards were created explicitly to protect the ideological foundations of the Islamic Republic. Their loyalty was directed not to the state in a traditional national sense but to the revolutionary project embodied by the clerical leadership.

Over the decades, the IRGC became the central institution of the Iranian political system. Militarily, it developed its own ground forces, naval units, missile programs, and intelligence networks. Economically, it expanded into a vast conglomerate controlling key sectors of the Iranian economy, including construction, telecommunications, energy infrastructure, and transportation. Politically, it emerged as the regime's most reliable instrument of domestic control, suppressing protest movements and safeguarding the authority of the clerical establishment during moments of internal crisis. In effect, the Guards evolved into a hybrid institution—part military command, part intelligence apparatus, part economic

Skip to content survival became inseparable from that of the regime itself.

A second pillar of Iran's strategic architecture was the development of its nuclear and ballistic missile program. For the leadership of the Islamic Republic, nuclear capability represented far more than technological progress or national prestige. It was conceived as a strategic instrument designed to secure the long-term survival of the revolutionary regime and to alter the balance of power in the Middle East.

A nuclear threshold status would serve several purposes simultaneously. It would deter external attempts at regime change by dramatically raising the costs of military intervention. It would strengthen Iran's ability to support its regional allies by providing a strategic shield against retaliation. And it would reinforce Tehran's long-standing ambition to challenge Israel's military superiority.

The nuclear program also carried powerful ideological significance. The Islamic Republic portrayed its technological achievements as proof that a state founded on Islamist revolutionary principles could rival the scientific and military capabilities of the West. In the regime's narrative, nuclear capability symbolized not only strategic deterrence but also the triumph of Islamic resistance over Western domination. The program therefore became a central element of the revolutionary identity of the Iranian state.

The third pillar of Iran's strategic architecture was the development of a regional network of allied militias and political movements. Beginning in the early years of the revolution and expanding significantly after the Iran-Iraq War, Tehran cultivated relationships with non-state actors across the Middle East that could advance Iranian interests while limiting the risks associated with direct interstate confrontation.

Rather than projecting power primarily through conventional military deployments, the Islamic Republic sought to embed itself within the political and military structures of neighboring societies. By supporting local actors who shared elements of its ideological outlook or strategic objectives, Iran created a system of indirect influence capable of exerting pressure on multiple fronts simultaneously.

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nabled Tehran to compensate for its conventional military limitations. Through a combination of ideological mobilization, asymmetric warfare, and

strategic patience, Iran built a regional posture that allowed it to challenge adversaries while avoiding the vulnerabilities of traditional military dominance.

The interaction of these three pillars—revolutionary institutions, nuclear deterrence, and regional networks—produced a strategic system that sustained the Islamic Republic for nearly half a century. Yet the effectiveness of this architecture depended on the continued cohesion of its components. Should any of these pillars weaken significantly, the broader structure of Iranian influence could begin to erode.

The current confrontation with the United States and Israel therefore represents more than a military campaign against a hostile state. It challenges the strategic architecture that has underpinned the Islamic Republic's regional power since the revolution.

III. The Possible Collapse of Political Islam

If the Islamic Republic of Iran were to collapse or suffer decisive strategic defeat, the consequences would extend beyond the fate of a single regime. It could represent a turning point in the history of political Islam itself. For nearly a century, Islamist movements have sought to transform Islam from a source of cultural identity and social organization into the foundation of political authority and state power. The Islamic Republic was the most successful and durable realization of that project. Its possible downfall would therefore raise a fundamental question: whether political Islam can continue to function as a viable governing ideology.

The origins of political Islam as a modern political movement can be traced to the early twentieth century, when Muslim intellectuals and activists began to respond to the profound transformations brought about by colonial rule, Western cultural influence, and the collapse of traditional Islamic political structures. The abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924 symbolized the end of the last widely recognized

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l authority. In the decades that followed, reformist thinkers and

religious activists sought to redefine the relationship between Islam and political power.

