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ISRAEL-IRAN TENSION: A NEW BREAKING POINT IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

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Center for Middle Eastern Studies

Address : Mustafa Kemal Mah. 2128 Sk. No: 3 Çankaya, ANKARA
Phone : +90 850 888 15 20
Email : info@dorsam.org.tr
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The attacks launched by Israel on Iran early on the morning of June 13 mark not merely a shadow war characterized by tactical moves, but the emergence of a new frontline in which the two states are directly confronting one another. This is a unilateral war waged by Israel—an actor that has long sought to justify its regional presence through conflict and instability. Yet this war is not solely between Israel and Iran; it stands as both a moment of reckoning and a critical turning point for all actors seeking to redefine the region.

- The attacks carried out by Israel initially aimed to destroy Iran's air defense systems in the western part of the country and subsequently expanded toward the depths of the capital and the southern regions of Iran.
- From Iran's perspective, the initial phase prioritized casualty and damage assessment across the country. Efforts were launched to rescue those trapped under the rubble following the explosions. At the local level, provincial authorities activated emergency and crisis protocols. Reports have emerged

indicating restrictions on internet and social media access.

- If the conflict continues with Iranian attacks and the resulting damage and casualties in Israel increase, the pressure on Benjamin Netanyahu will intensify. Israel has been engaged in multiple fronts of conflict for nearly two years, and it must not be forgotten that public resilience has its limits. In this context, it can be stated that there are no remaining bureaucrats onto whom Netanyahu can shift responsibility.
- Two distinct public reactions to Israel's ongoing wars can be observed. First, regarding the war in Gaza, there is a significant division within public opinion over the fate of the remaining hostages and the perceived weakness shown by the government. In contrast, on all other fronts of the war, there appears to be broad consensus among the Israeli public and political parties. In the confrontations with Hezbollah, the Houthis, and Iran itself, public unity has been evident.
- There is open-source evidence suggesting that the Iranian public is in a state of shock

in response to the events; at the same time, they appear to be turning their attention toward meeting their own immediate, pressing needs.

- Within Iran, the hardline revolutionary hawkish conservative faction has targeted the ongoing negotiation process with the West, blaming it—at least indirectly—for the attacks on the country. Criticism from this faction has intensified, with frequent claims that the talks with the United States have, from the outset, weakened Iran through a series of concessions.
- Although Iran's influence—long exercised through proxy forces in countries such as Syria and Lebanon—has largely diminished following the Syrian Revolution on December 8, 2024, the potential for continued tensions in areas like Iraq and Yemen still remains.
- Iran-backed actors may, over time, grow less inclined to view a heavily targeted Iran—struck in its territory, capital, and multiple cities—as the “center of the resistance.” This shift could undermine the foundation of Iran's regional strategy, which relies on solidarity with Shiite actors across the Middle East.
- In Iraq, the Shiite community has generally interpreted the attack as an act of foreign intervention and Zionist aggression. Given the sectarian, historical, and political ties to Iran, the assault has been perceived not merely as an attack on a state, but as a threat to an identity and to the broader axis of resistance.
- Despite the emerging sense of unity among Shiites, notable differences in tone and priorities can be observed in the responses. Iraqi Shiite actors known for their closeness to Iran—such as Asaib Ahl al-Haq and the Islamic Dawa Party—have explicitly framed the incident as a religious and ideological struggle.
- Groups with strong organic ties to Iran, such as Asaib Ahl al-Haq, have perceived the attack as a direct threat against themselves and adopted a harsh and threatening rhetoric. On the other hand, the Najaf-based religious authority and the office of Iraq's highest Shiite religious authority, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, have employed a more cautious and legally framed discourse, calling on the international community to take responsibility.
- The attacks targeting Iran are also likely to resonate within Iraq's intercommunal balance of power. In particular, considering that certain Shiite groups maintain an influential presence on the ground through their affiliated militias in Iraq, any tendency among these structures toward increased aggression must be regarded as a potential risk factor that could trigger renewed Shiite-Sunni tensions in the country.
- As for Iraqi Kurdish groups, their responses to the attacks have generally been cautious and reserved. The Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) officially condemned Israel's assault on Iran, stating that it poses a serious threat to regional security.
- Although Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani had previously managed to establish a relatively successful balancing act in the context of the Syria issue, the Iran-Israel conflict carries far greater symbolic and strategic weight, making it unlikely that he can achieve similar success in this crisis.
- From the perspective of the Gulf states, Israel's attacks on Iran are also contributing to the potential widening of a rift between

the U.S. and Israel. While the U.S. considers these strikes to be "legitimate" due to Iran's actions leading up to this point, it has nonetheless conveyed to Tehran that it was not responsible for the attacks and that American forces stationed in the region should not be targeted in any retaliatory actions.

- In an environment where negotiations are ongoing, the Gulf countries have not adopted a maximum pressure or negotiation-averse stance toward Iran, as was the case during Donald Trump's first term; on the contrary, they have emerged as key actors in the negotiation process.
- In addition to being forced to bear the consequences of the military conflict between Israel and Iran, the Gulf countries face another dilemma: the military instability directly undermines their economic policy agendas.
- The \$3.2 trillion in investments pledged by the Gulf states to Trump and the U.S. between May 13–16 cannot materialize from a Gulf region plagued by insecure trade routes, regional instability, and jeopardized supply chains.
- While maintaining its alliances with the West and the Gulf states, the Cairo administration is increasingly demonstrating a willingness to simultaneously sustain diplomatic relations with both Iran and Israel. It is foreseeable that Egypt will adopt a stance advocating de-escalation in the near future, while also seeking to expand its room for diplomatic maneuvering.
- At the heart of Egypt's dilemma lies its growing dependence on Israeli natural gas—supplied via the restructured Arish–Ashkelon Pipeline—to meet domestic electricity demand and sustain liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports. On the security front, critical maritime trade routes such as the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Suez Canal face serious risks. Retaliatory actions by Iran, whether directly or through proxy actors such as the Houthis, may target commercial vessels and regional infrastructure. This scenario poses a significant threat to countries like Egypt, Djibouti, and Eritrea, which are dependent on port revenues and host international military bases.
- Trump's decision to visit Qatar and meet with Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa in Saudi Arabia—while skipping a stop in Israel during his May 2025 Middle East tour—has been widely interpreted as a significant message directed at Netanyahu.
- With little left to achieve in Gaza, Netanyahu's attempt to manufacture a state of emergency through the Iran front signals that he has few political options remaining. His decision to attack Iran despite Trump's objections has heightened tensions in the Trump-Netanyahu relationship and suggests that Israel will act more independently on the ground.
- As regional tensions rise, the Kremlin's approach of "controlled assertiveness" simultaneously impacts multilayered balances of power—from oil markets to Syrian airspace. Russia's role in the Israel-Iran conflict rests on managing both its deepening partnership with Tehran in strategic and operational terms, and its ongoing deconfliction arrangements with Tel Aviv.
- While expanding its military-technical and nuclear support to Iran, Russia is simultaneously avoiding steps that could trigger direct confrontation with Israel, aiming instead to maintain a posture of "crisis manageability" with both sides. In this context, three possible scenarios emerge for the near future. The first and most likely scenario is that the

Kremlin continues its "controlled balance" strategy: even if Russia accelerates contracts related to the modernization of Iran's air defense systems, it keeps actual deliveries at a symbolic level to minimize the risk of conflict with Israel. In the second scenario, should Western capitals extend explicit security guarantees to Israel and Iran escalate its retaliation, Russia might expedite the delivery schedule of Su-35 fighter jets and deepen its ongoing military engagements with Tehran. In a third, less probable scenario, Moscow could adopt a more aggressive posture by reinforcing its pro-Iran stance—toughening its diplomatic position toward Israel and potentially reflecting this shift on the military front as well.

- China's initial reaction reflects its traditionally cautious approach to geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and its foreign policy's emphasis on maintaining a delicate

balance amid regional rivalries. Going forward, it is foreseeable that China will leverage its condemnation of Israel to position itself as a leading voice of the Global South and to strengthen its ties with both state and non-state actors across the Arab-Islamic world. While calling for de-escalation, China is expected to adopt a more pro-Iran stance by criticizing Israel's aggressive behavior.

- Positioning Iran as a counterbalancing force against U.S. influence in the Middle East, China's evolving relationship with a weakened Iran raises an important question. Nonetheless, given China's economic difficulties in transitioning to a value-added economy and the region's importance both as an energy supplier and as a market, it is clear that Beijing will seek pathways that minimize the likelihood of full-scale conflict in the region.



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) meets with Omani Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad al-Busaidi (R) as part of the fifth round of nuclear talks between Iran and the United States in Rome, Italy on May 23, 2025.

INTRODUCTION

As the sixth round of U.S.-Iran nuclear negotiations approached, Israel launched a series of attacks on Iran at approximately 03:00 a.m. on June 13, 2025. These attacks, named Operation Am Kelavi (meaning "Rising Lion") in reference to the Torah, reportedly involved more than 200 aircraft on the first day. In addition to nuclear facilities, the operation targeted commanders from both the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Artesh (regular army). The operation directly aimed at nuclear sites, senior military officials, and nuclear scientists. As part of the early morning airstrikes, IRGC Commander-in-Chief Hossein Salami, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Mohammad Bagheri, Commander of the IRGC's Khatam al-Anbiya Headquarters (Joint Forces Command) Gholam Ali Rashid, Quds Force Commander Esmail Qaani, and Commander of the Aerospace Force Amir Ali Hajizadeh were killed inside their residences and military headquarters. In addition, the attack targeted several nuclear scientists who played key roles in Iran's nuclear program. As a result, at least six nuclear scientists, including former head of

the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), Fereydoon Abbasi, were assassinated in their homes. A large number of civilians were also killed or injured in the attacks. Open sources contain allegations that, alongside the airstrikes, Mossad operatives inside Iran also carried out drone operations. The strikes targeted nuclear and military facilities located in Tehran, Tabriz, Kermanshah, Qom, Hamadan, Isfahan, and Fordow. Overall, the level of violence between the two countries has been following a steadily intensifying trajectory, particularly in April and October 2024, and most recently in June 2025.

The tension between Israel and Iran has long been one of the fundamental dynamics shaping the security architecture of the Middle East. However, Israel's recent targeted airstrikes against Iran indicate that this contentious relationship has entered a new phase—both in terms of its substance and its geographical scope. These attacks not only increase the likelihood of direct confrontation between the two countries but also compel regional and global actors to reassess their strategic positions.

Israel-Iran Tension:

The Process from Negotiations to Conflict

MAY 21: U.S. intelligence announced that Israel was preparing to attack Iran's nuclear facilities.

MAY 22: Iran warned Israel and the U.S. against possible attacks on its nuclear facilities.



MAY 23: Iran and the U.S. completed the fifth round of nuclear negotiations in Rome.

MAY 28: Donald Trump stated that he had warned Benjamin Netanyahu not to take action against Iran.

MAY 30: Saudi Arabia warned Iran that it must make a nuclear deal with Trump; otherwise, it would face the risk of an Israeli attack.

MAY 31: Oman conveyed the terms of the U.S. nuclear deal proposal to Iran.



JUNE 4: Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei rejected the U.S. nuclear deal proposal and announced they would continue uranium enrichment.

JUNE 9: Trump told Netanyahu that he wanted to resolve the Iran crisis through negotiations, not bombs.

JUNE 10: It was reported that Iran was preparing to present its counter-offer to the U.S. Trump stated that talks would resume.

JUNE 11: The U.S. decided to withdraw some of its personnel from the Middle East due to rising tensions with Iran.

JUNE 12: Oman's Foreign Minister announced that the sixth round of U.S.-Iran nuclear negotiations would take place in Muscat on June 15.

JUNE 12: Iran declared it would absolutely not give up its right to enrich uranium.



JUNE 12: The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) stated, for the first time since 2005, that Iran was not complying with its non-proliferation obligations. Tehran issued a statement condemning the decision.

JUNE 13: Trump called for a diplomatic resolution with Iran but said Israel might launch an attack.



JUNE 13: Around 3:00 AM, Israel launched comprehensive airstrikes targeting Iran's nuclear facilities and high-ranking military and civilian officials.

