Imminent Threat Or War Of Choice?

THE US/ISRAEL ATTACK AGAINST IRAN

This article examines the claim made by the Trump administration to justify the attack carried out against Iran on 28 February 2026, citing the "imminent threat" posed by Iran as the reason. It argues that it was not the "imminent threat" to Israel and the US that led to the attack. Rather, it is a 'war of choice' driven by strategic calculations, the belief that there was a window of opportunity to take control of Iran and eliminate its allies and vassals in the Axis of Resistance, given the changing regional power dynamics, US interests in the Middle East, and the broader quest to reclaim global hegemony that led the United States and Israel to attack.

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INTRODUCTION

Iran has been a core target of Western powers' adventures in the Middle East because of its rich energy resources and its geostrategic location, particularly during the Cold War, when it was the theatre of the 'Great Game' between the US and the then Soviet Union. Ronen Bergman, in his book *The Secret War with Iran*, writes about the depth of clandestine strategic cooperation between Israel and Iran before the Islamic Revolution in 1979, in which Israel had reportedly committed to providing Iran with ballistic missiles with a range of around 700 km, capable of carrying nuclear warheads. *(Bergman 2009, The Secret War with Iran: The 30-Year Covert Struggle for Control of a Rogue State, Oneworld Publications)* In 1967, the United States (US) also provided Iran with a nuclear research reactor, sowing the seeds of its nuclear technology as part of President Dwight D Eisenhower's 'Atoms for Peace'

programme—an initiative aimed at providing countries with peaceful civilian nuclear technologies in the hope that they would not pursue military nuclear programmes and could be drawn closer to Washington during the Cold War. *(https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/24/us/politics/us-iran-nuclear-program.html)*

As history demonstrates, neither were the US and Iran perpetual enemies, nor were Tel Aviv and Tehran the forever archrivals. The Islamic Revolution in 1979, which overthrew the US-backed Shah government, not only changed Iran's political future but also upended the equation of Iran with the US and Israel. From being described as the 'Island of Stability' by Jimmy Carter to being called part of the 'Axis of Evil' by George W. Bush, to being referred to as a "number one state sponsor of terror" by Donald Trump, the foreign policy lexicon of the US towards Iran has witnessed a complete overhaul in the past five decades. *(https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html)* The Islamic Revolution was not only a big blow to the economic and strategic interests of the US in the region, but was also deeply damaging to its pride and foreign policy credibility. The 1979–81 Iran hostage crisis led to the deep entrenchment of anti-Americanism in the state and society of Iran, later becoming the very 'albatross around the neck of the Islamic Republic posing new sets of security challenges'. *(Naṣr Walī Riḍā 2025, Iran's Grand Strategy: A Political History. Princeton University Press)* The US support to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88) further widened the antagonism between the US and Iran.

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After a long period, the year 2015 saw some glimpses of positive developments when a nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), was signed between the US and Iran. Soon after, the unilateral withdrawal of the US from the deal led to the restoration of sanctions against Iran, worsened its economic woes, and had an emboldening effect on Tehran, inducing it to pursue its nuclear activities, with serious implications for the non-proliferation status quo. In January 2020, the US killed Iran's top military commander, Qasem Soleimani, in a drone strike at Baghdad International

Airport, holding him responsible for the attack on the US embassy in Iraq and for supporting anti-US insurgents in the region. *(https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/03/asia/soleimani-profile-intl-hnk)* The October 7 attack on Israel by Hamas, which is one of the major proxies backed by Iran in the region, escalated the crisis in the Middle East to new heights. Israel and Iran engaged in a limited 12-day war in June 2025, with the US also participating for a short period. Talks for a new nuclear deal gained momentum following the ceasefire. However, the joint attack against Iran on 28 February 2026, led by the United States and Israel in the midst of ongoing negotiations, upended the entire diplomatic peace process and pushed the Middle East into further instability, with implications reaching far beyond the region.

