

DISCUSSION PAPER 04/26 | 29 MAY 2026

The Intimate Enmity: Iran and the West

An examination of the causes and consequences of the US-Israeli war on Iran

Yin Shao Loong



Khazanah Research Institute

The **KRI Discussion Papers** are a series of research documents by the author discussing and examining pressing and emerging issues. They are stand-alone products published to stimulate discussion and contribute to public discourse. In that respect, readers are encouraged to submit their comments directly to the author.

The views and opinions expressed are those of the author and may not necessarily represent the official views of KRI. All errors remain the author's own.

DISCUSSION PAPER 04/26 | 29 MAY 2026

The Intimate Enmity: Iran and the West

An examination of the causes and consequences of the US-Israeli war on Iran

This discussion paper was prepared by Yin Shao Loong, Deputy Director of Research from the Khazanah Research Institute (KRI). The author is grateful for the valuable comments from Nur Hisham Hussein, Nurul Izzah Anwar and an anonymous reviewer. The author also benefitted from a conversation with Professor Vali Nasr as the paper was being finalised. Invaluable assistance came from Sharifah Nurina Syed Malek Faisal in preparing this document. Apologies go out to Ashis Nandy for misappropriating the title of his excellent book, *The Intimate Enemy*.

Author's email address: yin.shaoloong@krinstitute.org

Attribution – Please cite the work as follows: Yin Shao Loong. 2026. The Intimate Enmity: Iran and the West. Kuala Lumpur: Khazanah Research Institute. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0.

Translations – If you create a translation of this work, please add the following disclaimer along with the attribution: This translation was not created by Khazanah Research Institute and should not be considered an official Khazanah Research Institute translation. Khazanah Research Institute shall not be liable for any content or error in this translation.

Information on Khazanah Research Institute publications and digital products can be found at www.KRIInstitute.org.

I: The History in the Present

The idea of a war with Iran is perhaps one of the longest standing tropes in Western history. The very first work of Western history, *The Histories* by Herodotus – from whence we derive the term – presents his researches (*historia*) into the causes of why the Greeks and Persians went to war in 499 BCE.¹ Herodotus was not the first to attempt a narrative chronology. What distinguished his effort was the search for causes. Those who attempt research today in the Western tradition are perhaps heirs to this ambition – to understand the reason why things happen.

Today's war is not the continuance of ancient grudges. It has its roots mostly in the sins of the 20th-century – the breakdown of the Ottoman and British Empires and the crime of partition and the Nakba. But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, an author of the war, has invoked the memory of Sparta, an ancient enemy of Persia, as part of an attempt to define the future of an expansionist genocidal Israel. For those willing to look, there are many parallels between modern and ancient times, just as there are fair uses, and abuses, of history, particularly in shaping the legitimacy of grudges. Conflict between the US, Israel and Iran now affects the whole world, threatening to collapse economies connected by supply chains, and it bears understanding why.

This article surveys some of the history of the enmity between the main participants of the 2026 war on Iran. It looks at these tensions because they threaten to prolong the economic shocks experienced by the rest of the world. With Israeli expansionist strategy being a major destabilising factor in the Middle East we then take a critical look at two alternative strategies proposed by Netanyahu. In particular, his proposal for Israel to become a Super-Sparta is scrutinised as a source of instructive social and military parallels, and avenues of possible decline.

1.1. We didn't start the fire

Herodotus begins *The Histories* by recounting the disputes between Asia and Europe – effectively a list of reciprocal princess kidnappings – starting in the mists of historical memory with a kidnapping of a Greek princess by Phoenician sailors, a Greek abduction of an Asian princess, followed by Helen of Sparta's abduction by Paris of Troy (Ilium) – the basis of Homer's *Iliad* and Western literature – and so on.² Herodotus thus answers the question, “who started the fire?” by pointing to the Phoenicians, nominally vassals of the Persian empire, founders of the city of Tyre, which is today being destroyed as part of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

¹ Persia is derived from the Greek exonym for Iran, after the region of *Pârsâ* (Fars), an origin point of two Iranian empires – the Achaemenids and Sasanians.

² Herodotus (2009)

Figure 1: The Middle East, early 21st Century.



Source: United States Central Intelligence Agency (1990).

The listing of grievances is a tradition that continues into today's Persian wars. On 2 March 2026, the White House published a timeline of Iran's "decades of terrorism against American citizens".³ The US dates its grievances from 1979 and the hostage crisis at the US embassy in Tehran following the Iranian Revolution – a kidnapping of sorts, but without princesses. Iranians however, look a bit further back to 1953 and the CIA and MI6-backed coup to topple Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, reverse the nationalisation of Iranian oil, and consolidate power around the authoritarian Pahlavi Shah back by his vicious secret police, SAVAK. The Shah's cruelties and mismanagement fanned the flames of revolutionary fervour that led to the events of 1979.

However, 1979 wasn't the primary reason put forward by the White House for embarking on a war with Iran in 2026. A day before issuing its list of historical grievances, the White House claimed that it had launched Operation Epic Fury on Iran to "eliminate the imminent nuclear threat posed by the Iranian regime, destroy its ballistic missile arsenal, degrade its proxy terror

³ The White House (2026b)

networks, and cripple its naval forces".⁴ Yet, the US and Israel had claimed that their attacks in the 12-day War of June 2025 had destroyed Iran's nuclear capabilities.⁵

A certain cynicism has descended on those long used to hearing of the imminent nuclear threat from Iran. In 2011, the US-based Christian Science Monitor was moved to document the history of these claims and found that they stretch back to the pre-revolutionary time of the Shah in the 1970s, shortly after the US had gifted Iran its first nuclear research reactor and a batch of Highly Enriched Uranium.⁶

1.2. How long the war, how long its tail?

US pretexts for war may have little bearing on the facts – as the invasion of Iraq and the spurious search for its non-existent weapons of mass destruction showed. What is factual and material is that the present US-Israeli war on Iran has had consequences for the rest of the world. The US-Israeli war on Iran has sent shocks through the global economy by disrupting oil and gas supplies as well as petrochemical inputs for critical products such as fertilisers and plastics. About 25% to 30% of global oil and 20% of liquefied natural gas pass through the Strait of Hormuz, feeding demand not only in Asia but also in parts of Europe.⁷ One third of world shipments of fertiliser pass through the Straits, shortages have curtailed rice planting season in Thailand.⁸ The US, while not highly exposed to Gulf trade, is still affected by global commodity prices of oil and gas, as well as fertiliser.

A question on the minds of many is: "how long will the disruptions last?" This, in effect, is first a question of how long the war will last.

Second, once the current war ends there is the issue of time for the restoration of Gulf country production of oil and gas, petrochemicals and derivative products that Asian economies in particular depend on. This is a function of the structure of the Gulf oil and gas supply chain and shipping times to consumers. Production facilities may need to be repaired, processing and possibly refining needs to resume, tankers need to enter the Straits of Hormuz if they are not already trapped in there, then they need to exit and reach their customer destinations – a process that may take weeks or months at sea. Iran has signalled that ships of certain friendly countries may pass through the Straits. So far this has included Malaysia, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Iraq and possibly Japan. However, passage does not guarantee that insurers will vouchsafe ships attempting transit. Thus, continued restrictions may continue to choke off shipping.

As the war progresses, the economic impacts experienced by the world economy appear initially as price shocks as economic actors respond to actual or perceived supply disruptions. Countries highly dependent on energy imports, such as the Philippines, have sought to pre-empt supply disruptions through emergency rationing measures. Following the price shocks come the actual

⁴ The White House (2026a)

⁵ The White House (2025)

⁶ Peterson (2011)

⁷ Adrian et al. (2026)

⁸ Tan and Watcharasakwej (2026)

supply shortages as production capabilities halted or destroyed by war dry up supply. By mid-April, the last pre-war tankers exited the Straits of Hormuz, following which supply actually started to dry up. The time needed for products to get from the Gulf to customers may exceed the stockpiles of dependent countries. Most countries have several months of stockpiles, but restoration of supply is now estimated in years. The IEA estimates that energy production could take as little as two years to come back to pre-war levels.⁹ Other estimates hold that repair and reconstruction could take up to five years.¹⁰

The experience of the supply shocks is deceptive due to time lags. The price shock is the first wave and travels fast. Energy markets respond in real time, reacting to US president Donald Trump's conveniently timed social media posts. Oil prices surge and ebb on this short-term basis. The supply disruptions – in the form of destroyed production or halted pumping of fossil fuel wells – has already happened weeks ago. It is as if the star of a distant solar system had exploded. By the time we see the light from the event, the star would already have been long dead.

In the specific case of oil, JP Morgan has pointed out that short-run demand is relatively inelastic. Transportation and airlines need fuel. Petrochemical plants need feedstock. Thus modest supply losses “can produce outsized price moves as the market rations scarce barrels.”¹¹

The balancing sequence typically runs as follows: spare capacity is activated first; inventories are drawn next; then emergency releases and refinery run cuts follow, and, finally, higher prices force demand lower.¹²

However, supply is not as deep as inventories would suggest on paper. Shortfalls in production can cause systemic slowdown or breakdown.

Like blood pressure in the human body, the issue is circulation. Pipelines lose pressure flexibility, terminals cannot load efficiently, refiners struggle to secure the right grades on time, and traders bid aggressively for nearby supply. The system does not fail because oil disappears, it fails because the circulation network no longer has enough working volume. ...In a prolonged disruption scenario, demand is therefore rationed well before inventories approach critically low levels.¹³

The experience of supply shocks is asymmetric. The US is well insulated as the world's largest oil and gas producer, with imports primarily from Mexico and Canada, and now – following the deposition of Nicolas Maduro in December 2025 – supply from Venezuela¹⁴. Europe and Asia are more dependent on supply from the Gulf.¹⁵

⁹ Martinsen, Satwani, and Selvaraju (2026)

¹⁰ Oxford Economics (2026)

¹¹ J. P. Morgan (2026a)

¹² Ibid.

¹³ J. P. Morgan (2026b)

¹⁴ U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) (2026a)

¹⁵ Gupta and Biemann (2026)

Thus, price shocks may raise inflation, supply shortages may curb growth, raising the spectre of stagflation in some markets. If the shocks drag on long enough then the prospect of regional recessions or a global recession may loom.

The third economic threat is Iran's counters to any escalation from the US or Israel. Iran does not have the missile or force projection reach to directly threaten the continental US. Instead, it has destroyed nearby US military bases in neighbouring Gulf countries¹⁶ and bombed Israel. Crucially, Iran has attempted to leverage the US by striking out at the global economy in the hope of transmitted shocks to the US and its trading partners will compel Trump to stand down. It has done this in two ways, first via a blockade of the Strait of Hormuz and second, by reciprocating US attacks with attacks on its allied Gulf countries who, besides their petrochemical and fuel industries, are significant global investors. The US blockade of the Iranian blockade – Operation Project Freedom – has added to the economic uncertainties of Gulf shipping, although it has thus far proven more performative rather than effective.¹⁷

The main uncertainty is how long the US and Israel are committed to sustain a war footing.

After over seventy-five days of war, the most powerful military in the world has been fought to a standstill by a nominally theocratic middle power weakened by decades of economic sanctions. The US has suffered an unprecedented loss of prestige not seen since the Vietnam War. Trump has signalled that he is seeking an off ramp to the war, but the failure of the mid-April peace talks in Pakistan signal that the war could resume after the extended ceasefire.