Particularly after Iran's direct retaliation to the most recent strikes, the confrontation has now evolved into an overt war. **What we are witnessing is no longer a shadow war confined to tactical maneuvers, but rather the emergence of a new front line in which both states are directly engaged. This war represents a unilateral act of aggression by Israel, a state that has long justified its presence in the region through narratives of conflict, warfare, and instability.** The current war cycle and the resulting regional destabilization have been reignited by Israel at a moment when nearly all other countries in the Middle East have been striving to break free from a protracted cycle of destruction and instead focus on building a stable, peaceful, and economically oriented regional order. Therefore, **this war is not merely a bilateral confrontation; it stands as both a critical juncture and a test for all actors aiming to redefine the future of the region.**

Israel's attacks against Iran represent not only a bilateral confrontation but also the manifestation of a multilayered regional and global issue. **Although Iran's influence—exercised for years through proxy forces in countries such as Syria and Lebanon—was largely dismantled following the Syrian Revolution on December 8, 2024, the potential for continued tension persists in other areas such as Iraq and Yemen.** While the Gulf states are concerned about the spillover of instability into their own territories, they have adopted a stance of disapproval toward Israel, albeit tempered with caution. On the global level, the U.S. support for Israel, contrasted with the more balanced, cautious, and non-confronta-

tional approaches of Russia and China for the moment, risks generating significant mistrust and instability among major powers. Türkiye, for its part, has been pursuing diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalation, formulating peaceful solutions in line with shifting on-the-ground dynamics and its national interests. Collectively, these developments render the trajectory of the Israel–Iran conflict even more critical, offering key insights into the future of both regional security and the broader international order.

This report, written as the first day of Israel's attacks was drawing to a close, provides a multilayered analysis of the internal and external dimensions of the Israel–Iran war, evaluating the initial day of hostilities within this broader context. It offers a detailed examination of how security discourse is instrumentalized in Israeli domestic politics, Iran's reactions—particularly concerning regime security, nuclear infrastructure, and senior leadership—as well as the perspectives of Iraqi Shiite actors and the Gulf states. The report also addresses the spillover effects in North and East Africa, outlines possible scenarios for the future of U.S.–Israel relations, and assesses the positions of Russia and China, along with Türkiye's evolving regional stance.

The report not only documents current developments but also offers a strategic-level analysis of the potential implications of the Israel–Iran confrontation for the regional order. In this respect, it serves both as a reference source and a guiding analytical framework for decision-makers, policymakers, media professionals, and academic circles alike.

ISRAEL'S TARGETED AIRSTRIKES AGAINST IRAN AND IRAN'S RESPONSE



A building collapsed as a result of Iran's attacks on Israel is seen in Tamra, Haifa, June 15, 2025.

In its large-scale air campaign against Iran, Israel employed F-15, F-16, and F-35 fighter jets to strike not only high-ranking decision-makers within Iran's military-nuclear command structure but also key military headquarters, critical defense infrastructure, and nuclear facilities. In one phase of the operation, air defense systems, ballistic missile platforms, and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) and unmanned combat aerial vehicle (UCAV) bases located in Iran's western and southern regions were also targeted. Among the most significant sites hit was the Natanz Nuclear Facility in Isfahan, where uranium enrichment activities were reportedly ongoing; it was subjected to intense bombardment.

The targeted airstrike operation, consisting of six to seven phases, was initiated between 02:00 and 03:00 a.m. on June 13 and, according to open-source findings, was carried out with F-15, F-16, and F-35 fighter jets entering via the Iraq–Iran border (Tikrit/Salah al-Din); it began by neutralizing Iran's air defense systems and radars in the western region during its initial

phase. In the initial phase, Iran's western air defense systems and radar infrastructure were neutralized. This was followed by precision strikes—employing guided low-altitude munitions including cruise missiles, air-to-surface missiles, smart bombs, stealth technologies, quadrotor drones, and FPV (first-person view) drones—against residential areas in Tehran that house members of the military-nuclear command echelon. These areas included Mahallati, Farahzad, Kamraniyeh, Sadabad, Nobonyad, and Shahrak-e Chamran. In parallel, military command centers, air defense installations, ballistic missile bases, and kamikaze drone facilities previously used during the “Al-Wa'd Al-Sadiq” operations in cities such as Kermanshah, Tehran, Tabriz, Ahvaz, Khuzestan, Lorestan, Ilam, Hamedan, and Shiraz were also among the targets. **The initial aim of the operation was to eliminate Iran's air defense coverage in its western provinces, after which the strikes extended deeper into the capital and toward southern parts of the country.**

Iranian Officials Killed in Israel's Attacks on Iran

Military Officials



MOHAMMAD BAGHERI
Chief of the
General Staff



HOSSEIN SALAMI
Commander-in-
Chief of the Islamic
Revolutionary Guard
Corps (IRGC)



GHOLAM ALI RASHID
Commander of the
Khatam al-Anbiya
Headquarters



AMIR ALI HAJIZADEH
Commander of the IRGC
Aerospace Force



ALI SHAMKHANI
Advisor to Iran's
Supreme Leader
Khamenei



ISMAIL KAANI
Commander of the Quds
Force of the IRGC



**GHOLAM REZA
MEHRABI**
Head of the Intelligence
Department of the
General Staff



MEHDI RABBANI
Deputy Head of the
Operations Department,
General Staff



Scientists Conducting Nuclear Work



**MOHAMMAD MEHDI
TEHRANI**
Rector of Islamic
Azad University and
Theoretical Physicist



FERIDUN ABBASI
Former Head of
the Atomic Energy
Organization of Iran



**ABDULHAMID
MINOUCHEHR**
Dean of the Nuclear
Engineering Faculty
at Shahid Beheshti
University



**AHMADREZA
ZOLFAGHARI**
Nuclear Engineer



AMIR HOSSEIN FIKHI
Former Head of the
Nuclear Science and
Technology Research
Institute



**KHALIL
MOTALLIBZADEH**
Nuclear Scientist



SAID BORCI
Materials Engineering
Specialist



MANSUR ASHGARI
Physicist



ALI BOUKAI KATREMI
Mechanical Specialist

Source: IDF

IRAN'S REACTIONS AND INTERNAL DYNAMICS

Iran's initial response to the attack manifested across multiple domains, including military rhetoric, crisis management, internal security, and public communication. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei declared that Israel's actions would not go unpunished and that it would pay a heavy price. Shortly thereafter, reports emerged indicating that approximately 100 kamikaze drones had been launched toward Israel, with follow-up ballistic missile strikes anticipated. These developments were accompanied by military propaganda campaigns centered on the theme of revenge. However, due to the structural damage inflicted on Iran's military capacity and the sudden chaos and unpreparedness observed within the command echelon, it was assessed that Iran failed to deliver an immediate and expected counter-response. Although rapid appointments were made to fill the leadership vacuum within the military command, it is evident that the newly formed command structure will require time to adapt to the evolving situation.

In the initial phase following the attack, damage assessment and casualty identification efforts were prioritized across Iran. Search and rescue operations were launched to extract those trapped under the rubble caused by the explosions. Another priority area was the protection and safeguarding of the remaining political and military leadership. In terms of internal security, the country shifted to a state of mobilization and emergency. At this stage, the *Basij* (People's Defense Force), affiliated with the IRGC, was activated. However, given that Israeli strikes continued intermittently, the precise role and effectiveness of the *Basij* under such conditions remains uncertain and will only become clearer over time. **At the local level, provincial authorities implement-**

ed emergency and crisis protocols. Reports indicate that internet and social media access was restricted. Journalists operating in the affected regions confirmed these limitations, noting significant difficulties in accessing online platforms. Additionally, the public was urged not to share images of military or sensitive locations, in an effort to prevent information leaks. In public spaces, media oversight and broadcast controls were intensified. **Open-source findings suggest that the Iranian public reacted to the events with widespread shock, while simultaneously seeking to meet their immediate needs.** One of the most visible indicators of this behavior was the crowding at fuel stations. Similar scenes of civilian panic and disruption occurred in the aftermath of explosions that resulted in civilian casualties. In this context, heightened security measures were implemented at hospitals following attacks that caused civilian deaths and injuries.

The revolutionary hardline conservative faction within Iran has directed its criticism at the ongoing negotiations with the West, viewing them as indirectly responsible for the recent attacks. Public discourse has increasingly reflected the view that the talks conducted with the U.S. in Oman were exploited by Israel as a "strategic deception and time-gaining maneuver." This narrative has been reinforced by references to certain Western sources, lending further weight to the argument. According to these critics, the negotiation process led Iran to lower its security vigilance and weaken its defense preparedness, ultimately contributing to the scale of the defeat it suffered. These criticisms have been directed at the current reformist government led by President Masoud Pezeshkian.

Since the final days of 2023, Iran has found itself in a markedly weakened position in terms of military capacity and its ability to project that



capacity on a regional scale. In this context, Iran faces a dual dilemma: first, managing its own domestic public and societal perception, and second, reasserting the image of a “strong Iran” to the regional actors it supports. **The tendency of Iran-backed groups to view Iran as the “center of resistance” may gradually erode because Iran itself—its capital and multiple cities—was directly targeted. This, in turn, could undermine the founda-**

tional principle of Iran’s regional strategy: its solidarity-based policy with Shiite actors.

From this perspective, although Iran-backed actors in Yemen—the Houthis—have issued statements urging Iran to launch a powerful counteroffensive, such a comprehensive and multidimensional retaliatory response may not be viewed as rational, especially when considering the likelihood of political and military reactions from Israel and the U.S. This dynamic

was also observable during the previous escalations between Iran and Israel in April 2023 and October 2024. The remarks made by certain prominent figures among the Houthi ranks—suggesting that Iranian leaders were overconfident and therefore failed to prevent the attacks, thereby exposing a serious vulnerability—further underscore the fragility of Iran's network of allied actors across the Middle East.¹ In light of these developments, it can be anticipated that, should hostilities between Iran and Israel continue in the coming days, the Houthis may once again carry out drone and ballistic missile attacks against Israel.

MILITARY RESPONSES AND RETALIATORY STRIKES

Following the initial wave of attacks, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei issued a second public statement, declaring, "The Zionist regime will not escape unscathed from this crime," thereby reinforcing the rhetoric of retaliation. Shortly thereafter, at 21:03 on the evening of Friday, June 13, 2025, Iran launched retaliatory ballistic missile salvos against Israel. A second wave followed at 21:29, with a third wave recorded at 21:42. Finally, a fourth wave of ballistic

missile attacks was carried out at approximately 01:00 a.m. on June 14. This four-stage retaliatory missile barrage was officially designated as Operation AL-Wa'd Al-Sadiq 3 ("The True Promise 3"). The attacks were launched from regions that had not been previously targeted by Israeli strikes, suggesting a calculated effort to preserve launch capabilities. Open-source intelligence indicates that the ballistic missiles were fired from bases located in Shiraz, Karaj, Isfahan, Kermanshah, and Tehran.

According to open-source findings, approximately 150 ballistic missiles were launched in the strikes, of which at least nine are assessed to have made impact. The attacks reportedly resulted in injuries to at least 35 individuals, two of whom were critically wounded. The intended targets of these strikes appear to have included central Tel Aviv and surrounding areas hosting Israel's key security and military institutions, such as Kiryat and Ramat Gan. Some of the missiles are reported to have landed in close proximity to the Israeli Ministry of Defense building. Visual documentation from the explosions, impacts, and missile trajectories suggests that the ballistic missiles used in this operation were similar to the

The tendency of Iran-backed groups to view Iran as the "center of resistance" may gradually erode because Iran itself—its capital and multiple cities—was directly targeted. This, in turn, could undermine the foundational principle of Iran's regional strategy: its solidarity-based policy with Shiite actors.

¹ Mohammad al-Basha, Basha on X: "What are the Houthis saying? 1) Media commentator and influencer, Ali Dhafer @alidhafer2017 Prays for Iran's victory and urges a powerful response that would emotionally satisfy the "believers." He notes that the attack's timing on the eve of wilayah (Shi'a religious" / X, 13 Haziran 2025.

solid-fueled missiles deployed in *Al-Wa'd Al-Sadiq 2*. Specifically, Iran's *Fattah* and *Kheibar Shekan* medium-range ballistic missiles were likely employed in this phase of the *Al-Wa'd Al-Sadiq* operations. These missile types are characterized by their solid-fuel propulsion, relatively high accuracy, substantial destructive capacity, and their ability to circumvent Israeli air defense systems. They are equipped with maneuverable reentry vehicle (MaRV) warheads, enabling high-speed maneuvering during atmospheric reentry—a capability that significantly diminishes the effectiveness of interception by advanced air defense platforms.

The large-scale damage observed in several buildings in Tel Aviv has been assessed as consistent with the destructive capabilities of the missiles used in the attack. In addition, open-source reports indicate that liquid-fueled *Emad* ballistic missiles were also employed during the operation. These missiles had been used more extensively in the earlier *Al-Wa'd Al-Sadiq 1* operation. Furthermore, during *Al-Wa'd Al-Sadiq 3*, footage of the ballistic missiles striking Israeli territory was broadcast on

large public screens in city squares, as part of an effort to boost public morale.