This joint operation against the Islamic Republic was codenamed 'Roaring Lion' by Israel and 'Operation Epic Fury' by the United States. The US administration alleged the "imminent threat" posed by the Iranian nuclear and missile programmes to the security of the United States as the primary reason for the attack, describing it as "pre-emptive" defence. *(https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/2026/03/peace-through-strength-president-trump-launches-operation-epic-fury-to-crush-iranian-regime-end-nuclear-threat/)* Given the largest military build-up of US forces near the Middle East since 2003 in January 2026, and Trump's statements in the State of the Union address on 24 February, the writing was on the wall despite pretences to engage in negotiations. *(https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/2/20/tracking-the-rapid-us-military-build-up-near-iran); https://edition.cnn.com/2026/02/18/politics/military-strike-trump-us-iran); (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/feb/27/us-urges-citizens-leave-israel-threat-strike-iran)*

Against this backdrop, this article examines the claim made by the US administration to justify the attack carried out against Iran on 28 February 2026, citing the "imminent threat" as the reason. The article adopts a qualitative method to examine the claims made by the US administration by analysing both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary sources include transcripts of speeches and statements made by President Donald Trump, briefings from the White House, and reports released by the US Intelligence Community. The secondary data sources include journal articles, selected books, reports, and newspaper articles.

A WAR OF CHOICE

Richard N Haass, in his book *War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars*, explains that a 'war of choice' is fought when there is no imminent

threat and other policy options, such as diplomacy, sanctions, and deterrence, could have been employed. *(https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/2003/11/23/wars-of-choice/7b6f51e1-371a-4c08-a9fd-d167d1e79a0f/.); https://www.ft.com/content/ 0321036f-6fd0-415f-b016-12958cc8b04b)* This is opposed to a 'war of necessity', which is carried out with wide international support and with military force used as a last resort. Drawing on the same, the US attack on Iran was a 'war of choice' for the following four main reasons.

One, the Iranian nuclear and missile programmes did not pose an imminent threat to the US, and the war was not waged as a last resort. Several media reports suggest that, based on the years-long intelligence gathering and preparations to track the movement of Ayatollah Khamenei and other top Iranian leaders, the US-Israeli attack on Iran was executed at a time when the chances to assassinate its top leadership seemed to be the highest. *(https://www.ft.com/content/bf998c69-ab46-4fa3-aae4-8f18f7387836); https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/feb/27/us-urges-citizens-leave-israel-threat-strike-iran)* It was thought to be too good an opportunity to pass up. These developments indicate that force was not used as a last resort and that the war was launched although there was no "imminent threat". This point is explained in subsequent paragraphs.

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Two, Trump neither had the authorisation of the UN Security Council nor the approval of Congress. According to the US Constitution's 'Declare War Clause', only Congress has the exclusive power to declare war. *(https://constitution.congress.gov/browse/essay/artI-S10-C3-2/ALDE_00013674/)* He exercised the power to go to war by invoking the emergency provisions of the US Constitution, which are generally resorted to in cases where there is clear evidence of an imminent threat from an enemy or an actual invasion. These first two reasons also violate the cardinal principles of 'Just War Theory', which lays out war as a last resort and the necessity of legitimate authority to declare war as essential components of a just war. *(Pattison James 2026, The Ethics of Intervention in Iran. Publicethics.org. https://www.publicethics.org/post/the-ethics-of-intervention-in-iran)*

Three, the Trump administration also had very little support from the

American public, as various polls suggest: only one in five Americans supported the US initiating an attack on Iran, unlike in wars previously fought by the United States. *(https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/28/us/politics/poll-americans-support-iran-attack.html, https://www.reuters.com/world/us/just-one-four-americans-support-us-strikes-iran-reutersipsos-poll-finds-2026-03-01/)* Compared to the beginning of most other conflicts, such as the Second World War, the Korean War, and the Iraq War, even the highest level of public support for this fight was recorded as significantly lower. *(https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/10/us/politics/polls-wars-us-support.html)*

Four, these attacks came at a time when peace talks were already underway. As Badr Albusaidi, the Foreign Minister of Oman and the mediator of the peace deal between the US, Israel, and Iran, said in a TV interview on 27 February, "a peace deal is within our reach … if we just allow diplomacy the space it needs to get there", adding that the ultimate objective of ensuring that Iran could never have a nuclear weapon had been attained

Did the US face an imminent threat from Iran's nuclear programme?

