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**War with Iran**

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### **The Outbreak of the War**

The war between Israel and Iran commenced on June 13, 2025, following a Israeli strike on Iranian territory. The Israeli government justified the attack by citing the urgent need to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, which it claimed could be developed within weeks.

In a large-scale aerial operation, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) deployed more than 200 aircraft to carry out coordinated airstrikes on approximately 100 targets. These included the Natanz nuclear facility, missile production complexes in Tabriz and Kermanshah, as well as military command centers in Tehran. Complementing the air offensive, Mossad reportedly executed a series of covert operations within Iran. These included sabotage missions-facilitated in part by the establishment of a clandestine drone base-designed to neutralize Iran's air defence systems and missile infrastructure. Additionally, Mossad is believed to have been involved in the targeted assassinations of senior military commanders and nuclear scientists. Israel did not attack the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant-an underground uranium enrichment facility located deep within a mountain near Qom-likely because it lacks the capability to penetrate the site's heavily fortified structure with its existing bombs.

The conflict has since escalated into a sustained exchange of hostilities: Israel continues its aerial bombardment and covert operations, while Iran retaliates by launching ballistic missile strikes against Israeli targets. Despite the ongoing violence, the strategic objectives of the war remain unclear, and there is little indication of how or when the conflict might conclude. Both nations continue to suffer significant human and material losses. Civilian infrastructure has been repeatedly targeted: Israel has struck sites such as a hospital and a television station, while Iran has attacked residential buildings and other civilian accommodations

Israel retains a significant advantage in air power and intelligence-driven precision strikes with use of its assassination capabilities. Conversely, Iran's arsenal of ballistic missiles presents a persistent threat to Israeli territory. Moreover, if the conflict expands further, Iran holds the potential to severely disrupt global maritime trade by obstructing the flow of oil and goods through the Strait of Hormuz, a critical chokepoint in international shipping.

### **Atomic Arsenal of Israel**

At the same time, it is widely acknowledged that Israel possesses a nuclear arsenal estimated to range between 80 and 200 warheads. These warheads can be delivered via land-based ballistic missiles, air-based platforms using modified fighter aircraft, and sea-based systems deployed on German-built submarines. Israel's nuclear capabilities have been developed since the late 1950s, with critical early assistance from France.

Notably, Israel has not signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and has consistently rejected international efforts to subject its nuclear facilities to oversight by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Despite this, major powers, particularly Western nations, have largely tolerated Israel's opaque nuclear posture. Efforts to advance regional nuclear disarmament in the Middle East have repeatedly been obstructed or marginalized, especially by the United States, whereas Iran has expressed support for such initiatives.

Historically, Israel has considered the use of nuclear weapons during moments of existential threat. During the 1967 Six-Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War, elements within the Israeli leadership reportedly debated nuclear deployment. More recently, a minister in the current Israeli government controversially suggested the possibility of using a nuclear weapon against Gaza, a statement that drew significant domestic and international condemnation.

### **Iran's History with Nuclear Power.**

Iran signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1968 and ratified it in 1970 under the rule of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. As a signatory, Iran committed not to pursue nuclear weapons and, in return, was granted the right to develop nuclear energy for

peaceful purposes under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). During the Shah's regime, the United States and several European nations actively supported Iran's civilian nuclear program.

However, the Iranian Revolution of 1978–79 radically altered the country's political landscape. The monarchy was overthrown, and a theocratic regime under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was established in 1979. Despite the ideological shift and the emergence of an authoritarian Islamic Republic, Iran formally remained a party to the NPT and continued to adhere to its commitments—at least nominally.

In 2002, the IAEA revealed that Iran had conducted undeclared nuclear activities for nearly two decades, constituting a violation of its safeguard's agreement, though not necessarily a breach of the NPT itself. This revelation triggered years of international negotiations, culminating in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015 between Iran and the P5+1 (the United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and Germany). Under the JCPOA, Iran agreed to strict limitations on its uranium enrichment and extensive monitoring by the IAEA, in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. While the JCPOA was not formally part of the NPT framework, it was designed to reinforce non-proliferation objectives.

In 2018, the United States unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA under President Donald Trump, largely influenced by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's objections to the deal. The U.S. reimposed comprehensive sanctions in November 2018, aiming to compel Iran to alter its regional policies, curtail its ballistic missile program, and limit its nuclear capabilities.

In response, Iran—though remaining a signatory to the NPT—gradually reduced its compliance with the JCPOA, expanding its uranium enrichment levels and stockpiles. Iran's decreasing cooperation with the IAEA, its progress in high-level enrichment, and alleged weaponization research (linked to the suspected “AMAD Plan”) have generated significant concern among international observers.

