

# End of Iran War in Sight as US Holds All the Cards

By Conrad Black

In a little less than 50 years, Iran has come full circle, and so has U.S. policy toward Iran. Venerable readers will remember that President Carter shamefully assisted in evicting the Shah of Iran, possibly the most enlightened ruler Persia has ever had, though not without his faults. Someday we will know exactly what it was that incoming President Reagan, when he was inaugurated in 1981, told the Iranian government would be the consequences if the hostages seized from the U.S. embassy in Tehran were not released. They were released, as Reagan was delivering his inaugural address.



The decades passed as Iran's oil income was steadily devoted to building up the totalitarian authority of the ayatollahs and the Revolutionary Guards and developing military capabilities of maximum destructiveness. Iran relentlessly pursued the development of fissile material, the acquisition of long-range missiles and launchers, and the development of nuclear warheads. This would enable it to dominate the Arab world and intimidate Israel.

The Obama administration effectively abandoned Israel as an ally, and Obama himself, early in his administration, gave a [speech in Cairo](#) in which he implied that now that the United States had a ruler whose father “came from a Kenyan family that includes generations of Muslims,” all problems between the United States and the Muslim world could be resolved. This led to the nuclear agreement between Iran and the founding members of the United Nations, as well as Germany and the European Union, that enabled Iran to develop and deploy nuclear weapons after 10 years, concluding in 2026.

President Trump withdrew from this agreement during his first term and imposed such heavy sanctions on Iran that its ability to finance its terrorist organizations, Hamas and Hezbollah, was severely compromised. The Biden administration revived the Obama policy of appeasement and Iran proceeded inexorably toward its military goals. When Trump returned to office, he repeated his long-standing position that Islamic Iran could not be allowed to possess a nuclear weapon, and in June 2025, after Israel commenced bombing of Iran in the last weeks before such a weapon might be deployed, the United States used deep penetration bombs to eliminate that military capacity.

Undeterred, the Iranians obsessively attempted to resuscitate their nuclear military program and the United States and Israel began the Iran war on Feb. 28. More than four weeks of aerial attack cost both countries only a few aircraft, and the United States just eight combat fatalities plus five other men killed in an accident while Israel suffered 35 dead from cluster rockets fired into civilian areas of Israel. Besides losing its supreme leader and many other senior officials, the Islamic Republic suffered the almost total destruction of its air defenses, air force, defense production industries, and navy (apart from some 30- or 40-foot open armed speedboats).

Given its military impotence, Iran resorted to attacking the oil industry of the formerly somewhat friendly Arab Gulf state countries and closed the [Strait of Hormuz](#) through which 20

percent of the world's oil production passes. This agitated many of America's allies, and disturbed American voters sensitive to oil prices, who had been assured that the Iran action would not inconvenience them. Trump threatened to destroy the entire infrastructure of Iran, including its electric grid and all of its noteworthy bridges.

That threat produced an Iranian cessation of its claim to have [shut down](#) the Strait, and the United States and Israel accepted a ceasefire for two weeks pending negotiations. The negotiations collapsed after one day, and Trump declared a complete sea blockade of Iran, ending approximately \$435 million of oil export revenue per day. He also announced that if there were any return to violence by Iran, its entire infrastructure and every indication of a modern state that it possesses would be destroyed from the air. This was known in U.S. military circles as "bridge and power-plant day" (when they would all be destroyed). The Iranians purported to open the Strait, but on the news that the blockade would continue and that the United States would clear the Strait for normal commerce, Iran again claimed to close it.

It is not clear that the Iranian faction the Americans are negotiating with is coordinating its activities with the faction that still runs what is left of Iran's military. The American position on April 21 is that the blockade will continue until the believable abandonment of Iran's military nuclear program and assistance to terrorist organizations, and its pretense to have any standing to close the Strait of Hormuz. It is not clear if negotiations will resume now that the [ceasefire has been extended](#), but Trump will not tolerate Iran's negotiating tricks. Any recourse to violence by Iran or a real attempt to prevent the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz will trigger "bridge and power-plant day," and the destruction of the oil-shipping facilities on Kharg Island and the large floating (tanker) oil reserve Iran maintains offshore.

As Iran must import 30 percent of its gasoline, it will be only a few weeks before the automobiles of the country will no longer operate. After approximately a month without the \$435 million per day generated by the oil industry and without the imports necessary for other Gulf states as ingredients in Iran's petrochemical and fertilizer industries, most gainful activity in the country will come to an end. There will be no money to pay anyone, including the Revolutionary Guard. Inflation will skyrocket to stratospheric levels, and the socioeconomic life of Iran will be strangled.

This is checkmate. Iran is playing to the Trump-haters and selling the line that it will win if its regime survives. The United States can strangle Iran in time for the midterm elections without violating Trump's pledge to avoid "boots on the ground" in another "forever war." This has been the shortest and most decisively one-sided of any war between serious contestants in modern history: a near nuclear power with armed forces of over one million people completely defeated at the cost of fewer than 50 fatalities, and a continuing naval blockade with a little further bombing will produce surrender.

Because of the ability of the United States to blockade Iran and maintain the Strait of Hormuz open to others at practically no cost in the lives of its own personnel—and for as long as it wishes—we are on the verge of the victorious end of the war on terror. This includes the extermination by Israel of the terrorist forces of Hamas and Hezbollah, pacifying Lebanon, and beginning the reconstruction of Gaza.

The only era of genuine and spontaneous peace in the Middle East while it has been governed by local authorities may be about to begin. The long disputation of the legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish state is almost over.

As unexpected bonuses, a process of nuclear non-proliferation has succeeded, and America will be able to force China to pay

more for its oil, while inducing Europe away from its addiction to Russian oil and gas so it no longer finances Russia's Ukraine War which it endlessly asks the United States to help it to win. In addition, everyone has seen the superiority of American military equipment compared to China and Russia, and no one could now imagine an early Chinese invasion of Taiwan.

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