There had been some evidence regarding Iran's covert attempt to develop nuclear weapons before 2003, despite the top leadership's public commitment not to do so. Various US Intelligence Community reports in the past have recognised the scientific, technical, and industrial capability of Iran to produce a nuclear weapon. *(https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA501008.pdf)* There have also been concerns regarding Iran's enriched uranium stockpiles, unprecedented for a state without nuclear weapons. However, none of the reports, either by the US government or the IAEA, the UN nuclear watchdog, concluded that Iran was preparing a nuclear bomb in the recent past. There is also no evidence that Iran was rebuilding its nuclear enrichment facilities.

On 28 February 2026, while announcing the US attack on Iran, Trump stated that Iran had "attempted to rebuild their nuclear program" and that the strikes would "ensure that Iran does not obtain a nuclear weapon". *(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-E7DIctrzo)* Although he had made a statement in June 2025 that US strikes had "obliterated" Iran's nuclear programme. *(https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/2025/06/irans-nuclear-facilities-have-been-obliterated-and-suggestions-otherwise-are-fake-news/)* His claims contradicted the findings of the US Intelligence Community 2025 report which states that "Iran is not building a nuclear weapon and that Khamenei has

not reauthorised the nuclear weapons program he suspended in 2003, though pressure has probably built on him to do so". *(https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ATA-2025-Unclassified-Report.pdf)*

Though IAEA's Director General, Rafael Grossi, had expressed concerns about the restricted inspector access and substantial, high-level enrichment of uranium, he categorically stated that there was no evidence of Iran having any structured programme to develop nuclear weapons and that it was not days or weeks away from building nuclear bombs. *(https://www.armscontrol.org/issue-briefs/2026-03/did-irans-nuclear-and-missile-programs-pose-imminent-threat-no)*

Furthermore, the contradictory and conflicting statements and the shifting war objectives of White House officials regarding the war goals further corroborate the argument that nuclear weapons were not the imminent threat that compelled the United States to attack Iran. Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth stated that the development of Iran's powerful missile and drone programmes were creating "a conventional shield for their nuclear blackmail ambitions", implying that the nuclear weapons programme did not pose an imminent threat. *(https://www.war.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4418826/hegseth-says-epic-fury-goals-in-iran-are-laser-focused/)* Secretary of State Marco Rubio, on the other hand, suggested that a likely Israeli surprise raid on Iran— which in turn could have prompted Iran to attack American forces—had led the United States to carry out those strikes, implying that Israeli planning significantly influenced the US decision to go to war. *(https://www.reuters.com/world/us-not-currently-postured-ground-forces-iran-rubio-says-2026-03-02/); https://www.hudson.org/national-security-defense/iran-strike-all-about-china-zineb-riboua)* Even though Trump predictably denied that Israel had influenced the US to go to war, *(https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/mar/03/trump-israel-iran-war)* the evidence cannot be ignored, given that the huge influence of the Israeli lobby in shaping US foreign policy towards the Middle East is an established reality, often pushing the US to come to the aid of Israel. *(Mearsheimer John J and Stephen M Walt 2007, The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy. 1st ed. Farrar, Straus and Giroux)*

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Did Iran's missile programme pose an imminent threat to the US?

While building up the ground for the attack on Iran, Trump, in his State of the Union address on 25 February 2026, claimed that Iran was building missiles that could soon reach the US. *(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWrZQBgpY7)* However, the US Defense Intelligence Agency concluded in 2025 that it would be ten years before Iran could overcome the technological and production limitations to produce a sizable arsenal, despite Trump's claims that Tehran's goal was to reach the United States with its array of missiles. Furthermore, the Trump administration didn't explain how a weaker Iran ranks first among the many threats the US faces, such as nuclear-armed North Korea and the growing nuclear arsenals and territorial aspirations of China and Russia. North Korea already has 60 nuclear weapons and is testing ballistic missiles capable of reaching the cities in the US. *(https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/28/us/politics/trump-iran-attack.html)* Iran has the biggest and most varied missile arsenal in the Middle East, with thousands of ballistic and cruise missiles, some of which can reach Israel and Eastern Europe. It has made substantial investments over the last ten years to increase the accuracy and lethality of these weapons. Iran's missile forces are undoubtedly a tool for projecting Iranian power and have been perceived as a threat to the US and its allies. However, Iran's current arsenal's range tops out at roughly 2,000–3,000 kilometre. *(https://missilethreat.csis.org/country/iran/, Naṣr, Walī Riḍā. 2025. Iran's Grand Strategy: A Political History. Princeton University Press)* The perception of threat may rest on a preventive logic, but does not demonstrate the pre-emptive necessity. Tehran would encounter technical difficulties if it tried to transform an SLV into an ICBM, even though it is developing satellite launch capabilities that are relevant to ICBM development. *(https://www.armscontrol.org/issue-briefs/2026-03/did-irans-nuclear-and-missile-programs-pose-imminent-threat-no)*