In conclusion, **Israel's targeted airstrikes took place at a time when Iran's military command structure was unprepared.** This had profound effects on both the leadership and the broader society. The continuation of the strikes compelled Iranian authorities to prioritize search and rescue operations, defensive measures, and the implementation of preventive actions. Securing the remaining decision-makers who were not assassinated also emerged as a key priority during this phase. The chaos and uncertainty caused by the attacks initially prompted the public to focus on addressing their immediate, urgent needs. At the same time, efforts were made to consolidate public sentiment and raise morale through propaganda associated with *Al-Wa'd Al-Sadiq 3*. Psychological warfare techniques were also employed, with both print and visual media emphasizing the reactivation of Iran's air defense capabilities and the country's ability to respond to Israeli aggression.

THE RISE OF THE LION AND THE PRICE OF SECURITY IN ISRAEL



The situation that has emerged following Israel's targeted attacks on key figures within Iran's nuclear program and military leadership is directly linked to Israel's internal societal problems and chronic security anxieties. In his book *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews*, Sami Shalom Chetrit writes, "Any person must know that on the day the Israeli–Palestinian conflict ends, Israel's social and civic issues will erupt into the center of the national agenda like a bomb."² When considering both the nature and scale of Israel's internal social issues, it becomes clear that these problems are profound and multilayered. However, persistent conventional and asymmetric security threats provoke existential fears that serve to obscure or suppress these deeper societal tensions. In Israel, debates on issues ranging from the state of the judiciary to the role of religion in public life—such as the secular–religious divide—have been inscribed into the collective subconscious, often lying dormant beneath the surface, only to be neutralized or overshadowed by prevailing security concerns.³

From Israel's perspective, the developments considered gains during the 2017–2020 period (the recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, the relocation of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, the unveiling of the "Deal of the Century," and the Abraham Accords) unfolded in parallel with a period of political crisis between 2018 and 2023, during which the country underwent five elections. As Chetrit suggests, these security-related achievements brought Israel's underlying societal issues to the surface, triggering deep polarization among the Israeli public around these unresolved tensions.

Amid shifting alliance dynamics centered on the secular–Orthodox divide among political parties, and within a broader conflict-ridden process shaped by his own persona, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu returned to office in 2023 by aligning with an ultra-right-wing electoral list in the 2022 elections. However, with the inauguration of the new government in January, efforts to implement a judicial

² Sami Shalom Chetrit, *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews*, Routledge, 2010, s. xi.

³ Raphael CohenAlmagor, "Israel as an Ethnic Democracy: Palestinian Citizens and the Fight for Equal Rights," *Berkley Center Response*, 6 August 2021.

reform quickly became the focal point of societal polarization. The proposed reform aimed to weaken the position of the Supreme Court as a check on government decisions, prompting the center-left opposition to organize the largest and most sustained protest movement in Israeli history, lasting ten months. On October 7, 2023, one of the most traumatic events in the country's history occurred: 1,200 people were killed, and 251 were taken hostage to Gaza. In the aftermath, Israel subjected the Palestinian population in Gaza to one of the most severe humanitarian crises in modern history. Facing three separate trials for abuse of power and corruption, Netanyahu attempted to shift the blame for the October 7 security failure onto the security establishment and blocked efforts to launch an independent commission of inquiry. In addition, he entered into open and sustained conflict with former Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi—both during and after Halevi's term—and dismissed Shin Bet Director Ronen Bar, who had been investigating the "Qatargate" scandal, in a manner that defied institutional norms and effectively scapegoated him before the public.⁴ Netanyahu has continued to replace senior officials in strategic institutions with alternative figures over whom he can exert greater personal control.

For Netanyahu, who cannot risk potential new elections without first projecting an image of "decisive victory in Gaza," the hostages have become the primary victims of the process. The expansion of the Gaza war to Lebanon and, subsequently, the onset of direct confrontation with Iran helped to frame Israel's internal governance crisis within a conventional security context. The resulting climate of mutual attacks and heightened security anxieties temporarily diluted public criticism of the government.

However, the dynamics that shaped the judicial reform protests continued to manifest in the hostage-related demonstrations as well. Another major focal point during the war was the exemption of the ultra-Orthodox from military service. While many reservists were called up for a second or even third round of service, more than 50,000 military-eligible ultra-Orthodox men avoided conscription—creating a major source of tension for the government. The controversy reached a critical point when United Torah Judaism and Shas threatened to leave the coalition over proposed sanctions against ultra-Orthodox men who had failed to register for the draft; the crisis was narrowly averted. Notably, the government continued its efforts to weaken the judiciary even amidst the war-time environment.

OPERATION AM KELAVI AND DOMESTIC POWER DYNAMICS IN ISRAEL

In Israel, two distinct public reactions have emerged in response to the ongoing wars. The first pertains to the war in Gaza, where public opinion is deeply divided over the status of the remaining hostages and the government's perceived failure to secure their release. A considerable segment of the Israeli population is exerting pressure on the government to act in favor of a hostage deal, with many actively participating in the protests referenced above. However, this situation presents a serious dilemma for the government. Ending the war would likely mean allowing Hamas to retain control over Gaza, which in turn would trigger calls for early elections—an outcome that would almost certainly signal the end of Netanyahu's political career.⁵ **By contrast, across all other fronts of the war,**

4 Jeremy Sharon, "High Court: Netanyahu's Decision to Fire Shin Bet Chief Was Unlawful, He Had Conflict of Interest," *Times of Israel*, 21 May 2025.

5 "Opinion Polls in Israel Suggest That Most People Want to End the War and Bring the Hostages Home," *Reuters*, 19 May 2025; "Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Faces Mounting Political Pressure as an Opposition Movement Seeks to

there appears to be broad consensus within the Israeli public and across political parties. Public unity has largely prevailed in the face of confrontations with Hezbollah, the Houthis, and Iran itself.

The notable exception to this consensus occurred during the Iranian missile attacks on October 1, 2024, when several ballistic missiles landed inside Israeli territory. During that period, the government faced serious domestic criticism; however, the Israeli military's retaliatory strikes on Iran quickly de-escalated the situation, and public debate subsided. In conclusion, the ongoing war in Gaza—and the resulting international isolation Israel faces in the eyes of the global community and international law—remains the government's most challenging front. As of June, this challenge has been further compounded by growing international backlash, particularly in the wake of the increasingly visible Trump–Netanyahu rift reported in open sources, and the official recognition of the State of Palestine by Iran, Spain, and Norway—developments that continue to present serious tests for the Israeli government.

Throughout this period, developments on two distinct fronts have

enabled Netanyahu to consolidate his self-fashioned image as 'Mr. Security.' The first includes the "beeper strikes" targeting Hezbollah, and the second consists of sophisticated operations against Iran. During periods when the war's momentum diminished—particularly amid ceasefire negotiations and hostage exchange talks—Netanyahu's propaganda,⁶ which framed "maximum pressure" as the only way to secure the hostages' release, appeared to resonate only weakly with the public.⁷ Since October 7, Netanyahu's public support has fluctuated in direct correlation with the course of events and shifting dynamics. In this context, the offensives against Iran—Israel's existential enemy—and Hezbollah—the prototypical force of Iran's proxy warfare in the region—have played a crucial role in shoring up Netanyahu's damaged image.

POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR DOMESTIC POLITICS

Due to Israel's targeting of the highest-ranking figures within the Artesh and the IRGC, the strike design not only dealt a blow to Iran's nuclear capabilities but also placed significant internal pressure on the regime.

It is evident that Am Kelavi has brought Netanyahu a significant boost in popularity, and he will likely seek to capitalize on its political dividends in the coming period. However, should Iranian attacks continue and the resulting destruction and casualties within Israel increase, the pressure on Netanyahu will also intensify.

Dissolve Parliament," *Reuters*, 4 Haziran 2025.

6 Benjamin Netanyahu, "We wouldn't have succeeded up until now to release more than 100 hostages without military pressure. And we won't succeed at releasing all the hostages without military pressure," *Reuters*, 25 Aralık 2023.

7 "Sixty-nine percent of Israelis support ending the war in exchange for a deal that releases all remaining hostages in Gaza," *The Times of Israel*, 28 Mart 2025.

In this context, an Iranian response became inevitable. Moreover, that response was expected to surpass the intensity and duration of the "True Promise 2" operation carried out on October 1, 2024. Iran's counteroffensive, which began on the evening of June 13, unfolded precisely within this framework. Multiple locations in Tel Aviv—including areas near the Ministry of Defense building—were struck, with reports of casualties and numerous injuries. By the morning of June 14, Israel continued to be hit by heavy ballistic missile barrages. While the Israeli public had already endured missile and drone attacks from Gaza, Lebanon, and the Houthis following October 7, 2023, the resulting damage had remained relatively limited. However, the scale of destruction caused by Tehran's retaliatory strikes after Israel's attack on Iran has been far more severe, leading to significant devastation within Israel.

At present, it is evident that *Am Kelavi* has brought Netanyahu a significant boost in pop-

ularity, and he will likely seek to capitalize on its political dividends in the coming period. However, should Iranian attacks continue and the resulting destruction and casualties within Israel increase, the pressure on Netanyahu will also intensify. Israel has been engaged in multi-front conflict for nearly two years, and it must not be forgotten that public resilience has its limits. In this context, it can also be said that Netanyahu has effectively run out of bureaucrats onto whom he can shift responsibility.

In Israel where elections are rarely held on schedule and early elections have become the norm⁸ the government is now entering its third year, and Netanyahu is expected to run as prime minister once again, fully leveraging all the advantages of incumbency. **At this stage, the outcome of the confrontation with Iran is likely to serve as a decisive factor in determining the future trajectory of Netanyahu's political career.**

8 "Israel has held most frequent elections among democracies since 1996 – report," *Times of Israel*, 22 Mart 2021.

ISRAEL'S ATTACK ON IRAN IN THE CONTEXT OF IRAQI ACTORS AND THE SHIITE COMMUNITY



A part of the missile Iran fired at Israel is seen in an empty field in Najaf, Iraq, June 14, 2025.

Israel's strike against Iran triggered widespread reactions among Iraqi Shiites. These responses displayed both a sense of unity and a cautious diversity. The timing of the attack—coinciding with the upcoming commemoration of *Ghadir Khumm* on June 14–15, 2025, a date celebrated by Shiites as the day Imam Ali was declared the rightful successor to the Prophet—also played a role in shaping Shiite sentiment. Religious rituals of such significance tend to reinforce communal solidarity within the Shiite population. **In this context, the Shiite community broadly interpreted the attack as an act of external aggression and Zionist hostility. Due to the sectarian, historical, and political ties between Iran and Shiite communities, the assault was not perceived merely as an attack on a state, but rather as a threat to a shared identity and to the broader axis of resistance.** Many statements issued by Iraqi Shiite actors emphasized that the attack targeted not only Iran, but also regional balance and the resistance front. These messages strongly highlighted themes of support and solidarity with the Iranian people.

Despite the prevailing sense of unity among Shiites, notable differences in tone and priorities have emerged across the various responses. Iraqi Shiite actors known for their close ties to Iran—such as Asaib Ahl al-Haq, Kataib Hezbollah, Harakat al-Nujaba, Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada,⁹ and the Islamic Dawa Party—have explicitly framed the incident as a religious and ideological struggle. These actors interpreted the attack as part of a global confrontation, invoking references such as "Master of the Age" in honor of Imam Mahdi, whom they recognize as the Twelfth Imam. In contrast, other Shiite groups, such as the National Wisdom Movement (al-Hikma), adopted a more political and diplomatic language. Their statements emphasized that international law had been violated, warned that the attack would further destabilize the region, and stressed that Iraq must remain outside the scope of this conflict. Statements made by Muqtada al-Sadr included calls for restraint, opposing provocative rhetoric such as demands for vengeance, and emphasized that both the government and the public must

9 "Iran-backed Iraqi factions signal escalation and unity following Israeli strikes on Iran", *Shafaq News*, 14 Haziran 2025.

In this context, it is likely that the attacks targeting Iran will also reverberate within Iraq's internal struggle over intercommunal power balances.

avoid impulsive reactions to prevent Iraqi territory from becoming a theater of war. While the overall Shiite stance may be summarized as one of sympathy and solidarity with Iran, it is clear that the ways in which this solidarity is expressed vary considerably across the spectrum of actors.

In contrast to the Shiite reaction, it is notable that Sunni political groups in Iraq did not issue any public statements or official responses to the attacks. The absence of official commentary from prominent Sunni actors such as the Taqaddum Party and the Azm Movement—both represented in the Iraqi Parliament—highlights the divergent approaches and internal fragmentation among the country's political factions.

In the post-2003 period, as Shiite political structures aligned with Iran gained increasing power within Iraqi politics, Sunni groups have been among the most consistent actors in mounting structured opposition to these forces. In this context, it is likely that the attacks targeting Iran will also reverberate within Iraq's internal struggle over intercommunal power balances. The decision by Sunni groups to refrain from taking a direct stance and instead adopt a more cautious and balanced discourse—such as calling for a de-escalation of regional tensions—can be interpreted as an effort to preserve

their current strategic positioning.

