

How to View the US-Israel “War Against Iran”

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Prerequisites for War

The results of the US presidential election on November 5, 2024, led to Donald Trump's inauguration as the 47th President of the United States on January 20 of the following year. This marked a new phase for both the Ukraine War, which began with President Putin's announcement of “special military operations” on February 24, 2022, and Israel's invasion of Gaza following Hamas' surprise attack on October 7, 2023. In particular, Israel's brutal military actions against neighboring countries since 7 October have begun to dismantle the fundamental balance of power that had previously defined Middle Eastern politics[1]. This is symbolized by the question of whether Israel and Iran can coexist in the same region of the Middle East in the future[2]. Current Middle Eastern politics can generally be seen as a fierce struggle over this issue.

On June 13, 2025, Israel launched a preemptive strike against several nuclear facilities in Iran. Subsequently, on June 22, the United States attacked three Iranian nuclear facilities. On June 24, a ceasefire was reached through Qatar's mediation. This period is commonly referred to as the “12-day war”[3]. However, this ceasefire agreement was temporary in nature, and the retaining posture of the Netanyahu government meant that the possibility of renewed full-scale military attack on Iran persisted. Netanyahu must have seen the inauguration of the second Trump administration as the greatest opportunity to attack Iran militarily during his 20-year political career, which began when he became leader of the Likud party in 1992.

The Outbreak of War against Iran

This finally became a reality with the preemptive strike and the subsequent “military operations” by the US and Israel against Iran on February 28. Just before that, on February 26, indirect negotiations on the nuclear issue were held in Geneva, mediated by Oman, with the participation of Iranian Prime Minister Araghchi, US Middle East envoys J. Kushner and Witkov, and IAEA Director General Grossi. Meanwhile, on February 27, the US Navy's state-of-the-art, nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford arrived off the coast of Israel in

the Mediterranean Sea. Shortly after 3 pm on 28 February (Japan Time), Israeli and US forces attacked Tehran, the Iranian capital, as well as several other cities, including Tabriz, Isfahan, and Karaj. Trump subsequently declared that the combat operation had begun.

On 28 February, the first day of hostilities, a U.S. Tomahawk cruise missile “mistakenly” bombed Shajareeh Tayebe Primary School in Minab, massacring more than 175 children and teachers[4]. However, to this day, President Trump and the U.S. have refused to admit responsibility and have not even attempted to provide humanitarian compensation. On the same day, U.S. and Israeli forces also brutally killed Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, together with his family, including his wife, daughter, and grandchildren. This was a grave violation of Iran’s sovereignty.

Clearly, these acts of war by the United States and Israel constitute a serious breach of international law. Once this war has largely ended, their humanitarian responsibilities must be severely scrutinized.

In addition, they have carried out the ruthless destruction of approximately 20 cultural heritage sites of World Heritage status, including Golestan Palace in Tehran on March 1 and Isfahan’s Chekhelstun Palace and the area around Naqsh-e Jahan Square (particularly the Ali Qapu Palace) by airstrikes on March 9. On March 7, the Israeli military conducted an airstrike on an oil storage facility in Tehran, causing a massive fire and severe environmental damage[5]. The attack on an Iranian warship in international waters off the coast of Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean, resulting in the abandonment of shipwrecked sailors without any rescue efforts, also constitutes a clear violation of international human rights practices.

Trump’s Miscalculation in the Early Stage of the Campaign

On the other hand, it should be noted that President Trump may have genuinely believed that the decapitation strike of Supreme Leader Khamenei in the initial stages of this war would lead to the collapse of Iran’s revolutionary regime, which had been in power since 1979. While I intend to discuss this further in a separate article, the conclusion is that the existence of a constitution in revolutionary Iran directly inherited the history of constitutionalism since the late 19th century, and it was closely related to the formation of Iran’s modern national consciousness. Even after the Islamic Republic system was established following the 1979 revolution, drafting a new constitution was among the first tasks undertaken, enabling the revolutionary regime to

swiftly establish the institutional form of a modern state.

Following the eight-year Iran-Iraq War, power in Iran became even more concentrated in the hands of the Supreme Leader, as evidenced by the 1989 constitutional amendment. Furthermore, the Revolutionary Guard, which played a significant role during the war, transformed from a mere military organization into a massive military-industrial conglomerate. Nevertheless, the Islamic Republic system has maintained its character as a modern constitutional state to this day, consistently adhering to the requirements necessary for a democratic system to function.

This major miscalculation by the United States likely stems from a critical ignorance and misunderstanding of the level of national unity that Iran's current political system has achieved through the historical process of modern history. Its strength as a state is fundamentally different from that of purely personal dictatorships, such as those seen in present-day Afghanistan.

April 8th as a Turning Point in the War

Following several extensions to the ceasefire negotiations with Iran, President Trump set 9:00 AM on April 8 (8:00 PM on April 7 Eastern Time) as the final deadline for a full-scale offensive. Therefore, this day suddenly attracted attention as the most crucial turning point in the war against Iran. I myself viewed the large-scale attacks and destruction of Iranian infrastructure facilities (bridges and energy facilities) by US and Israeli forces on the morning of the 8th as almost unavoidable.

However, just before the final deadline of 09:00 on the 8th (about an hour and a half beforehand), Trump announced on X that a two-week ceasefire agreement had been reached with Iran. This averted a destructive escalation of the war, which would have meant an unpredictable, prolonged conflict and a return to the Vietnam War, at least for the time being.

