

Principles for an Israeli Strategy to Address the Iranian Nuclear Threat at the End of the War

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Although we are currently in the midst of a war and do not yet know how it will end, the US negotiations initiative—which may bring the campaign to an end—requires a clear definition of Israel’s interest regarding the Iranian nuclear project.

The conclusion of Operation Roaring Lion will place Israel and the international community before a new strategic reality vis-à-vis Iran. The regime in Tehran, if it survives the war, may—after experiencing systemic trauma and damage to its senior leadership—adopt a national security doctrine that relies on nuclear weapons as its sole existential deterrent capability. Under these circumstances, it is essential to ensure that Iran retains no nuclear capability that could serve as a foundation for a military nuclear program. This paper argues that previous models of “risk management” (such as the JCPOA, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) are no longer relevant. Therefore, Israel must insist on the complete dismantling of Iran’s uranium enrichment infrastructure and relevant technological capabilities as a necessary condition for ending the war, whether

The Impact of the War on Iran’s Security Doctrine

The war has further undermined the foundations of Iran’s deterrence—both through its regional proxies and its ballistic missile arsenal—especially since Iran’s status as a nuclear threshold state failed to deter Israel from taking military action during the 12-day war in June 2025. The opening of the current campaign, perceived in Tehran as a deceptive move by Israel and the United States during nuclear negotiations, is likely to lead decision-makers to draw even more far-reaching systemic conclusions.

Collapse of the Old Oversight Model

The historical debate over the US withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018 has become irrelevant in light of the new circumstances. Whereas in the past it was possible to discuss a model of “limited enrichment” under supervision, the post-war reality no longer allows this:

1. **Loss of Political Trust:** Iran’s perception that it was misled during negotiations, combined with a sense of vengeance, eliminates the ability to rely on soft diplomatic understandings. If the negotiation round conducted during the war also proves to be deceptive, the problem will be exacerbated significantly.
2. **Accumulated Technological Knowledge:** Over the past decade, Iran has accumulated substantial expertise in operating advanced centrifuges,

designing a nuclear warhead, and producing additional key components for nuclear weapons. Although Israel has succeeded in eliminating the most senior nuclear scientists—thereby significantly disrupting this accumulated knowledge—Iran possesses highly capable human capital and an advanced academic system and will undoubtedly be able to replenish this knowledge over time. This knowledge would enable a rapid breakout to a bomb, even from low levels of enrichment.

Israel's Core Requirements

Israel must formulate a firm position centered on a demand for an irreversible change to the nuclear status quo. The core objectives are:

- **Dismantling of Underground Infrastructure:** Closure and destruction of all underground enrichment sites that provide immunity from conventional attack. This must include not only known facilities (Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan) but also the new site being constructed at the Pickaxe Mountain complex.
- **Removal of Fissile Material:** Transfer all uranium enriched to high levels (20% and 60%) outside of Iranian territory or dilute it to a low enrichment level unsuitable for military use.
- **Restrictions on Research and Development:** A complete prohibition on possession of advanced centrifuges and a freeze on all R&D related to weaponization.
- **Intrusive Inspection Regime:** Establishment of a stringent International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspection mechanism, with no time or access limitations, ensuring full transparency across the entire production chain, including activities potentially related to weaponization.

Paths to Achievement: The Outcome Function

Israel's interest requires focusing on the end result rather than the means of achieving it. This objective can be pursued through two parallel tracks:

1. **Diplomatic Track:** A prerequisite for any agreement to end the war must be the physical dismantlement of nuclear capabilities and not future commitments.
2. **Military Track:** If diplomatic efforts fail to produce the required outcome, Israel must exhaust the military campaign until the destruction of the critical infrastructure of the nuclear program, on the assumption that the cost of continued fighting is lower than the cost of accepting a nuclear Iran.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Israel must lead a firm diplomatic line toward its allies, especially the United States, emphasizing that the post-Operation Roaring Lion reality requires a paradigm shift. A return to a model of “containing” Iran’s nuclear program is no longer possible.

Operational Recommendation: The dismantling of underground nuclear sites and the removal of enriched uranium should be defined as a “red line”: without them, Israel should not agree to a ceasefire. Failure to act decisively at this stage would enable Iran to break out to nuclear weapons in the medium to long term, under the cover of lessons learned from the current campaign.