Within this new context, the parliamentary elections scheduled to take place in Iraq on November 11, 2025, may be viewed as an opportunity for Sunni political groups. In this regard, Sunni actors may seek to capitalize on potential losses of influence among Iran-aligned Shiite factions, thereby intensifying their pursuit of electoral gains. This pursuit is likely to become particularly visible in the post-election period, during government formation efforts, as Sunni groups aim to secure a more advantageous position within the next administration.

How Iran-aligned Shiite political parties will respond to the silence of Sunni groups remains a significant point of uncertainty.

Given that some Shiite factions exert influence on the ground through affiliated militia networks, any tendency toward escalatory behavior by these actors should be considered a potential risk factor capable of triggering renewed Shiite-Sunni tensions in Iraq. For this reason, the current Iraqi government's ability to prevent crises that could deepen sectarian polarization in the lead-up to the elections will be of critical importance. Similar to Sunni groups, Iraqi Turkmens have generally approached Israel's recent attack on Iran with caution and restraint. For the Turkmen commu-

nity—concerned about the spillover of regional instability into Iraq—preserving regional security is viewed as a key priority. However, diverging from the Sunnis, the Turkmen publicly condemned Israel. In a statement released on June 13, 2025, the Iraqi Turkmen Front—the community’s principal political actor—denounced Israel, stating: “Such attacks only fuel regional tensions, threaten regional peace and security, and open the door to further escalation and violence. Unfortunately, it is always the innocent who bear the cost of these assaults.”¹⁰

Among Iraqi Kurdish groups, responses to the attack have generally followed a cautious and reserved line. The Presidency of the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government (IKRG) officially condemned Israel’s strike on Iran, stating that it posed a serious threat to regional security.¹¹

However, this statement was issued approximately 13 hours after the attacks, indicating the KRG’s tendency to respond to such developments in a measured and delayed manner. At the same time, diplomatic precautions taken by the U.S.—including those involving Erbil—reveal that the region is not entirely insulated from emerging security risks.

HOW MIGHT THE ATTACK RESHAPE INTRA-SHIITE DYNAMICS?

Despite collectively condemning Israel, Iraqi Shiite actors expressed divergent reactions, shaped by a range of factors including the degree of ideological alignment with Iran, sensitivities surrounding Iraqi sovereignty, positioning within Iraq’s internal political landscape, and the expectations of their respective constituencies. **Groups with strong organic ties to**

Iran—such as Asaib Ahl al-Haq—interpreted the attack as a direct threat against themselves and adopted a harsh, confrontational tone. By contrast, the Najaf-based religious marja, including the office of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, employed a more cautious and legalistic discourse, calling on the international community to fulfill its responsibilities.¹² One of the key determinants of this divergence is the distinction between actors that remain aligned with Iran’s Supreme Leader and those that define Shiism through a lens of national identity. Similarly, circles emphasizing Iraqi sovereignty and the primacy of Iraqi national identity have warned that involvement in foreign conflicts risks turning Iraq once again into a proxy battleground. From the perspective of domestic political balance, actors closely aligned with Iran issued strong reactions to reinforce those ties, while others chose more measured language to remain sensitive to the growing anti-Iran sentiment within Iraqi public opinion.

At the societal level, especially among the younger, civil protest generation that has emerged since 2019, a more distanced attitude toward Iranian interference prevails. As a result, political actors aiming to engage with youth audiences have tailored their rhetoric accordingly. Taken together, these dynamics once again reveal a renewed fragmentation within the pluralistic and multi-centered structure of Iraqi Shiism.

Among the fragmented Shiite actors, the cautious stance represented by the central Iraqi government, the office of Ayatollah Sistani, Muqtada al-Sadr¹³ and the National Wisdom Movement (al-Hikma), despite being articulat-

10 “Birleşik Irak Türkmenleri Cephesi Listesinden bildiri”, *Türkmeneli TV*, 13 Haziran 2025.

11 “Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government condemns Israeli attack on Iran”, *AA*, 13 Haziran 2025.

12 “Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani’s Office condemns Israeli strikes on Iran as ‘a crime’”, *964 Media*, 13 Haziran 2025.

13 Muqtada Al-Sadr warns against Iraqi involvement in Iran-Israel conflict”, *964Media*, 13 Haziran 2025.

ed through different rhetorical styles, reflects a shared understanding. At the core of this shared perspective lies the imperative to preserve Iraq's sovereignty and to keep the country out of regional conflicts. Alongside the condemnation of the attack, this approach carries a strong warning against allowing Iraqi territory to become a new front line in the confrontation. These actors have expressed growing discomfort with Iraq's long-standing instability, which they attribute to the influence of external powers and the prevalence of proxy wars. Accordingly, they argue that an uncontrolled escalation along the Israel-Iran axis would impose a burden on Iraqi society that it is no longer capable of bearing. This position may also stem from unease over the unchecked and unquestioned penetration of Iranian influence into Iraq's political sphere.

It can be observed that Iraq's population—particularly its youth—now aspires to a future rooted more in prosperity, security, and sovereignty than in sectarian-based conflict. In this context, the shared position adopted by actors who prioritize Iraq does not reject solidarity with Iran outright, but instead maintains a deliberate distance from efforts to turn Iraq into an extension of regional conflicts. This approach reflects a broader trend within Iraqi Shiism toward autonomy—not only at the theological level but also in political and societal terms.

In the aftermath of Israel's attack on Iran, Shiite actors ideologically, organizationally, and strategically aligned more closely with Iran positioned themselves in stark contrast to the cautious, sovereignty-centered camp. These groups expressed their reactions in far stronger terms, grounding their responses in a framework of absolute solidarity with Iran. Their rhetoric went beyond mere condemnation of the attack; it was characterized by declarations identifying Israel as "the absolute enemy of our time," calls to expand the resistance front,

and assertions that the regional spread of the war would be both legitimate and necessary.

For these actors—including groups within the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF)—Iran is not merely a neighboring country, but the center of Shiite identity and the "axis of resistance." Accordingly, every attack on Iran is perceived as a direct threat to their own existence, and they argue that Iraq must actively align itself with this struggle. However, this stance stands in sharp contradiction to those who prioritize Iraq's sovereignty and internal stability. In this context, the position of Iran-aligned Shiite actors in Iraq reflects not only a foreign policy-oriented engagement but also an internal struggle for political dominance. For these groups, unconditional support for Iran represents not only an expression of ideological loyalty, but also a strategic tool to preserve and reinforce their position within Iraq's domestic power structure.

CAN SUDANI'S BALANCING STRATEGY SUCCEED?

The success of Iraqi Prime Minister Sudani's balancing strategy is shaped by both Iraq's broader political equilibrium and the internal dynamics within the Shiite landscape. Through this policy of balance, Sudani seeks to maneuver between two principal external actors—Iran and the U.S.—while also managing the divergent tendencies among Iraq's Shiite groups to preserve political stability. However, high-stakes international crises, such as Israel's attack on Iran, pose a serious test to this strategy. Although Sudani's approach aims to keep Iraq insulated from regional conflicts, the direct engagement calls from Iran-aligned militia groups and the rising polarization within the public sphere illustrate the limits of his ability to sustain that balance.

Although Sudani had previously managed to establish a relatively successful balance in

the context of the Syrian conflict, the Iran-Israel confrontation carries far greater symbolic and strategic weight, making it unlikely that he will achieve similar success in this crisis. Iran-aligned Shiite groups may exert pressure on Sudani to adopt a more openly supportive stance toward the axis of resistance. In contrast, groups aligned with the "Iraq-first" perspective are likely to insist on maintaining Iraq's neutrality. Under these circumstances, the key factor that will determine the success of Sudani's balancing strategy will be his ability to manage the divisions within the Shiite base.

Sudani's ability to maintain balance will likely depend on his success in expressing solidarity with Iran at the rhetorical level while avoiding direct involvement in the conflict at the operational level. Managing emotional reactions through such a dual-track approach—while preserving practical neutrality—will be critical for maintaining Iraq's fragile balance of power. However, unrestrained actions by militia groups could test the limits of the government's balancing strategy. Therefore, Sudani's success will depend not only on his own political acumen but also on his ability to foster a degree of consensus among competing Shiite actors.

HOW WILL IRAQ'S INTRA-SHIITE BALANCE BE AFFECTED?

Israel's strikes on Iran have made the long-standing internal contradictions within Iraq's Shiite political and social structure increasingly visible. Especially considering the upcoming parliamentary elections, such crises impact not only Iraq's foreign policy posture but also the trajectory of the ongoing contest over representation and hegemony within Iraqi Shiism. Iran-aligned actors may seek to use the attack as a means of political mobilization. In this sense, the discourse of expanding the axis of resistance could be leveraged to assert political dominance during the election period. This posture reflects not only a reactive

stance against an external enemy but also a strategy aimed at marginalizing rival Shiite actors aligned with the "Iraq-first" perspective in domestic politics. In contrast, those actors positioned around the ideal of "an Iraq that stays out of conflict" advocate keeping the country insulated from external interventions and prioritize meeting public demands for security and prosperity. The confrontation between these two approaches signals not only a potential rupture that will influence the outcome of the elections, but also one that will shape the architecture of Iraq's post-election political order.

This political polarization will not remain limited to rhetoric alone. The longstanding structural rivalry within the PMF may reignite in the aftermath of Israel's attacks on Iran. Militia groups known for their close alignment with Iran may seek to enhance both their legitimacy and territorial influence in a context where resistance discourse is gaining renewed momentum. However, this trend could trigger a new sense of threat for factions affiliated with the Najaf-based religious establishment. These groups have consistently advocated for subordinating the PMF to civilian authority, institutionalizing its structure, and redefining its role within a security architecture compatible with the Iraqi state.

The reactive atmosphere following the Israeli strikes may push demands for PMF's integration into the background, opening space for the re-legitimation of militia activity and the consolidation of territorial dominance by Iran-aligned groups. This development may not only deepen tensions within Iraq's security structures but also generate a new arena of competition over religious legitimacy. In particular, Iran's long-term strategic objective of increasing its influence over the Najaf seminary may intensify the struggle for prestige and representation between Sistani's circles and Iran-affiliated religious networks.

How the Shiite community will be affected by this process depends not only on the behavior of political elites but also on the evolving tendencies within the broader social base. The youth and civil segments that became more visible during the 2019 protests tend to adopt a more nationalist, secular, and critical stance toward Iranian intervention. The demands of this generation reflect a political consciousness that goes beyond balancing relations with Iran, calling instead for solutions to structural problems such as corruption, poor public services, unemployment, and misgovernance.

In this context, the gap between the rhetoric of Iran-aligned Shiite actors and the expectations of the younger generation is steadily widening.

This widening disconnect may signal a fragmentation within the Shiite electorate in the upcoming elections. If Shiite political factions—and the militia groups representing them on the ground—fail to manage this social tension and continue to rely on traditional ideological loyalties, the result may not only be increased intra-party competition, but also a deeper generational rupture within Iraqi Shiism.

Reactions from Iraq to Israel's Attacks on Iran



AYATOLLAH ALI AL-SISTANI, THE HIGHEST SHIA RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY IN IRAQ:

We strongly condemn this criminal act and call on the international community to pressure this aggressive entity and its protectors to prevent such attacks from recurring.



BASIM AL-AVADI, SPOKESPERSON FOR THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT: The Republic of Iraq's government strongly condemns the military attack initiated by the Zionist regime on the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Iraqi government emphasizes that mere condemnations are no longer enough and that international stances must turn into deterrent and practical measures.



MUQTADA AL-SADR, LEADER OF THE SHIA NATIONAL MOVEMENT: The Zionist entity, with direct support from the U.S., has gone too far in spreading its terrorism... The land of the infallibles and the sacred sites in Iraq must be kept away from this war. Iraq and its people do not need new wars.



HADI AL-AMIRI, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE BADR ORGANIZATION: We are following the treacherous attacks by Zionist forces against peoples in the region, and most recently targeting the Islamic Republic of Iran, with the highest level of responsibility and awareness. We offer our deepest condolences to the Islamic Republic of Iran and its Leader of the Revolution, expressing full solidarity in leadership and struggle.



IRAQI KURDISH REGIONAL GOVERNMENT: We condemn Israel's attack on the Islamic Republic of Iran and its use of military force to resolve conflicts. At this sensitive time, the international community has the responsibility to respond quickly and prevent further chaos and disorder from escalating.



MAHMUD AL-MASHHADANI, SPEAKER OF THE IRAQI PARLIAMENT: We call on the United Nations and the Security Council to "immediately condemn" the attacks. Further violence, which would cause the loss of innocent civilian lives, must be avoided.

