

# MP-IDSA *Issue Brief*

## The 12-Day Iran-Israel War and Reverberations in West Asia

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### **S**ummary

Both Iran and Israel have claimed victory in the aftermath of the 12-day war between the two nations. Israel's achievement of air superiority over Iranian airspace may further embolden it to undertake such operations in the future. Iran has also demonstrated its missile capability to strike deep inside Israel, boosting its confidence. The war challenged the prevailing narrative of American retreat from the region and reaffirmed that the US remains the most influential external player in West Asia.

The 12-day war between Israel and Iran has significant repercussions for future geopolitics and security in the West Asia region. This is the first time that both regional powers—Israel and Iran—have engaged in a direct war. Although both exchanged fire in April 2024, it was a limited and a counter-attack intended to convey respective security red lines and to serve as a warning against any future misadventure or miscalculation.

On 13 June 2025, Israel launched ‘Operation Rising Lion’ and carried out air strikes on key Iranian nuclear facilities, military officials and nuclear scientists. The objective of Operation Rising Lion was to degrade Iran’s nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. On the very first day, Israel killed several Iranian military personnel, including the head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and nine prominent nuclear scientists.

Israel’s war with Iran was driven by its belief that Iran was nearing the development of a nuclear weapon. As Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated, if not stopped, “Iran could produce a nuclear weapon in a very short time.”<sup>1</sup> Israel also believed that Iran was approaching a “point of no return” in its nuclear programme.<sup>2</sup> Israel targeted Iranian nuclear sites, including Arak, Natanz, Isfahan and Fordow. For Israel, nuclear weapons in the hands of Iran is an unacceptable scenario. Israel also claims that Iran’s nuclear weapons are intended to be used to annihilate Israel. That was the key reason why Israel adopted this offensive strategy of attacking and degrading Iranian nuclear and missile programmes.

The sudden attack of this magnitude caught Iran by surprise. To counter the Israeli attack, Iran launched ‘Operation True Promise 3’ and fired a barrage of missiles and drones at Israel. Iran said the objective was to defend the country from Israeli aggression. Iran displayed unprecedented resilience in the face of Israeli strikes. Iran launched more than 550 missiles and over 1,000 UAVs towards Israel.<sup>3</sup> Israel claims that around 80 to 90 per cent of these missiles were intercepted by its air defence.<sup>4</sup>

Iran asserts that it succeeded in hitting several critical targets in Israel. Throughout Operation True Promise 3, missiles remained the primary strength of Iran's attack on Israel. Therefore, Israel targeted infrastructure, storage facilities and missile

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<sup>1</sup> [\*\*“Netanyahu Defends Israeli Attack on Iran: ‘We Refuse to be Victims of a Nuclear Holocaust’”\*\*](#), *i24news*, 13 June 2025.

<sup>2</sup> [\*\*“Israel Army Says Had Intel Iran Nuclear Programme Nearing ‘Point of No Return’”\*\*](#), *The Economic Times*, 13 June 2025.

<sup>3</sup> [\*\*“Operation Rising Lion – Update”\*\*](#), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Israel, 23 June 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Yonah Jeremy Bob, [\*\*“IDF: 80-90% of Iranian Missiles Intercepted, But 24 Israelis Killed in Attacks”\*\*](#), *Jerusalem Post*, 16 June 2025.

launching pads. Netanyahu also claimed that Israel has destroyed much of Iran’s ballistic missile production programme, missile stocks and launchers.<sup>5</sup>

Iran's air power and air defence remain severely weak and uncompetitive compared to Israel. Israel has a large, modern and sophisticated air force equipped with up-to-date technology. On the other hand, Iran, suffering from decades of sanctions, has been unable to upgrade its air force and air defence. The Iranian Air Force currently operates some older fighter jets, which were procured from the US during the Shah's regime. Aware of its vulnerabilities, Iran has heavily invested in missile development, possessing a variety of missiles, including supersonic and hypersonic ones. It has also revealed underground missile cities in the past.<sup>6</sup>

With the active involvement of the US and Qatar, both countries came to agree on the cessation of hostilities on 24 June 2025. Subsequently, both sides claimed victory and the achievement of their war objectives. This war has severe repercussions not only for the contentious Israel–Iran relationship, but also on geopolitics and security in West Asia in the short and long term, as both players have significant influence on different vital actors in the region.