It is readily becoming apparent that the continued belligerence of the Israeli regime and its outsized influence on the White House is one of the most important factors in initiating and possibly prolonging the undeclared wars in the Middle East that have rocked the global economy. While support for Israel has declined in the general US population thanks to the livestreaming of the Gaza genocide, the US political elite remains heavily captured by the Israel Lobby.¹⁸ The leadership of both the Republican and Democratic parties are vocal supporters of the Zionist project. The Israel Lobby's influence on the presidency is even stronger.

The *New York Times* has reported extensively how Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu secured exclusive access to sell the war to US President Donald Trump.¹⁹ In intimate briefings in February 2026, Netanyahu massaged Trump's confidence that a war with Iran would be a brief and decisive affair, over in weeks – not a standoff debacle with no clear end in sight.

Netanyahu pitched a formula resting on four parts. First, decapitation of the Iranian leadership, echoing Israeli measures on Hamas and Hezbollah in recent years. Second, crippling Iran's capacity for force projection and its ability to threaten neighbours. Third, a popular uprising within Iran. Fourth, regime change with the installation of a sympathetic leader. With the exception of the first plan, everything else fell apart in the first few weeks of the war. Israel and

¹⁶ CNN (2026)

¹⁷ Diakun, Minchin, and Ranaan (2026)

¹⁸ Mearsheimer and Walt (2006); Codepink (n.d.)

¹⁹ Swan and Haberman (2026)

the US appear to have underestimated the resilience of the Iranian government and its armed forces, especially their recuperation following the 12-Day War of 2025. Trump apparently dismissed fears voiced by Gen. Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that Iran could block the Straits of Hormuz since the war would be swiftly concluded.

In Trump, Israel and Netanyahu may have found a once-in-a-lifetime US president pliant to their suasion and willing to help realise Netanyahu's 40-year long wish to destroy the Islamic Republic. Trump was 32 years-old in 1979 when the Islamic Revolution took over Iran and he had apparently long nursed a desire to dismantle its government.

II: The Intimate Enmities of the Present War

2.1 Israeli-Iranian enmity

Israel is a settler colonial state founded in 1948 on the partition of the territory of Palestine. It has striven to become the regional hegemon in the Middle East. Iran and Türkiye have been major regional rivals to this role, as successor states to past hegemons the Persian empire and Ottoman Caliphate respectively. Along with Egypt they are the most populous countries in the Middle East – more than double the population of the runners up Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Population along with wealth is a core foundation of state power since it is a proxy for both workforce and armed forces.²⁰ Egypt, while much larger than Iran, is actually poorer. Without the constraint of economic sanctions Iran has the potential to be a regional powerhouse. It sits on the world's third largest proven crude oil reserves and the world's largest natural gas field.²¹ Therefore, it is in Israel's expansionist interest to subordinate Iran. Not content with initiating war with Iran, Israel has also simultaneously begun to frame Türkiye as a threat.²² Egypt had been domesticated as a threat to Israel since détente with Anwar Sadat in 1979.

Table 1: Population and GDP of Egypt, Iran, Türkiye, and Israel, 2024.

	Egypt	Iran	Türkiye	Israel
Population	116,538,258	91,567,738	85,518,661	9,974,400
GDP (US\$ billions, 2024)	389.06	475.25	1,359.00	540.38

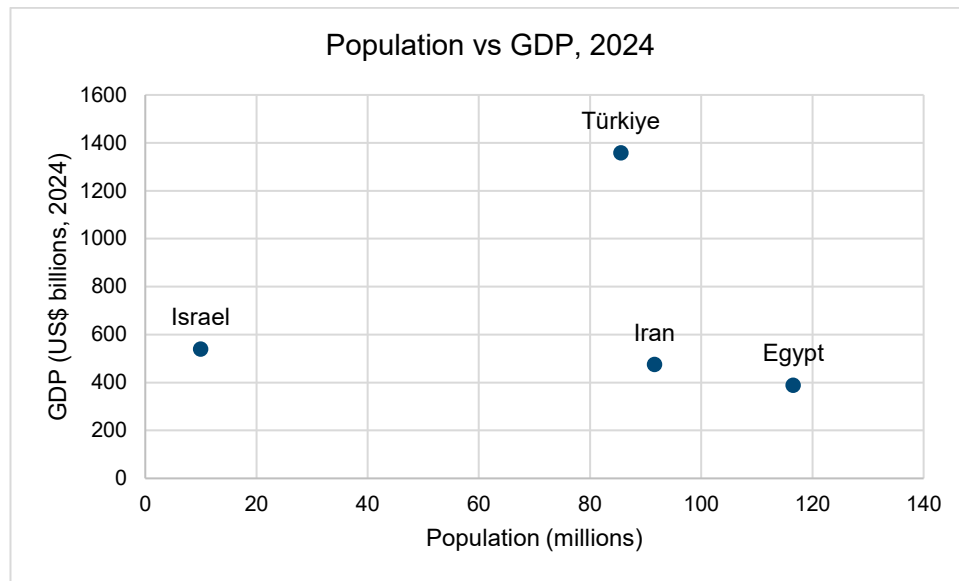
Source: World Bank Group Data

²⁰ Mearsheimer (2003)

²¹ US-China Economic and Security Review Commission (2026)

²² Cordall (2026)

Figure 2: Population and GDP of Egypt, Iran, Türkiye, and Israel, 2024.



Source: World Bank Group Data

The expansionist and hegemonic ambitions of Israel have brought it into conflict with most states in the region since its formation. Military backing from Europe and the US has enabled it to pursue its strategy of violence.

Israel has been a principal agent responsible for triggering multiple Arab-Israeli Wars, the Suez Canal crisis, the 1970s oil crisis, and the present conflict that has led to the conditional closure of the Straits of Hormuz by Iran in response to US-Israeli atrocities.

The revolutionary government which took control of Iran in 1979 under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini declared enmity with Israel as one of the key pillars of its foreign policy. The pre-revolutionary regime under the authoritarian Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was aligned with both the US and Israel, but had ceded much of its oil wealth to Britain, Russia and the US, which was a source of national resentment. By 1979, Israel had already waged four wars with neighbouring Arab states, seizing territory which provoked countermeasures such as the Arab oil embargo on Israel's Western allies that triggered the 1973 oil crisis. Throughout the 1970s, Iranian revolutionaries from both the left and Islamist persuasion had trained in Lebanon under the Palestinians. Palestinians also trained the likes of the Japanese Red Army and the German Baader-Meinhof group.²³ "Iranian opposition groups of all political stripes, from Marxists to nationalists, religious fundamentalists to Islamist modernists, were exploring the option of an armed insurgency against the king of Iran."²⁴ Through a mix of guile and opportunity, Khomeini became the figurehead of anti-Shah opposition. Part of his attempt to cultivate a broader regional appeal was to adopt the Palestinian cause.

One of the first acts of the Khomeini government was to gift the abandoned Israeli embassy in Tehran to Fatah and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) when Yasser Arafat became

²³ Ghattas (2021)

²⁴ Ibid.

the first foreign dignitary to visit post-revolutionary Iran.²⁵ Israel has framed post-revolutionary Iran as an existential threat, playing on Western sentiment that conflates protecting the Zionist project with guilt over the Nazi-perpetrated Holocaust. Iran for its part has supported Lebanon's Hezbollah and Palestine's Hamas, both of whom consolidated in opposition to Israeli expansion.

Netanyahu, who has led Israel for 17 of its 78 years, has been facing criminal charges for bribery, fraud and breach of trust since 2020,²⁶ and is wanted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza (albeit not for genocide).²⁷ Maintaining Israel's war footing in the genocide and regional wars has allowed Netanyahu to indefinitely defer his criminal trial hearings.

In the wake of the 7 October 2023 actions by Palestinian liberation group Hamas, Netanyahu's personal interests have aligned with the interests of his coalition partners from the Israeli right. These include extremist National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir who represents the settler movement practicing the violent expulsion of Palestinians from their land. In addition to waging war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Netanyahu's government has promoted a "Greater Israel" policy of settler expansion – with uncomfortable echoes of the German Nazi policy of *Grossdeutschland* (Greater Germany) – that envisions a territorial expansion of Israel that stretches from the Euphrates to the Nile.²⁸ Recent incursions into and the annexation of Gaza, the West Bank, Syria and Southern Lebanon up to the Litani river are the contemporary strokes of this idea that dates to the early days of Zionism in the late 19th century.²⁹

In pursuing the Greater Israel strategy and the genocide of the Palestinian people, Netanyahu may have logically sought to remove Iran as an ally of Hamas and regional power balancer with interests in the 'Shia Crescent' running through Iraq, Syria up to Lebanon. Former Israeli official Daniel Levy has suggested that Israel's political elites may see that overthrowing Iran and weakening the Gulf states is a precondition for Israel to become a regional superpower.³⁰ The visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Tel Aviv just days before the war on Iran hinted at support for Netanyahu's strategy of building a network of alliances surrounding the region.

However, Israel's war on Iran and bloody annexation of southern Lebanon has further polarised global opinion against Israel and its allies in the West. In the US, a month into the war with Iran, Pew Research found that by March 2026, 60% of U.S. adults had an unfavourable view of Israel, up from 53% last year. The majority of adults under 50 in both the Democratic and Republican parties rated Israel and Netanyahu negatively.³¹ The parties' leadership is another matter. Continued support for Israel by Western elites and states has undermined the legitimacy of the West's claim to leadership in an international rules-based order or a universal conception of human rights. When it comes to Palestinians or Iranians their lives and rights demonstrably

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Eisen, Patel, and Smith (2023)

²⁷ International Criminal Court (2024)

²⁸ Levy (2026); Jaber (2026)

²⁹ Laqueuer and Rubin (1969)

³⁰ Levy (2026)

³¹ Silver (2026)

matter less. Notable interventions from civil society, unions and a handful of states such as Spain, have sought to cut off Western military aid to Israel, or at least deny transshipment.