June 14, 2025

info@orsam.org.tr www.orsam.org.tr



GULF STATES' PERSPECTIVE ON ISRAEL'S STRIKES AGAINST IRAN



Saudi Arabia's Defense Minister Khalid bin Salman (L) meets with Iran's leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (R) and delivers a letter from King Salman bin Abdulaziz, Tehran, Iran, April 17, 2025.

Israel's June 13, 2025, strikes on various targets inside Iran constitute a critical military development—both geographically and strategically—for the Gulf states, which are situated between Israel and Iran. Since October 2023, the Gulf states have had to directly manage the consequences of Israel's growing willingness to use military force. They have supported diplomatic efforts aimed at preventing a full-scale military confrontation between Israel and Iran. Within this framework, the sixth round of nuclear negotiations between the U.S. and Iran was scheduled to take place on June 15 in Muscat, the capital of Oman. Although Steve Witkoff, representing the U.S., emphasized that talks could still proceed and urged one more attempt at diplomacy, Iran announced through its state television that it had decided not to participate in the upcoming round of negotiations.¹⁴

The Gulf states issued statements that were broadly aligned in their response to Israel's strikes on Iran. Led by Saudi Arabia, all Gulf countries condemned Israel's actions, criticized the disregard for diplomacy, and denounced what they described as a clear violation of international law.¹⁵ A common feature of these statements was the call on international actors—particularly the United Nations Security Council—to take responsibility.¹⁶ The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) also released a statement condemning Israel and urging international organizations to act.

In this context, it should be noted that the Gulf states' statements regarding the recent attacks closely resemble their earlier responses to Israel's destabilizing moves and efforts to shift the military balance in its favor across key Middle Eastern capitals such as Gaza, Beirut, Baghdad, and Damascus.

14 Elizabeth Crisp, "Iran pulls out of nuclear talks with the US", *The Hill*, 13 Haziran 2025

15 Saudi Arabia Foreign Ministry, Foreign Ministry on X: "#Statement | The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia expresses its strong condemnation and denunciation of the blatant Israeli aggressions against the brotherly Islamic Republic of Iran, which undermine its sovereignty and security and constitute a clear violation of international laws and <https://t.co/OYuWXwiE5y>" / X, 13 Haziran 2025

16 "GCC Sec. Gen Condemns Israeli Occupation Aggression On Iran", *MENAFN*, 13 Haziran 2025

Since October 2023, the Gulf states have followed broadly similar strategies in response to rising military instability and the increased use of force across the Middle East. In particular, Israel's destructive strategies in cities such as Gaza, Sanaa, Beirut, Baghdad, and Damascus have significantly obstructed the course of diplomatic normalization agreements with Israel. Even the return of Trump to office was insufficient to revive a new normalization process.¹⁷ Within this broader climate, the weakening of military capacity among Iran-backed actors—and the overall decline of Iran's political and military influence in the region—has left the Gulf states facing a strategic dilemma: the need to prevent Iran from becoming entirely weakened.

The Gulf states supported the negotiation process launched in Oman between the U.S. and Iran. Even before the talks began, Anwar Gargash, Diplomatic Advisor to the President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), conveyed Washington's negotiation proposals to Iran's Supreme Leader Khamenei.¹⁸ The fact that these talks were both initiated and conducted in a Gulf country, Oman, underscores the extent of Gulf involvement in the issue.¹⁹

The Gulf states' strategies regarding Israel's attacks on Iran are directly linked to broader geopolitical balances and military/security considerations. Geopolitically, the Russia-Ukraine war, growing rifts between the U.S. and the EU, and the divergence between the U.S. and Israel over strategies focused on Gaza, Sanaa, and Damascus had all contributed to a growing possibility of an agreement between the U.S. and Iran. The fact that the U.S. largely included

Gulf states in its negotiations with Iran—while excluding Israel and most EU countries—mirrors its approach to Russia, where Ukraine and European states were similarly left out of U.S.–Russia talks. This pattern suggests Washington's intention to resolve the issue unilaterally and through peaceful means.²⁰

U.S. President Trump has repeatedly stated that if negotiations with Iran fail, or if Iran demonstrates unwillingness to participate, there could be secondary consequences—namely military outcomes—that he himself would prefer to avoid.²¹ From a geopolitical standpoint, Israel's strikes on Iran appear to mark a shift in which the United States takes a backseat, while Israel assumes the role of the actor seeking to resolve the Iran issue through military means. At this point, **Israel's attacks on Iran also highlight, from the Gulf states' perspective, a potential deepening of divergence between the U.S. and Israel. Although the United States views the attacks as "legitimate" given Iran's recent conduct, it has nonetheless emphasized to Iran that the strikes were not carried out by the U.S., and that American personnel and installations in the region should not be targeted in any retaliatory response.**

The Gulf states' bilateral normalization processes with Iran have proceeded with the knowledge of the U.S. **In contrast to the maximum pressure and negotiation-averse stance of Trump's first term, the Gulf countries have not adopted a confrontational posture toward Iran during the current phase of negotiations.** On the contrary, they have emerged as key interlocutors in the dialogue

17 "Saudi Arabia pauses normalisation talks with Israel amid ongoing war with Hamas", *France 24*, 14 Ekim 2023

18 "Khamenei Rejects US Talks as UAE Official Delivers Trump Letter", *Iran Wire*, 13 Mart 2025

19 Lyse Doucet ve Barbara Tasch, "US and Iran hold 'constructive' first round of nuclear talks", *BBC News*, 12 Nisan 2025

20 "Europeans sidelined in US-Iran nuclear talks despite holding key card", *The Strait Times*, 11 Nisan 2025

21 Nayera Abdallah, Parisa Hafezi ve Tala Ramadan, "Trump says US close to a nuclear deal with Iran", *Reuters*, 15 Mayıs 2025

process. In this context, Gulf states' relations with Israel have been affected by their evolving ties with Iran; this has not only undermined the sustainability of normalization efforts with Israel but has also rendered the Gulf's strategy of balancing Iran through its relationship with Israel increasingly costly. Notably, during President Trump's first Middle East tour between May 13–16, 2017—covering Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar—Israel was excluded from the itinerary, unlike in 2016. This omission signaled that, despite Israel's stance, the U.S. and the Gulf states might be aligning their Iran strategies independently of Israeli preferences.

The expanding geographic and military scope of Israel's attacks on Iran primarily constitutes a development that is likely to significantly exacerbate military instability in the region. The potential extent of this instability is directly linked to the magnitude of Iran's military response to the attacks. In this context, the Gulf states are confronted with several strategic dilemmas.

The Gulf states are currently disturbed by Israel's increasingly direct use of military force against Iran. The possibility that they may be economically, politically, or militarily affected by the conflict—particularly in the event of intentional or unintentional Iranian attacks targeting U.S. assets or the Gulf states themselves—makes direct involvement in the conflict increasingly difficult for them. The Gulf states are, therefore, strongly invested in a diplomatic de-escalation of military tensions between Israel and Iran and seek a resolution through diplomatic means.

In addition to bearing the consequences of the military confrontation between Israel and Iran, the Gulf states face another dilemma: the direct negative impact of the resulting military instability on their economic and political agendas. Although oil prices have risen

in the aftermath of these developments, such an increase is far from desirable for the Gulf states in a context where the uninterrupted trade of oil, maritime security, and the safety of commercial routes in the Middle East are no longer guaranteed.

Israel's attacks on Iran have further weakened Tehran's already fragile regional posture, placing it in an even more difficult position. From the perspective of the Gulf states, another consequence of these strikes is the increased likelihood that the concept of normalization with Israel will be shelved for an extended period. Israel's growing willingness to resort to military force may bring to the fore not only the challenge of managing Iran, but also the emerging need to manage Israel itself. **Indeed, the \$3.2 trillion in investments pledged by the Gulf states to Trump and the U.S. during the May 13–16 May visit cannot materialize from a Gulf region marked by insecure trade routes, regional instability, and disrupted supply chains.**

In this context, in addition to the aforementioned dilemmas facing Iran and the Gulf states, one of the most fundamental challenges for the U.S. is how to manage the Iran issue while simultaneously maintaining its relations with key allies such as Israel and the Gulf states. Accordingly, the Trump administration—having come to power with a declared intent to pursue swift and direct solutions in conflict zones—risks forfeiting both the opportunity to engage Iran in dialogue and resolve the crisis peacefully, and the ability to safeguard the security of Gulf partners who have recently pledged \$3.2 trillion in investments to the U.S. These risks arise primarily due to Israel's unilateral actions, which threaten to destabilize the region further and undermine Washington's strategic interests.

The Impact of Israel's Attack on Iran on the Gulf Countries



KUWAIT

KUWAIT MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS: Strongly condemned Israel's attacks on Iran, stating that they are a clear attack on Iran's sovereignty and a violation of international law. They reiterated a call to the international community, especially the UN Security Council, to stop these violations.



SAUDI ARABIA

SAUDI ARABIA MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS: Strongly condemned Israel's direct attacks on Iran. The statement said these attacks violate Iran's sovereignty and security, clearly breaching international law.



QATAR

QATAR MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS: Strongly condemned Israel's attacks on Iranian territory, calling it a clear violation of Iran's sovereignty and security, and a blatant breach of international law. It expressed that this dangerous escalation threatens regional peace and stability, and emphasized the urgent need for the international community to act to stop these violations.



UAE

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS: Condemned Israel's military attacks on Iran in the strongest terms and expressed deep concern about the negative effects of this escalation on regional security and stability. It stressed that dialogue, respect for international law, and sovereignty are essential for resolving crises, and called on the UN Security Council to take urgent steps to secure a ceasefire and strengthen international peace and security.



OMAN

OMAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS: Strongly condemned Israel's attack on Iran, stating that it violates the UN Charter and international law and represents a dangerous escalation threatening regional stability. Oman emphasized that the attack aims to sabotage the US-Iran nuclear negotiations, held Israel responsible, and called on the international community to take a firm stance.



BAHRAIN

BAHRAIN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS: Condemned Israel's attack on Iran, stating it threatens regional security. It stressed the need to stop the military escalation and resolve tensions through dialogue and diplomacy. It also expressed that continuing the US-Iran nuclear negotiations and ending the conflict would benefit the peoples of the region.

June 14, 2025

info@orsam.org.tr www.orsam.org.tr



THE REPERCUSSIONS OF THE ISRAEL-IRAN TENSION ON NORTH AND EAST AFRICA



Maghreb Resistance Convoy, which set out to break the blockade on Gaza, is welcomed with roses in Misrata, Libya, June 12, 2025.

For the countries of North and East Africa, Israel's recent attacks hold significant importance, particularly from an economic and diplomatic standpoint. The initial effects in these domains have been observed in global energy markets. While West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil prices rose by 8 to 14 percent, the price of Brent crude surpassed \$74 per barrel.²² With the Strait of Hormuz coming under threat, concerns over potential disruptions in global supply chains have increased. For countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Djibouti, and Eritrea, this development constitutes serious economic pressure, especially given their dependence on low-cost fuel and secure maritime trade routes.

Significant ruptures are also taking place on the diplomatic front. Egypt's nuclear-focused talks with Iran in Cairo point to a strategic repositioning in regional diplomacy. **Although Cairo continues to uphold its alliances with Western and Gulf countries, it is increasingly demonstrating a willingness to maintain si-**

multaneous diplomatic relations with both Iran and Israel. It can be anticipated that Egypt will adopt a stance advocating de-escalation in the coming period, while also seeking to broaden its diplomatic maneuvering space.

Egypt's response to Israel's attack on Iran will be shaped by a fragile and increasingly complex strategic calculation. **At the core of Egypt's dilemma lies its heavy dependence on Israeli natural gas—supplied via the restructured Arish–Ashkelon Pipeline—to meet domestic electricity demand and sustain LNG exports. An unexpected delay in gas exports from Israel has further strained Egypt's energy situation.** Under a new agreement, Israel was expected to supply 200 million cubic feet of gas per day starting in mid-May 2025; however, various reports indicate that the Israeli side has delayed deliveries and demanded higher prices.²³ This development comes just as Israel completed a 46-kilometer offshore pipeline

²² Huileng Tan, Kwan Wei Kevin Tan ve Nora Redmond, "Oil prices surge after Israel strikes Iran", *Business Insider*, 13 Haziran 2025.

²³ Cyril Widdershoven, "Egypt is Scrambling For Cheap Oil and LNG as its Energy Crisis Deepens", *OilPrice.com*, 18 Mayıs 2025.

expansion aimed at increasing its daily export volume from 1.0 to 1.2 billion cubic feet and linking to Egypt's gas network.²⁴ The delay—combined with underproduction at the Zohr field, rising summer electricity demand, and Egypt's urgent efforts to procure LNG from Qatar—clearly exposes the fragility of Egypt's energy security and the asymmetric dependence characterizing its energy relationship with Israel.

