The US-Iran war has recast Syria's strategic role



Syrian President Ahmed Al Sharaa, aka Mohammed Al Julani, is trying to navigate a difficult regional dynamic, especially in the Levant, as the conflict continues to escalate on several fronts, from Lebanon to Gaza to Israel to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Iran. Through smart diplomacy, Al Sharaa was not only able to divest himself of his past credentials but also endeared himself to President Donald Trump, who lifted the $10 million bounty on his head. Turkey, Saudi Arabia and some other Arab League countries have helped him enter the mainstream of normal nations, even as their internal dynamics, diverse groups and ethnicities, as well as regional geopolitics, continue to impose ever-new challenges.

The forced removal and departure of former President Bashar Al Assad by the current dispensation in a rather swift operation weakened Iranian and Russian influence in the region. Moscow, despite hosting Assad, opened channels with the Al Sharaa regime early on and has tried to retrieve its strategic heft in Syria, especially understandings with regard to strategic Syrian ports. Damascus chose to be pragmatic and declined to open new adversarial fronts. For them, Iran and Israel remain a major challenge in any case, as both pose threats of destabilisation against their sovereignty and territorial integrity. Hence, a cautious yet firm approach has been adopted.

But the US-Iran-Israel war seems to have dragged them into the gravitational orbit of big- and middle-power competition, as regional players began to weigh their options as to how best to use Syria's strategic geography and potential pliability. This was started by President Trump himself when he tried to restrain his Israeli, diffident protégé, Netanyahu, from derailing the MoU (Memorandum of Misunderstandings and Violations) with Iran and stopping strikes against Lebanon and Hezbollah, which is the very first clause, condition and red line for Iran. Of course, currently both sides have junked the MoU, as they are escalating the conflict once again. But it still remains a framework to revert to for new talks whenever a ceasefire is achieved.

Trump, decrying excessive violence and bombardment by Israel against Lebanon, especially Hezbollah, has often invoked the erstwhile credentials and not-so-flattering past of Al Sharaa and his extremist outfits and experience to argue that Syrians can better handle Hezbollah than Benjamin Netanyahu, also implying that the Islamists take care of each other and kill each other. Although, overtly, Al Sharaa would prefer not to be dragged into that war and help Israel, which, in any case, has occupied the Golan Heights (recognised by the US and Trump) and is seen as an overbearing, confrontational and coercive power next door with whom finding a modus vivendi will remain a challenge. But for them, even Hezbollah is a challenge; hence, its decimation is in their interest. Meanwhile, reports indicate that Syria's security establishment is drawing up plans for possible operations against Hezbollah, if needed, as per Israeli Kan News. A source close to the government notes a clear gap between Damascus's public stance and behind-the-scenes preparations; forces have been ordered to confront any Hezbollah presence inside Syria. The impact of war in Lebanon is real for Syria.

Al Sharaa's domestic challenges are still not over, even as the process of regional assimilation moves on. ISIS keeps on chasing and criticising Al Sharaa, accusing him of complicity with the US and Israel, especially after his pompous visit to the White House and his praise of Trump as the harbinger of peace in the region. ISIS accused Muhammad al-Julani of treason, comparing him to figures in Islamic history portrayed as betraying the Muslim nation: Abu Rigal, Ibn al-'Alqama, Atatürk, al-Samiri, and Balaam.

In an Al-Naba editorial titled "Atatürk in Washington", ISIS claims al-Julani follows in their footsteps through cooperation with the West and a willingness to hand Syria over to Western and Israeli interests. ISIS stresses that al-Julani has admitted Syria now helps the West fight terrorism and that Turkish support—"the West's arm in the region"—enabled his rise to power. The group argues his alliance with the West is longstanding, calling him an "international spy" prepared to sacrifice the blood of the mujahideen. It adds that during his Washington visit, Jewish forces struck southern Syria without any response from the new Syrian regime. This is a challenge he will have to ward off with dexterity.