## Iranian Nuclear Assets Degraded

During the war, Israel’s main goal was to eliminate the Iranian nuclear programme to prevent it from challenging Israel’s security. Iran, on the other hand, claims that its nuclear programme is solely for peaceful purposes and it has no intention of enriching uranium to be able to produce nuclear weapons. The involvement of the US in the attack on the nuclear sites marked a significant escalation. At the beginning of the war, the US clarified that Israel launched the attack on Iran unilaterally and that the US had no role in the war. However, the US’s participation in bombing the Iranian nuclear facilities on 22 June dubbed as Operation Midnight Hammer clearly indicates a collaboration between Israel and the US right from the outset.

As for the extent of damage to Iranian nuclear sites as a result of the US bombing, US President Donald Trump claimed that these sites had been “obliterated”.<sup>7</sup> Israel claimed that after the US attack on Fordow, the enrichment facility has become “inoperable” and that the US attack has set back Iranian ability to make a nuclear

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<sup>5</sup> Lazar Berman, [“Netanyahu Claims ‘Historic Victory,’ Says ‘We Sent Iran’s Nuclear Program Down the Drain’”](#), *The Times of Israel*, 24 June 2025.

<sup>6</sup> [“Iran's IRGC Unveils One of Its Largest Underground Missile Cities”](#), *Tehran Times*, 25 March 2025.

<sup>7</sup> [“Iran’s Nuclear Facilities Have Been Obliterated — And Suggestions Otherwise Are Fake News”](#), The White House, 25 July 2025.

weapon “by many years”.<sup>8</sup> The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson admitted that the attacks have “severely damaged” the nuclear sites.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the US and Israeli claims of significantly damaging Iranian nuclear infrastructure, they are aware that Iran retains knowledge of nuclear enrichment and will likely rebuild and restore their facilities in the coming days and weeks. There were also reports that Iranian nuclear materials were removed prior to the US attack on the sites.<sup>10</sup> Israel believes it will take a few years for Iran to rebuild these facilities, thus successfully delaying and degrading the Iranian nuclear programme in the short and medium term. The US states that its attack has set back Iran’s nuclear capabilities by around two years.<sup>11</sup>

## Concerns and Responses of Regional Powers

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states condemned the Israeli attacks on Iran and expressed concern over the escalating war between their two big neighbours. For the Gulf Arab nations, the Israel–Iran War comes at a time when they were restoring diplomatic relations with Iran and, gradually opening up to Israel. In the recent years, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have restored their diplomatic ties with Iran. Bahrain is also considering engaging with Iran and restoring its diplomatic links. Bahrain and the UAE have normalised relations with Israel. The long-term escalation of war between Israel and Iran could destabilise the entire region further, which would be detrimental to regional security.

The GCC states were also concerned that a prolonged military war in their neighbourhood would negatively affect regional stability, security and the economy. A consistent and uninterrupted energy supply is the key concern for the GCC states. During the war, Iran threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz, a critical waterway for the supply of oil from the Gulf region to the rest of the world. This would have impacted their economies as well.

The events took a completely different turn on 22 June when Iran launched missiles towards Qatar, targeting the Al-Udeid airbase operated by the US. The missile attack did not cause any damage as most of the missiles were intercepted by the US and Qatari military. Qatar quickly condemned the Iranian missile attack on its territory

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<sup>8</sup> [\*\*“Statement by the Prime Minister's Office on behalf of the Israel Atomic Energy Commission \(IAEC\)”\*\*](#), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Israel, 25 June 2025.

<sup>9</sup> [\*\*“Iran Says No Talks Unless US Drops Deception, Commits to Diplomacy”\*\*](#), Press TV, 3 July 2025.

<sup>10</sup> François Murphy and John Irish, [\*\*“U.S. Strikes on Iran’s Nuclear Sites Set Up ‘Cat-and-Mouse’ Hunt for Missing Uranium”\*\*](#), Reuters, 29 June 2025.

<sup>11</sup> [\*\*“Degraded: US Strikes Set Back Iran’s Nuclear Programme, Says Pentagon – Estimates up to 2-year Delay”\*\*](#), The Times of India, 3 July 2025.

and called it a violation of its sovereignty.<sup>12</sup> Other GCC member states also collectively condemned the Iranian attack on Qatar, reiterating that any “threat to any member state is a direct threat to all GCC states”.<sup>13</sup>

Iran justified its attack on Qatar under Article 51 of the UN Charter to exercise its right to self-defence against the American attack on its sovereignty and territorial integrity, clarifying at the same time that this attack was not intended to harm Qatar. Given that Iran and Qatar maintain very close relations, Iran’s missile launch towards the Al Udeid Airbase was more a symbolic expression of anger at the US presence in the region rather than a serious attempt to attack Qatar.

