

The Iran Conflict Is Currently Neither War nor Peace, but One Side Holds All the Cards

By Conrad Black

The Iran War has now become an almost incomprehensible slow-motion pantomime of the governments involved. Of course, no war has been declared.

The last serious declaration of war in the world was by the Soviet Union against Japan in the summer of 1945, a few days before the atomic bomb was dropped by the United States on Hiroshima, as Japan endured the most catastrophic week of wartime events of any important country in history. Apart from the subsequent benefits of the government of Gen. MacArthur, Japan's chief accomplishment in World War II was effectively to abolish its antique chivalrous notion of the declaration of war, since it attacked the United States without warning and while its ambassador was delivering a note saying that further negotiations appeared unlikely to achieve anything.



U.S. forces patrol the Arabian Sea near the M/V Touska by the Strait of Hormuz on April 20, 2026. U.S. Navy via Getty images

The United States and Israel undertook an aerial campaign and sea blockade against Iran for approximately a month that completed the destruction of that country's navy and air defenses, did very heavy damage to almost all military targets in Iran, and reduced Iran's daily dispatch of missiles, chiefly directed to the unoffending United Arab Emirates, by 90 percent. In 20,000 air and missile strikes, Israel and the United States inflicted just 3,500 deaths on Iranians, an astonishingly efficient and comparatively bloodless application of air warfare. Israel lost approximately 30 civilians, and the United States 13 servicemen, five of them in a non-combat accident that could just as easily have occurred in South Carolina. It has been the most one-sided war between major combatants in modern history.

As President Trump was threatening what his chief military personnel called "bridge and power plant day" on which all bridges and power plants in Iran would be demolished, and promised the end of Iranian civilization (with his customary Manhattan developers' hyperbole), and as the pope admonished the United States against the evils of excessive belligerence, the United States and Iran suddenly achieved a sufficient degree of agreement to suspend hostilities—allegedly against the wishes of the Israeli government—to see if negotiations

could produce a satisfactory peace. The stated conditions were that Iran must permanently and verifiably abandon plans for a nuclear military capacity, including the evacuation or destruction of its stock of enriched uranium, which could allegedly produce approximately 10 nuclear warheads; the end of any interference in free commercial passage in the Straits of Hormuz; and the end of Iranian assistance to terrorist organizations. The insistence upon the last of those three objectives has been intermittent.

President Trump has been widely reviled by domestic and foreign critics as a warmonger who abuses the apparent and astonishing ability of the American military to inflict unimaginable damage, including the physical seizure and removal of the Venezuelan leader and his wife while suffering no combat fatalities as it did so. He has responded with a prolonged but not yet successful effort to negotiate terms with Iran, rising above the more bellicose policy suggestions of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and many in his own entourage.

It is not the least irony in this conflict that the same President Trump is now being reviled by his innumerable critics for naive and implausible predictions of imminent peace, as well as for being the chief author of a war which is now represented largely as a failure, although, as mentioned above, it has in fact been the most one-sided exchange of fire between serious national combatants in history, entirely successfully by the United States and almost as bloodlessly by its Israeli ally. President Trump has announced on numerous occasions that he will ensure the military clearance of the Strait of Hormuz to permit the resumption of normal exports of oil and phosphates and other essential resources from the Persian Gulf. But he only began to do this for two days and then desisted at the inexplicable request of some of his Gulf Arab allies.

There are events that justify some level of optimism from the

American standpoint: Iran has lost 90 percent of its exports, the United States effectively now controls much of the Chinese oil supply, and Iran is undoubtedly going to be driven into bankruptcy within a few months at the latest and more probably well before then.

It is at the moment neither war nor peace, but not a phony war as in the first months of 1940 when no shots were fired, nor a real ceasefire, since that theoretical state is violated almost every day. It is a suspenseful condition in which the United States and Israel possess approximately 1,000 times the conventional military strength of their opponent, yet Iran is selling to the anti-American and anti-Israeli gallery the utter fraud that it has fought its opponents to a standstill because it claims to be able to blockade the Strait of Hormuz in response to the American blockade of Iran's ports. This is nonsense, as the United States could easily clear the outboard whalers that are all that is left of the Iranian navy and convoy tankers to the open sea. The glitch is the customary sweaty-palmed nervousness of the Lloyd's of London insurance brokers.

It is inconceivable that a man of Trump's extreme preoccupation with his historical performance as president and hyperactive ego, possessing the overwhelming advantage in the correlation of forces that he does and realizing the importance to his historical reputation of the outcome of this war, will not force it to a conclusion beneficial to the United States. The world is waiting for him, and it is unlikely to have long to wait.

First published in the [Epoch Times](#)