As of early 2025, according to IAEA assessments, Iran had amassed enough highly enriched uranium to potentially produce six nuclear weapons, though it would likely require an additional

year to develop and weaponize a functional nuclear warhead and integrate it into a missile delivery system.

The U.S. intelligence community's Annual Threat Assessment, published in March 2025, noted:

*"We continue to assess Iran is not building a nuclear weapon and that Khamenei has not reauthorized the nuclear weapons program he suspended in 2003, though pressure has probably built on him to do so. In the past year, there has been an erosion of a decades-long taboo on discussing nuclear weapons in public that has emboldened nuclear weapons advocates within Iran's decision-making apparatus. Khamenei remains the final decisionmaker over Iran's nuclear program, to include any decision to develop nuclear weapons."* (p. 26)

On May 31, 2025, the IAEA issued its most severe condemnation of Iran in two decades, stating that the country had continued enriching uranium to near weapons-grade levels and had failed to meet its non-proliferation obligations. The report further emphasized:

*"The Agency's JCPOA-related verification and monitoring has been seriously affected by the cessation of implementation by Iran of its nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA. The situation has been exacerbated by Iran's subsequent decision to have all of the Agency's JCPOA-related surveillance and monitoring equipment removed."*

Of particular significance is the recent admission by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi, which contradicts long-standing claims made by former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former U.S. President Donald Trump. In an interview with CNN journalist Christiane Amanpour on June 17, 2025, Grossi affirmed what Iran has consistently maintained and what the UN nuclear watchdog has also documented in its official reports: *"What we reported was that we did not have any proof of a systematic effort [by Iran] to move toward a nuclear weapon."*

The Extensive report of the New York Times indicates that President Trump initially sought to renegotiate an agreement with Iran-a move reportedly opposed by Netanyahu. Ultimately, Netanyahu opted for a military approach, launching an attack on Iran and thereby signalling a decisive turn away from diplomacy in resolving the dispute.

While estimates regarding the precise number of nuclear weapons Iran could produce, the timeline for weaponization, and the technical means of delivery remain contested, what is clear is that these developments heightened Israeli perceptions of an imminent nuclear threat. As a result, Israel launched a large-scale military attack on Iran on June 13, 2025, as previously described.

### **The War**

In justifying Israel's attack on Iran, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that the operation was a necessary preemptive measure intended to thwart what he described as a covert Iranian effort to develop nuclear weapons that is an existential threat to Israel, in his view.

He claimed that Iran had already reached the capacity to produce up to nine nuclear bombs. However, critics of Netanyahu contend that the strike was politically motivated, aimed at preempting a possible diplomatic agreement between the United States and Iran regarding Iran's civilian nuclear program—or even at averting the collapse of his own increasingly embattled government.

For years, Israel has maintained that Iran was on the verge of acquiring a nuclear weapon, even during periods when Iran's nuclear facilities were under regular inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Netanyahu, in particular, has been a vocal and persistent figure in international forums, warning of the Iranian threat and campaigning against any diplomatic accommodation. His critics argue that this focus borders on a personal crusade, shaped by what some perceive as a longstanding ideological obsession with undermining the Iranian regime. His stated hope is to bring the Iranian masses to overthrow the of Iranian ayatollahs.

The June 13, 2025, attack received overwhelming support from the Israeli public, and domestic media coverage largely echoed the government's narrative, presenting the military operation as both necessary and justified. Public enthusiasm for the war was fuelled by a perception of Iran as Israel's most dangerous adversary in recent decades. This perception has been shaped over the years by political rhetoric and media framing often dehumanized Iran, portraying it as an existential threat. The notion of an 'axis of evil' a narrative reinforced by Israel over many years has ultimately proven to be more rhetorical than substantive. Nonetheless, it has been employed by Israeli leaders to justify a range of military and political actions.

That said, the antagonism between the two nations is mutual. The Islamic Republic of Iran has consistently refused to recognize Israel's legitimacy, referring to Zionism as a colonial and illegitimate movement. Tehran has also been a major supporter of the Palestinian cause, both diplomatically and materially, contributing to a deeply entrenched ideological and geopolitical rivalry that continues to inflame tensions across the region.

### **The Undeclared Israeli Motives for War**

Beyond the official narrative promoted by Israeli government channels-framing the June 13, 2025, pre-emptive strike on Iran as a necessary action to prevent Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons-analysts familiar with the intricacies of Israeli politics have suggested a broader set of underlying motivations. These unofficial motives are rarely discussed by military or political authorities and are largely absent from mainstream Israeli media, which is saturated with commentary from former generals and security experts. Such coverage often highlights the strategic brilliance of Israel's military actions, the existential threats it faces and the victimhood of Israeli public, while omitting or minimizing the fact that Israel initiated the war, and the suffering of the Gaza population.