2.2 The Normalisation of Settler Colonialism

The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law. The Congress contemplates the following means to the attainment of this end:

1. *The promotion, on suitable lines, of the colonization of Palestine by Jewish agricultural and industrial workers. ...*

The Basle Declaration, First Zionist Congress, 1897

The entire crisis in the Middle East and the backing of the Zionist settler colonial project speaks to a truth underlying Western states in the post-World War II order. When we think of a geographically expansive West that includes the states of North America, Europe and Australia and New Zealand, we can recognise that late-stage settler colonialism is normalised in the cases of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US. Many of the states in Europe practiced forms of colonialism, some of which did not end with the massive post-World War II enfranchisement of the Global South and the expansion of United Nations membership. Britain and France maintain numerous overseas colonies euphemised as Overseas Territories or Departments, respectively. Sympathy for white settlers in Zimbabwe remained a feature of even the left-leaning *Guardian* newspaper in the UK. But, the South African apartheid state used to be seen as an anachronistic vestige of European colonialism. However, the active persistence of Israel is testimony to the continued acceptance of colonialism amongst Western elites and a number of elites in the Global South. In February, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio addressed the elite of Europe at the Munich security conference. He spoke nostalgically of an expansionist imperial West. Of a collective European effort to colonise and settle America. He pitched a collective Transatlantic effort to reinvigorate ‘Western civilisation’ as he characterised it, a proposal that was greeted with a standing ovation.³²

As a relationship of unequal power, colonialism rests on ideas of superiority and inferiority between peoples. That one peoples’ land, livelihoods, resources and even culture can be taken away by another. These attitudes help structure policies of dispossession and violence.³³ They also invite reciprocal violence and opposition in the form of movements of national liberation. At an extreme, dehumanisation of target populations can precipitate genocide. Dehumanisation manifests in language which helps justify action. Nazis used a variety of degrading terms to characterise Jews, Roma and Sinti as less than human.³⁴ Jews were described variously as “rats, lice, cockroaches, foxes, vultures”, while Roma and Sinti were considered criminal by birth.³⁵ This supported Nazi policies to cleanse society of their presence. Likewise, the US boasts a rich

³² Rubio (2026)

³³ Fanon et al. (2004)

³⁴ Landry, Orr, and Mere (2022); Sveriges Museum Om Förintelsen (2024)

³⁵ Criado (2022)

tradition of dehumanising language used on its enslaved population of Africans, exterminated Native Americans and those peoples it has invaded.

Israeli Judaic scholar and philosopher Yeshayahu Liebowitz, was a self-avowed Zionist, in a political sense, but he was critical of the existential peril and corrupting moral consequences of occupation:

Judaism existed for eighteen centuries without statehood and without territory. ...Today Jews have security everywhere except in the state of Israel. The most dangerous spot for Jews to live today is the state of Israel because Israel is in constant conflict with the Arab and Muslim worlds. This is the price we have to pay for political and national independence.

What happened in June 1967 transformed Israel into a conquering power, into an instrument for the violent domination of another people. This, I fear, maybe the ruin of the state of Israel; Jews here may go the route of the white minority in South Africa. The occupation corroded Israel's social fabric, and it has led to a belief in the utility of military force to solve political problems.³⁶

Liebowitz here crosses similar territory to scholars of colonialism such as Ashis Nandy, who argue that colonialism is dually corrosive – to both the colonised and coloniser.³⁷

A grave concern with Israel's prosecution of its Greater Israel strategy is that it is happening simultaneously with a policy of genocide of the Palestinians. A regionally expansionist genocide policy against Arabs, Persians, Turks and other indigenous ethnicities of the Middle East could result in an even greater humanitarian atrocity.

The dehumanisation of the peoples of the Middle East as a pretext to violence was given a tremendous boost by the statement of Donald Trump on 6 April 2026. Following futile US military intervention 38 days into the war on Iran, the US President wrote on social media that “a whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again.”

This remarkable threat from a nuclear superpower has been recognised as a criminal statement of genocidal intent.³⁸ If Russia, China, Iran or North Korea – the West's favourite antagonists of the moment – were to announce that Western civilisation would die tonight, never to be brought back again, it would precipitate wholesale condemnation and preparations for open conflict.

³⁶ Liebowitz and Egan (1986)

³⁷ Nandy (2010)

³⁸ Risse (2026)

Figure 3: The Western Mediterranean 150 BCE. Prior to the outbreak of the Third Punic War.



Source: Goran tek-en (2021)

The threat to end a civilisation recalls the Third Punic War between Rome and its Mediterranean rival Carthage, a Phoenician city-state in North Africa.³⁹ Rome brought to a close nearly a century of conflict by razing the great city of Carthage to the ground and slaying or enslaving all its people – ending Carthage as a civilisation. The Roman senator Cato the Younger earned his place in history by concluding all his speeches with the incitement, “*Carthago delenda est*” – Carthage must be destroyed. Prior to its utter destruction Carthage had already been crippled by the peace terms following the Second Punic War or Hannibalic War. This was the famous conflict where the Carthaginian general Hannibal led an army including war elephants over the mountains into Italy to wage war against the Romans. While he defeated them in every battle on Italian soil he was unable to win the war, thanks in part to the stubborn refusal of the Romans to surrender and Hannibal’s unwillingness to invade the city of Rome itself. When the Romans undermined Carthage’s alliance system and took the battle to Africa, Hannibal was defeated at the battle of Zama. Subsequently, Carthage was forced to demilitarise, forsake its colonies, pay reparations to Rome and required Rome’s permission to wage war. In his *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, British economist John Maynard Keynes, writing on the unsustainable consequences of the Versailles Treaty imposed on Germany after World War I, argued against France imposing such a

³⁹ Punic and Phoenician are respectively cognate Latin and Greek exonyms for the seafaring and trading Canaanite people originating from modern-day Lebanon and Syria. In Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Carthage and Rome are intimate enemies. Aeneas, a prince of Troy, flees westward after the fall of the city to the Greeks. He falls in love with Dido, Queen of Carthage, but abandons her to go on to establish the city of Rome. Dido commits suicide in grief.

“Carthaginian Peace” with crippling reparations on Germany. Adolf Hitler later used the lopsided terms of this Carthaginian Peace to build his case for National Socialism (Nazism).

While Carthage was effectively a victim of ancient genocide, Hitler became its most infamous modern proponent. Now Trump, the leader of the country which defeated Hitler, a country once thought to lead the “free world”, has issued a statement of genocidal intent.

Under Article II of the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, “genocide means any of the following acts committed with *intent* to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group” (emphasis added). Article III states that among the acts punishable are “[d]irect and public incitement to commit genocide”.⁴⁰ It is also a crime under US law.⁴¹

2.3 US-Iran Enmity

The road to Trump’s genocidal statement was paved by decades of tense US-Iran relations stemming from US political interference in Iran and the hostage crisis at the US embassy in Tehran led by revolutionary students in 1979.

The Tehran hostage crisis was an early episode in the Islamic Revolution. The Revolution was launched to depose the Pahlavi dynasty who had seized power in 1921. Authoritarian rule under the Pahlavi Shah had been imposed with the assistance of British and American spy agencies after they had collaborated to overthrow the democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953. Mossadegh’s offence to British and American sensibilities was to nationalise the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). AIOC was at the time Britain’s largest overseas asset, half owned by the British government and vital to its balance of payments.⁴² A US diplomatic missive in 1950 noted, “AIOC has been operating for 40 years with production costs under 10¢ a barrel and the price of crude oil at \$1.00 to \$3.00 a barrel.”⁴³ The AIOC paid much more in income taxes to the British government than it did in royalties to the Iranian government.⁴⁴ The Iranians in particular were incensed by the more favourable terms offered by US oil companies to the Saudis – 50-50 shares.⁴⁵ The Iranian Parliament had voted to nationalise AIOC a month before Mossadegh was elected prime minister.⁴⁶ Britain placed an oil embargo on Iran. The US, whom Mossadegh thought to be sympathetic as a long-time ally of Iran, refused Iran a loan, helped the British enforce their economic blockade, and called for the oil dispute with the British to be settled first.⁴⁷

Eventually, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill petitioned US president Dwight Eisenhower for a joint intervention. In 1953, the CIA worked up a British plan to bring down Mossadegh via a

⁴⁰ General Assembly resolution 260 A (III) (1948)

⁴¹ 18 U.S.C. § 1091 (1988)

⁴² Marsh (2003)

⁴³ Office of The Historian (1950)

⁴⁴ Keddie and Richard (2006)

⁴⁵ Sampson (1975)

⁴⁶ Keddie and Richard (2006)

⁴⁷ Keddie and Richard (2006)

coup d'état and consolidate power around Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi as absolute monarch.⁴⁸ The AIOC was subsequently rebranded as British Petroleum (today's bp) and eventually collaborated with US oil companies to consolidate Western control of Iran's oil wealth – the “Seven Sisters” of Western oil; British Petroleum, Royal Dutch Shell, Gulf, Exxon, Mobil, Texaco and Chevron.⁴⁹ Iran deeply understands the relationship between Western oil interests and regime change that has now become a cliché.

In popular retelling, Mossadegh is often cast as the victim and the Shah the villain, Mossadegh pursuing anti-imperialist nationalist interests versus the Shah as a close ally of the West focused on authoritarian developmentalism, but both had their merits and flaws for Iran's national interest. Mossadegh was nationally popular but lacked a grand strategy for hedging both Soviet and Western threats to sovereignty. The Shah had a grand strategy to pursue authoritarian developmentalism with Western support, but lacked national popularity to pull his people along with him. Thus, the seeds of revolution found fertile ground.⁵⁰ The post-revolutionary government of Iran has been defined by Mossadegh's legacy of anti-imperialist nationalism and a regional anti-imperialist (and anti-Israeli) grand strategy (the Shia Crescent). Economic development has been hindered by Western sanctions while popular discontent has been suppressed by authoritarianism. However, the present war has likely consolidated support for the government as the aerial bombing campaign has targeted civilian infrastructure such as girls' schools, hospitals and universities rather than exclusively political or military sites.⁵¹

2.4 Anti-Imperialism and the Clash with the US

Iran's historical experience bears similarities to China in that both suffered a “century of humiliation” that has fuelled a nationalism in both countries that strongly emphasises sovereignty. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Iran was subject to domination by foreign powers and enjoyed little practical sovereignty. It was jointly invaded by Britain and the Soviet Union during World War II. In Iran, this nationalism erupted in the revolution of 1979. According to Nikki Keddie, a leading US scholar of the Iranian revolution, discontent with the Shah's rule by 1977 was tied to:

an economic recession, inflation, urban overcrowding, government policy that hurt the bazaar [trading] classes, glaring income gaps, and conspicuous Western-style consumption by the elite. ...The effective suppression of secular oppositionists...left room for the religious opposition... In addition the association of the shah's regime with Western culture, commodities, and vices brought on a traditionalist reaction even among many former Westernizers, which often took an Islamic form.⁵²

The taking of hostages at the US embassy in Tehran by revolutionary students occurred against this backdrop of nationalist sentiment against imperialism. The US had permitted the Shah to

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Sampson (1975)

⁵⁰ Nasr (2025)

⁵¹ Vali Nasr, comments at Forum Antarabangsa Madani, May 12, 2026.

⁵² Keddie and Richard (2006)

seek refuge in the US – ostensibly for medical treatment – and the students, with memories of 1953 still fresh in their minds and fearing a US-sponsored counter-revolution, demanded his extradition. 66 US embassy staff were held for 444 days during which the US endured humiliation after humiliation as it was unable to expedite their freedom despite its tremendous power. US President Jimmy Carter saw out the last days of his presidency with the hostage crisis unresolved. The US even took its case to the International Court of Justice decrying such actions against diplomatic staff to be a violation of international law. (Never mind that the CIA had conspired to topple Mossadegh 26 years earlier). To this day, US ambassador to the United Nations Mike Waltz rarely misses an opportunity in his speeches on the Middle East to remind the UN of the Tehran hostage crisis.⁵³ This narrative facilitates an image of the US as a victim.