In 2024, Egypt's natural gas imports from Israel reached a record level of 981 million cubic feet per day, marking an 18.2% increase compared to the previous year.²⁵ A sharp decline in domestic gas production in Egypt since April 2024 has made Israeli gas increasingly central to the country's energy equation. By January 2025, the import volume had risen to 1.15 billion cubic feet per day, and during the summer peak months of July and August, it was projected to increase by up to 58%.²⁶ This long-term trend of dependency also carries signs of political volatility within the supply chain. Although the disruption in May 2025 was officially attributed to maintenance work at the Leviathan field, it coincided with a period of heightened regional tensions and was interpreted by Egyptian analysts as political pressure or even "geopolitical blackmail." The dual reality of Egypt importing Israeli gas at historically high levels while facing the possibility of supply interruptions has further exposed Cairo's vulnerability in energy security and has limited its flexibility in foreign policy during times of crisis.

This asymmetry is particularly striking at a time when security and diplomatic relations between the two countries have deteriorated. Since the beginning of 2025, Israeli polit-

ical leaders and media outlets have accused Egypt of violating the Camp David Accords by accelerating its military operations in the Sinai Peninsula—particularly through projects such as the development of port facilities, the upgrading of El-Arish Airport, and the expansion of other military infrastructure. These allegations have emerged precisely at a time when Israel itself has violated the same peace agreement by occupying the Philadelphi Corridor along the border between Gaza and Egypt.²⁷ Despite these mutual accusations and the prevailing climate of mistrust, Egypt's continued increase in natural gas imports from Israel reveals the pragmatic logic underpinning the relationship. Despite mounting mutual distrust, the economic interdependence in the energy sector has produced a functional partnership that transcends political tensions.

This functional realism is also evident in Egypt's domestic politics. In early 2025, the Cairo administration deported dozens of international activists who had come to participate in a march aimed at ending the blockade on Gaza. It was reported that Israel had requested Egypt to prevent the march, and that Egypt complied with the request, citing security sensitivities in the border areas. Although this move drew criticism at the international level, it demonstrated Egypt's prioritization of strategic coordination with Israel despite growing domestic and regional pressures.

This complex landscape coincides with a period in which Egypt is attempting to recalibrate its regional posture, deepen its diplomatic normalization with Iran, and position itself as a neutral mediator amid rising tensions in the Middle East. On June 2, 2025—just eleven days

24 Cyril Widdershoven, "Egypt is Scrambling For Cheap Oil and LNG as its Energy Crisis Deepens", *OilPrice.com*, 18 Mayıs 2025.

25 "Report: Egypt's imports of Israeli gas surged 18 % in 2024", *Middle East Monitor*, 20 Ocak 2025.

26 "Israel delays gas exports to Egypt amid price disputes and summer demand surge", *Watan News*, 11 Mayıs 2025.

27 Ahmed Abdeen, "Egypt-Israel: From Political Alliance to Military Tensions", *Orient XXI*, 11 Mayıs 2025.

before Israel's attack on Iran—Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Egyptian Deputy Foreign Minister Ihab Abdellaty held a joint press conference in Cairo, during which both sides openly expressed their commitment to strengthening bilateral relations in politics, economy, trade, and tourism.²⁸ Although ambassadors have not yet been reinstated, the two parties delivered strong messages of intent to overcome past obstacles and deepen cooperation. Araghchi adopted a patient and conciliatory tone, describing the rapprochement as a historic opportunity, while Abdellaty characterized the process as “significant.” This formal engagement represents the most serious diplomatic contact between the two countries in years and indicates Egypt's pursuit of new diplomatic channels with Iran, alongside a recalibration of its traditionally strategic alignment with Israel.

In this context, Egypt's strongly worded statement describing Israel's attack on Iran as a “blatant and extremely dangerous regional escalation” and a “flagrant violation of international law”²⁹ is particularly noteworthy. Given Egypt's structural dependence on Israeli gas, a more measured response might have been expected from Cairo; however, this public and forceful rhetoric can be interpreted as a calculated move to preserve regional legitimacy. Egypt emphasized that the attack could drag the entire region into “overwhelming chaos,” reiterated the necessity of a political—not military—solution to the crisis, and explicitly stated that “the arrogance of power brings security to no nation, including Israel.” The timing and substance of the statement reflect not only solidarity with Iran, but also a deliberate effort to demonstrate diplomatic autonomy, recalibrate regional alliances, and assert Egypt's intent to

serve as a normative and stabilizing actor in Arab geopolitics.

In conclusion, Egypt finds itself in a precarious position—economically dependent on Israel, diplomatically engaged in a rapprochement with Iran, and politically constrained by both regional developments and domestic public pressure. Its stance in the context of the Israel–Iran confrontation is expected to be shaped by these multilayered imperatives, resulting in a cautious, ambiguous, and necessity-driven posture rather than one marked by assertiveness or clarity. Cairo's primary objectives will be to secure the flow of energy, minimize reputational damage, and avoid being overly aligned with any axis of the conflict.

COUNTRIES NORMALIZING AND NOT NORMALIZING RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL

Meanwhile, Morocco is expected to further strengthen its strategic alliance with Israel and the Gulf states. The Rabat government is likely to issue statements supporting Israel's actions and criticizing Iran's regional influence. This stance aligns with Morocco's growing security cooperation with Israel in recent years.

Tunisia, while maintaining official neutrality, has witnessed increasing public sensitivity toward the Palestinian cause. The government is expected to navigate the situation through cautious statements that emphasize regional stability and humanitarian concerns, avoiding direct alignment. Tunisia is likely to preserve its historically non-aligned and diplomatically restrained position.

In the case of Libya, reactions remain ambiguous due to ongoing internal divisions and a

28 Aseel Saleh, “Iran, Egypt initiate a new chapter of rapprochement amid growing regional tensions”, *Peoples Dispatch*, 6 Haziran 2025.

29 Mohamed Samir, “Egypt condemns Israeli strikes on Iran, warns of regional chaos”, *Daily News Egypt*, 13 Haziran 2025.

fragmented authority structure. While the Tripoli-based government may issue messages of solidarity with the Arab and Islamic worlds, elements affiliated with the eastern faction under Khalifa Haftar may remain silent or adopt rhetoric aligned with Gulf states. Although Libya's weak central authority limits its role as an influential actor in the regional equation, the presence of foreign military forces in the country sustains its strategic sensitivity.

Sudan, once seen by the West as a promising example of normalization with Israel under the Abraham Accords framework, experienced a setback in this process due to Israel's failure to deliver the expected military support. In July 2024, Khartoum reestablished diplomatic ties with Iran, and due to wartime necessities, Iran emerged as Sudan's primary military supplier. This orientation carries the potential to turn Sudan into a peripheral front in the Israel-Iran conflict. Iran's growing influence over Sudan may subject Khartoum to pressure from Gulf countries, closer scrutiny from Israel, and contribute to a deepening of geopolitical polarization in East Africa.

Ethiopia is also positioned on a delicate balance. While Addis Ababa maintains strong diplomatic and economic ties with Israel, it signed a limited defense cooperation agreement with Iran in February 2025. This move can be interpreted as a pragmatic balancing strategy. However, if tensions between Tehran and Tel Aviv escalate further, it may become increasingly difficult for Ethiopia to maintain its neutrality. Should the defense agreement with Iran evolve into operational or intelligence dimensions, diplomatic pressure on Addis Ababa is likely to intensify. Therefore, it is highly probable that Ethiopia will align itself with Israel during this period.

On the security front, critical maritime trade passages such as the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Suez Canal have come under significant threat. Potential retaliatory actions by Iran—either directly or through proxy actors such as the Houthis—may target commercial vessels and regional infrastructure. This scenario poses a substantial risk for countries like Egypt, Djibouti, and Eritrea, which are heavily reliant on port revenues and host foreign military bases. Considering ongoing coastal investments and external security partnerships, the vulnerability of the East African coastline is becoming increasingly pronounced.

Moreover, a potential rise in militia activity in regions such as Syria, Iraq, or Yemen could indirectly impact the broader regional security architecture. While countries like Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda currently appear to be maintaining a position of neutrality, persistent instability may compel them to reassess their stance or to take a more active role in the evolving situation through regional mechanisms such as the African Union or Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

In conclusion, Israel's attack and Iran's anticipated retaliation may generate multilayered consequences for North and East Africa. In the short term, rising energy prices and disruptions in maritime transportation will strain already fragile economies. In the medium term, regional diplomatic ties will be tested, and countries pursuing dual-balancing strategies may be forced to adopt more definitive positions. Should the tension become protracted, potential outcomes could include realignments in military cooperation, weakened governance capacities, and a deepening geopolitical polarization between the Horn of Africa and North Africa.

POSSIBLE TRAJECTORY OF U.S.- ISRAEL RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ATTACK



U.S. President Donald Trump meets with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the Oval Office, Washington D.C., U.S., April 8, 2025.

Starting in April 2025, the U.S. and Iran entered a new phase of nuclear negotiations mediated by Oman, holding five meetings—both at the senior and technical levels—in Rome and Muscat. The U.S. delegation, led by Witkoff, proposed a phased lifting of sanctions, access to frozen assets, and permission for limited oil exports in exchange for Iran significantly reducing its uranium enrichment activities. The U.S. also stipulated comprehensive inspections and long-term monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In response, the Iranian delegation, led by Foreign Minister Araghchi, presented a three-stage plan: lowering uranium enrichment to 3.6%, reinstating international inspections, and transferring highly enriched uranium stocks abroad, all contingent upon a guarantee from the U.S. Congress to lift sanctions. While Iran signaled a willingness to compromise, Supreme Leader Khamenei rejected any proposal that required a complete halt to enrichment, deeming such demands

"humiliating." Tensions escalated shortly before the sixth round of talks on June 15, when the IAEA issued a censure against Iran for failing to share required information since 2019. Tehran viewed this as politically motivated and responded by activating a third enrichment facility—an action that provided Israel with the timing it had been seeking for its long-planned attack.³⁰

Notably, during the course of the negotiations, Trump repeatedly signaled his disapproval of Israel's plans to strike Iran.³¹ One of the primary reasons behind the swift dismissal of National Security Advisor Mike Waltz—known for his hawkish stance on Iran—on May 1st was reportedly his engagement with Netanyahu on the Iran issue without Trump's prior approval.³² As the Trump administration proceeded to overhaul the National Security Council, it removed several pro-Israel staffers and advisors, a move that provoked significant backlash in

30 "New intelligence suggests Israel is preparing possible strike on Iranian nuclear facilities, US officials say", *CNN*, 20 Mayıs 2025.

31 "Trump Acknowledges Israel Could Attack Iran Soon", *The New York Times*, 12 Haziran 2025.

32 "Inside Waltz's ouster: Before Signalgate, talks with Israel angered Trump", *Washington Post*, 3 Mayıs 2025.

Israel. 33 The growing divergence between the U.S. and Israel in recent months has not been limited to the Iran file; it extends to issues such as Türkiye's regional influence, the ceasefire in Gaza, and the emergence of a new Syrian government. **Trump's decision to skip Israel during his May 2025 Middle East tour—while visiting Qatar and meeting Syrian President al-Sharaa in Saudi Arabia—was widely interpreted as a pointed message to Netanyahu.**

As with his meeting with al-Sharaa, Trump's speech in Riyadh—where he criticized neo-conservative American interventionism—also included an invitation to Saudi Arabia to join the Abraham Accords and emphasized the significance of the agreements for the Gulf states. This suggests that while Trump remains attentive to Israel's security, he harbors serious reservations toward Netanyahu.³⁴ The underlying reason appears to be Netanyahu's demanding and uncompromising posture.³⁵ It is considered a major source of tension that Netanyahu and his network in Washington, D.C., have consistently sought to shape Trump's Middle East agenda, while Netanyahu himself has been unwilling to demonstrate the flexibility expected by the U.S. in return.

Trump has, on multiple occasions, conveyed to Netanyahu that he should refrain from launching an attack on Iran and that the U.S. would not take the initiative if such an operation were carried out.³⁶ However, Netanyahu is confronting a convergence of domestic crises that could mark the end of his political career: threats by ultra-Orthodox parties to dissolve

the coalition over a draft law abolishing military exemptions for their community, the ongoing situation in Gaza, and scandals such as "Qatar-gate." As he has begun giving testimony in corruption cases, a conviction could lead to his removal from office and possibly imprisonment. Thus, it can be anticipated that Netanyahu will resort to every available option to remain in power. His attack on Iran may be interpreted as an attempt to defer Israel's deepening political crisis, as he struggles to hold together a fragile coalition whose collapse could cost him his career. **With limited room to maneuver in Gaza, Netanyahu's effort to manufacture a state of emergency through Iran reflects the narrowing of his political options.**

Although U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio asserted that the U.S. had no involvement in the attack and a White House statement confirmed that while Washington had been informed, it had not provided any operational assistance, the claim that Israel launched the strike on Iran entirely without U.S. support should be approached with caution. Trump described the attack as "perfect" and warned that Iran would face even worse consequences should it refuse to reach an agreement.³⁷ Given Trump's repeated emphasis on Israel's security across various platforms, a plausible scenario is that he may politically charge Netanyahu with the costs incurred by the U.S., and seek to unseat him in the next election by deploying all available leverage. On the other hand, **Netanyahu's decision to strike Iran despite Trump's objections has not only**

33 "Pro-Israel' figures in the White House are being dismissed, and Jerusalem is worried: 'Something isn't working between Trump and Netanyahu'", Ynet, 2 Haziran 2025.