Several undeclared factors appear to have shaped Netanyahu's decision to go to war:

**Strategic Timing and Regional Context:** The decision to attack Iran followed a series of military and geopolitical developments that appeared to shift the regional balance in Israel's favor. These included Israel's perceived success in containing Hezbollah in Lebanon, the weakening of Syria's influence due to internal conflict, a previous confrontation with Iranian forces in Syria, and the substantial blow dealt to Hamas during the 2023–2025 Gaza War.

**Political Gain and Netanyahu's Personal Positioning:** The war significantly bolstered Prime Minister Netanyahu's popularity. Widely perceived as cautious or even hesitant in past crises, Netanyahu was credited by the public for demonstrating decisive leadership. His narrative of having prevented Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons helped reframe him as a "savior of the nation."

**Marginalization of the Gaza Genocide and Hostage Issues:** The war shifted the national conversation away from the unresolved Gaza conflict, where approximately 53 Israeli hostages remain in captivity. With over 55,000 Palestinians killed, approximately 6,000 buried under rubble, and 125,000 injured-alongside massive displacement and starvation-the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza faded from the public agenda.

**Omission of current situation in Gaza and West Bank:** In addition, the war serves to divert internal and international attention from Israel's ongoing actions in Gaza and the West Bank. In Gaza, Israeli military operations have resulted in continued civilian casualties and severe humanitarian conditions, including widespread hunger. In the West Bank, the expansion of what has been described by numerous human rights organizations as a system of apartheid persists, marked by the displacement of Palestinians and violent attacks carried out by Jewish settlers, frequently with the support or protection of the Israeli army.

**Framing the War as Israeli Victimhood:** Although Israel initiated the current conflict and has targeted civilian sites in Iran (many of which receive limited media coverage) the suffering of Israelis is predominantly framed through a lens of victimhood. Political leaders, alongside mainstream and social media, frequently emphasize Israeli civilian casualties and the destruction of residential infrastructure, while often omitting mention Iranian attacks on Israeli military or security-related targets. This framing carries particular resonance within Jewish historical consciousness, shaped by the legacy of the diaspora, the trauma of the Holocaust, and the enduring dynamics of the Israeli-Arab conflict. As a result, narratives of victimhood elicit distinct emotional, cognitive, and behavioural responses within both Israeli society and the broader Jewish diaspora, particularly in the forms of moral disengagement, moral entitlement, and moral silencing. *Moral disengagement* refers to the psychological process by which individuals or groups suspend moral norms to justify harmful actions. *Moral entitlement* fosters a belief that actions, including those causing harm, are permissible if perceived as necessary to protect the Jewish people. *Moral silencing* implies that external criticism is illegitimate, based on the conviction that others lack the moral standing to judge or rebuke Jewish suffering or actions taken in its defence.

**National Unity and Political Consolidation:** The war generated a rare moment of political consensus across the Israeli political spectrum—from the Zionist left to the far right—with over 80% of Israeli Jews reportedly supporting the military campaign. Only a marginal segment of the population publicly questioned the necessity or wisdom of the war.

**Distraction from Domestic Failures:** The war helped deflect public attention from Netanyahu's failure to prevent the devastating Hamas-led attack on October 7, 2023, for which he has consistently refused to accept responsibility or initiate a formal state inquiry. The sense of humiliation and vulnerability following that attack was replaced by renewed feelings of national pride and resilience.

**Political Survival and Coalition Stability:** Prior to the war, Netanyahu faced significant internal opposition within the Knesset, particularly over the contentious issue of military conscription exemptions for the ultra-Orthodox community. Eventually he capitulated the ultra-orthodox parties on dodging military service and so he hardly survived the vote of confidence in the Knesset on this issue. The war allowed him to reposition himself and consolidate his leadership.

**Continuation of the Government's Authoritarian Agenda:** The conflict created conditions conducive to furthering the government's controversial agenda of judicial overhaul and broader regime transformation. Measures include curtailing the independence of the Supreme Court, limiting civil society and press freedom, increasing state control over education, and reshaping key public institutions.

**Strengthening International Standing:** The war, while risky, demonstrated Israel's military and intelligence capabilities on a global scale. For many Western governments sceptical of Iran's intentions, the Israeli operation served shared strategic interests by degrading Iran's nuclear and military infrastructure.

**Electioneering and Public Messaging:** With parliamentary recess approaching (ending July 27, 2025, and resuming October 19), Netanyahu effectively launched an informal re-election campaign. Framing himself as the "Master of Security," he turned national security into the

central theme of public discourse, diverting attention from socio-economic challenges and coalition instability.

**Reframing the Regional Agenda:** Netanyahu positioned the war not just as a tactical defence, but as part of a broader vision of reshaping the Middle East's geopolitical landscape—an extension of Israel's ongoing normalization efforts and strategic partnerships in the region.