2.5 The Toll of Economic Sanctions

It also helps justify the imposition of sanctions on Iran since 1979. While styled as a liberal alternative to war, economic sanctions can be more destructive despite being ineffective. US international relations scholar Robert Pape surveyed the worldwide data from sanctions imposed from 1914 to 1990 and found that “there is little valid social science support for claims that economic sanctions can achieve major foreign policy goals.”⁵⁴ While sanctions are ineffective for pursuing foreign policy by other means they happen to be very devastating to life. A 2025 study by the medical journal *The Lancet* found that economic sanctions worldwide have caused more deaths than battle.⁵⁵ Sanctions imposed by the US and EU on other countries led to the deaths of over 28 million people – perhaps as many as 38 million – between 1971 to 2021. Whereas 5.3 million people perished in battle over the same period.

The legislation used by Jimmy Carter to impose sanctions on Iran has contemporary relevance. It was the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) of 1977. IEEPA is the same law used by Trump to impose his “Liberation Day” tariffs on the world in 2025, until the US Supreme Court struck it down in early 2026.

In 1980, thinking post-revolutionary Iran was weak and ripe for the taking, Iraq’s Saddam Hussein launched the Iran-Iraq War with US military support. Known for extensive use of chemical weapons by the Iraqis, the bitterly fought war was to last eight years and became a crucible of military experience for many of today’s Iranian leaders, including the new Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khomeini. By 1981, the US embassy hostages were released on Ronald Reagan’s inauguration day. The embassy escapade possibly cost Jimmy Carter a second presidential term. US attitudes towards Iran after 1979 would frame it – and Islam – as a political threat.⁵⁶ Concern would focus in particular around its nuclear programme.

⁵³ United States Mission to the United Nations (2026b); United States Mission to the United Nations (2026a)

⁵⁴ Pape (1997)

⁵⁵ The Lancet Global Health (2025)

⁵⁶ Said (1997)

2.6 Iranian Nuclear Capabilities

The US had gifted Iran its first nuclear research reactor in 1967 and trained Iranian scientists in the US.⁵⁷ As part of the Eisenhower administration's "Atoms for Peace" programme, countries such as Israel, Iran and Pakistan were given nuclear technology that helped provide political cover for the "biggest nuclear arms build-up in US history" and fuel the Cold War arms race.⁵⁸

[W]hile Iran had signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1968, the Shah hinted in statements responding to India's 1974 "peaceful nuclear explosion" that he might consider pursuing nuclear weapons. Second, he negotiated big nuclear reactor purchase deals with France, the United States, and West Germany.

That was especially concerning, since the Shah had also developed an interest in pursuing spent-fuel reprocessing and had started to denounce restrictions on his country's nuclear capabilities, asserting a national right under the NPT to develop the full nuclear fuel cycle, echoing the current theocracy's claims to such a right. (Both regimes also justified this right on the basis of Iran's need to diversify energy sources away from oil, in the event of declining oil reserves.) Spent-fuel reprocessing can produce plutonium that may be diverted to the development of nuclear weapons, and the Shah's deals could have positioned Iran to produce hundreds of nuclear weapons.⁵⁹

Under the Atoms for Peace programme, the US exported over 25 tonnes of highly enriched uranium (HEU) to 30 recipient countries. In 2025, real estate developer and US Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff stated, "We have one very, very clear red line [with Iran], and that is enrichment. We cannot allow even 1% of an enrichment capability."⁶⁰ However, enrichment to between 3-5% is a routine part of running a civilian nuclear programme. Research grade enrichment for medical isotopes and test materials runs from 20 to 85%, while weapons-grade is at 90%.⁶¹ Iran is thought to have uranium stockpiles at 60% enrichment, which could take around five years to weaponise if policy was to guide it there.

An assessment of Iran's nuclear weapon intentions and capabilities in a 2007 US National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) – an authoritative consensus view of the US intelligence community – held that Iran had halted its nuclear weapons programme in 2003 primarily due to international pressure. Contemporary reports suggest that this assessment of both the NIE and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which reached similar conclusions, still stands.⁶²

The recently assassinated Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had been opposed to Iran developing nuclear weapons. His successor Mojtaba Khamenei has not yet made his policy on nuclear weapons clear, but the US and Israel's decapitation policy targeted at moderates and subsequent attacks on the

⁵⁷ Al-Sayed (2026)

⁵⁸ Peachey (2014)

⁵⁹ Al-Sayed (2026)

⁶⁰ Reuters (2025)

⁶¹ Duggal (2026)

⁶² Slattery et al. (2026)

country may have hardened Iran's position. The current Iranian government may conclude that nuclear deterrence is required to insulate them from further attacks from the US and expansionist Israel.

Thus, it is clear that US policy regarding Iran's nuclear capabilities is not based on principle, but alignment with US interests. The pretext of invading Iran now on the basis of nuclear bombs that weren't there recalls the "weapons of mass destruction" pretext used by the US to invade Iraq and topple their erstwhile ally Saddam Hussein, who was not related to the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Conversely, the Israeli nuclear weapons programme is the only one in the Middle East. It is veiled in secrecy – refusing inspections from the IAEA – but enjoys tacit support from the US. Israel is clearly America's favoured nuclear power in the Middle East, but it is the entity that behaves most like a rogue state with its many wars with neighbouring states and threats to continuing doing so under its Greater Israel policy.

2.7 The Abraham Accords – a force for destabilisation

Trump's 2020 Abraham Accords had fuelled instability in the Middle East by providing Israel with Arab allies, UAE and Bahrain, later Morocco and Sudan. Israel, Bahrain and UAE began conducting joint military exercises and intelligence cooperation.⁶³ These three states were also placed under the US Central Command's new regional air and missile defence scheme. This alliance was effectively targeted at containing Iran, but normalisation provided cover for Israel to increase its oppression of Palestine.

Within a year of signing of the Abraham Accords, there was a nearly 15 percent increase in Israeli settler attacks on Palestinian people and property, compared to the year prior. In 2022, settler attacks increased by 123 percent as compared to 2020. Despite evidence of Israeli army and police support for settler violence, no accord signatory stepped in to curb the violence.⁶⁴

Bahrain and UAE followed the US in cutting funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the U.N. agency supporting Palestinian refugees.⁶⁵ Recovered documents revealed that one of the motivations for Yahya Sinwar to plan the Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023 was to disrupt normalisation and prevent Saudi Arabia joining before the Palestinian question could be settled. While Israel stepped up its genocide policy on Palestinians, its new military alliance allowed it to begin escalation with Iran – assassinating General Qassem Suleimani and bombing the Iranian embassy in Damascus, and engaging in reciprocal drone and missile warfare. Military coordination under the Abraham Accords allowed Israel to better defend itself from Iranian aerial attacks. The Abraham Accords also weakened and divided the pressure Arab States could apply to Israel on Palestinian issues.⁶⁶ The question of Palestine is at the heart of Arab politics and regional stability. The Abraham Accords support the ambitions of Greater

⁶³ Linetsky and Duss (2026)

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Israel and regional hegemony. It also plays into regional competition between the UAE and Saudi Arabia as rival claimants for Sunni leadership.

Destabilisation of the Middle East would appear to hurt long-term US interests since it opens up another front of conflict in addition to Russia-Ukraine and saps resources away from containing the rise of China as its principal global rival.⁶⁷ The redeployment of the US Pacific Fleet from East Asia to West Asia in the current crisis shows that US force projection has limits – it cannot decisively be in two places at once. The standoff over the Straits of Hormuz, backed by Iran’s missile and drone capabilities, also shows that a navy is not needed to counter the Pacific Fleet. The loss of a US carrier to Iranian surface-to-sea missiles would entail a tremendous blow to prestige. The many US bases in the Middle East appear to have been destroyed by Iran’s bombardments in the first few weeks of the war.⁶⁸ The US has expended precious missile stocks, materiel and prestige only to be fought to a standstill by a middle power.

Bipartisan support for Israel amongst the US ruling class thus leads them to substitute Israel’s national interest for the pursuit of US national interest. This is the concern outlined by Mearsheimer and Walt in *The Israel Lobby*. Either be dragged along by middle power Israel’s wars of choice or retain greater autonomy to pursue wars in line with a great power’s interest. Both have implications for the global economy and regional economies outside the Middle East, but it is clear that the present course of US-Israeli alignment is economically destabilising and – with its genocidal agenda – morally repugnant. As long as Israel is able to wag US foreign policy what Israel plans for the region matters greatly to the rest of the world.

2.8 The Hexagon and Super-Sparta

In recent months, Netanyahu has proposed two alternate models for Israel’s forward strategy, one based on geometry, one based on history. Both play fast and loose with geometry and history. Both have been met with skepticism, internationally and domestically, with the possible exception of Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India.

Netanyahu’s Hexagon

Less than a week before launching the war on Iran, Netanyahu proposed a regional ‘hexagon of alliances’ including Israel, India, Greece and Cyprus, along with other unnamed Arab, African and Asian states. This implies more than six points and the geographical route from India to Greece via Israel is more of a wiggly line than a hexagon. Rather than spatial geometry, what Netanyahu focused on was a geometry of sectarianism. This hexagon was pitched against a “radical Shia axis” and an “emerging radical Sunni axis”.⁶⁹

The radical Shia axis is likely the Iran-centred ‘axis of resistance’ that includes Hezbollah, Iraqi militias and Yemen’s Houthis (Ansar Allah). The radical Sunni axis was left undefined but likely

⁶⁷ Mearsheimer (2003)

⁶⁸ CNN (2026)

⁶⁹ Gjevori (2026)

refers to those countries issuing joint diplomatic statements in response to recent Israeli aggression.

Israel attacked at least six countries in the region in 2025, including Palestine, Iran, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen, and conducted attacks linked to Gaza in international waters in Tunisia and Greece. It has also threatened Egypt, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Jordan.⁷⁰

It may also include Pakistan as the sole Muslim-majority nation (also majority Sunni) with nuclear weapons. On 17 September 2025, Pakistan formed a security cooperation alliance with Saudi Arabia. Türkiye was rumoured for a time to have been interested in joining this. This development may have helped spur Modi's visit to Tel Aviv, which took place just after the hexagon speech and two days before the war on Iran. However, Modi did not take up Netanyahu's hexagon. Joining an alliance that is ostensibly anti-Muslim might be too much even for Modi, who in his messaging and foreign policy has tried to reach out to Muslim-majority nations such as Malaysia. The hexagon was also greeted with scepticism by a senior Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) official.⁷¹

This was the second time in less than six months that Netanyahu's grand visions had been rebuffed. The hexagon failed on the international stage, whereas earlier Israelis had rejected his ideas for a hardline domestic vision.

Israel: Super-Sparta or Spartan, All too Spartan?

On 15 September 2025, between the June 2025 12-Day War on Iran and the undeclared Ramzan War of February 2026, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called for Israel to become a "Super Sparta".

Speaking at a Ministry of finance conference for the Accountant General, Netanyahu said that Israel would have to prepare to be more isolated amongst nations as it pursued a permanent war footing. He painted a picture of Western Europe succumbing to influence from immigrant Muslim minorities rather than the livestreaming of the Gaza genocide that he had presided over. This turning of opinion against Israel would necessitate it becoming an autarkic military enclave – a "Super Sparta" – in order to produce the weapons it needed to survive in light of mounting pressure on its access to foreign military trade and aid.

His speech caused jitters amongst tech capitalists who depend on external investment and trade to sustain Israel's innovative startup ecosystem.⁷² Global multinationals such as Amazon, Apple, ARM, Broadcom, Cisco, HP, IBM, Intel, Google, Meta, Microsoft, and NVIDIA are among the tech firms with significant investment or research and development facilities in Israel. Economic autarky implied being cut off from these flows of trade and international capital which help sustain Israel's economy.

