

# Iran's Retaliation to Israeli Attack on Iranian Embassy: Wilayat Al-Faqih's Perspective

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## Abstract

On April 1, 2024, Israel launched an airstrike on the Iranian Embassy in Damascus that killed two senior Quds Force generals and seven members of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The attack triggered a retaliation from Iran on April 13, 2024. This study aims to analyze Iran's retaliation policy against Israeli attacks from the perspective of Wilayat al-Faqih as the basis of the government system in Iran. The descriptive analytical method based on qualitative research is applied in analyzing Iran's retaliation policy, which uses a literature study technique in data collection. The results of the study show the implications of the Wilayat al-Faqih system in Iran's retaliation policy, which are shown in several points of analysis, namely: Iran's retaliation policy is the policy of the Supreme Leader

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and President of Iran; Iran's retaliation policy is a form of 'True Promise Operation' which is based on the Wilayat al-Faqih system as a determinant of the direction of Iran's foreign policy; and The existence of socio-political support from countries, such as: Russia, China, North Korea along with several international organizations, such as: Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the European Union which also strengthen the direction of Iran's foreign policy in the context of state defence based on the Wilayat al-Faqih system. This study provides insight into how ideology can influence a country's policy in the dynamics of international conflict.

**Keywords:** Retaliation, Wilayat al-Faqih System, Operation Pledge of Allegiance, Iran-Israel Conflict

## INTRODUCTION

Iran is the only country with an ethnic Persian majority in the Middle East and one of the few Shia Muslim countries. Iran often experiences friction and tense relations with Middle Eastern countries dominated by ethnic Arabs and Sunni Muslims (Ilham, 2019). The relationship between Iran and Israel in the Middle East has a long history of cooperation between Persians and Jews, spanning thousands of years (Umam, 2022). However, this relationship underwent a drastic change from close friendship to intense hostility after Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979. The dynamics of the relationship affect the political dynamics in the region and create an aspect of international politics that shows how complex and layered the interactions between these two countries are in the broader context of the Middle East. The dynamics of relations between the two countries have

experienced ups and downs, along with the ups and downs of relations between Iran and United States of America.

The success of Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979 led to a resurgence of political awareness and self-confidence among Muslim nations worldwide. The Iranian Revolution encouraged the commitment of the people and the government to implement Islamic law while establishing a democratic government and political system (Sumarno, 2020). Based on Shia ideology as the character of the Iranian state, Ali Merad explains that the ideologization of Islam in Iran is an attempt to formulate the teachings of Shia Islam into norms and values that govern the socio-political order (Akbar, 2017). Iran not only aims to implement Islamic law in daily life, but also seeks to integrate Islamic principles into the political and governmental structure of the country.

Iran is attempting to combine two relatively contradictory systems, namely a government based on religious law with elements of modern democracy (Lolaki, 2020). Iran's constitution is designed to strike a balance between religious obligations and democratic rights, ensuring that freedom and justice can be achieved without neglecting the religious values on which the country is based. Implementing the Wilayat al-Faqih concept in Iran's government system has significantly impacted Iran's foreign policy. The Wilayat al-Faqih system places the highest authority on Islamic jurists in influencing how Iran responds to global issues and its foreign policy (Latif et al., 2022). Over the past 40 years, Iran has significantly increased its

political influence in the Middle East. After the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Ayatollah Ruhullah Ali Khomeini became the supreme leader and inspired revolutions in neighbouring countries.

On Monday, April 1, 2024, the Syrian Ministry of Defence reported that at approximately 5.p.m local time, Israel launched an attack on the Iranian consulate located in the elite Mazzeh district of Damascus (Subari, 2024). The attack levelled the Iranian consulate building in Damascus and left 13 people dead, of which seven were members of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), while six were Syrian nationals. The Iranian Revolutionary Guards revealed that among the dead were two top commanders of the Quds Force, Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi and Brigadier General Mohammad Hadi Haji Rahimi. Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi served as a liaison between the IRGC and Hezbollah. Zahedi is known to work closely with Hezbollah leaders, including Hassan Nasrallah and Imad Mughniyeh (Gebeily et al., 2024). Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, reacted strongly to the incident. Khamenei stated that the attack on the Iranian embassy in Damascus was tantamount to an attack on Iran's territory and sovereignty. Khamenei also stressed that Israel must be held accountable and punished for this act, indicating a potential escalation in tensions between the two countries (Regan et al., 2024).