Jordan faced a dilemma as the war began. It condemned the Israeli attack on Iran. Jordan is a major US ally, has good relations with the GCC countries and has normalised its relationship with Israel since 1994. It has a large population of Palestinian origin, which influences the King's cautious stance on the issue. As Iranian missiles and drones flew over its airspace, a few people were injured in Jordan, most likely due to falling debris. Jordan activated its air defences and intercepted missiles and drones over its airspace.<sup>14</sup>

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi condemned Israel’s attack on Iran and stated that it posed a threat to regional security. Egypt is worried about the consequences of the war on the Israel– Hamas war, especially the US and Israeli intentions to resettle the people of Gaza in the Sinai Peninsula. Egypt is also an ally of the US and receives military aid of around US\$ 1.3 billion.<sup>15</sup> It has also stopped several international activists from moving towards Gaza in support of Palestine.

Turkish President Recep Erdogan condemned the Israeli attack on Iran. But Ankara has a traditional rivalry with Tehran. During the 12-day war, it was more concerned about the refugee crisis, where a number of Iranian refugees entered Türkiye. Ankara doesn’t want a nuclear Iran, but at the same time, it cannot be seen going with the US in a war against Iran. There were allegations that Türkiye had shared information about Iranian missile launches from the NATO radar base in Kurecik, which has been refuted by Türkiye.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> [\*\*“Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs: Attack on Al-Udeid Base Unacceptable”\*\*](#), Qatar Adheres to Policy of Good Neighborliness, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Qatar, 24 June 2025.

<sup>13</sup> [\*\*“GCC Condemns Iranian Attack on Al-Udeid Air Base”\*\*](#), *Qatar Tribune*, 25 June 2025.

<sup>14</sup> Mera Aladam, [\*\*“Jordan Intercepts Iranian Drones Targeting Israel”\*\*](#), *Middle East Eye*, 13 June 2025.

<sup>15</sup> Hamza Hendawi, [\*\*“Egypt Faces Prospect of Iran Defeat Further Empowering Israel in Region”\*\*](#), *The National*, 23 June 2025.

<sup>16</sup> [\*\*“Türkiye Denies Transmitting Intel to Israel from Kurecik Radar Base”\*\*](#), *Anadolu Agency*, 15 June 2025.

## Russia and China

When the US got directly involved in the war against Iran, Russia and China adopted a different approach towards the war. Russia condemned the Israeli attack on Iran, saying it violated the UN charter. It said the Israeli leadership will be responsible for the consequences of the war.<sup>17</sup> Russia also condemned the US attack on the Iranian nuclear facilities and called it a “substantial blow to the global non-proliferation regime”.<sup>18</sup> President Vladimir Putin offered to mediate between Israel and Iran to end the war.<sup>19</sup> Iran supplied drones to Russia “months before the War” started in Ukraine.<sup>20</sup> Russia’s involvement in a long war against Ukraine would prevent it from supporting Iran militarily.

Like Russia, China also condemned the Israeli attack on Iran and the US attack on Iranian nuclear sites. Though China offered to facilitate de-escalation, it did not offer any material support to Iran. China perceives the aggressive posturing of both Israel and Iran during the war as detrimental to its interests in West Asia, such as energy security and the Belt and Road Initiative projects. China also does not want to directly confront the US in the region. This made China adopt a more cautious stance despite having a close relationship with Iran. On the other hand, China made four proposals to end the war, which included promoting a ceasefire, ensuring the safety of citizens, opening dialogue and involving the UNSC to play a greater role in de-escalating the situation.<sup>21</sup> After the war, reports noted China was showing a willingness to supply air defence systems and J-10 fighter jets to Iran. This will have deeper geopolitical consequences and further escalate the US–China competition in the region.

## What Does the War Mean for the Region

The 12-day war represents more than a bilateral war. As the war intensified, the regional powers reassessed their positions, keeping in mind their national interests. Their behaviour is a reflection of the future security and strategic landscape of the region. While the war exhibited the new boundaries of escalation and deterrence of

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<sup>17</sup> [“Foreign Ministry Statement in Connection with Israel’s Strikes on Iran”](#), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russia, 13 June 2025.