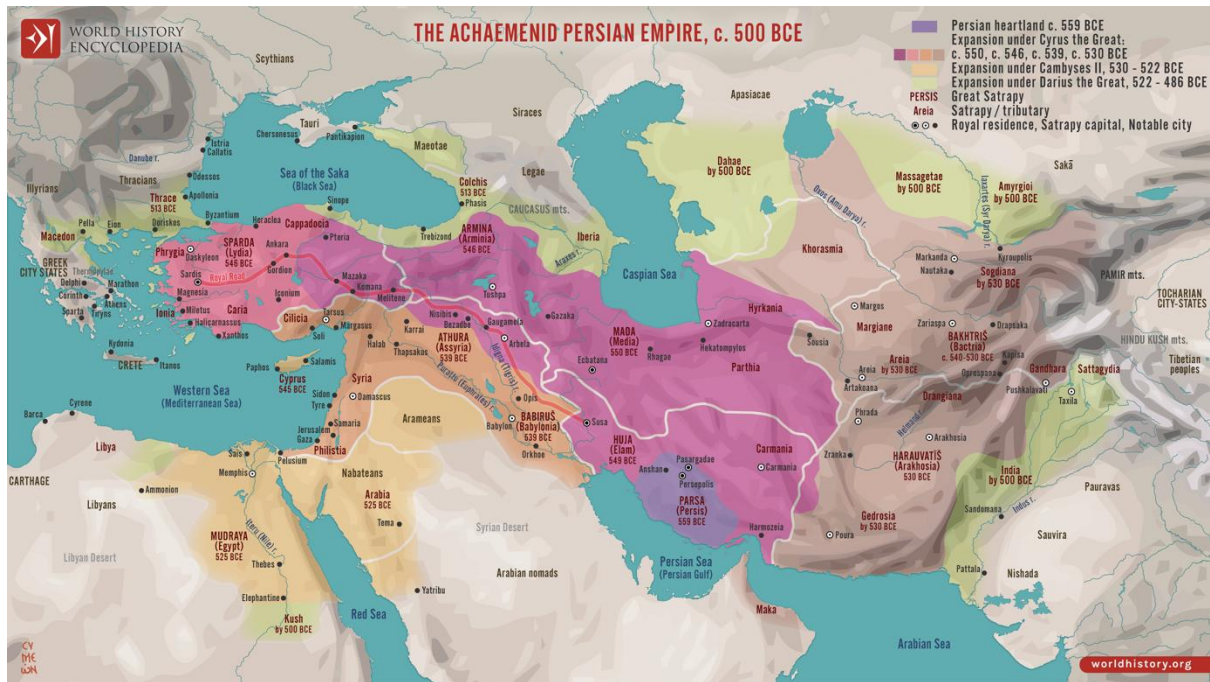
⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg (2026)

⁷² Mazzucato (2022)

Netanyahu has not earned a reputation for speaking the truth, so it is unsurprising that he mischaracterised Sparta to his audience. In its military readiness and ethnic apartheid, Sparta bears some similarities to Israel. However, it differed markedly in its political and economic system. It was not autarkic as Netanyahu claimed. It also had a complicated relationship with Persia. Despite Sparta's military fame, it lost many battles, and the reality of its imperial overstretch and military decline offer an inauspicious comparison. It is an instructive comparison however that could help us understand how the Zionist project may reach its limits.

Figure 4: The Achaemenid Persian Empire with Athens and Sparta to the far left, c. 500 BCE.



Source: Netchev (2025).

Sparta was an ancient Greek city-state famous for being the pre-eminent warrior society of 5th-century BCE Greece. It was Sparta that earned immortal fame when it sent 300 warriors under the command of King Leonidas to delay the invading Persian army of King Xerxes at the narrow coastal pass of Thermopylae. In 480 BCE, Achaemenid Persia was the superpower stretching from India to Egypt while the Greek city-states were peripheral upstarts. The Persian invasion was in reprisal for the sacking of Sardis, a Persian city, in 498 BCE by rebellious Ionian Greeks aided by Athens. The Spartans had allied with Athens to resist the Persian invasion, with Leonidas committing to hold the pass at Thermopylae whilst the Athenian general Themistocles would block the naval route at Artemisium. Thermopylae was actually a military defeat. The 300 Spartans were wiped out to a man, along with several thousand allies and 700 Thespians (not actors, but warriors from Thespieae). But it was regarded as a heroic last stand, since they held out for three days on the narrow pass against a much larger force of Persians.

Figure 5: The Scene of the Battle of Thermopylae.



Note: This image has been cropped.
Source: Steeple Davis (2018)

In popular culture, Zack Snyder's 2006 film *300*, based on Frank Miller's orgiastically violent graphic novel, told the tale of the 300 Spartans. The film emerged at a time when the US was engaged in its second war in Iraq – Operation Iraqi Freedom. Led by King Leonidas (portrayed by actor Gerard Butler), the movie Spartans are buff, bronzed and painted as noble champions of freedom whereas the Persians are depicted as their twisted oriental nemesis, a slave army driven by a tyrant – with many characters given an inexplicably African and Hispanic rather than an Iranian depiction.⁷³

In reality, Sparta was an oligarchic dyarchy, ruled by two kings backed by a gerontocracy of 28 elders over 60 years old, the *gerousia*. The twin kingship allowed one to rule while the other waged war abroad. They led a warrior society that rested on an enslaved class of Greeks, the

⁷³ The film is also notable for being the film debut of Michael Fassbender, who delivers an atypically one-dimensional performance as a screaming Spartan. Although he would go on to deliver a deeply-felt performance in Steve McQueen's *Hunger* (2008) as Irish republican hunger striker Bobby Sands, Fassbender's crude performance in *300* testifies to the shallowness of the material.

helots (captives). Spartan society was famous for boasting strict adherence to the law. The subordination of the individual to the polity, enforced by the *ephor* lawkeepers. Sparta's mythical founder Lykourgos was famed as a lawgiver, setting down the rules of Spartan society. This has merited him a plaque in the US House of Representatives.⁷⁴ If Athens speaks to the democratic pretensions of Western civilisation – the slave-owning, imperialist, direct democracy (the latter of which no modern democracy would replicate) – Sparta is the ancestor of the West's traditions of authoritarianism, collectivism and ethnic oppression – fascism.

Tom Holland, a prolific author of popular histories of the ancient and medieval period, co-host of the Rest is History podcast, and a contemporary translator of the Histories, has tried to paint the Greco-Persian Wars as a conflict of freedom versus slavery, but this is to anachronistically project modern predilections on an ancient geopolitical conflict that was realist rather than idealist in nature. Even fascists would defend their national sovereignty in the face of foreign invasion.

If Sparta (or Athens) could be said to stand for freedom, it would only be freedom from imperial Persian vassalage to pursue their own agenda of conquest – of other Greeks and, in time, Persia itself. While Spartan law frowned on the accumulation of wealth, banning gold and silver coinage in favour of iron currency worthless outside, Sparta wasn't averse to accepting Persian financing for its war against Athens. Notably, Xerxes, while certainly a hegemon, was the grandson of Cyrus the Great, the lawgiver, who liberated the Jews of Babylon (near modern-day Baghdad, Iraq) and permitted their return to Judea.

Defenders of Israel have long tried to style it as the only democracy in the Middle East. Yet, Israel is an ethnostate whose existence rests on the appropriation of Palestinian land – the original sin of the 1948 partition – as well as the exploitation of Palestinian labour, and violent subjugation of the Palestinian population. Every Israeli (apart from objectors such as Ultraorthodox Jews) undergoes military service in the Israeli "Defence" Force (IDF) which functions more like a policing army of occupation. By 2009, one in 11 Israeli Jews lived on land seized since 1967.⁷⁵

Ancient Sparta was an ethnically stratified society. All male citizen Spartans, *homoioi* (equals), were full-time warriors, unlike typical Greek city-states where a *hoplite* was a man of means able to afford his own armour, but lived otherwise as a merchant, tradesman or farmer. This kind of hoplite was only a part-time warrior, an amateur. Even the Athenian philosopher Plato had fought as a hoplite against Sparta in subsequent wars. In Sparta, farming and other work was done by an enslaved class of Greeks, the *helots*. Surrounding the city of Sparta were its second-class subjects, the *perioikoi* (those who lived around), who assisted in war and other matters. The spatial arrangement recalls the concentric geography of apartheid Durban in South Africa where whites were buffered by Asians with black Africans on the outer limits of the city.

Spartan society was effectively a military camp imposed on the native Greek population of Lakonia and Messenia in the Peloponnesian peninsular of the Greek mainland. When asked why Sparta had no walls (unlike say Athens) a Spartan quipped that its spears were its walls. It was enslaved helot labour that allowed a Spartan citizen male to train full time and maintain his

⁷⁴ Architect of the Capitol (n.d.)

⁷⁵ Ibid.

contribution of food to the communal mess. Other Greek city-states typically enslaved foreigners or barbarians. Sparta (along with Thessaly) were exceptions in enslaving Greeks. This gave rise to the political problem of keeping the helot population suppressed in their native land.

With studied legalism, every year the ephors of the Spartan state would declare war on the helots in order to relieve any Spartans of blood guilt should they need to kill a helot. The coming of age ritual for young Spartans was known as the *krypteia* (secret), which may also have been the name of an organisation akin to secret police. Youths would descend on the helot dwellings at night and be expected to murder the strongest helots.⁷⁶ This practice helped terrorise the helot population and harden the Spartans to sustain their system of ancient military apartheid. Prominent Palestinian historian Rashid Khalidi has been amongst those comparing today's Palestinians to the helots of yore. Netanyahu was hardly the first to compare Israel to Sparta.⁷⁷

The choice of Sparta as a model for an isolated Israel is significant because in popular Western culture – thanks in part to Zack Snyder's *300* – Sparta's main enemy is Persia. More educated Western elites – a dying breed – would be aware that Sparta fought other Greeks more than it fought Persia. The favourite classical Greek text of the neoconservatives and New England American elite is Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War, which forms a sequel to the Histories of Herodotus. Herodotus was deemed far too ethnographically curious and appreciative about non-Greek cultures for the contemporary use of the neoconservatives – concerned as they were to justify US interventionism abroad. For example, Herodotus says of Persian boys that they are taught three things from birth: how to ride, how to shoot the bow, and to tell the truth. His opening paragraph of the Histories sets out his intention to narrate the great deeds of both Greeks and non-Greeks.⁷⁸

Set after the Persian invasion in Herodotus, Thucydides' history tells of how democratic Athens (a rising power) provoked war with oligarchic Sparta (a ruling power). Graham Allison's theory of the Thucydides Trap derives from this history.⁷⁹ Sparta was able to defeat Athens, yet Sparta did so with financing from Persia. Those more familiar with the ancient Greeks would be aware that the lines between Persians and Greeks were not drawn as sharply as Snyder and Miller's works suggest. Many Greeks were subjects of the Persian empire. The Persians regularly employed Greek mercenaries and advisors.