BEYOND IMMINENT THREAT: STRATEGIC CALCULATIONS BEHIND THE US ATTACK

Although the US has become less vulnerable to energy fluctuation after the Shale Revolution post-2010, the Middle East region remains geopolitically consequential. The US has eight permanent bases and eleven other military sites in the Middle East/West Asia. *(https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48123)* This includes all six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), representing the largest

overseas military presence maintained by any country in the region. These are seen as essential in Washington to deter its adversaries and protect its maritime interests, and keep a check on the sporadic Russian military manoeuvres and the Chinese expanding footprints in the region. If the US attack on Iran was not primarily driven by the imminent threat posed by Iran's nuclear and missile programmes, what other motivations might explain this decision? The following factors help explain the strategic rationale behind the US attack.

One, John Mearsheimer argues in his book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* that Great Powers in international relations do not merely seek to maximise their power; rather, they are "always searching for opportunities to gain power over their rivals, with hegemony as their final goal". *(Mearsheimer John J 2001 The Tragedy of Great Power Politics. Norton)* This explains the behaviour of states in international politics, where states are primarily power maximisers. While the US seeks to reclaim the heyday of unipolarity by re-establishing its hegemony in the international system, Israel seeks to create a unipolar West Asia to its benefit. *(https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/israel-the-us-and-a-war-to-build-a-unipolar-west-asia/article70696555.ece)* This is particularly pertinent because ever since the fall of Iraq, Libya, and Syria, Iran is the only revisionist power and major state actor in the region that directly challenges the supremacy and existence of Israel and the dominance of the US. Israel and Iran possess almost comparable conventional military capabilities across various indicators despite the enormous imbalance in terms of size, population, and sovereign autonomy. *(https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/iran-israel-war-conflict-who-is-more-powerful-and-owns-nuclear-weapons-arms-missiles-military-strength-ali-hosseini-khamenei-benjamin-netanyahu/articleshow/128879156.cms)*

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Israel holds the advantage of having undeclared nuclear weapons, Iran benefits from a much larger geography and population—Iran is about 75 times larger in land area and roughly nine times more populous than Israel, which adds to its significant, still partly tapped economic potential. The entry of external players, such as US, alters the balance of power between Iran and Israel and

makes the region more complex and competitive. Most Arab countries harbour US military bases and are dependent on American aid. Israel has secured formal peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, and more recently expanded its regional legitimacy through the Abraham Accords with the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan. Other Muslim States have either softened their stance towards Israel or have established direct ties and come to terms with the Zionist State's expansion in Palestinian, Syrian, and Lebanese territories. A region free from the challenge of a formidable power like Iran would allow Israel to expand its dominance, which would further help the US secure and advance its interests in the region. Therefore, the interests of both Israel and the US are intertwined.

Two, Iran, being the only Shia majority country in the region, exported its revolutionary ideals beyond its borders by supporting and arming Shia militias. Shiites have historically enjoyed lesser wealth and political clout and were sidelined by Sunni majorities. *(https://agsi.org/analysis/the-decline-of-irans-proxy-network/)* This network, described as the 'Axis of Resistance', is mainly comprised of Hamas, Hezbollah, and Houthis. It stretches from Lebanon to Yemen and Gaza to Iraq and is supported and funded by Iran to project power and serve as a deterrent to its main enemies, Israel and the US. *(https://www.stimson.org/2025/irans-axis-of-resistance-weakened-but-still-dangerous/)* Iran's proxies also act as a buffer against possible threats. The Houthis undermined Saudi Arabia's leverage in Yemen, Hezbollah deterred Israel in Lebanon, and Iraqi militias influenced Baghdad's politics. *(https://agsi.org/analysis/the-decline-of-irans-proxy-network/)* The Houthis have carried out a total of more than 300 attacks on US warships and commercial vessels, particularly in the Red Sea, over the past two decades by launching missiles and attack drones. *(https://www.war.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4122757/us-punches-back-at-iran-backed-houthi-terrorists-in-yemen/)*