34 "Full text of Trump's speech in Riyadh: 'Dawn of the bright new day for the great people of the Middle East'", *The Times of Israel*, 16 Mayıs 2025.

35 Liza Rozovsky, "Despite His Flattery of Trump, Netanyahu Was Dealt the Cold Shoulder in the Oval Office," *Haaretz*, 8 Nisan 2025.

36 "Trump: Netanyahu May Go Into War with Iran, but the U.S. Won't Be Dragged In," *Haaretz*, 25 Nisan 2025.

37 "Israel Strikes Iran's Nuclear Facilities, Killing Top Military Officials," *The Washington Post*, 12 Haziran 2025.

strained their personal relationship but also signaled that Israel intends to act more autonomously on the ground. From this perspective, Netanyahu appears to be pursuing a strategy of converting his own political risks into security risks for Israel to compel U.S. intervention. Should Iran respond with a proportional counterattack, it is unlikely that the U.S.

would remain passive. The deployment of two destroyers with ballistic missile defense capabilities to the Eastern Mediterranean, the increase in U.S. combat aircraft in the region, and the rise in troop presence at regional bases to 40,000 personnel suggest that Washington is actively preparing for a range of contingencies.³⁸

38 "US Helps Israel Shoot Down Barrage of Iranian Missiles," *Associated Press*, 13 Haziran 2025.

THE APPROACHES OF RUSSIA AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA TO THE ISRAELI STRIKE



The 13th International Senior Security Officials Meeting was held at the Russian National Center in Moscow, Russia's capital. The meeting was attended by Ali Akbar Ahmadian (right), Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, and Chen Wenqing (left), member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Moscow, Russia, May 28, 2025

On June 13, 2025, while condemning Israel's "Operation Rising Lion" against Iran with reference to international law, Russia simultaneously pursued a dual-track balancing policy aimed at preserving both its deepening alliance with Tehran and its ongoing deconfliction mechanisms with Israel. Israel's strikes targeted the Natanz uranium enrichment facility and ballistic missile infrastructure along the Isfahan–Kermanshah axis. In response, Tehran labeled the assault as an "act of war" and began preparations for retaliation. **As regional tensions escalated, the Kremlin's posture of "controlled assertiveness" reverberated across multiple layers of the regional balance of power—from global energy markets to the operational status of Syrian airspace.**

Russia's role in the Israel–Iran conflict is premised on managing both its deepening operational and strategic partnership with Tehran and the ongoing deconfliction mech-

anism maintained with Tel Aviv. The provision of Geran-2 (Shahed-136) loitering munitions, used by Russia in Ukraine, stands out as a direct outcome of this cooperation.³⁹ In the energy domain, Russia's effort to channel its gas to global markets via Iran through the North–South corridor reflects both countries' shared resolve to undermine Western dominance in the energy sector under sanctions pressure.⁴⁰ On the nuclear front, an agreement signed on 10 June 2025 announced the construction of eight new reactors, reinforcing Russia's role as the primary contractor in the expansion of Iran's civilian nuclear capacity.⁴¹ At the diplomatic level, Moscow actively supported Iran's full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2023 and its admission into BRICS+ at the 2024 Johannesburg Summit, with both capitals converging on the discourse of a "post-Western security architecture."⁴²

39 "How Russia's Shahed drones are getting more deadly — and what Ukraine is doing about it," *Kyiv Independent*, 17 Mayıs 2025.

40 "Russia can start gas supplies to Iran with small volumes of up to 2 bcm a year — Putin," *TASS*, 17 Ocak 2025.

41 Russia Has Not Forgotten the Difficult Times: Rosatom Will Build 8 Reactors," *EADaily*, 10 Haziran 2025.

42 "Iran and Saudi Arabia among 6 Nations Set to Join BRICS," *NPR*, 24 Ağustos 2023; "Iran Becomes Full Member of Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *FDD*, 6 Temmuz 2023.

The “deconfliction mechanism” established during the Syrian civil war formed the cornerstone of Russian–Israeli relations. Within this framework, both countries avoided actions that could escalate bilateral tensions. This policy was largely maintained in the subsequent period. However, following the events of 7 October, the Kremlin characterized Israeli bombardments as a “disproportionate use of force”⁴³ and adopted a ceasefire-oriented and Israel-critical stance in the United Nations Security Council.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, due to its focus on the war in Ukraine, Russia did not translate this position into political or military action against Israel. After the Syrian revolution, Russia also sought to engage with the al-Sharaa government, initiating diplomatic negotiations concerning the future of its military bases and regional policies.⁴⁵

In conclusion, **while Russia continues to expand its military-technical and nuclear support to Iran, it simultaneously avoids steps that would lead to direct confrontation with Israel, thereby aiming to preserve “crisis manageability” with both sides.** This dual-balancing strategy allows Moscow to deepen its influence in the Middle East and benefit economically from rising energy prices, while also maximizing its geopolitical maneuvering space as the West’s attention shifts away from the Ukraine dossier.

Against this backdrop, Moscow issued a rhetorically strong yet measured response to the attack. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov described Israel’s operation as “a blatant violation of international law that sharply escalates

regional tensions,” expressing Russia’s deep concern.⁴⁶ On the same day, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement characterizing the strike as “an unprovoked act of aggression rooted in provocation,” and accused the West of “fueling anti-Iranian nuclear paranoia.”⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the Kremlin has thus far refrained from signaling any sanctions or military measures against Israel, indicating that its strategy of limited rhetorical alignment with Iran in this crisis is likely to continue. In parallel, the increase in oil prices as a result of the attacks is viewed as a favorable development for both Russia and Iran.

In this context, three potential scenarios emerge for the near future. The first and most probable scenario is that the Kremlin will maintain its “controlled balance” strategy; thus, even if Russia accelerates air defense modernization contracts with Iran, it is likely to keep deliveries at a symbolic scale to minimize the risk of direct confrontation with Israel. In the second scenario, should Western capitals extend explicit security guarantees to Israel and Iran’s retaliation escalate, Russia may advance the delivery schedule of Su-35 fighter jets and deepen its ongoing military engagements with Tehran. In the third and less likely scenario, Moscow could adopt a more assertive policy, further amplifying its pro-Iran stance, intensifying its diplomatic posture against Israel, and potentially reflecting this shift in the military domain.

For Türkiye, the implications of these dynamics are multilayered. On the energy front, the

43 “Russia Maneuvers Carefully over the Israel-Hamas War as It Seeks to Expand Its Global Clout,” *Associated Press*, 16 Ekim 2023.

44 “US vetoes UNSC Gaza ceasefire resolution as Israeli strikes kill 95,” *Al Jazeera*, 4 Haziran 2025.

45 “Russia gambles to keep military bases in post-Assad Syria,” *Al Jazeera*, 2 Mart 2025.

46 “Russia Condemns Sharp Escalation of Tensions Between Israel, Iran — Kremlin,” *TASS*, 13 Haziran 2025.

47 “Russia Strongly Condemns Israel’s Attack Against Iran — Foreign Ministry,” *TASS*, 13 Haziran 2025.

potential disruption of supply from the Persian Gulf could trigger a relative increase in demand for the Ceyhan and BTC pipelines, while the surge in crude oil prices would widen Türkiye's current account deficit. In the South Caucasus, the deepening of Russia–Iran military-technical integration may constrain Ankara's diplomatic maneuverability in the context of the Zangezur Corridor debates. Additionally, although unlikely, the emergence of a regional bloc involving Russia as a result of the Israel–Iran conflict could jeopardize ongoing areas of cooperation between Türkiye and Russia and complicate Türkiye's policy toward Syria.

In conclusion, the Kremlin regards Israel's June 13 strikes as an unlawful provocation under international law, escalating rhetorical pressure while in practice adhering to its balancing strategy. This stance aligns with Russia's broader objectives of consolidating influence in the Middle East, maximizing energy revenues, maintaining its focus on the war in Ukraine, and diverting Western attention from the Ukrainian front. However, should the tension become chronic and Tehran launch a large-scale retaliation, Moscow's military-technical support to Iran may expand both quantitatively and qualitatively—potentially ushering in a new phase in the regional balance of power. Türkiye's ability to manage these geopolitical pressures and seize emerging mediation opportunities in a timely manner will be critical to its regional influence in the coming period.

CHINA'S APPROACH

China expressed that it is “deeply concerned” over Israel's June 13 strikes on Iran and declared its readiness to play a role in defusing a situation that threatens to drag the Middle East into a full-scale war. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian stated that “China opposes any violation of Iran's sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity, as well as any ac-

tions that escalate tensions or expand the conflict,” adding that “a renewed and sharp escalation of regional tensions would serve no party's interests.” He further noted that “China calls on all relevant parties to make greater efforts to promote regional peace and stability and to prevent further escalation, and stands ready to play a constructive role in helping de-escalate the situation.” **Beijing's initial response reflects the traditional posture of Chinese foreign policy in the Middle East—marked by caution toward regional geopolitical tensions and an attempt to maintain a delicate balance among competing actors.**

In the coming period, it is foreseeable that China will employ its rhetoric condemning Israel as part of its effort to position itself as a leading voice of the Global South and to strengthen its relations with both state and non-state actors across the Arab-Islamic world. By portraying itself as a great power genuinely prioritizing peace, China is likely to emphasize the stark contrast between Chinese and American approaches to the Middle East in the eyes of the Global South. **While calling for de-escalation, Beijing is expected to adopt a more Iran-leaning stance by condemning Israel's aggressive actions.** Nevertheless, the likelihood that this rhetoric will translate into direct support remains low given China's broader foreign policy strategy.

Over the past decade, China's foreign policy strategy has increasingly been shaped within the framework of great power competition, positioning Iran as a rising regional power capable of constraining U.S. interests in the Middle East to some extent. Consequently, China–Iran relations have followed an upward trajectory. During this same period, China's global and regional influence has also expanded. Notably, the 25-year strategic cooperation agreement signed in 2021 between China and

Iran⁴⁸ followed by the 2023 Iran–Saudi Arabia rapprochement mediated by China⁴⁹ reflected both the deepening nature of Sino-Iranian ties and the emergence of China as an alternative major power with the potential to offer solutions to regional conflicts. However, the developments following the Syrian revolution have revealed the limitations of China's capacity to effectively address regional crises, a reality that has, in turn, undermined growing perceptions of Chinese influence and trust in the region.

Although China and Iran are often portrayed—alongside Russia—as part of a strategic alliance, their bilateral relationship primarily reflects China's pragmatism-driven foreign policy approach centered on transactional ties. This pragmatic structure is evident in two specific cases. The first concerns the 25 million barrels of Iranian oil sent to China's Dalian and Zhoushan ports in 2018, which remained stranded for six years due to U.S. sanctions. A dispute over storage fees emerged, during which Iran refused to pay, placing China in a difficult position by portraying it before international audiences as a country that had effectively seized the oil. The second case involves Iran's increasing reliance on China—exporting more than 60% of its oil to Beijing—following the reimposition of U.S. sanctions under Trump's second term in 2025. As Iran signaled a potential thaw with the West, a trust deficit began to emerge on the Chinese side. Similarly, the much-publicized 25-year, \$400 billion

strategic partnership agreement between China and Iran has failed to materialize. Whether this was due to China's caution to avoid secondary sanctions or the operational difficulties posed by the IRGC's dominance in key sectors such as port logistics, commodity imports, and oil sales remains uncertain. These examples highlight the mutual distrust in the relationship and underscore its essentially pragmatic nature; wherein national interests take precedence over ideological or strategic alignment.

Given that China positions Iran as a counterbalancing power to the U.S. in the Middle East within its broader foreign policy strategy, the future trajectory of its pragmatic relationship with a weakened Iran poses an intriguing question. However, **considering the region's importance for China—as both a source of energy and a market—especially at a time when the Chinese economy is struggling to transition toward higher value-added sectors, it is evident that Beijing will seek to minimize the likelihood of a full-scale conflict in the Middle East.** For this reason, rather than managing a bilateral relationship with a fully isolated and Western-antagonistic Iran, China may prefer to play a mediating role in encouraging Tehran to reach an agreement with the West. Such a role would not only offer China a new negotiation platform with the U.S. within the context of great power diplomacy but also allow Beijing to present itself to the Global South as a reliable and constructive global power.