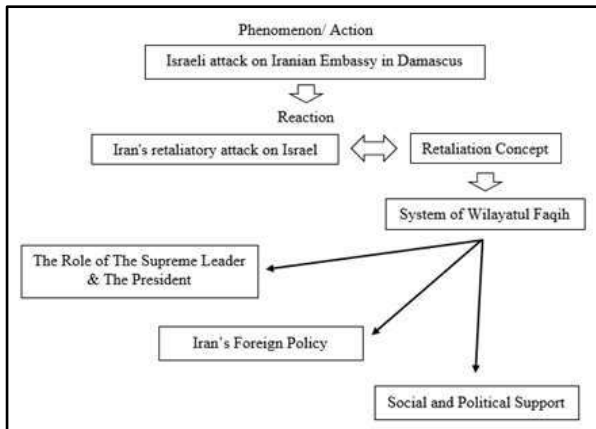
This research aims to analyze how the implications of the Iranian government's Wilayat al-Faqih system face Israel's attack on Iran's

sovereignty in the form of an attack on the Iranian embassy in Damascus. In addition, this study is expected to contribute to understanding the dynamics of politics and military strategy based on state ideology, especially the dynamics of Israeli and Iranian politics and their implications for regional and global stability.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is based on Thomas Schelling's concept of retaliation, which is analysed using the perspective of the concept of Wilayat al-Faqih as a government system in Iran. In this case, Iran's retaliation attack against Israel is analysed using the perspective of Wilayat al-Faqih as a supra-system in policy-making in Iran, which is described in the following flowchart:

Figure 1. Analytical Framework



Source: Obtained from the researcher

Thomas Schelling in his work “The Strategy of Conflict” explains that in many cases, the power of retaliation (offensive) is more effective than just trying to withstand attacks (defensive). This confirms that an uncertain retaliatory threat is more frightening and reliable than a definite one. For him, retaliation is important in resolving conflicts and preventing large-scale conflicts. Schelling also emphasised that a deep understanding of when and how to use threats and counter-measures is key to maintaining stability and avoiding open conflict (Myerson, 2009). In the case of the Israeli attack on the Iranian consulate building in Damascus, it shows that Iran chose to retaliate through uncertain threats against Israel as a decisive action by the Iranian government against the Israeli government.

Meanwhile, the concept of Wilayat al-Faqih is closely related to the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. In his book entitled "*Hokumat-e Islami: Velayat-e Faqih*" or Islamic Government: The Guardianship of Jurists, Khomeini explains that the ideal government should be led by a qualified Islamic jurist who has an in-depth knowledge of sharia, known as a faqih (Rizvi, 2012). Wilayat al-Faqih emphasises that the ulama have a role as spiritual leaders as well as military leaders who are responsible for protecting Islam and Muslims from all threats. The ulama not only fight through writing and speeches, but are also ready to confront directly to protect the interests of Islam. The position of the faqih is not only a spiritual leader, but also a political leader, thus

providing a legal and moral basis for the government he leads. In its implementation, Wilayat al-Faqih places the supreme leader as the highest leader with the authority to guide state policy based on the principles of *Shia Imamah* ideology, including military response to attacks. The case of Iran's retaliation against Israeli airstrikes on the Iranian embassy in Damascus can be seen as a direct implication of policies based on the Wilayat al-Faqih system.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a type of qualitative research, which applies a descriptive analytical method with an inductive approach that is generalizing to the research findings. Therefore, this research is based on a case study of 'Iran's retaliation policy against Israel's attack on the Iranian embassy in Damascus' which will be reviewed from the perspective of Wilayat al-Faqih as the basis of the ideology of the Islamic state of Iran. The object of the research is focused on Iran's retaliation policy against Israel, as an implication of the Wilayat al-Faqih system by the Iranian government. The literature study technique is used by researchers in collecting research data, which comes from secondary data in the form of: scientific journals, books, reports, and official websites. The data analysis technique used by researchers starts from collecting data through literature studies, to then be reduced, processed, and presented based on research variables, which are then concluded.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations regulates the role and function of embassies as diplomatic representatives representing the sending country in the receiving country, and their existence reflects the rights and sovereignty of the state to carry out international relations (Santoso, 2018). Embassies and consulates play an important role in protecting the interests of the sending country and cooperating with the receiving country, which is a manifestation of sovereignty.