Since the October 2023 attack by Hamas on Israel and the subsequent war in Gaza, these networks have faced substantial losses because of the leadership decapitation and destruction of the key logistical and support infrastructure, leaving the Iranian regime more vulnerable because of a reduced deterrence capability. The losses of Hezbollah in Lebanon at the hands of Israeli forces in 2024, with the assassination of Hassan Nasrallah and other top Hezbollah commanders had a cascading effect in the region and weakened Iran's clout . *(https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/29/world/middleeast/israel-hezbollah-nasrallah-assassination-intelligence.html); (Nichol Joseph and Adi Asi (Quillette), 2025, 'The Fall of Hezbollah'. 17 July https://quillette.com/2025/07/17/the-fall-of-hezbollah-iran-israel/)* The fall of the Assad regime in Syria since 2024 has also limited Iran's power projection, given that the Assad regime was the primary

state anchor of the 'Axis of Resistance'. *(https://www.stimson.org/2025/irans-axis-of-resistance-weakened-but-still-dangerous/)* The Houthis in Yemen also faced significant losses in 2024, including the killing of their chief of staff, Mohammed al-Ghumari. A weakened, but not entirely incapacitated, network of Iran's allies increased the leverage of the US and Israel in the region. *(https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/yemens-houthis-say-chief-staff-muhammad-al-ghamari-was-killed-2025-10-16/)*

Three, the threat of losing ground to the emergence of other Great Powers, such as China and Russia, has also shaped American Middle East strategy. *(https://doi.org/10.1177/0974928418785478)* In 2024, the Middle East was the top recipient of Chinese investment under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and retained the second position in 2025. *(Wang 2026, 'China Belt and Road Intiative (BRI) Investment Report,2025)* A US Congressional report states in its findings that the limited but enduring cooperation between China and Iran in recent years has been directly opposed to the US-led international order, hampering the US's efforts to shift its focus to the Indo-Pacific. *(https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2021-06/China-Iran_Relations.pdf)* The 25-Year Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2021 between Beijing and Tehran was a manifestation of increasing bonhomie between two arch rivals of the US.

The losses of Hezbollah in Lebanon at the hands of Israeli forces in 2024, with the assassination of Hassan Nasrallah and other top Hezbollah commanders had a cascading effect in the region and weakened Iran's clout. The fall of the Assad regime in Syria since 2024 has also limited Iran's power projection.

After the June 2025 war, Tehran abandoned the US-controlled Global Positioning Systems (GPS) navigation and embraced China's BeiDou satellite navigation network to reduce vulnerability to the US jamming and spoofing of GPS signals, particularly critical for accurate missile and drone guidance. *(https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/international/iran-abandons-gps-what-its-shift-to-chinas-beidou-means)* China has provided an economic lifeline to Tehran, buying nearly 80 per cent of Iran's crude oil exports. Beijing takes advantage of the anxiety Iran instils in Gulf Arab nations to strengthen its own ties with them. *(https://www.hudson.org/national-security-defense/iran-strike-all-about-china-zineb-riboua)* Moreover, China was instrumental in facilitating Iran's entry into the Shanghai Cooperative Organisation (SCO) and BRICS in 2023 and 2024, respectively. Any direct or indirect control over the

Iranian regime would provide the US with leverage over China.

A strong Iran in the region, therefore, invariably helps China to increase its power in the region and beyond. It compels the US to delay its 'Pivot to Asia' plans and gives China more room in the Indo-Pacific, particularly with respect to Taiwan. The Pentagon recognises the growing might of China and considers it as the second-most powerful country in the world after the US. *(https://www.war.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4418826/hegseth-says-epic-fury-goals-in-iran-are-laser-focused/)* Therefore, the mutually reinforcing partnership between China and Iran is not one that either the US nor Israel would like to see flourish in a region they have dominated for a long time. However, for Washington maintaining dominance in a region situated thousands of miles away is unsustainable in the long term in the absence of a strong regional ally.