48 "Iran and China sign 25-year cooperation agreement," *Reuters*, 27 Mart 2021.

49 Wissam Saadeh, "Saudi-Iran Reconciliation: How China Is Reshaping the Middle East," *Middle East Eye*, 16 Mart 2023.

THE ISRAEL-IRAN ESCALATION AND TÜRKİYE



Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan (R) shakes hands with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Aragchi (L) as they meet on the sidelines of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Extraordinary Council of Foreign Ministers Meeting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on March 8, 2025.

In the post-October 7 period, the escalating tensions between Israel and Iran initially remained confined to indirect confrontations between Israel and Iran-backed proxy forces. In the early stages of this controlled escalation, Israel targeted Iran's spheres of influence and affiliated actors in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. While Israel failed to achieve a decisive outcome in Gaza, it succeeded in significantly degrading Hamas's military capacity and severing the group's external ties, effectively placing it under blockade. During this period, Iran attempted to relieve pressure on Hamas by opening a second front through Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. At this stage, with Israel primarily focused on Gaza, a state of managed tension prevailed along the Israeli-Hezbollah border, as both sides limited their strikes to areas short of deep penetration into one another's territory. Following the near-completion of Israel's military operations in Gaza, its focus shifted toward Hezbollah. Contrary to the earlier phase of controlled tension, Israel carried out operations aimed at decapitating Hezbollah's leadership, including strikes that rendered over a thousand of its militants

combat-incapable in a single assault. Israel also escalated its pressure on Iranian-backed militias and regime targets in Syria, another key arena of Iranian influence. The critical turning point in this phase was the collapse of the Ba'ath regime in Syria—a country that historically served as a strategic conduit for Iran's regional proxy network. The fall of the Assad regime significantly undermined Iran's ability to project influence in Lebanon, Palestine, and Iraq. As a result, the post-October 7 period has been marked by a decline in Iran's regional clout, the erosion of its proxy-based security architecture, and a weakening of its overall foreign policy effectiveness. This strategic setback has, in turn, emboldened Israel to pursue more direct and far-reaching military options.

In parallel with the weakening of proxy forces, Israel has also initiated a process of direct tension with Iran. Until October 7, the two countries had been careful to avoid direct confrontation. The rules of engagement between them changed when Israel struck the Iranian consulate in Syria.⁵⁰ The targeting of an area

50 "Israel strikes Iranian consulate in Damascus, killing top commanders," *Al Jazeera*, 1 Nisan 2025.

In parallel with the weakening of proxy forces, Israel has also initiated a process of direct tension with Iran.

that is technically considered Iranian territory and the killing of high-ranking Iranian officials in the attack compelled Iran to respond. Through a structure it had built over many years using proxy forces, Iran had managed to conduct conflicts outside its own territory and at low cost, and this method of warfare had long worked in its favor. This situation sparked debates within Israel, where the idea that "it is necessary to fight not the octopus's arms but its head" gained prominence. Israel interpreted Hamas's October 7 operation inside Israeli territory as a direct intervention by Iran and, in the aftermath, adopted a strategy in which it aimed to determine the rules of engagement with Iran itself. Israel, step by step, first weakened Iran's proxy forces and thus reduced Iran's capacity to inflict harm, and then drew the conflict into a direct and conventional dimension. In other words, the conflict was pulled from an arena where Iran held the advantage to one where Israel possesses far greater capabilities. This new period has exposed Iran's limitations and vulnerabilities; Iran has delayed its retaliation and has not been able to respond proportionally to Israel's attacks. Iran's failure to establish sufficient deterrence against Israel has encouraged

Israel to carry out more effective operations, and the scale of the attacks has gradually expanded. This process culminated in the June 13, 2025 operation, in which Israel escalated the conflict to a higher level by targeting nuclear facilities, critical IRGC command centers, and high-level military figures—including the Iranian Chief of General Staff—as well as nuclear engineers.⁵¹

When the scale, targets, and effects of the attacks in the Israel-Iran escalation are examined, it becomes evident that Israel has gained a clear advantage in terms of military effectiveness and psychological superiority. Israel has succeeded in altering the nature of the conflict by shifting it onto Iranian territory. Iran, on the other hand, has yet to develop an effective response strategy to this new form of conflict. This indicates that the initiative in crisis escalation has shifted in favor of Israel. The fact that Israel was able to target high-ranking Iranian commanders and Hamas leader Haniyeh⁵² in its operations also reveals the strength of Israel's intelligence infrastructure within Iran. This also demonstrates weaknesses in the internal cohesion of the Iranian regime and its inability to provide sufficient protection against external infiltrations. It

51 "Israel launches major strike inside Iran targeting nuclear and military sites," *Reuters*, 13 Haziran 2025.

52 "Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh's sons killed in Israeli airstrike," *BBC News*, 10 Nisan 2025.

may be argued that through its operations, Israel also aims to deepen internal fractures within the Iranian leadership and to accelerate the regime's loss of public trust.

Following Israel's attacks, Iran has found itself facing a serious dilemma. On the one hand, Iran does not want the crisis to escalate and is trying to prevent the conflict from turning into a regional war. Therefore, any potential retaliation by Iran must be proportionate and calculated. On the other hand, such a cautious approach could lead to further strategic losses. Iran's deterrence capacity has been undermined, and it has come to be perceived as a weak actor both by Israel and by its regional allies. In essence, Iran possesses military capabilities that could inflict significant damage on Israel; however, it remains uncertain to what extent Iran is prepared to face the political, military, and economic costs of employing this capacity. Indeed, the fact that Israel has demonstrated its ability to target Iran's highest-ranking figures further exacerbates the potential consequences of any Iranian retaliation. Conversely, if Iran opts to respond proportionately in an effort to de-escalate the conflict, this may ultimately be perceived as a display of weakness—one that could yield even graver consequences for Iran in the long term. The regime's existing vulnerabilities—ranging from the domestic socio-economic crisis to failures in foreign policy and the erosion of public support—may deepen the psychological and structural fractures that Israel seeks to exploit through these attacks.

In terms of regional power balances, Türkiye's position holds particular significance in this process. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye described Israel's attack as "a violation of international law" and explicitly condemned it.⁵³ The statement expressed concern over the potential spread of the con-

flict, emphasized the need for international action, and directly criticized the Netanyahu government. It is evident that Türkiye highlighted three fundamental concerns through this statement. First, in the event of Iran becoming destabilized and the war spreading across the region, Türkiye faces the risk of encountering serious security and economic costs. Should Iran be dragged into a state of war, it could trigger a crisis similar to that in Syria, subjecting Türkiye to multidimensional pressure. Destabilization in the region, especially in Iraq, would jeopardize Türkiye's economic initiatives and diplomatic efforts. In this context, hopes for a successful political transition process in Syria, the implementation of strategic projects such as the Development Road in Iraq, and the overall vision for regional order could be severely undermined. Türkiye's second concern is that Israel, by violating the boundaries of international law, is effectively turning extralegal conduct into a norm in the region. The fact that an attack on a sovereign state goes unpunished may set a dangerous precedent for similar actions in the future. Türkiye is particularly apprehensive about such attacks being repeated in countries within its immediate sphere of interest, such as Syria. Third, Türkiye is a country that could be directly affected by the shocks that such attacks may cause in global energy markets. As an energy-importing nation, any reflection of regional geopolitical risks on energy prices could negatively impact Türkiye's economic stability.

Clues regarding the position Türkiye will adopt in response to this crisis can be found in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' statement calling for the "international community to take action." Türkiye seeks to take the lead in diplomatic initiatives aimed at de-escalating the crisis. In this context, two main channels come to

53 "Turkey condemns Israeli strike on Iran as breach of international law," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 14 Haziran 2025.

the fore. The first involves diplomatic efforts directed at the United States, which is perceived to have provided implicit support for Israel's attacks. Türkiye may attempt to exert pressure on Washington in order to bring about constraints on Israel's actions.

The second channel, as in the case of the Gaza issue, would be to foster cooperation among regional countries and to promote a unified stance against Israel's aggression—possibly including the implementation of sanctions—thereby attempting to constrain Israel. Additionally, Türkiye may also engage in diplomatic moves aimed at maintaining dialogue with Iran and assuming a mediating role.

In conclusion, Israel's recent attack on Iran marks a period in which regional power struggles in the Middle East are taking new forms and the crisis management capacity of the international system is being tested. How Iran

responds to this attack will determine whether the conflict escalates into a full-scale war or transitions into a new negotiation process. Since October 7, the intensity of the conflict has been increasing. However, all parties still remain wary of the consequences of an all-out war. Israel appears to be the exception to this, yet its confidence is sustained by the unconditional support of the United States. Therefore, the stance the U.S. adopts in this process may prove decisive. Although the Trump administration provides unconditional support to Israel, it does not prefer a regional war that would require deeper American military engagement in the Middle East. President Trump's social media posts following the Israeli attacks also indicate that the primary goal is to secure a stronger bargaining position in nuclear negotiations.⁵⁴ This may eventually prompt the U.S. itself to seek de-escalation through Israel. In such periods, the role of regional actors like Türkiye is likely to become more prominent.

54 "Trump hints Israel strike on Iran may aid nuclear talks," *Haaretz*, 14 Haziran 2025.



A damaged building by Israeli strikes on Iran is seen in Tehran, Iran, June 14, 2025.

CONCLUSION

The tension between Israel and Iran, which has recently escalated into an overt state of war, continues to intensify and deepen with each passing day. The mutual military actions between the two parties are no longer confined to proxy actors or indirect cross-border operations; rather, they are now shaped by the use of hard power directly involving state capacities and national security priorities. This development further destabilizes the already fragile security balance in the Middle East and increases the risk of the conflict evolving into a multi-layered regional crisis.

From Israel's perspective, this process can be interpreted as an attempt to suppress domestic political crises, redirect public attention toward a security threat, and reestablish its regional power capacity. The Netanyahu government seeks to overcome its legitimacy crisis at home through military engagement, while Iran is undergoing a regime-level consolidation process driven by the perception of a direct external threat. The fact that both actors tend to use the conflict as a strategic instrument complicates the prospects for a

lasting ceasefire or a platform for dialogue in the short term. Nevertheless, Iran's decision not to fully shut down dialogue channels with the U.S. can be seen as a positive development for the process. However, the potential scale of Iran's expected retaliatory response to Israeli attacks also carries the risk of further escalation, reflecting the dilemma of "escalation dominance."

When examining regional responses, Shiite political and militia groups—particularly in Iraq—have adopted a position that not only increases direct support for Iran but also heightens the risk of internal instability. Iraq's upcoming parliamentary elections and the integration of Iran-aligned proxy forces into the Iraqi army could push the country into a new spiral of instability. In contrast, Gulf states are pursuing a cautious diplomatic approach to avoid being drawn into a conflict that might spill over into the region; most actors are deliberately refraining from taking sides in the war. For countries pursuing economic development agendas based on diplomatic balancing and economic diversification, this situation has

created a serious climate of uncertainty. While the short-term effects of the conflict remain manageable, the Gulf states are expected to adopt clearer positions in the medium to long term. Although the echoes of the Israel-Iran war are more limited in North and East Africa, indirect security and diplomatic pressures are becoming increasingly perceptible, particularly in countries like Sudan and Ethiopia. This suggests that the conflict may not remain geographically contained.

On the global level, the U.S. continues to offer unconditional support to Israel and is working to legitimize Tel Aviv's regional military engagements. However, official statements throughout the day reveal a noticeable divergence in rhetoric between President Trump and the foreign policy and security bureaucracy. In contrast, Russia—due to its loss of influence in Syria and ongoing tensions with European countries over the war in Ukraine—has adopted a balancing strategy and does not wish to see the conflict escalate further. China, for its part, maintains a stance of stra-

tegic equilibrium, refraining from directly siding with either party due to concerns over the security of Belt and Road Initiative routes and the stability of energy supplies. The positioning of these three global actors indicates that the implications of the war will extend beyond the Middle East and have broader consequences for international politics.

From Türkiye's perspective, the Israel-Iran war constitutes a multifaceted crisis that directly impacts both diplomatic balance and the regional security architecture. While Türkiye seeks to create space for regional peace initiatives, it also closely monitors developments that pertain to its own national security. Israel's regional military engagements and Iran's security reflexes may introduce new dynamics that Türkiye could face in both the Syrian and Iraqi theaters. Therefore, Türkiye's pursuit of an active, multilateral, and proactive diplomacy will be crucial not only in managing this specific crisis but also in shaping the emerging regional order.

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