Many observers contend that, since late 2024, Israel has seized the southern Syrian buffer zone, ended the 1974 disengagement accord, backed plans for expanded control, and provoked Druze and other communities to rise up—moves Damascus calls a step towards annexation. Syria, Turkey and Egypt all reject these claims, with Ankara upgrading air defences and Cairo insisting on full Israeli withdrawal. While Israel frames its actions as security measures, affected states view them as expansionism. All three are aligning defence planning, stating they will respond if their sovereignty or territory is targeted.

But the Iran war and the closure of the Straits of Hormuz and Bab el Mandeb have necessitated a speedy diversification of connectivity, pipelines and alternative routes by the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and others. This was even discussed during the recent visit of the Iraqi Prime Minister to the White House, when Trump supported the 800 km Iraq-Syria pipeline from Kirkuk to the Mediterranean to bypass Hormuz. Iraq had built a pipeline from Kirkuk to Banias around the Strait of Hormuz three times since 1952. Syria shut the first one in 1982 due to the Iran-Iraq War. Saudi Arabia seized the second. Turkey froze it in arbitration. The US bombed it in 2003. Now a proposed $60 billion pipeline, supported by the US, goes right back through Syria. Even as the diversification might be going on, conflicts of the kind being witnessed cannot ensure unanimity against attacks.

Other examples from the past could be instructive. Iraq also built IPSA through Saudi Arabia in 1989: 1.65 million barrels a day of capacity, purpose-built to dodge Hormuz. Iraq invaded Kuwait one year later. The Saudis shut the line, then expropriated the entire thing in 2001 and converted it to carry gas. The Turkish route, Kirkuk to Ceyhan, lasted longest.

The new Middle East calculus: Trump's Israel condition threatens US-Saudi nuclear deal



The US-Saudi civilian nuclear deal is currently in a state of diplomatic limbo following an abrupt, high-stakes policy shift by US President Donald Trump. While the two nations formally signed a landmark 30-year peaceful nuclear cooperation pact on July 22, 2026, President Trump threw the deal into immediate turmoil just a day later by declaring its approval strictly contingent on Saudi Arabia normalising relations with Israel via the Abraham Accords.

The sudden restriction has cast intense confusion over the agreement's future, as Riyadh has long maintained that it will not recognise Israel without a clear pathway to an independent Palestinian state. Riyadh demands an independent Palestinian state based on 1967 borders and asserts that East Jerusalem must serve as the capital of the Palestinian state. Saudi officials insist on a clear, definitive roadmap toward these goals before any diplomatic recognition of Israel.

The Core Details of the Signed Deal

Signed in Washington by US Energy Secretary Chris Wright and Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, the pact is structured as a Section 123 Agreement under the U.S. Atomic Energy Act. It is a 30-year partnership worth tens of billions of dollars. It provides American companies, such as nuclear reactor manufacturer Westinghouse, priority access to construct and supply Saudi Arabia's civilian nuclear energy infrastructure. Under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's economic vision, the kingdom aims to diversify its power grid away from oil, freeing up more fossil fuel supplies for lucrative export markets. For Washington, the deal aims to deeply embed American companies into the Gulf's energy infrastructure, strategically shutting out nuclear bids from competitors like China and Russia.

The Uranium Enrichment Controversy

The most contentious element of the signed pact involves domestic uranium enrichment, a critical process that can produce fuel for civilian power reactors but can also be adapted to build nuclear weapons. President Donald Trump posted on Truth Social that under the deal, Saudi Arabia will not enrich uranium. Officials of the Trump administration suggest that security risks are taken care of because any future enrichment facilities would be run by US personnel in a restricted "black box" system. The "black box" concept is intended to function as a closed, highly secure system where inputs and outputs are tracked, preventing the diversion of materials toward military uses. Facilities would restrict access to sensitive components, preventing Saudi personnel from handling or learning core enrichment mechanics.

However, the deal allows for a joint US-Saudi study over a two-year period to determine if a domestic uranium enrichment facility is needed in the kingdom. While the deal does not obligate the US to transfer fuel cycle technologies, it reportedly establishes a legal framework that could allow Saudi Arabia to domestically enrich uranium in future. Non-proliferation experts note that the centrifuge infrastructure required for civilian fuel can be repurposed to produce weapons-grade material. Thus, there are concerns, as this agreement does not force Saudi Arabia to completely forgo domestic enrichment but leaves the door open for enrichment.