On April 1, 2024, Israel attacked the Iranian Embassy in Damascus, Syria, using six missiles launched from F-35 warplanes, citing Iran's involvement in supporting militant groups in the Middle East region (Suhayatmi et al., 2024). Israel has long targeted the military installations of Iran and its proxies in Syria, including the Hezbollah group in Lebanon. Hezbollah, founded in the 1980s to fight the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, is one of Iran's main proxies in the region. The attack on the Iranian embassy compound in Damascus marks a new escalation, as it is the first time Israel has directly attacked an Iranian diplomatic facility.

Israel claims that Iran uses Syrian territory as a delivery route for missiles and other weapons to Hezbollah. Israel also claims Iran support Hamas, which sparked the Gaza conflict with an attack on Israel on October 7, as well as supporting Houthi rebels in Yemen who fired missiles at the Israeli resort town of Eilat and attacked shipping vessels (Council,

2024). Since the start of the increasingly brutal conflict in Gaza, Israeli airstrikes have increased in both frequency and intensity. Israel has not only targeted the Gaza region but also expanded its operations to attack the interests of Iran and its allies, including Hezbollah in Syria. These strikes have focused on Damascus, the Syrian capital, where Iran and Hezbollah have significant cooperation.

On April 13-14, 2024, The Iranian government responded to the Israeli attack with a direct airstrike (Oruç, 2024), involving more than 300 projectiles, including drones, ballistic missiles, and land-attack cruise missiles. This retaliatory strike was a landmark moment because, for the first time, Iran launched a military operation directly from its territory through the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and other Iranian military forces. Iran's retaliatory strike was supported by its allies, including militant groups and states in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen (Specialists, 2024). This marked a significant escalation of tensions in the Middle East region. Iran's retaliatory strikes targeted Israeli air bases located in the Israeli Golan Heights, as part of a strategy to strengthen Iran's position in the face of threats to its sovereignty and regional security under the Wilayat al-Faqih system.

In the context of foreign policy, the Wilayat al-Faqih system emphasises clerical leadership that encompasses the spiritual, domestic, and international affairs based on power and Iran's national interests (Fudala, n.d.). In order to overcome the impact of the Western world embargo, Iran

built partnerships and strengthened diplomatic relations with other countries outside the Western Bloc. Iran has established full diplomatic relations with 99 countries and actively cooperates with international organizations, one of which is the OIC (Farzanegan & Kadivar, 2023). Iran is also actively collaborating with the Non-Aligned Movement in response to the economic and political isolation imposed by the United States and the European Union in the form of economic sanctions or embargoes, due to accusations from Western countries that Iran is developing a nuclear program (Olsen, 2019). Iran's retaliatory move against Israel can be seen as an attempt by a country to demonstrate its military capabilities in facing any threats from other countries.

### **Iran's Retaliatory Policy Against Israel as an Implication of the Wilayat al-Faqih System**

Wilayat al-Faqih emphasises the importance of centralising power under the supreme leader, who provides strategic direction for the country's foreign policy. It asserts an anti-Western, resistance-oriented approach to foreign domination and promotes active defence as the central pillar of Iran's security policy and diplomacy. Iran adopted the principle of "*La Sharqiyyah, La Gharbiyyah, Jumbur Islamiyyah*" (Neither East nor West, but Islam) (Mikail, 2013), as Iran's commitment to independence and sovereignty, rejecting alignment with any global power bloc.