The founding of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928 marked one of the most important milestones in this process. Its founder, Hassan al-Banna, argued that Islam was not merely a system of religious belief but a comprehensive framework governing all aspects of life, including politics and law. The movement's goal was therefore not simply moral reform, but the gradual establishment of a political order grounded in Islamic principles. In the decades that followed, Islamist thinkers developed increasingly radical interpretations of this idea. Among them, the Egyptian intellectual Sayyid Qutb articulated a vision of revolutionary transformation in which Islamic governance would replace what he regarded as corrupt and illegitimate political systems across the Muslim world.

For much of the twentieth century, however, political Islam remained largely an oppositional movement. Islamist organizations operated under authoritarian regimes that limited their political participation and frequently repressed their activities. In countries such as Egypt and Syria, secular nationalist governments dominated the political landscape, while Islamist movements struggled to translate ideological influence into state power. Even where Islamists gained popular support, they rarely succeeded in capturing and sustaining control of the state.

The Iranian revolution changed this dynamic. By overthrowing the Pahlavi monarchy and establishing a regime explicitly grounded in Islamic doctrine, the revolution demonstrated that political Islam could become the basis of a modern state. Although Iran's Shiite religious tradition differed from the predominantly Sunni currents that had shaped earlier Islamist movements, the revolution nonetheless provided a powerful example of ideological transformation. For many Islamists across the region, it showed that religiously inspired political movements could defeat entrenched regimes and reshape national political orders.

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mbolic and strategic center for a broader constellation of Islamist

aders presented their revolution as the vanguard of a global struggle against Western influence and encouraged the mobilization of Islamist

movements throughout the Middle East. Financial support, military training, and ideological coordination enabled Tehran to cultivate alliances with a range of militant organizations that shared elements of its anti-Western and anti-Israeli agenda. The Iranian state thus provided political Islam with something it had previously lacked: a durable institutional base capable of sustaining revolutionary activism across borders.

Yet the very success of this model also exposed its limitations. As Islamist movements moved from opposition into positions of political authority, they encountered the practical challenges of governance. Managing complex economies, administering modern states, and responding to diverse social demands proved far more difficult than mobilizing revolutionary enthusiasm. In several cases, Islamist governments struggled to deliver stability or economic improvement, undermining the appeal of their ideological promises.

The experience of the Islamic Republic itself illustrates these contradictions. While the regime succeeded in consolidating power and projecting influence abroad, it did so at the cost of persistent economic hardship and growing domestic discontent. International sanctions, political repression, and ideological rigidity placed increasing pressure on Iranian society. Periodic waves of protest—from the Green Movement in 2009 to the demonstrations that followed the death of Mahsa Amini in 2022—revealed a widening gap between the revolutionary narrative of the regime and the aspirations of large segments of the Iranian population.

Similar tensions have appeared in other contexts where Islamist movements gained political influence. In Egypt, the brief presidency of Mohamed Morsi after the 2011 Arab uprisings ended with a military coup amid widespread political polarization. In Sudan, an Islamist regime that had once sought to reshape society collapsed under the weight of economic crisis and internal conflict. In Gaza, Hamas has struggled to balance militant resistance with the responsibilities of governance under conditions of isolation and economic hardship. These experiences do not necessarily signal the disappearance of Islamist political movements, but they do

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For decades, the Islamic Republic appeared to defy these structural constraints. Despite sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and repeated internal crises, the regime endured and even expanded its regional influence. Its survival gave political Islam a powerful symbol of resilience and demonstrated that a revolutionary Islamist state could outlast many of its adversaries. The durability of the Iranian system therefore played a crucial role in sustaining the broader ideological confidence of Islamist movements.

If that system were to collapse, the ideological consequences could be profound. The Islamic Republic is not simply one Islamist regime among many; it is the most significant state embodiment of political Islam in the modern era. Its disappearance would deprive the movement of its principal source of strategic coordination, ideological legitimacy, and geopolitical influence. Without a state capable of supporting transnational networks and projecting ideological authority, political Islam could lose much of its capacity to function as a coherent political project.