There are also concerns relating to lax proliferation standards because the deal does not include the "gold standard" established in the U.S.-UAE 2009 nuclear pact, which completely banned local enrichment. Furthermore, Riyadh reportedly has not agreed to sign the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) "Additional Protocol" for enhanced snap, unannounced inspections. Thus, the agreement relies instead on a less rigorous bilateral U.S.-Saudi oversight system. However, arms control experts note that these bilateral guarantees are entirely contingent on keeping strong diplomatic relations.

Geopolitical Fallout & Security Concerns

Iran's concerns: Iran has reacted with strong condemnation, accusations of "strategic hypocrisy", and implicit warnings of a regional arms race following the announcement of the 30-year US-Saudi civilian nuclear cooperation agreement. Iran's Interior Ministry spokesperson, Ali Zeinivand, pointedly criticised Washington's "history of discrimination", noting that the US arbitrarily decides which regional countries are permitted to have nuclear programmes. While reiterating that Tehran remains legally committed to its obligations and does not seek weapons, Zeinivand warned that "if an arms race were to take hold in this region, we would have more freedom of action than anyone else." Hardline Iranian analysts, such as Abolfazl Bazargan, have questioned why Iran continues to act in "good faith" with international monitors like the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) when the US signs lenient deals with rivals while simultaneously threatening Iranian facilities.

Middle East Arms Race: Critics in Washington and across the Middle East fear the deal could spark a dangerous nuclear arms race. In 2018, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman explicitly stated that Saudi Arabia would immediately develop a nuclear weapon if its regional rival, Iran, did so. While the text reportedly prohibits Saudi Arabia from weaponising US-supplied nuclear materials, it does not strictly forbid the kingdom from using American technology to enrich fuel sourced from third countries.

Israeli Opposition: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed the normalisation demand as a "historic leap forward", but Israeli officials remain deeply alarmed by the prospect of domestic Saudi uranium enrichment, fearing it could set a dangerous regional precedent. Despite initial signs that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was aware of the brewing deal, prominent Israeli security figures strongly slammed the agreement, warning that any civilian enrichment loophole will inevitably lead to a military nuclear programme.

Congressional Pushback: The agreement has been submitted to the US Congress for a mandatory 90-day review period. While several Democratic and Republican lawmakers have fiercely criticised the pact as a "reckless" giveaway that could trigger a Middle East arms race, blocking it requires a joint resolution of disapproval to pass by a simple majority, followed by a two-thirds supermajority in both chambers to override a presidential veto—a high threshold that makes overturning a potential veto unlikely. The true immediate barrier remains whether Washington and Riyadh can resolve the deadlock over Israel's recognition.

What Happens Next?

The fate of the deal remains in diplomatic suspension. If President Trump maintains the absolute condition that Riyadh must join the Abraham Accords—which the White House reaffirmed by stating, "If they don't join… the deal is off"—the landmark pact is highly unlikely to move forward. Analysts note that if the American deal ultimately collapses, Saudi Arabia is highly likely to pivot and secure its nuclear ambitions through alternative partners like China, Russia, or South Korea, a shift that would significantly erode American strategic leverage in the Middle East. China's CNNC and Russia's Rosatom previously bid or signed preliminary pacts with fewer non-proliferation strings attached. South Korea remains a capable technical builder for commercial reactors.

Thus, if the US-Saudi nuclear deal hits a deadlock, Riyadh may pivot to alternative suppliers. This will lead to the loss of multi-billion-dollar reactor contracts for US industry, a weakened American oversight over Saudi nuclear development and accelerated multipolar alignment in the Gulf, reducing long-term American hegemony.

When capability becomes ordinary: AI and the new rules of advantage



The debate around artificial intelligence is being framed too narrowly. The real shift is not about whether AI is useful or risky. It is about capability: who gets to act on ideas, and who gets to decide what counts as credible execution. For most of human history, the distance between a powerful idea and its realisation was defined by credentials, capital, and access. A strong insight without institutional backing or technical training often stayed unrealised. Artificial intelligence is reducing that distance. That reduction, more than any benchmark or product cycle, is the structural change underway.