Incidentally, several noteworthy events occurred in the days leading up to this. Firstly, President Trump repeatedly made outrageous and completely unacceptable remarks about Iran. Statements such as 'sending Iran back to the Stone Age' and 'wiping an entire civilization overnight' are unbecoming of the US President, who constantly carries the nuclear button, and clearly violate international law by intimidating another country.

Furthermore, the United States and Israel did not relent in their attacks on Iranian infrastructure just before April 8. Faced with such brutal and relentless assaults by Israel and the U.S., citizens across Iran reportedly organized demonstrations—forming “human chains”—surrounding the

bridges and energy facilities identified as potential targets for the 8th. The significance of this development cannot be overstated; it is impossible to dismiss these actions merely as the work of Iranian government supporters.

The Awakening of the Iranian People and the Future Course of Events

Prior to launching attacks at the end of February, Israeli and American intelligence agencies incited young people throughout Iran and abroad. This resulted in thousands of deaths in the days following the internet shutdown on 8 January[6]. At this stage, the rift between the Iranian government and its people seemed irreparable. However, it was miraculously resolved by the inhumane attacks and national crisis perpetrated by none other than Israel and the United States. Many citizens turned to the realization that the liberation of the Iranian people cannot be achieved without defeating their formidable enemies, Israel and the United States.

In response to this series of turmoil, Pakistan actively mediated the first direct talks between Iranian and American delegations in Islamabad on April 11 to negotiate a ceasefire. The negotiations were extremely contentious, with significant differences between the two sides' positions, and ended with a break after 21 hours of talks. However, one thing that has become clear from the events since April 8 is that Trump himself does not want the war to drag on or become a quagmire. Trump has since resorted to a military blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. However, it is clear that relying solely on military force will not lead to a breakthrough, but rather worsen the situation. Overall, it seems likely that Iran holds all the strategically advantageous bargaining cards.

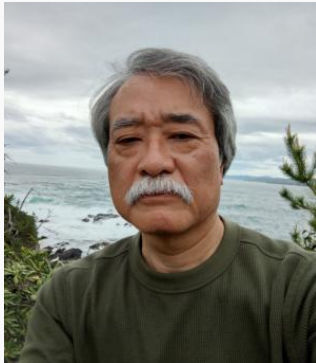
During the ceasefire negotiations, the main focus has been on the complete abandonment of Iran's nuclear program, as demanded by the US, and new control of the Strait of Hormuz, as demanded by Iran. Bargaining has continued into May, but given Iran's extreme distrust of Trump's stance so far, it is unclear whether substantive negotiations will begin before the US-China summit in mid-May.

On the other hand, on April 8, Israel launched its largest-ever attack, targeting over 100 Hezbollah military bases in southern Lebanon. The Israeli army (IDF) has continued ground operations in the area. Furthermore, Israel continues to occupy and control the Gaza Strip. Clearly, Israel's stance of territorial expansion is the biggest obstacle to ceasefire negotiations in this war. (Written on May 10, 2026.)

Notes

- [1] For changes in the situation in Iran and the Middle East since 2013, see my article, “The Situation in Iran and Middle Eastern Politics: Ten Years and the Future: A Reappearance After Four Years Under the Trump Administration?”(「イラン情勢と中東政治の 10 年と今後：米トランプ政権の 4 年間から再登場へ？」), *Regional Cultural Studies*, No. 23 (March 20, 2024), pp. 41-57.
- [2] For the historical background of Iran-Israel relations up to this point, see my article, “Iran and Israel: A History of Conflict,”(「イランとイスラエル、相剋の歴史」) *Chuo Koron*, September 2025 issue, pp. 146-153.
- [3] For a more detailed account of this war, see my article, “The Trump Administration’s Second Term and Two Wars: From the US Presidential Election to the ‘Ceasefire’ in the Gaza War,”(「2 期目のトランプ政権と 2 つの戦争：米大統領選挙からガザ戦争の『停戦』まで」) *Regional Cultural Studies*, No. 24 (March 20, 2026), pp. 98-100.
- [4] Whether this was truly a misfire caused by the use of AI is likely to remain a focus of investigation for a long time to come, similar to the downing of Iran Air Flight 655 by a US Navy missile at the very end of the Iran-Iraq War (July 3, 1988).
- [5] In terms of environmental destruction, serious concerns have been raised about the environment of the Persian Gulf amid the ongoing blockade of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran and the United States, and the exchange of military attacks.
- [6] On January 21, Iranian authorities announced that the death toll during this period, including security personnel, was 3,117. Even if we estimate the actual number to be twice this figure, it would still be around 7,000.

About the Author



Hitoshi Suzuki was born in 1958. He graduated from the Department of Liberal Arts, Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the University of Tokyo in 1983. After completing his master's degree, he joined the Institute of Developing Economies (IDE) in 1986. He was posted to Tehran, Iran, from 1989 to 1991 and again from 1999 to 2001, and to London, UK, from 2015 to 2016. He retired from IDE in 2019 and has been a researcher at Toyo Bunko since 2023. He earned his PhD in 2008 and specializes in modern and contemporary Iranian history. His major publication is *Rural Cities in Contemporary Iran: Revolution, War, and the Transformation of Local Society* (『現代イランの農村都市—革命・戦争と地方社会の変容』, Keiso Shobo, 2011).