

If Israel Succeeds in Bringing Down Iran's Nuclear Program, the World Will Be Better Off

By Conrad Black

The Iran-Israel war has the potential to effect a radical improvement of political conditions in the Middle East as well as a decisive success in the unending war on terrorism, and breathe new life into the nuclear non-proliferation process.

No country has expressed serious grievances over the Israeli attack on Iran. The corrupt, totalitarian, pseudo-theocratic dictatorship in Iran is evidently detested by the majority of Iranians, and as the principal terrorism-sponsoring state in the world for nearly 50 years, its only allies are the terrorist groups that it arms and finances, in particular Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis. Various countries are making the usual pro forma dissents from recourse to force, but the relief in the Arab world, the Persians' ancient enemy, is audible.



Smoke rises from a location targeted in Israel's wave of strikes on Tehran, Iran, on early morning of June 13, 2025.
SAN/Middle East Images/AFP via Getty Images

It's notable that some important countries that have become absurdly hostile to the Israeli efforts in Gaza have sounded a markedly different tune over Iran. French President Emmanuel Macron [said on June 13](#) that Iran bore a great responsibility for raising tensions in the world and that Israel had engaged in a justified use of force. He even suggested a possible dispatch of French soldiers, though it is not clear in what capacity they might serve in the Middle East. This was a welcome resuscitation of French moral sense, in fine conformity with the initial reaction of former president Nicolas Sarkozy, which was [opposition as forceful](#) as that of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and U.S. President Donald Trump to a nuclear Iran.

The cause of nuclear non-proliferation has been rather bedraggled for many years. There was some progress after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, but the Chinese and the Russians are now busily building up their arsenals, and the

United States is understandably taking the steps necessary to ensure that it maintains the greatest deterrent force in the world. It must be said that at one level, Iran has a legitimate complaint: The nuclear powers have gradually [increased in number](#), starting with the United States, followed by the Soviet Union in 1949 and then the United Kingdom, France, and China. And once China had the bomb, India had to have it also, and if India, then Pakistan. Along the way, Israel developed a nuclear arsenal for legitimate reasons of self-defence, as did the white supremacist government of South Africa. This last was voluntarily dismantled in the time of Nelson Mandela.

The other nuclear powers have not made any serious attempt to disarm, and it would not be desirable in any case. There is little doubt that the possession of nuclear weapons by the responsible democracies (including Israel) has been a thoroughly effective deterrence. In his famous speech in Fulton, Missouri, in 1946, [Winston Churchill said](#) that if it were not for the existence of the atomic bomb in the hands of the United States, the Red Army would be in Paris and London itself might be under bombardment.

If Iran succeeded in developing and deploying deliverable nuclear warheads, it is no secret that Egypt, Saudi Arabia, probably Turkey, and a number of other countries would have to do the same, and there would soon be a tremendous profusion of nuclear arsenals all over the world. This would doubtless continue to increase the effectiveness of deterrence, but it would also increase the possibility of lunatics such as those in Tehran getting hold of such weapons, or even the possibility of a nuclear accident.

It is clear that President Trump was aware of the comprehensive intelligence that caused Netanyahu to determine that it had to strike Iran at once to prevent it from becoming a nuclear military power and a mortal threat to Israel. Trump made no significant effort to dissuade Netanyahu from this

course, and has invited the Iranians to return to disarmament talks with the United States and “[make a deal](#), before there is nothing left.”

On June 15, Trump [told ABC News](#) that the United States was not involved in the war but could become involved in it. By this, he almost certainly meant that if Iran did not negotiate with its one remaining chip—the continued existence of the deep underground nuclear scientific program—then the United States would carry out the president’s pledge to ensure that Iran did not become nuclear power. This would involve either direct action, or by endowing Israel with the necessary resources to terminate the Iranian nuclear program using the 15-ton bunker-buster bombs delivered by the ultrasophisticated and almost undetectable B-2 bombers that have been [deployed to Diego Garcia](#) island in the Indian Ocean.

It is very difficult for outsiders to be confident of the readiness and ability of the domestic opposition in Iran to take advantage of Israel’s battering of the regime and to rise up against it. The overthrow of the ayatollahs and the liberation of the historic Persian people, one of the world’s important nationalities for nearly 3,000 years, would be a terrible blow to international terrorism. It would almost certainly lead to a substantial composure of the differences between Israel and the principal Arab states.

Officials and apologists for the present Iranian regime say that if Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein had not been deprived of his nuclear program by the Israelis, and if the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi had not voluntarily given up his nuclear program, both men would be alive and in office today. If the campaign to relieve Iran of its nuclear military potential is successful, the appropriate maxim will be that those governments that do not excite the animosity of the civilized world by trying to develop a nuclear military potential while threatening great violence on others, will have a better chance of survival than those who do.

Whether new life is breathed into the cause of nuclear non-proliferation or not, President Trump is already leading the way into the next phase of the nuclear era by beginning the development of an airtight antimissile defence. It was President Reagan's pursuit of the [Strategic Defence Initiative](#) that frightened the Soviet Union with the spectre of depriving the USSR of its first-strike nuclear capability.

Either Iran will be deprived of nuclear potential and the cause of non-proliferation will be strengthened—however arbitrary the terms of admission to the nuclear military club may be—and the point will be reinforced that irresponsible countries will not be permitted to become nuclear powers, or Iran will propel dozens of countries into arming themselves with nuclear weapons. This would motivate the more advanced countries to follow the United States into nuclear missile defence in depth. Trump is taking a belt-and-braces approach to the problem: He will ensure that Iran is frustrated in its nuclear military ambitions while he moves the United States towards the next phase of comparative nuclear invulnerability.

At this point, Israel is winning the war against Iran. It is likely that Israel will emerge triumphant, with or without the direct assistance of the United States, and the world will be better for it.

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