<sup>18</sup> [“Foreign Ministry Statement in Connection with the US Strikes on Iran”](#), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russia, 22 June 2025.

<sup>19</sup> [“Putin Condemns Israeli Strikes on Iran, Says Ready to Mediate”](#), *The Moscow Times*, 13 June 2025.

<sup>20</sup> [“Iran Confirms Drones to Russia But ‘Months’ before Ukraine War”](#), *Al Jazeera*, 5 November 2022.

<sup>21</sup> [“Xi Jinping Has a Phone Call with Russian President Vladimir Putin”](#), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China, 19 June 2025.

Iran and Israel, the posturing of the key regional and extra-regional players uncovered their strategic compulsions and limits of support.

If the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October 2023 spoiled the chances of Israel–Saudi Arabia normalisation by way of Saudi Arabia joining the Abraham Accords, the Israeli attack on Iran jeopardised the future of US–Iran nuclear negotiations that had progressed most recently under President Trump, through five rounds with the mediation of Oman. That is why Iran alleges that the five rounds of indirect nuclear talks between the US and Iran were a pretext to attack Iran. Tehran also believes that US actions betrayed diplomacy, and before any further talks begin, the US must ensure it will not misuse negotiations for military aggression.

The war reaffirmed that the US remains the most influential external player in West Asia and challenged the prevailing narrative of American retreat from the region. In contrast, Russia is caught up in a prolonged war with Ukraine which limits its ability to provide any meaningful military support to Iran. Moreover, the fall of Bashar al Assad has already eroded the Russian influence in West Asia and the Russia–Syria–Iran nexus.

China took a calibrated position and did not go beyond condemnation and suggestions for a de-escalation. Clearly, China doesn't intend to confront the US in West Asia and the Arab countries with whom it has significant economic and energy interests. At present, no other major power possesses either the political will or the military capacity to engage in West Asia, to the extent that the US does.

Most of the countries of the region are allies of the US. While expressing support for Iran and condemning Israel, these countries also realise the importance of their relationship with the US. As a result, they have maintained a balanced and calibrated approach towards the war. Despite Israel's strained relations with the majority of regional countries, it continues to leverage its close ties with the US to influence these countries and moderate their anti-Israel positions. Conversely, Iran—despite its frequent appeals to Islamic solidarity—has received limited substantive support from these countries, with responses largely confined to symbolic political backing.

Iran is critical of the conduct of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and accuses it of maintaining double standards. Since the war, the credentials of the IAEA have been challenged by Iran. Iran accuses the IAEA of providing classified information about the Iranian nuclear programme to other countries, which has ultimately fallen into the hands of Israel. Iranian parliament passed a resolution which states that the IAEA inspectors' access to the Iranian nuclear sites will now



require the approval of Supreme National Security Council.<sup>22</sup> This will have severe implications for future diplomatic efforts over the Iranian nuclear issue.

A war of this scale and magnitude was in the making for nearly two decades. It was a matter of the favourable conditions and strategic calculations for a direct armed confrontation to occur between the two. Israel launched an attack on Iran at a time when Tehran’s two key regional allies, Hamas and Hezbollah, have been significantly weakened due to the Gaza War. For Israel, a war against Iran while these two groups remained strong would have posed significantly greater challenges. Furthermore, the return of Donald Trump to the White House provided Israel with the necessary political and military support it required from the US to launch an attack on Iran. The close US–Israel relations continue to grow stronger.

However, the Iranian threat to block the Strait of Hormuz remains a concern for oil-exporting and importing nations, as well as for global energy security. Given Iran’s strategic location and military capabilities, it can take such a step in the context of a protracted war with Israel. With maritime traffic already disrupted in the Red Sea, any restriction in the Strait of Hormuz would have had a negative impact on international energy markets and supply chains.

Although the war has temporarily ceased and both countries have claimed victory, their strategic posturing has further reinforced rather than moderated. Israel’s achievement of air superiority over Iranian airspace may further embolden it to undertake such operations in the future. Iran has also demonstrated its missile capability to strike deep inside Israel, boosting its confidence. Far from de-escalating, the narrative and resolve of both countries have only hardened after the war. This makes the regional environment more tense and unstable. Despite the halt in hostilities, long-term regional strategic uncertainties persist.

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<sup>22</sup> [“Iran’s Parliament Approves Bill to Suspend Cooperation with UN Nuclear Agency”](#), *Press TV*, 25 June 2025.



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