This does not mean that Islamist movements would vanish from political life. Religious identities and political grievances will continue to shape the politics of many societies in the Muslim world. But the collapse of the Islamic Republic could mark the end of a particular historical phase in which political Islam appeared capable of organizing regional politics around a revolutionary state. In that sense, the fall of the Iranian regime would represent more than a change of government. It could signify the exhaustion of a century-long attempt to transform Islamist ideology into a durable model of political order.

IV. Regional Aftershocks: The End of Iran’s Proxy System

If the Islamic Republic were to suffer decisive strategic defeat, or if the regime itself were to collapse, the consequences would be felt most immediately across the Middle East. For decades, Iran’s regional influence rested on a network of allied

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d militias that extended from the Mediterranean to the Arabian

s system enabled Tehran to project power far beyond its borders while avoiding the risks of direct confrontation with stronger conventional militaries.

The erosion of the Iranian state would inevitably weaken this network. Many of the organizations that relied on Iranian financial support, military training, and strategic coordination would suddenly find themselves without their principal sponsor. The resulting transformation would not necessarily occur in a uniform or predictable manner, but it would fundamentally alter the strategic landscape of the region.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah would face the most immediate consequences. For more than four decades, the organization has depended heavily on Iranian resources and guidance. Financial transfers, weapons supplies, and training provided by the IRGC enabled Hezbollah to evolve into the most powerful non-state military force in the Middle East. Without sustained Iranian support, the movement would confront severe operational constraints. Its ability to maintain large-scale military capabilities could diminish, and its political position within Lebanon—already fragile amid the country's economic collapse—could become increasingly contested.

In Iraq, the consequences would likely be more complex. Iranian influence has long been embedded in a network of Shiite militias and political factions that operate both within and alongside the Iraqi state. The weakening of Tehran's authority could produce a period of fragmentation as these groups reassess their strategic alignments. Some might seek greater autonomy within Iraq's domestic political system, while others could attempt to cultivate new regional patrons. In either case, the decline of Iranian coordination would alter the balance among Iraq's competing power centers.

In Syria, the erosion of Iranian influence is already well underway. For years, the Assad regime served as a crucial logistical corridor linking Iran to Hezbollah in Lebanon and enabling the flow of weapons, personnel, and financial resources across the Levant. The emergence of a new Syrian leadership under Ahmad al-Sharaa, whose priorities appear increasingly oriented toward domestic consolidation and regional normalization rather than ideological alignment with Tehran, has weakened that corridor. A decisive defeat of the Islamic Republic would accelerate this trend, further reducing Iran's ability to move weapons and logistical

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In Yemen, the implications would extend beyond the country's internal conflict. Iranian support helped transform the Houthi movement into a regional actor capable of threatening maritime routes through the Red Sea and challenging Saudi Arabia's security environment. A reduction in Iranian backing could alter the dynamics of Yemen's war and potentially reduce the Houthis' capacity to project force beyond their immediate territory.

More broadly, the decline of Iran's proxy system would mark the end of a strategic configuration that has defined Middle Eastern geopolitics for decades. For nearly half a century, Tehran relied on this network to exert pressure on adversaries across multiple fronts while avoiding direct confrontation with stronger military powers. The dismantling of this architecture would not automatically produce stability, and the fragmentation of these networks could generate new uncertainties and rivalries as regional actors compete to fill the resulting vacuum.

Nevertheless, the disappearance of a centralized system capable of coordinating militant pressure across the region would fundamentally reshape the strategic environment. The "axis of resistance" that emerged from the Iranian revolution would cease to function as a coherent geopolitical force.

In that sense, the weakening or collapse of Iran's proxy architecture would represent more than a shift in regional alliances. It would signal the disintegration of one of the central mechanisms through which the Islamic Republic projected its revolutionary ambitions across the Middle East.