I have experienced this directly. I am not trained in software engineering, data science, or psychometrics. What I had was domain knowledge grounded in organisational behaviour and AI adoption. For years, that remained conceptual. I could define problems clearly, but building solutions required capabilities outside my reach. That constraint changed when I began using AI as a disciplined collaborator. Not as a shortcut, but as a system that could extend structured thinking into execution. Through that process, I built the AI Instinct Index®, a psychometrically grounded diagnostic that measures individual and organisational AI readiness across behavioural dimensions. It is now under institutional pilot evaluation. The relevance of this example is simple. The path from idea to implementation is no longer reserved for those with formal technical training.

This expands participation. More individuals can now build, test, and refine ideas. But lower barriers do not guarantee quality. When electricity became widely available, it did not make everyone an engineer. It enabled more people to use power without understanding it. When photography moved out of studios into the hands of the public, it did not eliminate professionals. It increased the number of creators and widened the range of output. The same pattern is emerging with AI. Some outputs will be rigorous and useful. Many will not. Tools built without methodological discipline or domain depth can create misplaced confidence. Earlier systems filtered participation through training and institutional validation. That excluded many capable individuals. It also imposed a baseline of rigour. AI weakens that filter without replacing it with an equivalent standard.

This pattern has appeared before, and it often attracts moral arguments after the fact. When the telegraph expanded long-distance communication, incumbents warned about information disorder.

WESTERN RAILWAY VADODARA DIVISION

VARIOUS WORK

e-TENDER NOTICE NO. DRM-BRC 066 to 067 OF 2026-27; Sealed Tenders for and on behalf of the President of India are invited by Divisional Railway Manager (WA/C), Western Railway, Pratapnagar, Vadodara-390 004 for the following works. **Sl. No. (1): Tender No.: DRM BRC 066 of 2026-27 Name of Work:** BAHERIYA ROAD:- Supplying of potable water by Road tanker for 24 Months under the jurisdiction of SSE(Works) Godhra. **Approximate cost of the work:** ₹11,20,356.74 **Bid Security to be deposited:** ₹ 22,400.00 **Sl. No. (2): Tender No.: DRM BRC 067 of 2026-27 Name of Work:** Elimination of LC No. 8, 14, 20 and 45 of Vasad-Kathana Section and LC No. 23 and 27 of Nadiad-Modasa section by Merger of LCS by providing diversion road. **Approximate cost of the work:** ₹8,34,85,636.94 **Bid Security to be deposited:** ₹ 16,69,700.00 **Date and Time for submission of tender and opening of tender:** Tender is to be submitted on 19.08.2026 before 15.00 Hrs, and is to be opened on same date at 15.30 Hrs. **Website particulars and notice for location where complete details can be seen Address of the office from where the tender form can be purchased:** Website @ **www.ireps.gov.in** Divisional Railway Manager (WA/C) Western Railway, Pratapnagar, Vadodara-390 004 **BRC-178**

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WESTERN RAILWAY VADODARA DIVISION

OHE MODIFICATION

Tender No.: EL-TRD-Tender-25-26-37-1 Name of Work: OHE modification in existing OHE and other allied TRD work in connection with reception/dispatch facility of trains on line no. 9 & 10 and bonding work in Vadodara Godhra section. **Approximate Cost of the Work:** ₹3,00,31,046.00/- **Bid security:** ₹ 6,00,600,00 **Cost of Tender documents and completion period:** Completion Period 18 months **Tender scheduled on:** Tender Closing date 31/08/2026 and time of closing at 15-00 hrs. on the same date. **Web page particulars and notice for location where complete details can be seen & address of the office and clarification:** Website @ **www.ireps.gov.in** Divisional Railway Manager (Electrical TRD) Western Railway, Pratap Nagar, Vadodara - 390004. **BRC-180**

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Truhome FINANCE

TRUHOME FINANCE LIMITED (Formerly Shriram Housing Finance Ltd.)

