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Iran

Iran's regime in a predicament of its own making

- Features -

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One of the most famous sayings about revolutions is attributed to one of the most prominent leaders of the French Revolution during its most radical phase, Louis Antoine de Saint-Just (1767-1794): “Those who make revolution halfway only dig their own graves.” This saying also applies to armed conflicts, as historical evidence indicates that those who engage in these conflicts and confrontations half-heartedly against people they have declared to be their absolute enemies, thus inducing in these enemies a determination to crush them in return, are doomed to defeat. This is indeed the case with the “Islamic Republic” of Iran. Since its establishment following the overthrow of the Shah, it has declared its absolute hostility to what it calls the “Great Satan”, meaning the United States, and the “Little Satan”, meaning the State of Israel.

However, Tehran’s behaviour has been quite devious compared to these claims. It accepted Israeli and US aid during its eight-year war against Iraq, then cooperated with the US invasion of that country, with its Iraqi allies participating in the transitional authority installed by the occupier. We then saw the forces it deployed in Syria following its intervention to rescue the Assad regime receive successive blows from the Zionist state without ever responding. Finally, when the limit of its toleration was exceeded with the Israeli bombing of its consulate in Damascus last year, Tehran launched a limited, almost symbolic, attack on Israel in retaliation.

Hamas carried out Operation “Al-Aqsa Flood” on 7 October 2023, while betting on the “Axis of Resistance” entering the fray in a decisive manner, naively believing the bombastic statements issued by the Axis’s leaders in Tehran. These statements were echoed by Lebanon’s Hezbollah, Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces, and the Houthi Ansar Allah regime in northern Yemen (only the Assad regime refrained from joining this choir, maintaining Israel’s favour, as it had long guaranteed the security of the Zionist occupation of Syria’s Golan Heights).

The result was typical: Tehran stood halfway in the confrontation, refraining from entering the battle alongside Hamas while allowing its allies in Lebanon and Yemen to intervene on a limited scale, by launching missiles from afar in the case of Yemen and engaging in a geographically limited war of attrition in the case of Lebanon. The outcome was that Israel – which, to say the least, never stops halfway in its hostility to its enemies – launched a devastating attack on Hezbollah as soon as it completed its re-invasion of the Gaza Strip in a genocidal war of a degree of violence unparalleled in contemporary history. It then dealt the Houthi regime painful blows, and continues to do so, until it pounced on Iran itself in a large-scale attack.

The “Islamic Republic”’s halfway stance also applies to its nuclear program. Instead of secretly acquiring the nuclear weapon, as Israel did in the 1960s, India in the 1970s, Pakistan in the 1980s, and North Korea early in the present century, Tehran publicly enriched uranium beyond what is needed for peaceful nuclear energy, but it stopped at the 60 percent threshold, not exceeding it to the level necessary for a military program. This half-hearted behaviour escalated following the United States’ withdrawal in 2018 from the nuclear agreement concluded with Iran three years earlier, a decision taken by Donald Trump during his first term in office. Israeli concerns about Tehran acquiring a nuclear weapon were consequently exacerbated, at a time when Iran did not, and still does not, possess the deterrent capability attached to this weapon.

It became certain therefore that the Zionist state would strike Iran’s territory rather sooner than later in a major effort to destroy the regime’s military potential, particularly its nuclear program, as I have repeatedly emphasized (see, for

example, "The Postponed Israeli Attack on Iran", Al-Quds Al-Arabi, 23 April 2024). For, in the eyes of the Zionist state, this is a decisive battle, whereas the "Islamic Republic" handles its confrontation with Israel in the manner of the former Arab nationalistic regimes in Iraq and Libya, which barked from afar to outbid their Arab neighbours, believing they were immune to direct war. The decisive character of the battle for Israel stems primarily from its keen desire to maintain its monopoly on nuclear weapons in the face of its enemies, and even its Arab allies. It believes that if its nuclear deterrent were neutralized, this would expose it to danger and would impose limits on its freewheeling aggressive behaviour in the Middle East, which has reached its peak in recent months with the onslaught on Hezbollah, the destruction of Syria's military capabilities, and now the onslaught on Iran.

To be sure, Israel's freewheeling aggressiveness is not based solely on its own deterrent power, but also on the protection and partnership it enjoys from its Western allies, especially the United States. Much of the global media has once again been deceived by the alleged "disagreement" between Trump's purportedly "peaceful" intentions and Netanyahu's aggressive ones. The truth is that the two men are engaged in a game of "good cop, bad cop" in pursuit of a single goal: forcing Iran to capitulate and completely dismantle its uranium enrichment program. In Washington's view, this goal must be achieved in the easiest possible way, whether peacefully through Tehran's submission to military threats issued by Israel and Washington, or militarily through Iran being subjected to a devastating attack by them, as is currently unfolding before our eyes.

Trump had given the "Islamic Republic" sixty days to accept his surrender terms, while he and his ally Netanyahu were threatening war if it does not comply. With the deadline expiring and Tehran still refusing to abandon its enrichment program, Trump gave the Zionist state the green light to launch its attack on the 61st day, feigning a false neutrality that only deceived those who indulge in wishful thinking. Trump's apparently neutral stance toward the onslaught (fully supported by his forces, but without their direct involvement so far) was intended to convince the world that he had done everything possible to avoid engaging US troops into a direct war with Iran.

Here is indeed another instance of Tehran standing halfway, as it has repeatedly threatened, in the words of the "Supreme Leader" himself, that it would consider any Israeli aggression against it to be backed by Washington, and that its retaliation would not spare US forces deployed in the region. It has refrained from carrying out this threat, however, even by way of its regional proxies, as it knows full well that Trump would use any Iranian strike against US forces as a pretext to join the Israeli war effort directly, under political conditions that would silence the section of his own partisans that opposes America's involvement in other people's wars.

[Gilbert Achcar's blog](#) 17 June 2025

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