V. Global Consequences: The Indo-Pacific Connection

Although the confrontation with Iran is unfolding in the Middle East, its consequences extend well beyond the region. The Islamic Republic has long occupied a strategic position within the broader geopolitical contest between the United States and a group of revisionist powers—most notably China and Russia—seeking to reshape the international order. Over the past decade, Tehran's relationships with both Beijing and Moscow deepened significantly, driven by a

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shared interest in weakening Western influence and circumventing economic sanctions. As a result, any decisive weakening of the Iranian regime would reverberate across the global balance of power, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, where the strategic rivalry between China and the United States is most intense.

Iran's importance in this global competition derives partly from geography. Situated at the crossroads of the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia, the country occupies a key position along the continental corridors that China has sought to develop through its Belt and Road Initiative. For Beijing, cooperation with Iran offered several advantages: access to energy resources, an overland route linking China to the Middle East and Europe, and a strategic partner willing to challenge American influence in a region historically dominated by Western powers. In 2021, the two countries formalized a long-term strategic partnership that envisioned expanded Chinese investment in Iranian infrastructure, energy production, and transportation networks.

This partnership formed part of a broader pattern in which China, Russia, and Iran sought to coordinate their positions in response to Western economic and political pressure. Military exercises involving the three countries signaled a growing willingness to cooperate on security matters, while diplomatic coordination in international forums reinforced their shared opposition to what they described as a Western-dominated international order. Although the alignment among these powers remained loose and pragmatic rather than ideological, it nonetheless reflected a convergence of interests aimed at constraining American influence.

The potential collapse or strategic defeat of the Islamic Republic would disrupt this alignment in several important ways. First, it would remove one of the key nodes in the network of states that have helped China and Russia circumvent Western sanctions. Iran has long served as a laboratory for techniques designed to evade financial restrictions, ranging from alternative payment systems to covert oil shipments and complex trade arrangements. These mechanisms have been useful not only for Iran itself but also for other states seeking to reduce their vulnerability

Skip to content nomic pressure. If the Iranian system were dismantled or weakened

significantly, the operational knowledge embedded in these networks could erode, limiting the ability of revisionist powers to replicate them in future crises.

Second, instability in Iran could complicate China's strategic planning by disrupting energy flows and transportation corridors that are central to its economic security. China remains heavily dependent on imported energy, much of which passes through maritime chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Malacca. Iranian oil has played an important role in diversifying Beijing's energy supply and mitigating the risks associated with these vulnerable sea lanes. A prolonged disruption in Iran, or a regime change that alters the country's geopolitical orientation, would force China to reassess both its energy strategy and its logistical planning for large-scale military operations, particularly in scenarios involving Taiwan or the South China Sea.

Third, the weakening of Iran would expose the limits of the emerging partnership among China, Russia, and other states that have positioned themselves as alternatives to Western leadership. One of Beijing's central diplomatic messages to countries in the so-called Global South has been that alignment with China offers a path to strategic autonomy and protection from Western coercion. Yet if China proves unwilling or unable to assist a key partner under severe pressure, the credibility of that message may diminish. The perception that the United States and its allies remain capable of decisive military action could prompt many governments to reassess their strategic calculations.

The consequences of these shifts would be particularly significant in the Indo-Pacific. In recent years, several states in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific have sought to balance their economic ties with China against their security relationships with the United States and its allies. Demonstrations of American military capability and alliance cohesion can play a crucial role in shaping these calculations. The current conflict illustrates that the United States retains both the capacity and the political will to act in concert with partners when core strategic interests are perceived to be at stake.

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For countries such as Japan, this dynamic is especially important. Japan has spent the past decade strengthening its defense capabilities and deepening its security

cooperation with the United States and other regional partners in response to China's growing military power. At the same time, Tokyo remains heavily dependent on energy imports from the Middle East. Developments in Iran therefore carry direct implications for Japan's economic security as well as for the broader strategic environment in which it operates. A weakening of the China-Russia-Iran alignment would reinforce the credibility of the U.S.-Japan alliance and strengthen the network of democratic partnerships that has gradually taken shape across the Indo-Pacific.