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APPENDIX-IV-A [SEE PROVISION TO RULE 8(6)] SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to Rule 8(6)] of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower/s and Guarantor/s that the below described immovable properties mortgaged/ charged to Truhome Finance Limited (formerly Shriram Housing Finance Limited), the Physical Possession of which have been taken by the Authorized Officer of Truhome Finance Limited, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" basis for recovery of the balance due to Truhome Finance Limited from the Borrowers And Guarantors, as mentioned in the table. Details of Borrowers and Guarantors, amount due, Short Description of the immovable property, reserve price and earnest money deposit and date of Inspection are also given as:

Name of Borrowers/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/Mortgagers	Amount of Recovery and date of Demand Notice	Reserve Price (Rs.) & Bid Increment	Date & Time of Auction	Contact Person Details – (AO and Disposal team)
1) HARIYANI BHARGAV CHANDULAL 2) KUPALI BHARGAVKUMAR HARIYANI 3) HARIYANI NAIMISH CHANDUBHAI 4) CHANDUBHAI BHARGAVBHAI HARIYANI Present Address:- BHATIYA SOCIETY, BHURIYA HANUMAN NEAR, SHIV MANDAP ST.Chandrapur, Wankaner, Gujarat-363621. Permanent Address: Maruti Park, Chandrapur,Wankaner – 363621. Business Address: I Mogal Maa Delux Sales Agecny, Jin para, H.W. Octroi Naka Near, Ground floor,Shop No.7,wankaner. Property Address: Plot No. 44/p south side,bhatiya soc.,Nr. Shri suryamukhi hanuman ji Temple Wankaner high way, at- chandrapur – 363621. Permanant Address: KUPALI BHARGAVKUMAR HARIYANI Bhatiya Soc. At - Chandrapur, Wankaner, Present Address:- HARIYANI NAIMISH CHANDUBHAI Siddharth Nagar,Opp. Amarshi Mill Building -06, Flat 308, wankaner LAN - SHLHRAJK0000812 Date of Possession & Type 10-05-2026 and Physical Possession Encumbranches known Not Known	13(2) Notice date 14.11.2025 --- Rs. 1294581/-(Rs. Twelve lakh ninety four thousand five hundred eighty one only) as on Dated.07-11-2025 under reference of Loan Account No. SHLHRAJK0000812.	Rs. 8,50,000/- (Rs. eight lakh fifty thousand only) **Bid Increment:** Rs.. 10,000/- and in such multiples. **Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)(Rs.)** Rs.85,000/- (Rs. Eighty Five thousand only) **Last date for submission of EMD : 21 August 2026 , Time 10.00 a.m. to 05.00 p.m.**	**22-AUG-2026 & Auction Time: 11 AM to 1 PM**	**Mehul Parmar 8490964364 Debjyoti Roy- 09747 02021 Property inspection Date. 21 August 2026, Time.11 AM to 1 PM**

Description of Property

A Residential Building with land adm. 47-81 sq. mts. Of plot no. 44 p southern side of chandrapur RS No. 132, sub dist. Wankaner, Dist. - Morbi Boundaries of the said Property East : survey no. 134/1/p West : Plot No.45 North : Plot no.44p South : South Plot No. 43

1) **For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer the website of Truhome Finance Limited (Formerly Shriram Housing Finance Limited) website.**
2) **The intending bidders have to submit their EMD amount to be deposited by way of RTGS/NEFT to the account details mentioned herein below: BANK NAME: AXIS BANK LIMITED BRANCH: BANDRA KURLA COMPLEX, MUMBAI BANK ACCOUNT NO. Current Account No. 911020045677633 IFSC CODE: UTIB0000230.**
3) **The mortgagors/borrowers are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest before auction, failing which secured assets will be sold as per above schedule.**
4) **Please note that the secured creditor is going to issue the sale notice to all the Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Mortgagors by speed/ registered post. In case the same is not received by any of the parties, then this publication of sale notice may be treated as a substituted mode of service.**

Place : Morbi
Date: 03-08-2026

Sd/- Authorised Officer- Truhome Finance Limited (Formerly Shriram Housing Finance Limited)