Based on the direction of Iran's foreign policy based on the Wilayat al-Faqih system, Iran strengthens the influence and military presence of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in its diplomatic missions and ensures that Iranian embassies serve as strategic protection centers against external threats. The IRGC, as the core element of Iran's defense, is tasked with preserving the country's sovereignty and countering other countries' attempts to dominate by strengthening its security operations directly and supporting its regional partners. The main goal of Iran's politics is to have a political system that continues to develop as a manifestation of the Islamic Revolution of Iran (Keshmirshekan, 2023). This shows that the Shia ideology of Iran through the Wilayat al-Faqih system underlies every policy set by the Iranian government. Every action or policy in Iran goes through parliament with the approval of the Supreme Leader, including Iran's retaliation policy against Israel's attack on their embassy in Damascus.

The decision-making process in Iran involves an in-depth analysis to ensure that policies align with the people's needs and aspirations and maintain the stability and progress of the country based on in-depth information analysis (Mikail, 2019). According to Article 110 of the Constitution, the Wilayat al-Faqih has the duty and power to appoint fuqaha and guardianship councils. The Wilayat al-Faqih, headed by the Supreme Leader, has supreme judicial authority and the power to appoint and dismiss the commander-in-chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard. The Wilayat al-Faqih is also authorised to declare a state of war and peace, approve the eligibility of presidential candidates, and dismiss the President

of the Republic in the country's interest (Lolaki, 2020). The Wilayat al-Faqih system at the core of the Islamic Republic of Iran's government plays a significant role in determining the country's response to incidents such as the Israeli airstrike that hit the Iranian Embassy in Damascus. The implications of Iran's Wilayat al-Faqih system in responding to the Israeli attack on the Iranian Embassy in Damascus, among others, can be seen from the role of the Supreme Leader and the Iran's foreign policy in the Wilayat al-Faqih System.

a. The Role of the Supreme Leader and the President in the Wilayat al-Faqih System

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based on the Wilayat al-Faqih system, which clearly distinguishes the roles and functions of the President and the Supreme Leader. The President acts as the chief executive, elected directly by the people through an electoral process. At the same time, the Supreme Leader holds supreme authority in the country's religious, military, and strategic affairs, elected by an assembly of experts (Karnen, 2015). As the chief executive, the President is primarily responsible for the day-to-day running of the government. He is mandated to sign international agreements to represent Iran on the global stage. The president also has the authority to appoint ministers, ambassadors, and provincial governors, although these appointments are subject to prior approval by parliament (Wilayat al-Faqih) (Rochmat, 2010). This marks the

existence of a check and balance mechanism in the Iranian government system, while also showing the uniqueness of the democratic government system in Iran with the existence of Shi'a ideological authority.

The Supreme Leader has strategic authority, appointing the supreme commander of the armed forces, which includes the Islamic Revolutionary Guard (IRGC) and the regular military. In the context of the Israeli airstrike on the Iranian Embassy in Damascus in 2024, the supreme leader decided on strategic measures from instructing an immediate military response to taking a diplomatic approach by condemning the act in international forums (Saab, 2024). This strategy aims to retaliate against the attack and ensure that Iran retains a strong influence in the turbulent region. Meanwhile, President Raisi, as Iran's chief executive, lodged an official complaint with the UN Security Council, demanding that Israel take responsibility for the attack (Xinhua, 2024). Raisi's move, which uses international legal channels, aims to garner global support and increase pressure on Israel. Raisi also appealed to traditional allies, such as Russia and China, for political and military support, as well as strengthening coordination with Syria to ensure security and stability in the region (Wintour, 2024). Raisi's diplomacy emphasises Iran's strength in dealing with threats to its sovereignty.

The Iranian president performs his role while adhering to the Wilayat al-Faqih principle that places Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as the highest authority in strategic decision-making, particularly regarding foreign policy and national defence. In this context, Raisi functions as the chief executive and as the link between the Supreme Leader's strategic directives and their implementation at the government level. This close collaboration is reflected in the Supreme Leader's direct instruction to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard (IRGC) to expand Quds Force operations in Syria. This demonstrates how relevant institutions formulate and implement strategic directives at the highest level. Raisi also considered the domestic economic and political impact, which included measures to maintain economic stability and mitigate the potential international impact of conflict escalation (Hadi, 2024). Iran's response to this incident demonstrates the synergy between the Supreme Leader and the President in dealing with external threats, including in the case of Israel's attack on the Iranian Embassy in Damascus.