Ionian Greeks inhabited the western coast of contemporary Türkiye and were thus vassals of the Persian Empire. Yunani is a Malay and Turkic exonym for the Ionians and Greeks in general which dates from the Greek settlement of Anatolia. Herodotus was originally a citizen of Halicarnassus in Persian Anatolia, meaning that the first Western history was produced in Asia, not Europe, as the geographical dividing line runs through the straits of the Bosphorus that bisects modern day Istanbul.

⁷⁶ Cartledge (2004)

⁷⁷ Weiss (2009)

⁷⁸ Herodotus (2009)

⁷⁹ Allison (2015)

Figure 6: Ancient Greece (Hellas) and Greek colonies in Asia during the 5th-century BCE.



Source: Zaltron (2020)

Xenophon, an Athenian mercenary and intellectual, but one closely aligned to Sparta, wrote the sequel to Thucydides' history of the wars between Athens and Sparta. Xenophon's career testifies that relations between Greeks and Persians were not always adversarial. His *Anabasis* was a memoir of his time serving as a leader of Greek mercenaries in the service of one of the contenders to the Persian throne, Cyrus the Younger – the great grandson of Xerxes – who sought to seize the throne from his brother Artaxerxes II. Cyrus perished on the field of battle near Babylon, leaving Xenophon and a few others to lead the stranded Greek mercenaries through hostile territory back to the Anatolian coast. Xenophon also penned the *Cyropaedia* (the education of Cyrus), loosely based on the Cyrus the Great, founder of the Achaemenid Persian dynasty and ancestor of Cyrus the younger. The *Cyropaedia* sets out the education of the ideal ruler. Thus, Xenophon as a Greek intellectual and general, even one who would later invade Anatolian Persia with his friend the Spartan king Agesilaos, would uphold as his ideal model of rulership a Persian. As the author of a treatise on household management, the *Oikonomikos*, Xenophon may also lay claim to being a founder of economics (oikonomos).

The Spartan economy was certainly not autarkic as Netanyahu has tried to suggest. Their native Lakonia and the broader Peloponnese lacked the copper and tin to make the bronze that they would arm themselves with. These metals would necessarily have to be sourced by trade. Crucially, they were not forged by Spartan citizens, but rather by the perioikoi, the second class non-citizens of Lakonia.⁸⁰ Under their strict laws, the Spartans were banned from engaging in crafts or trades, these latter functions were externalised in Sparta's caste system.⁸¹ The perioikoi crafted pottery that was traded throughout the Mediterranean and even to the Black Sea. Perioikoi also played another role to stave off the demographic decline that is the nightmare of an ethnostate based on occupation. The full Spartan citizens were limited in number – at most they may have numbered 9,000 at their peak – but over time their numbers were eroded by war and the perioikoi, and even the helots, were gradually drafted in to bolster their thinning ranks. This finds echoes in Israel's courting of immigration by non-European Jews from Ethiopia and India. Israel is also facing demographic challenges in overcoming the IDF's manpower crisis, with heavy reliance on reservists, compounded by its inability to draft Ultraorthodox citizens into the IDF.⁸²

The Spartans did not farm, they depended on the perioikoi and helots to do so. Expansion of the economy depended in part on enslaving new helots. The risk of uprisings was real. Despite the yearly terrors of the *krypteia* the helots of Messenia rebelled twice. Eventually, their enemies from rival city states would take advantage of this.

Though today Spartans are famed for their military prowess, they also lost many battles. Their military might was brought to an end through several factors which make them an inauspicious military analogy for Israel. After defeating Athens in the Peloponnesian War, Sparta engaged in imperial overstretch with adventures in Persian Anatolia, under the command of King Agiselaos and Xenophon, and conflict with the Greek city-state of Thebes. Thebes boasted a particularly gifted general by the name of Epaminondas (incidentally the name of a tanker that was recently trapped in the Straits of Hormuz).

Epaminondas figured out how to break Sparta on the battlefield. Greek warfare is today extolled as a distinctive 'Western way of war' for its orderly ranks of armoured hoplites fighting closely side by side in a phalanx.⁸³ In fact, it was highly ritualistic. The hoplite phalanx of spear and shield was upheld as virtuous while archery was derided as cowardly. It was Persian archery that ultimately mowed down the flower of Spartan manhood at their last stand in Thermopylae. Light troops armed with javelins, *psiloi*, performed a harassing role considered beneath the lofty Spartans, so helots were usually tasked with this. However, at the Battle of Sphacteria 425 BCE, the Athenian light troops' fire and flee tactics helped defeat 440 heavily armed Spartans. The other distinctive ritual practice of hoplite warfare was that the best troops would be arrayed on the right of the line of battle and the worst would be on the left. Thus, with opposing battle lines the best troops of each side would face the worst troops of the other. Even the Spartans –

⁸⁰ Cartledge (2004)

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Svetlova (2026)

⁸³ Hanson and Keegan (2009)

distinguished for the time devoted to hone their skill in manoeuvre and drill – earned their fame by facing the worst of their enemies’ troops.

At the battle of Leuktra in 371 BCE, pitted his best troops against the Spartan elite. He fielded them in great depth. The hoplite phalanx was normally twelve ranks deep – and the Spartans were no exception. The Theban phalanx was ranked a full 50 men deep – a solid and impenetrable mass of men. The Spartan elite were crushed. Following Leuktra, Epaminondas took the battle to the Spartan homeland by supporting an uprising of the helots in the Third Messenian War. He thus struck at both their battle tactics and their socioeconomic base. This helped break both the mystique of Spartan military supremacy and its material foundations. Epaminondas would not live to see the final subjugation of the Spartans. That honour would go to King Philip II of Macedonia, father of Alexander the Great. As a child, Philip II served as a political hostage of Thebes under the tutelage of Epaminondas. He would revolutionise Greek warfare by fully embracing combined arms tactics – a deeper phalanx with long pikes paired with shock cavalry and a refused flank – and conquer the entirety of the Greek mainland. His son Alexander would go on to realise the Greek dream of conquering Persia, although he did not live long to enjoy it.

Inaccurate and inauspicious as Netanyahu’s analogy of Sparta was, it likely tried to draw on popular recognition of Sparta’s martial prowess. Invoking a Super-Macedonia might have drawn some blank stares, despite its superior military machinery and steamrolling of Persia. In any case, some naysayer would have no doubt pointed out that the Macedonian way of war was eventually crushed by the legions of the Roman Republic. The Romans went on to suffer a number of spectacular defeats at the hands of a resurgent Persian empire. Even losing two emperors and one of Caesar’s Triumvirate partners – Marcus Licinius Crassus – to misadventures against the Parthian and Sassanid empires. Persia’s next defeat as an empire came not from the West, but from Arabia and was followed by its submission to Islam. In the present, Netanyahu may have sold Trump a false image of a flimsy Iranian state, but it underpins a hard strategic truth. Israel on its own lacks the power to defeat Iran. It needs the US to fight its Iran war for it. However, since the US has underestimated Iran, victory may not be guaranteed. Super-Sparta speaks to Netanyahu’s fear of an isolated Israel, whereas the Hexagon speaks to a modality where it is taken seriously in a regional alliance.

Today, Israel’s stock market is booming and 2025 saw its largest ever foreign investment deal with Google’s \$32 billion purchase of cybersecurity firm Wiz.⁸⁴ The 7 October strategy of Hamas exposed glaring gaps in Israel’s vaunted intelligence and cast a shadow over the ease of settler colonial life. Israel reactionary blitzkrieg has enjoyed military success in Gaza, Syria and Southern Lebanon, though this is largely against women, children and civilians rather than in asymmetric warfare against resistance forces. Drone warfare waged by Hezbollah appears to have dented the Israeli advance into Lebanon. Attempts to decapitate Hezbollah, Hamas and Iran have failed to yield decisive advantage. Their enemies have regrouped and struck back, though Hamas and Hezbollah are much weakened. Israel seems well positioned to retain the territories it has seized in Gaza, Syria and Southern Lebanon until such a time that resistance forces are strengthened, possibly by a post-war Iran. Israel’s assassination of Iranian negotiator and security chief Ali Larijani on 17 March 2026 may have removed one of the key statesmen capable of brokering a

⁸⁴ Taylor (2026)

constructive peace.⁸⁵ Perhaps this was intentional as it likely strengthened the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and the case for prolonging war – so that the US could continue to serve the Greater Israel agenda.

In even the murder of negotiators the Spartans had more honour than the Zionist regime. Sparta infamously murdered two emissaries of King Xerxes who came demanding tribute and submission in the form of gifts of ‘earth and water’ in 491 BCE. In the movie 300, this is depicted as Leonidas kicking the envoys into a pit. In history, the Spartans knew they had committed a grave sin against the gods by murdering the Persian negotiators. Being a religious people, they sent two Spartans volunteers to Xerxes to be killed in recompense. Xerxes showed magnanimity by sparing their lives and sent them home, thus establishing moral superiority over the Spartans.

Likewise, during the ceasefire in 2026, we see the regrouped Iranian leadership attempting to distinguish itself from the Trump and Netanyahu administrations by sending clear diplomatic signals and standards to pursue a satisfactory end to the war. Israel appears set in continuing to pursue its Greater Israel ambitions in Gaza and Lebanon, as well as continuing the war with Iran. Trump has tried to deescalate after his blockade of the Iranian blockade of Hormuz failed, but he appears unable to make concessions that Iran can accept. Iran meanwhile demands its right to nuclear enrichment and the lifting of sanctions. These appear to be unacceptable to Trump.

The post-1979 Islamic Republic has been defined by national security, anti-imperialism focused on the US and only modest developmental ambitions. Developmental ambitions have supported diplomatic efforts at rapprochement with the West, but this has often sat in conflict with the national security doctrine of forward defence and resistance in the greater Middle East to stave off threats to Iranian sovereignty. Nuclear enrichment lies at the centre of this tension between national security and Western engagement.

The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) brokered by Obama was able to deescalate enrichment in exchange for sanctions relief, but Trump’s enmity towards Obama and Joe Biden has seen him tear down their signature policies such as the JCPOA and the Inflation Reduction Act in favour of his own policy architecture such as the Abraham Accords midwived by his son-in-law Jared Kushner. As the broader Iran-US-Israel conflict explored above shows, uncritical enmity can lead to strategic traps.

Empires weakened by war become vulnerable to outside incursions. Since the Middle Ages this was often the prerogative of horsemen from the Steppe – Goths ended the Western Roman empire, Turks conquered Constantinople, Mongols swept into the Delhi Sultanate and Imperial China. Horsemen from the Arabian Peninsula overran the Sassanian Empire, and the Arab

⁸⁵ Vali Nasr (2025) narrates an encounter between Larijani and Henry Kissinger in New York in 2015. Kissinger, who wanted dialogue with an Iranian politician, asked Larijani when Iran would choose to follow pragmatism instead of revolutionary ideology, like a proper nation-state. Kissinger went on to extol the virtues of Immanuel Kant and his concept of perpetual peace. Larijani replied that he was the translator of Kant into Persian and held a doctorate in Kant’s philosophy. Kissinger reportedly warmed up to this common bond and proceeded to have a fruitful exchange with Larijani over many hours.

uprising helped end the Ottoman Caliphate and open the way for the Zionist settlement of Palestine.

