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# **Gulf Mediation in Focus: Regional Implications of Renewed US-Iran Nuclear Talks**

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December 2025



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## **Gulf Mediation in Focus: Regional Implications of Renewed US-Iran Nuclear Talks**

For GCC states, the trajectory of potential US-Iran nuclear talks is closely intertwined with regional stability, energy security, and their own long-term strategic planning. While Washington and Tehran remain the primary actors in the nuclear file, the implications for the GCC are direct and immediate. As a result, GCC governments see themselves not only as stakeholders but also as potential facilitators in shaping a sustainable diplomatic outcome.

### **Why Gulf States Oppose a US-Iran Confrontation**

GCC states consistently emphasize the importance of avoiding any military escalation involving Iran, particularly scenarios that could draw in the United States. This assessment reflects a growing concern that an Israeli-Iranian confrontation is more plausible than a direct US-Iran clash, with the risk that Israel might seek to involve Washington if hostilities escalate. Owing to their immediate geographic proximity to Iran, Gulf states would be among the first to experience the direct fallout of any conflict, whether through missile trajectories, airspace disruption, or threats to maritime security. Recent attacks on Qatar have underscored how quickly regional spillover can materialize, even when hostilities are not directed at GCC countries themselves. Given the concentration of critical energy infrastructure and the region's dependence on secure maritime routes, GCC states would face disproportionate economic and security risks from any escalation, reinforcing their strong preference for de-escalation and containment.

The GCC's approach can thus be described as one of preventive and protective diplomacy, aimed at reducing tensions, maintaining channels of communication, and safeguarding the region's economic and developmental trajectory. While GCC governments have longstanding concerns about certain aspects of Iran's regional behavior, they recognize that Tehran retains asymmetric capabilities that could threaten Gulf security in the event of a crisis. Moreover, the GCC's assessment of Iran's limited ability to counter Israel directly does not diminish the potential for destabilizing spillover should a confrontation occur.

GCC governments also do not view regime collapse in Iran as a desirable outcome in light of the fact that Israel announced regime change as a stated objective of its military action during the June 2025 12-Day War. Instead, they see such a scenario as fraught with uncertainty and potentially severe regional repercussions. Lessons drawn from other regional transitions underscore the risks



associated with sudden state collapse: governance vacuums, fragmentation of authority, intensified sectarian dynamics, and the empowerment of non-state armed groups.

According to the GCC's strategic calculus, such instability would pose far greater challenges than managing relations with an established state, even one with whom there are disagreements. For this reason, GCC leaders favor calibrated diplomacy and structured engagement over approaches that could lead to uncontrollable instability.

The continued inability to restart nuclear negotiations with Iran risks allowing ambiguity, miscalculation, and unilateral action to define the next phase of the regional security environment, dynamics that have historically increased the likelihood of escalation and conflict. Against this backdrop, GCC states view the current condition of Iran's nuclear program, marked by technical and political setbacks, as an opportunity to shift toward a more predictable and legally grounded framework. Their objective is to ensure that the existing de facto constraints on Iran's nuclear capabilities are formalized through a negotiated agreement, reducing incentives for pre-emptive action and lowering the risk of another destabilizing confrontation in the region.

From the GCC perspective, neither military action nor sanctions alone have produced lasting results. The only sustainable path is a diplomatic settlement that leads Iran to formally accept clear limitations on nuclear activities and contributes to a more stable regional environment. Such an outcome would help prevent future proliferation pressures and support the Gulf's vision of a secure, economically integrated region.

### **Nature of Gulf Mediation: Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia**

Gulf mediation, whether led by Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, or the UAE, reflects growing regional diplomatic maturity and a shared interest in preventing escalation. These efforts are anchored in national and collective security priorities, not neutrality for its own sake. Successful mediation is seen as delivering benefits not only to the broader region but also to global energy markets and international security.

Each Gulf state contributes a unique strength to mediation efforts, whether Oman's established channels of communication with Tehran, Qatar's experience in facilitating dialogue, or Saudi Arabia's pivotal position as the region's largest political and economic actor with significant influence on Gulf security priorities.



Together, these complementary capacities provide a credible and effective platform also for supporting renewed diplomatic engagement on the US-Iran front on the nuclear file.

As the persistent trust deficit continues to constrain US-Iran diplomacy, GCC states, given their geographic proximity to Iran and established working relationships with both Washington and Tehran, are potentially well positioned to help reduce misperceptions and sustain diplomatic continuity during sensitive phases. From the US perspective, there are growing incentives to support such an approach. President Trump has repeatedly signaled an interest in reaching a negotiated arrangement with Iran, and more broadly, Washington remains keen to avoid another regional conflict that could draw the United States into direct confrontation.

In this context, a coordinated Gulf framework could broaden the scope of confidence-building measures by facilitating sustained backchannel communication, supporting phased and reciprocal steps, and anchoring de-escalation efforts within a regional setting that reassures all parties. While Iran has traditionally viewed Oman as its preferred intermediary, a wider Gulf-led approach could offer Tehran stronger assurances regarding regional intentions while signaling a collective Gulf commitment to stability. For Washington, constructive Gulf involvement would not only reinforce regional buy-in for negotiations but also help ensure greater predictability and durability in the implementation of any future understandings.

### **Creating the Conditions for Renewed Nuclear Negotiations**

For Gulf states, the immediate priority is not to shape the outcomes of a future settlement, but to help prevent escalation and create the minimum political and security conditions required for negotiations with Iran to resume. Avoiding destabilizing scenarios, including miscalculation, uncontrolled military exchanges, or sudden shocks to regional stability, remains central to this approach. Within this context, Gulf engagement is best understood as a facilitative role aimed at lowering tensions, preserving communication channels, and signaling regional support for diplomacy rather than confrontation. Establishing these enabling conditions will be essential if negotiations are to restart in a credible and sustainable manner; the broader implications of any eventual agreement would require a separate and more extensive analysis.

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