Based on the executive command system in Iran, it can be concluded that Iran's retaliation policy against Israel's attack on the Iranian embassy in Damascus cannot be separated from Iran's Wilayat al-Faqih system, where Raisi's authority and policies as an executive are inseparable from the authority of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as Supreme Leader.

b. Iran's Foreign Policy in the Wilayat al-Faqih System

In formulating foreign policy, the Iranian government is guided by the Iranian Constitution, based on the Wilayat al-Faqih system in determining the direction of policy. One of the basic principles of Iran's foreign policy is rejecting all forms of domination from foreign powers (Golmohammadi, 2019). In addition, Iran also has a strong commitment to defending the rights of all Muslims in the world, by the vision of the Islamic revolution that prioritises global Muslim solidarity. This policy also emphasises the importance of not allying with hegemonic powers that are considered to undermine the balance of power in the region and the world.

Article 3 and Article 152 of the Iranian Constitution emphasise that Iran's foreign policy must be in line with the Islamic ideology of Shi'a (Wilayat al-Faqih) that underlies Iran's political system of government (Iran, 1989). This shows that decisions in Iran's international relations are not only based on political or economic interests, but must also align with Islamic moral and ethical principles. The Constitution does not provide detailed guidance on how power in foreign policy is distributed, but Article 110 places the Supreme Leader as the central figure in making key foreign policy decisions (Karnen, 2015). The Supreme Leader has the authority to declare war, organise peace, and determine the direction of relations with other countries.

On April 1, 2024, an Israeli airstrike on the Iranian Embassy in Damascus triggered a wave of international condemnation. The Israeli attack added to political tensions in the Middle East region, given that an embassy is a diplomatic representation protected by international law. Iran responded to the Israeli attack through diplomatic channels by sending an official letter to the UN Security Council on April 2, 2024 (Agency, 2025). The letter strongly condemned Israel's actions, calling them a violation of Iran's sovereignty as well as a violation of the UN Charter that guarantees protection for diplomatic missions. Although Iran officially reported the incident, the UN Security Council failed to respond meaningfully.

As a country that implements the principle of *Wilayat al-Faqih* in its political system of government, Iran gives the Supreme Leader full rights and authority in policy-making to protect national sovereignty and maintain Iran's ideological legitimacy on the international stage (Guanti & Hasiah, 2021). Israel's attack on the Iranian Embassy in Damascus triggered a strategically calculated response. On April 14, 2024, Iran responded by launching more than 300 units of modern weaponry, including drones, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles (Ganzeveld, 2024). The action was taken to emphasise Iran's position as a regional power that will not tolerate attacks on its sovereign symbols, as well as a broader political statement about its military capabilities.

Iran has publicly announced plans to launch a retaliatory strike against Israel. Iran's Foreign Minister, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, claimed that the Iranian government had given 72 hours' official notice to neighbouring countries to reduce the potential impact of Iranian retaliation on third parties and prevent a wider spread of conflict. With the start of Operation True Promise, signs of an attack began to appear on social media, with videos of Iranian drones crossing the airspace towards Israel, circulating hours before reaching their targets (Shaikh, 2024). Iran's decision to fire more than 300 weapons, including missiles and drones, into Israeli territory reflects its readiness to deal with any threats, including potential civilian casualties, infrastructure damage, and increased military escalation in the region.

Iran's April 14 attack on Israeli territory demonstrated Tehran's potential ability to cripple Israel's airspace superiority. Iran's direct airstrike on Israel was a watershed moment in the regional security status quo. The attack did not reveal anything new about Iran's military capabilities. Instead, it demonstrated Iran's potential to exploit Israel's lack of strategic depth and showed the strength of Tehran's leadership in matching the actions of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Iran's retaliatory attack on Israel was the second direct attack by a state on Israel, after Iraq's Saddam Hussein launched Scud missiles at the state of Israel in 1991 (Daraghi, 2024). While it is doubtful that Iran's retaliatory strikes will deter future Israeli actions against Iranian assets, they have prompted defence strategists in Washington and Israel to

revise their calculations about the limits of Iran's tolerance and capabilities. This, combined with pressure from the White House, influenced the magnitude of the response against Israel, which occurred on April 19, 2024, in a series of attacks in Esfahan province (Shaikh, 2024).