**Delay of Criminal Proceedings:** Netanyahu's over lasting corruption trial-on charges of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust-has faced repeated delays since its initiation on May 24, 2020. During his defence phase, which began in December 2024, Netanyahu reportedly stated over 1,700 times that he could not recall events. The outbreak of war provided another justification for postponement of proceedings; a pattern observed previously during national crises.

**Suppression of Emerging Scandals:** The war also diverted attention from sensitive investigations involving Netanyahu's office, particularly in connection with the so-called "Qatar Affair." Allegations include improper financial ties and policy influence from a state known to support Hamas. An internal investigation by the Shin Bet into these claims was reportedly underway at the time the war began.

**Restoration of Deterrence Post–October 7:** Finally, Netanyahu viewed the war as a way to restore Israeli deterrence, severely damaged by the October 2023 Hamas attacks. By confronting Iran directly, he sought to reestablish Israel's strategic dominance and redefine the rules of engagement in the region.

### **Conclusion: Netanyahu's Strategic Vision and the Geopolitics of Perpetual Conflict**

The trajectory of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's leadership appears deeply rooted in a doctrine that sees perpetual conflict as essential to Israel's survival-a worldview shaped by the belief that the state must "live by the sword." In this context, the war with Iran represents not only a military campaign but also a strategic milestone in Netanyahu's broader vision to reshape Israel's regional and internal order.

This campaign could not have proceeded without the explicit and implicit support of the United States. Former President Donald Trump reportedly gave a “green light” to the June 13, 2025, Israeli strike on Iran, while U.S. intelligence and weapons systems played a vital role in enabling the operation. Moreover, American aerial refuelling tankers support Israeli air operations. Thus, in both material and strategic terms, this war may be viewed as a joint venture, with the United States sharing a vested interest in neutralizing Iran’s nuclear capabilities and potentially destabilizing or even toppling the Islamic Republic’s theocratic regime. The formal entry of the United States into the war would constitute a significant strategic shift, the consequences of which are difficult to predict.

Israel alone lacks the capacity to sustain a successful military campaign of this magnitude without U.S. support. The alliance remains indispensable, and under President Trump’s leadership, bilateral cooperation appears not only assured but also ideologically aligned. It is therefore no coincidence that Trump demanded Iran’s unconditional surrender and went so far as to issue threats against the life of Iran’s Supreme Leader. In this sense, the war reflects the logic famously articulated by George Orwell: *“The war is not meant to be won, it is meant to be continuous.”* Perpetual conflict sustains political power, suppresses dissent, and reorders both domestic and international agendas.

An Orwellian dimension is evident in the official discourse of global powers, exemplified by the statement issued by G7 leaders on June 17, 2025. In a declaration marked by selective framing and diplomatic cynicism, they stated: *“We, the leaders of the G7, reiterate our commitment to peace and stability in the Middle East. In this context, we affirm that Israel has a right to defend itself. We reiterate our support for the security of Israel... Iran is the principal source of regional instability and terror.”* This statement underscores the asymmetrical narratives promoted by Western powers, which emphasize Israel’s security while obscuring or dismissing the broader geopolitical context and humanitarian consequences of the conflict.

Netanyahu’s geopolitical strategy aims to elevate Israel to the status of a dominant regional power, unencumbered by the longstanding Israeli–Palestinian conflict. His government rejects the creation of a Palestinian state and increasingly embraces policies aimed at the de facto annexation of the West Bank. Rather than pursuing a negotiated peace, Netanyahu seeks

normalization with authoritarian Arab regimes while bypassing Palestinian demands for statehood and justice.

Simultaneously, Netanyahu has advanced a domestic agenda that threatens to transform Israel into an illiberal or even authoritarian state. His coalition, dominated by ultra-Orthodox and religious nationalist parties, envisions a theocratic future—an Israel governed increasingly by religious law, curtailed civil liberties, weakened judicial independence, and a shrinking space for dissent, pluralism, and minority rights.

Crucially, this vision is not without a base of popular support. Polling suggests that approximately 40% of Israeli Jewish citizens strongly back Netanyahu's leadership and broader ideological project. An additional 30% express moderate support or agreement with parts of his vision. Only about 15% demonstrate serious and consistent opposition. In such a political climate, the transformation of Israel's domestic and regional identity from a democracy committed to coexistence to a state defined by militarism, annexation, and religious nationalism no longer seems improbable.

The outcome of the war, which was imposed on Iran by Israel, remains difficult to predict. Prime Minister Netanyahu has publicly vowed to topple the Iranian regime, raising questions about his willingness to disengage from what appears to be a deeply entrenched strategic objective. Iran, for its part, could take a constructive step by clearly stating that it has no intention of developing nuclear weapons, and that it does not seek the destruction of the State of Israel—a position it may already hold, but which must be explicitly affirmed to help create the conditions for a ceasefire.