In the Histories, Herodotus tells the tale of the last king of Lydia, Croesus (d. 547 BCE), a man so wealthy that he remains renowned today – “as rich as Croesus” is a phrase still used to describe great wealth. Croesus wished to wage war on the nascent Persian empire. He consulted the Oracle at Delphi, who gave him a typically cryptic reply that if he waged war on Persia, “he would destroy a great empire”. Croesus would later discover that that empire was his own. In our present time, the richest US president in history has been persuaded to make war on Persia by the oracle of Tel Aviv. Will an empire fall?

III: Conclusion

The Palestinian Question remains at the heart of today’s war. It is fully back on the agenda after 7 October 2023. Hamas was successful in disrupting Arab normalisation with Israel and resetting the geopolitical destiny of the Middle East. Israel’s genocide of the Palestinian people, which predated its collective punishment of Gaza, has become a defining moral issue of our time. Israel’s pursuit of Greater Israel amidst the stigma of genocide will further polarise sentiment – particularly in the Middle East – against it as it poses an existential threat to its neighbours.

Besides the issue of how long the war will last, the questions that remain are how will it end? Will it be with a whimper or a bang?

As of late May 2026 and six weeks of an uneasy ceasefire, several options appear to present themselves to the sides involved. Since it has successfully resisted US and Israeli attacks, Iran appears to want a negotiated peace that will represent a qualitative improvement from its pre-war position. This means sanctions relief and reparations, the latter of which could take the form of Strait of Hormuz passage payments. Iran appears willing to move closer to US demands on nuclear stockpiles. A 10 May 2026 proposal from Iran suggested that Iran was willing to dilute its highly enriched uranium stockpiles and ship the rest to a third country. It also signalled willingness to suspend enrichment for 12 years, shorter than the 20-year moratorium called for by Washington.⁸⁶ Iran had previously agreed to voluntary suspension of enrichment in 2003 with Europe. However, Europe failed to deliver their end of the bargain. This resulted in Iran resuming enrichment in 2005 which provoked a series of punishing UN sanctions on Iran. Iran is unlikely to want to repeat this experience of a “Carthaginian Peace”. Trump’s original policy aims were focused on no nuclear weapons, but there are none, so the goalposts have shifted to no enrichment in mid-2025 due to Israeli pressure. The demand for the entire stockpile to be shipped out also appear to be due to Israeli influence.⁸⁷

If Trump does not seek to pursue a negotiated peace then several other options remain. He can resume hostilities with unclear prospects. An air or naval war would risk more reprisals on Gulf allies. The fact that the US has not been able to protect its Arab allies may have undermined its value as a hedge against Iranian hegemony. Bombardment of Iran will also apply a further drain

⁸⁶ Parsi (2026)

⁸⁷ Ibid.

on already depleted US missile stocks. Naval warfare may put US ships at risk of being sunk or severely damaged by Iranian aerial bombardment. Trump has also mooted a land invasion to seize Iran's uranium stockpiles. This would be a lengthy and costly affair given that the June 2025 bombardments may have buried some stockpiles underground. A US ground force on Iranian soil in a fixed position would leave it vulnerable to being surrounded and either wiped out or taken hostage, potentially repeating the humiliation Carter suffered in 1979.

In a 10 May 2026 interview on 60 minutes, a premier US public affairs talk show, Netanyahu suggested that his preferred option would be for the US to undertake such a ground offensive. Israel appears to want the US to absorb the lion's share of risks in order to guarantee Israel as the sole nuclear power in the Middle East. Trump's negotiating team is now led by people with close ties to Israel, joining Kushner and Witkoff is Nick Stewart of the pro-Israeli lobby group The Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD). FDD appears to have been influential in shifting Trump's talking points closer to Israel's.⁸⁸ It seems unlikely that such a team would be able to reach a workable compromise with Iran.

Besides a Carthaginian Peace and outright war, Trump could also just declare victory (for the umpteenth time) and walk away, leaving the situation unresolved but the Straits of Hormuz under Iranian control.⁸⁹ This would put allied Gulf economies into a death spiral unless they pivot and seek accommodation with Iran. There are signs that most Gulf states, with the exception of the UAE and Bahrain, have tried not to further antagonise Iran. Saudi Arabia has signalled a more accommodationist position towards Iran rather than pursue reprisals for attacks on US bases on Saudi soil. For Asian economies, formalisation of Iran's toll on the Straits and the absence of US naval reprisals could provide the stability shipping insurers need for trade to resume.

While walking away avoids the legacy problems of signing a deal worse than Obama's JCPOA or military defeat, Trump's actions still leave the prestige of US military power diminished. There will be more questions about the actual coercive power of the US. It is unclear if this will affect the willingness of lesser nations to submit to Trump's trade agenda. It is also unclear what Trump will attempt in the remaining two and half years of his presidency. As an egotistical man, he will likely continue to seek opportunities to recover lost prestige, mostly likely at the expense of other nations.

In both trade war and hot war, Trump has been fought to a standstill by lesser powers. China has deadlocked Trump's tariffs with reprisals on rare earths. His use of IEEPA tariffs has been declared illegal by the US Supreme Court. Iran has choked the Straits of Hormuz. However, there has been considerable collateral damage on the other nations of the world who for the most part have acquiesced to his trade regime and are now suffering the consequences of his ill-conceived war on Iran. Under Trump, the US is looking like flailing empire in decline, barely able to focus on its principal strategic rival, China.⁹⁰ However, the lesson coming from both the trade war and Iran war is that unless this decline is managed with guardrails of some sort then the global economy and lesser states will experience disproportionate economic costs, if not shocks. Certain countries

⁸⁸ Magee (2026)

⁸⁹ Reuters (2026)

⁹⁰ Boot (2026)

such as Cuba – already under economic blockade – could lose their sovereignty outright. Policymakers in developing countries would be well advised to develop diplomatic and economic buffers for an early end to the new American century.

This could take the form of supporting a constructive and fair peace process brokered by Pakistan, diversification away from Gulf country trade, increasing stockpiles of energy and other essentials (perhaps emulating China’s enviable oil reserves), reducing fossil fuel import dependency by accelerating renewable energy adoption and readying fiscal safety nets for the most vulnerable economic actors and households. Reducing fuel subsidies will not compensate for an absolute shortage of oil. Supply shocks remain the main threat in the next few months and voluntary or enforced rationing measures may be needed to stretch out thin supplies. Even if the war ends by June, it will take around six months for oil production to reach pre-war levels.⁹¹ This means that the second half of 2026 will be punishing on many countries, Malaysia included. This may invite an unwelcome return to pandemic-era constraints for many.

The US and China could conceivably withstand a six-month war in the Gulf due to domestic fossil fuel capabilities or large stockpiles, but they are likely to face mounting inflation from fuel.⁹² It seems unlikely that the global economy, especially Europe and Asia, can survive further months of supply shocks without slipping into recession or crisis. Malaysia may be one of the more resilient developing countries in Asia with major trade and investment ties with the US and China, but Malaysia is not immune to contagion from the region. The business case for the Gulf as an expatriate financial playground may have collapsed⁹³, presenting an opportunity for countries such as Singapore or Malaysia to take in financial refugees. Hardened by decades of sanctions and the experience of the eight-year Iran-Iraq War, Iran is likely capable of persevering through many more months of war. Revolutionary Iran has been defined by its defiance of US imperialism and the preservation of its independence and sovereignty, even at the expense of its economy or the comfort of its people.⁹⁴

It is perhaps instructive that Herodotus, in closing the first Western history, gives the final word to the Persians. Specifically, it closes with the Persians asking their king Cyrus the Great the wisdom of moving to a more gentle, fertile land. Cyrus cautions them that should they move, they should prepare to be hegemony no longer, as “soft places tend to produce soft men, for the same land cannot yield both wonderful crops and men who are noble and courageous in war.”⁹⁵ Agreeing with Cyrus, the Persians resolved to continue living in a rough land rather than lose their freedom to others.

⁹¹ U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) (2026b)

⁹² China buys about 90% of Iran’s oil, but this only constitutes around 12% of China’s crude imports. However, its stockpiles are estimated to last two to four years. US-China Economic and Security Review Commission (2026)

⁹³ Vali Nasr, comments at Forum Antarabangsa Madani, May 13, 2026.

⁹⁴ Nasr (2025)

⁹⁵ Herodotus (2009)

References

- 18 U.S.C. § 1091. 1988. "Genocide." <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/1091>.
- Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg. 2026. "Netanyahu's Hexagon of Alliances May Remain a Dream." Arab News. March 2, 2026. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2634934/%7B%7B>.
- Adrian, Tobias, Jihad Azour, Nigel Chalk, Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas, Alfred Kammer, Abebe Aemro Selassie, Krishna Srinivasan, and Rodrigo Valdes. 2026. "How the War in the Middle East Is Affecting Energy, Trade, and Finance." IMF. March 30, 2026. <https://www.imf.org/en/blogs/articles/2026/03/30/how-the-war-in-the-middle-east-is-affecting-energy-trade-and-finance>.
- Allison, Graham. 2015. "The Thucydides Trap: Are the U.S. and China Headed for War?" *The Atlantic* (blog). September 24, 2015. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/united-states-china-war-thucydides-trap/406756/>.
- Al-Sayed, Sara. 2026. "The US–Israeli History Behind Their War Against Iran." *The Equation* (blog). March 19, 2026. <https://blog.ucs.org/sara-al-sayed/the-us-israeli-history-behind-their-war-against-iran/>.
- Architect of the Capitol. n.d. "Relief Portrait Plaques of Lawgivers." Accessed May 8, 2026. <https://www.aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/art/relief-portrait-plaques-lawgivers>.
- Boot, Max. 2026. "What a Former CIA Analyst Reveals about a Potential China Fight." *The Washington Post*, May 11, 2026. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2026/05/11/us-china-militaries-assessed-by-cia-veteran-china-expert/>.
- Cartledge, Paul. 2004. *The Spartans: The World of the Warrior-Heroes of Ancient Greece, from Utopia to Crisis and Collapse*. 1. Vintage Books ed. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- CNN. 2026. *Majority of US Military Sites in Middle East Damaged by Iran, CNN Investigation Reveals*. <https://www.cnn.com/2026/05/01/world/video/us-military-bases-iran-strikes-images-invs-digvid>.
- Codepink. n.d. "Bought by Zionism." Bought by Zionism. Accessed May 8, 2026. <https://www.boughtbyzionism.org/>.
- Cordall, Simon Speakman. 2026. "Turkish 'Threat' Talked up in Israel as Netanyahu Focuses on New Alliances." Al Jazeera. February 23, 2026. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/2/23/turkish-threat-talked-up-israel-netanyahu-focuses-new-alliances>.
- Criado, Miguel Ángel. 2022. "How Nazi Propaganda Dehumanized Jews to Facilitate the Holocaust." EL PAÍS English. December 4, 2022. <https://english.elpais.com/society/2022-12-04/how-nazi-propaganda-dehumanized-jews-to-facilitate-the-holocaust.html>.
- Diakun, Bridget, Joshua Minchin, and Tomer Ranaan. 2026. "At Least 26 Iranian Shadow Fleet Vessels Bypass US Blockade." Lloyd's List. April 20, 2026. <https://www.lloydslist.com/LL1156966/At-least-26-Iranian-shadow-fleet-vessels-bypass-US-blockade>.