Four, Iran has faced internal challenges and protests on many occasions. The 2009 Green Movement and the 2022 Mahsa Amini protests have caused serious disruptions but not enough to dislodge the regime. *(https://www.outlookindia.com/international/mass-protests-and-imminent-us-strike-biggest-existential-challenge-for-iran)* However, in 2025-26 the large-scale US and Israeli fomented and funded protests in Iran spread over more than 200 cities, and resulted in the killing of thousands, leaving the regime more vulnerable and under heavy scrutiny and criticism. These protests were caused by the deepening economic crisis, widespread human rights abuse, restrictions on women's freedom, and ethnic discrimination, among others. It was the largest uprising and biggest threat the regime faced since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, involving wider sections of society as compared to the Mahsa Amini protests. *(https://news.sky.com/story/irans-leaders-facing-most-serious-threat-since-1979-revolution-13492604)* The Iranian government confirmed the death of at least 3,117 people. *(https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/clyxrv8z0vdo)* In the wake of the US-fostered and supported domestic crisis, Trump had warned Iran of a possible US military intervention, marking a shift in the US approach towards Iran from containment to confrontation. *(https://doi.org/10.64628/AB.yfskmt5vd)*

Five, the timing of the US attack on Iran was significant, as Donald Trump felt emboldened by the successful kidnapping of the president of Venezuela in January 2025 by US Special Forces. In this context, Trump believed Mossad's advice that it was the right time to force regime change in another country where domestic dissatisfaction appeared to be intensifying. Iran's important security provider and supporter, Russia, was tied up with the war in Ukraine. The other states in the Global South faced challenges and compulsions that dissuaded

them from supporting Iran against the combined might and threats of the US and Israel. Therefore, many analysts have also argued that Netanyahu's ability to apply pressure on Trump played a critical role in causing the US to attack Iran. The combination of all these factors demonstrates that, just as the US used the alleged existence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) as a pretext to invade Iraq in 2003 and thereby expand its global hegemony, Iran's nuclear and missile programmes have been used as excuses to bring about regime change in Tehran and strengthen US dominance in the Middle East, where Iran has stood against it for more than four decades. It was a war of choice driven by strategic calculation, changing regional power dynamics, US military-industrial and oil and gas interests in the Middle East, the quest to reclaim global hegemony, and the considerable influence of Israel.

China has provided an economic lifeline to Tehran, buying nearly 80 per cent of Iran's crude oil exports. Beijing takes advantage of the anxiety Iran instils in Gulf Arab nations to strengthen its own ties with them.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the series of events, statements of the officials, including President Trump, US intelligence agencies, and the IAEA Chief, does not support the claim that Iran posed an imminent threat to the US, justifying a "pre-emptive" joint US-Israel attack on Iran. Therefore, these strikes were anything but "pre-emptive" as Israel or the US would have liked the international community to believe. This does not imply that the threat to the US or Israel is non-existent, but it is nowhere close to being categorised as imminent, and requiring "pre-emptive" strikes, including the mass murder of Iran's religious and military top leadership. The timing of the US attack on Iran was significant, as Donald Trump felt empowered by the successful overthrow and capture of a president in Venezuela in January 2025. The proxies of Iran, such as Houthis, Hamas, and Hezbollah, have been weakened if not defeated since October 2023, leaving the Iranian regime more vulnerable due to its reduced deterrence capabilities. The fall of the Assad regime in Syria since 2024 has also limited Iran's power projection. Iran's main security provider and supporter, Russia, is caught up in the war with Ukraine. Many analysts have also argued that Netanyahu's hold

on Trump and the dominant influence of the Israeli lobby were critical factors behind the US 'surprise attack' on Iran. Yet, historically, aerial bombardments have rarely, if ever, brought about regime change in any country, unless boots were put on the ground. The subsequent attempts to export 'democracy' and remote-controlled 'nation-building' have not been successful either, due to blowback effects and strong nationalistic fervour among the masses. However, all those alleged objectives don't change the fact that the reasons provided by the Trump administration for attacking Iran were anything but the "imminent threat" posed by the Iranian nuclear and missile programme.

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