Iran's options for responding to an Israeli attack are not limited to direct military retaliation, but include a range of options that have different levels of complexity. One strategic option for Tehran is the military reinvigoration of Hezbollah as its main ally in Lebanon, which has long served as the front line of resistance against Israel (Grajewski, 2024). Another alternative is to activate proxy groups or other allies in the Middle East region through limited operations. However, the damage to Iran's missile production infrastructure from the attack poses a difficult strategic dilemma: whether to allocate limited resources to restore its domestic production capacity or prioritise support to its network of allies and partners in the region.

In the long run, this situation could encourage Iran to deepen military cooperation with Russia, including the possibility of exploring joint missile production on Russian territory, a move that would not only be strategically advantageous but also reduce the risk of attacks on production facilities on Iranian territory (Reisinezhad, 2024). The silver lining for Iran is the recent success of its regional outreach, as Israel only uses Iraqi airspace, where US coalition forces are stationed,

in carrying out strikes (Specialists, 2024). This reinforced the value of Iran's rapprochement with Saudi Arabia and broader diplomatic efforts in the Middle East region, where eventually Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, and the secretary general of the Gulf Cooperation Council condemned Israel's attack on Iran.

Following the Israeli attack on the Iranian embassy in Damascus, Iran's Supreme Leader took a significant step in changing its foreign policy strategy and military approach. This change marked a fundamental shift from reliance on non-state allies (proxy groups operating in the Middle East region), towards a more independent and technology-based deterrence strategy. This transformation reflects Iran's need to adapt to increasingly complex threats. Hajizadeh, as commander of the IRGC's aerospace forces, is known for his leadership in developing advanced military technologies, such as ballistic missiles, drones and air defence systems (Reisinezhad, 2024). This suggests that Iran's grey zone strategy of prioritising indirect conflict by non-state allies, including Hamas and Hezbollah, is now a reciprocal approach.

Through retaliatory strikes, Iran wants to convey several important messages to the international community, especially to those who try to disrupt Iran's stability and territorial integrity. Iran wants to demonstrate its ability to respond to significant military threats and

show that its sovereignty is a boundary that cannot be violated without serious consequences. This counter-measure is in line with Iran's foreign policy of self-defence and rejection of all forms of foreign domination, as stipulated in the constitution and supported by the fatwa of the Supreme Leader (Magramo et al., 2024). Iran's retaliatory strikes also reflect the development of Iran's defence technology, which has undergone significant improvements in recent decades. The launch of hundreds of drones and ballistic missiles not only demonstrates Iran's operational and tactical capabilities but also shows substantial progress in its domestic military industry, particularly in the production of autonomous technologies and high-precision weapon systems. Iran has sought to build self-sufficient military capabilities, especially in the face of economic sanctions that restrict the import of weapons from abroad.

### **International Support in Strengthening the Wilayat al-Faqih System**

The Israeli airstrike on the Iranian embassy in Damascus has triggered significant reactions from various countries and created a wave of social and political support, given that an embassy is a diplomatic representation protected by international law. The support from other countries for Iran following Israel's attack on the Iranian embassy in Damascus suggests a consensus among some world leaders on the need to respond to military aggression. Some political support in the form of strong statements and condemnations from various leaders such as; Russia, China,

Slovenia, and Switzerland emerged, condemning Israel's actions and expressing support for Iran to defend itself (Council, 2024). This response reflects the complex dynamics of international relations, where support for Iran's actions can be seen as an attempt to assert the right to self-defence and counter what is perceived as a violation of international law.