The Indo-Pacific dimension of the Iranian conflict underscores a broader point: the Middle East can no longer be viewed as a separate strategic theater disconnected from global power politics. Energy markets, trade routes, military alliances, and technological competition increasingly link the region to the wider geopolitical contest between major powers. In this context, the possible collapse of the Islamic Republic would not simply alter the political landscape of the Middle East. It would also reshape the strategic calculations of states thousands of miles away, from the Persian Gulf to the Western Pacific.

For nearly half a century, the Iranian revolution contributed to the emergence of a geopolitical environment in which ideological conflict in the Middle East intersected with great-power rivalry. If that revolutionary system now begins to unravel, the consequences will be felt not only in Tehran or Beirut but also in Beijing and Tokyo. The struggle against the Islamic Republic is therefore part of a much larger story about the evolving structure of global power in the twenty-first century.

Conclusion: The End of the 1979 Era

The Iranian revolution of 1979 reshaped the Middle East and reverberated far beyond it. By establishing the first modern state explicitly grounded in Islamist revolutionary doctrine, the revolution transformed political Islam from a current of opposition into a system capable of exercising sovereign power. Over

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at followed, the Islamic Republic built a distinctive strategic architecture that combined revolutionary institutions, nuclear and missile

deterrence, and a transnational network of allied militias. Through this system, Tehran was able to challenge Israel, undermine pro-Western governments, and project influence across a region stretching from the Mediterranean to the Arabian Peninsula.

For nearly half a century, the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East was profoundly shaped by the structures created in the aftermath of 1979. The survival of the Islamic Republic through war, sanctions, and repeated internal crises gave the revolutionary model an aura of resilience that reinforced the broader ideological confidence of political Islam. At the same time, Iran's ability to cultivate and coordinate allied movements across the region enabled it to exert pressure on its adversaries without relying primarily on conventional military power.

The current confrontation between Iran and the United States and Israel therefore carries significance that extends far beyond the immediate objectives of the conflict. It represents a direct challenge to the strategic and ideological system that emerged from the Iranian revolution. If the Islamic Republic were to collapse, or even suffer a decisive strategic defeat, the consequences would reverberate across several dimensions of international politics.

At the ideological level, the disappearance of the Iranian revolutionary state would deprive political Islam of its most durable and powerful institutional embodiment. Islamist movements would undoubtedly continue to exist, and religious identities will remain a central element of political life across the Muslim world. But without a state capable of sustaining transnational networks and projecting ideological authority, political Islam could lose much of its credibility as a model of sovereign governance.

At the regional level, the erosion of Iran's strategic system would dismantle the network of militias and allied movements that has structured Middle Eastern conflict for decades. The fragmentation or transformation of these networks would alter the balance among regional powers and could open the way for new diplomatic and

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nents. At the same time, the disappearance of Tehran's centralized patronage could generate new uncertainties as local actors adapt to a radically altered geopolitical environment.

At the global level, the consequences would extend well beyond the Middle East. Iran has become an important component of the loose strategic alignment linking China and Russia with a group of states seeking to challenge Western influence. The weakening or collapse of the Islamic Republic would disrupt this alignment, complicate the strategic calculations of revisionist powers, and reinforce the credibility of the U.S.-led alliance system that connects the Mediterranean to the Indo-Pacific.

History rarely offers precise moments when one geopolitical era ends, and another begins. Yet there are periods when long-standing structures of power and ideology begin to unravel, revealing the contingency of systems that once appeared durable. The revolutionary order that emerged from the upheavals of 1979 may now be approaching such a moment.

If the Iranian revolution symbolized the rise of political Islam as a revolutionary force in international politics, the fall of the Islamic Republic could mark the beginning of its historical decline and the reversal of the geopolitical era that began nearly half a century ago.

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