- Duggal, Hanna. 2026. "What Is Uranium Enrichment and How Quickly Could Iran Build a Nuclear Bomb?" Al Jazeera. April 22, 2026. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/4/22/what-is-uranium-enrichment-and-how-quickly-could-iran-build-a-nuclear-bomb>.
- Eisen, Norman, Mansi Patel, and Kai Smith. 2023. "The Corruption and Autocracy Nexus: The Case of 'King Bibi.'" *Brookings* (blog). April 10, 2023. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-corruption-and-autocracy-nexus-the-case-of-king-bibi/>.
- Fanon, Frantz, Jean-Paul Sartre, Richard Philcox, and Homi K. Bhabha. 2004. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York (N.Y.): Grove press.
- General Assembly resolution 260 A (III). 1948. "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide." OHCHR. December 9, 1948. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-prevention-and-punishment-crime-genocide>.
- Ghattas, Kim. 2021. *Black Wave*. Holt Paperbacks.
- Gjevori, Elis. 2026. "What's Netanyahu's Planned 'Hexagon' Alliance – and Can It Work?" Al Jazeera. February 23, 2026. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/2/23/whats-netanyahus-planned-hexagon-alliance-and-can-it-work>.
- Gupta, Kriti, and Justin Biemann. 2026. "If Oil Backs off, Risk Reprices." J.P. Morgan. March 23, 2026. <https://privatebank.jpmorgan.com/apac/en/insights/markets-and-investing/tmt/if-oil-backs-off-risk-reprices>.
- Hanson, Victor Davis, and John Keegan. 2009. *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.
- Herodotus. 2009. *The Landmark Herodotus: The Histories*. Translated by Andrea L. Purvis. New York, NY: Anchor Books.
- International Criminal Court. 2024. "Netanyahu." 2024. <https://www.icc-cpi.int/defendant/netanyahu>.
- J. P. Morgan. 2026a. "Oil Flash Note."
- . 2026b. "Oil Flash Note."
- Jaber, Samer. 2026. "Iran Remains an Obstacle to the 'Greater Israel' Project." Al Jazeera. April 14, 2026. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2026/4/14/iran-remains-an-obstacle-to-the-greater-israel-project>.
- Keddie, Nikki R., and Yann Richard. 2006. *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*. New Haven Conn.: Yale University Press.
- Landry, Alexander P., Ram I. Orr, and Kayla Mere. 2022. "Dehumanization and Mass Violence: A Study of Mental State Language in Nazi Propaganda (1927–1945)." *PLOS ONE* 17 (11). Public Library of Science:e0274957. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0274957>.
- Laqueur, Walter, and Barry M. Rubin. 1969. *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*. 7th ed. Penguin Books.

- Leibowitz, Yeshayahu, and John P. Egan. 1986. "Yeshayahu Leibowitz: Liberating Israel from the Occupied Territories." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 15 (2). Taylor & Francis, Ltd.:102–8. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2536829>.
- Levy, Daniel. 2026. "What Benjamin Netanyahu and the Israeli Right Really Mean When They Invoke 'Greater Israel.'" *The Guardian*. April 13, 2026. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/apr/13/benjamin-netanyahu-middle-east-greater-israel>.
- Linetsky, Zuri, and Matthew Duss. 2026. "How the Abraham Accords Fueled a New Era of Conflict." *Foreign Policy* (blog). May 7, 2026. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2026/05/07/trump-iran-israel-saudi-arabia-uae-abraham-accords-conflict-palestine/>.
- Magee, Caolán. 2026. "What Is the FDD, the pro-Israel Think Tank Shaping Trump's Iran Policy?" *Al Jazeera*. May 6, 2026. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/5/6/what-is-the-fdd-the-pro-israel-think-tank-shaping-trumps-iran-policy>.
- Marsh, Steve. 2003. "The United States, Iran and Operation 'Ajax': Inverting Interpretative Orthodoxy." *Middle Eastern Studies* 39 (3). Taylor & Francis, Ltd.:1–38.
- Martinsen, Audun, Karan Satwani, and Kartik Selvaraju. 2026. "The Cost of War: Gulf Energy Infrastructure Left Facing a \$25 Billion Repair Bill." *Rystad Energy*. April 15, 2026. <https://www.rystadenergy.com/news/middle-east-conflict-rebuild-energy-cost>.
- Mazzucato, Mariana. 2022. "Rethinking the Social Contract between the State and Business." UCL Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment. November 2, 2022. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/publications/2022/nov/rethinking-social-contract-between-state-and-business>.
- Mearsheimer, John J. 2003. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Mearsheimer, John J., and Stephen M. Walt. 2006. "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy." *The Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs*. 2006. <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/israel-lobby-and-us-foreign-policy>.
- Nandy, Ashis. 2010. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Nasr, Vali. 2025. *Iran's Grand Strategy: A Political History*. Princeton Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Office of The Historian. 1950. "Memorandum by Mr. Richard Funkhouser of the Office of African and Near Eastern Affairs to the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs (McGhee)." September 14, 1950. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v05/d38>.
- Oxford Economics. 2026. "Iran War Set to Push GCC Economies into Recession." March 30, 2026. <https://www.oxfordeconomics.com/resource/iran-war-set-to-push-gcc-economies-into-recession/>.
- Pape, Robert A. 1997. "Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work." *International Security* 22 (2). The MIT Press:90–136. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539368>.

- Parsi, Trita. 2026. "The Important Change in Iran's Latest Response to Trump." Substack newsletter. *Trita Parsi* (blog). May 11, 2026. <https://tritaparsi.substack.com/p/the-important-change-in-irans-latest>.
- Peachey, Caroline. 2014. "60 Years of Atoms for Peace." *Nuclear Engineering International* (blog). January 23, 2014. <https://www.neimagazine.com/analysis/60-years-of-atoms-for-peace-4164653/>.
- Peterson, Scott. 2011. "Imminent Iran Nuclear Threat? A Timeline of Warnings since 1979." *The Christian Science Monitor*. November 8, 2011. <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2011/1108/Imminent-Iran-nuclear-threat-A-timeline-of-warnings-since-1979>.
- Reuters. 2025. "Trump Envoy Witkoff Cites US 'red Line' with Iran against Uranium Enrichment," May 18, 2025, sec. Middle East. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/trump-envoy-witkoff-cites-us-red-line-with-iran-against-uranium-enrichment-2025-05-18/>.
- . 2026. "US Intelligence Examining How Iran Would React to Donald Trump Declaring Victory." *The Jerusalem Post*. April 28, 2026. <https://www.jpost.com/international/article-894510>.
- Risse, Mathias. 2026. "'A Whole Civilization Will Die Tonight:' The Day the American President Threatened Genocide." Harvard Kennedy School. April 8, 2026. <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/carr-ryan/our-work/carr-ryan-commentary/whole-civilization-will-die-tonight-day-american>.
- Said, Edward W. 1997. *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. New York: Vintage.
- Sampson, Anthony. 1975. *The Seven Sisters: The Great Oil Companies & the World They Shaped*. New York, NY: Viking.
- "Secretary of State Marco Rubio at the Munich Security Conference." 2026. United States Department of State. February 14, 2026. <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2026/02/secretary-of-state-marco-rubio-at-the-munich-security-conference/>.
- Silver, Laura. 2026. "Negative Views of Israel, Netanyahu Continue to Rise among Americans – Especially Young People." *Pew Research Center* (blog). April 7, 2026. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/07/negative-views-of-israel-netanyahu-continue-to-rise-among-americans-especially-young-people/>.
- Slattery, Gram, Jonathan Landay, Erin Banco, Gram Slattery, and Erin Banco. 2026. "Exclusive: US Intelligence Indicates Limited New Damage to Iran's Nuclear Program, Sources Say." *Reuters*, May 4, 2026, sec. Middle East. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/us-intelligence-indicates-limited-new-damage-irans-nuclear-program-sources-say-2026-05-04/>.
- Sveriges Museum Om Förintelsen. 2024. "Nazi Attitudes towards the Sinti and Roma." December 9, 2024. <https://museumforintelsen.se/en/untold-a-digital-companion-to-the-exhibition/nazi-attitudes-towards-the-sinti-and-roma/>.
- Svetlova, Ksenia. 2026. "Israel's Perpetual Mobilization: The Limits of Netanyahu's 'Super-Sparta' Model." Chatham House. April 22, 2026.

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2026/04/israels-perpetual-mobilization-limits-netanyahu-super-sparta-model>.

Swan, Jonathan, and Maggie Haberman. 2026. "How Trump Took the U.S. to War With Iran." *The New York Times*. April 7, 2026.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2026/04/07/us/politics/trump-iran-war.html>.

Tan, Rebecca, and Wilawan Watcharasakwej. 2026. "Iran War Is Crushing Asia's Farmers, Threatening Global Food Supply." *The Washington Post*, May 9, 2026.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2026/05/09/iran-farms-thailand-food/>.

Taylor, Chloe. 2026. "Israel's Economy and Financial Markets Are Booming — Even as Conflict Rages in the Middle East." CNBC. April 30, 2026.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2026/04/30/israel-economy-stock-market-tel-aviv-trump-netanyahu-gdp-us-inflation.html>.

The Lancet Global Health. 2025. "The Health Toll of Economic Sanctions." *The Lancet Global Health* 13 (8). Elsevier:e1327. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(25\)00278-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(25)00278-5).

The White House. 2025. "Iran's Nuclear Facilities Have Been Obliterated — and Suggestions Otherwise Are Fake News." June 25, 2025.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/releases/2025/06/irans-nuclear-facilities-have-been-obliterated-and-suggestions-otherwise-are-fake-news/>.

———. 2026a. "Peace Through Strength: President Trump Launches Operation Epic Fury to Crush Iranian Regime, End Nuclear Threat." March 1, 2026.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/releases/2026/03/peace-through-strength-president-trump-launches-operation-epic-fury-to-crush-iranian-regime-end-nuclear-threat/>.

———. 2026b. "The Iranian Regime's Decades of Terrorism Against American Citizens." March 2, 2026. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/releases/2026/03/the-iranian-regimes-decades-of-terrorism-against-american-citizens/>.

United States Mission to the United Nations. 2026a. "Explanation of Vote on a UN Security Council Resolution on the Situation in the Middle East." April 7, 2026.

<https://usun.usmission.gov/explanation-of-vote-on-a-un-security-council-resolution-on-the-situation-in-the-middle-east-2/>.

———. 2026b. "Remarks at a UN General Assembly Meeting Following the Vetoes of China and Russia on a UNSC Resolution on the Situation in the Middle East." April 16, 2026.

<https://usun.usmission.gov/remarks-at-a-un-general-assembly-meeting-following-the-vetoes-of-china-and-russia-on-a-unsc-resolution-on-the-situation-in-the-middle-east/>.

U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). 2026a. "U.S. Imports from Venezuela of Crude Oil and Petroleum Products (Thousand Barrels)." April 30, 2026.

<https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=PET&s=MTTIMUSVE1&f=M>.

———. 2026b. "Short-Term Energy Outlook." May 12, 2026.

https://www.eia.gov/outlooks/steo/report/global_oil.php.

US-China Economic and Security Review Commission. 2026. "China-Iran Fact Sheet." March 16, 2026. <https://www.uscc.gov/research/china-iran-fact-sheet-short-primer-relationship>.