On April 2, 2024, Russia's Ambassador to the United Nations (UN), Dimitri Polyansky, formally requested an open meeting by the UN Security Council to discuss Israel's attack on the Iranian Embassy in Damascus. This request received support from the Security Council Presidency, then held by Malta, which immediately scheduled the meeting at 3 pm local time in New York (Santiago, 2024). The meeting was designed to allow Security Council member states to express their views on this serious breach of diplomatic sovereignty and its impact on regional stability. Meanwhile, North Korea was involved in Iran's retaliatory measures in response to the attack, supplying advanced technology and equipment to upgrade Iran's air defence system (Abrams, 2024). Moreover, this cooperation also involves delivering critical technologies and components to strengthen Iran's ballistic missile arsenal, demonstrating a new dimension of strategic partnership between the two countries that is often considered controversial in the international arena.

Political support for Iran's response to the attack on its embassy in Damascus also came from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a regional organisation comprised of Arab states in the Persian Gulf region. One of

the first voices to emerge came from the Foreign Ministry of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which released an official statement strongly condemning the attack targeting Iran's diplomatic mission in the Syrian capital. The UAE statement emphasised the importance of respecting the Vienna Convention on the Protection of Diplomatic Missions from all forms of attack, which was joined by four other GCC members: Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. These countries collectively condemned Israel's actions as a violation of international diplomatic norms and a threat to regional stability (Cafiero, 2024). This supportive response demonstrates the GCC's efforts in balancing relations among regional actors, including Iran, which has significant influence in the region, and strengthening solidarity in defending the principles of sovereignty and collective security.

In contrast to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) approach which tends to condemn Israeli attacks outright, the European Union (EU) is taking diplomatic steps by leveraging its existing relationship with Iran to reduce tensions in the region. By foregrounding Iran's role as an influential regional actor, the EU seeks to create lines of communication to defuse conflicts and contain the escalation of conflicts in the Middle East, which could impact global security, including the risk of surging refugees and the threat of cross-border terrorism. Ultimately, the airstrikes Iran launched on April 14 can be understood as a measured response in line with international provisions. Iran has also clarified that it does not carry out retaliatory strikes without warning. Prior to the strikes, Iran publicly signalled that Israel should be prepared to face the consequences of their

actions. Iran sought to abide by the norms of international law by taking the diplomatic route first. This is also evidence that Iran is not acting rashly, but calculatingly, by procedures recognized in the UN Charter. The move was recognized by several countries as legitimate, although some feared that the retaliation could trigger further escalation in an already volatile region.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Israeli airstrike via F-35 fighter jets on the Iranian Embassy in Damascus on April 1, 2025, and killed two generals and seven members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has the meaning of an attack on the sovereignty of the Iranian state, considering that diplomatic representatives represent the rights and sovereignty of the state in carrying out its diplomatic functions. The Wilayat al-Faqih system is the main factor underlying Iran's military retaliation policy for Israel's attack on the Iranian embassy, which can be indicated that the retaliation policy cannot be separated from the role of the Supreme Leader and President of Iran in the military and ideological aspects of government, namely the authority of the supreme leader in declaring war and the President who handles international diplomacy as well as domestic stability. The retaliatory policy in the form of Operation Pledge of Allegiance shows, that the Wilayat al-Faqih system gives full rights and authority to the Supreme Leader to protect his national sovereignty while maintaining his ideological legitimacy on the international stage. In addition, there is political support in the form of strong statements and condemnation from various state leaders, such as;

Russia, China, Slovenia, and Switzerland, as well as several international organizations, such as; the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the European Union which condemned Israel's actions and expressed support for Iran to defend itself. This support is considered an effort by the international community to assert the right to defend itself and fight against what is considered a violation of international law, as well as a manifestation of Iran's efforts to strengthen the direction of its foreign policy in the context of defending Iran's sovereignty, which is based on the Wilayat al-Faqih system. Iran's military retaliation against Israel shows the significance of the role of ideology in shaping state policy towards the tensions of the conflict it faces. This study can be developed in an analysis of the implications of Iran's Wilayat al-Faqih system in other Iranian policies, or it can also be developed comparatively from the perspective of implementing democracy within the framework of the Wilayat al-Faqih system with the implementation of democracy in other Islamic countries.

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