

The enemy of my enemy is my friend

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In today's world, the onset of warfare sometimes commences with open source reports published by experts. Indicative is the statement from the Israeli Prime Minister's Office on Saturday, May 31, 2025, that revealed that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the global overseer of nuclear issues, had found that Iran's enrichment program was targeting the development of nuclear weapons.

The Israel Defence Force (IDF) views the report as precise and as validation of its threat evaluation spanning several decades. The dangerous mix of intent and capability extends beyond uranium enrichment. It also encompasses the Iranian ballistic missile program designed to deliver the nuclear warhead against targets defined in threatening speeches by the Ayatollah, including Israel, Saudi Arabia, and even the United States. Furthermore, there is the aspect of Iranian regional interference that bolsters terrorist organisations.

The report offers Israel an opportunity to garner international backing for actions against the Iranian threat. Nevertheless, there are underlying factors contributing to the global reluctance to respond quickly. At the fore are the events leading up to the 2003 Iraq war against Saddam Hussein. American President George Bush was convinced that Iraq had nuclear weapons, supported by a dossier of intelligence. Meanwhile, French President Jacques Chirac and the Pope expressed scepticism regarding his claims.

They emphasised that a significant detail was missed. No one had seen Iraq's nuclear stockpile, and its location remained uncertain. After Saddam was removed from power, no nuclear arms were found. This resulted in a growing scepticism among the global public regarding intelligence assessments, along with a heightened belief in disinformation, propaganda and fake-news. This scepticism was further reinforced by the subsequent consequences. The Middle East experienced a rise in violence between Shia and Sunni groups, which Saddam had previously kept in check.

These repercussions have influenced public opinion, decision-making processes and hindered decisive actions against Iran for the past 22 years. Israel and other nations firmly believe that Iran must never acquire nuclear capabilities. This would compel Saudi Arabia to pursue nuclear weapons as a means of defense and deterrence. *The Cold War dynamics would be revived in the Middle East. This would escalate the Shia and Sunni conflict into a nuclear confrontation.*

Nevertheless, the experiences gained from the removal of Saddam Hussein strongly suggest that similar tactics should not be employed to oust the Ayatollah as were used in Iraq. The United States and its allies are not contemplating the deployment of large military forces to Iran. This situation leaves limited viable alternatives.

The most effective would be through a revolution in Iran, leading to a new leadership in Tehran that would dismantle the uranium enrichment and ballistic missile programs. There is no clear indication yet of whether or when this might occur. Therefore, diplomacy remains the favoured approach for both the United States and the European Union. Even China and Russia recognise this as a viable strategy.

In contrast, Israel is the only nation advocating for a more assertive stance, potentially through air strikes. However, such actions would necessitate the same level of support that President George Bush garnered in 2003, during which he dedicated months to building an international coalition against Iraq.

The crucial questions are whether the global community will acknowledge the IAEA report and if they will react promptly and decisively to Israel's request regarding Iran. The past 22 years have demonstrated that the formation of such an international coalition is improbable. This is not only due to the bitter experience from Iraq but also the diminishing American influence on global issues. In summary, there is a reluctance to engage in another conflict in the Middle East. The statements made by American and other leaders suggest that Israel may have to act independently.

This scenario indicates that there are more questions than solutions, with assumptions taking precedence. Central to this discussion are the considerations surrounding the potential for air strikes on Iranian targets, which, although still a viable option, is not the sole approach. Other possibilities include utilising advanced technology and the digital landscape to address Iran's uranium enrichment and missile development efforts. However, stopping these without a regime change in Teheran could only be viewed as a temporary measure. What is genuinely necessary is the ability to sustain a viable deterrence over time against any threat.

Ethics have consistently been pivotal in influencing responses to various threats. While the targeted assassinations of terrorist leaders represent one concern, taking action against significant religious figures and leaders from other countries would mark a new precedent. Nevertheless, the Hamas invasion on October 7 serves as a stark reminder of the perils associated with neglecting and failing to address urgent threats. There are numerous layers of risk involved, and the IDF may soon find itself compelled to undertake unprecedented actions, irrespective of the backing from the international community.

Such strategies must also consider the ever-changing and dynamic geopolitical landscape of the region, which now includes the Abraham Accords, a new government in Syria, and the IDF's multi-front conflict in Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen, and the West Bank. Any resolution would necessitate a fresh understanding of victory and, more importantly, of peace. Israel's willingness to acknowledge and respond to this reality will not only shape its military stance but also influence the geopolitical dynamics of the entire region.

In this context, the true victor could be the nation that perceives the most significant threat from Iran, namely Saudi Arabia. The consequences are well understood, involving widespread violence directed at Shia communities across various nations, which would no longer benefit from Iran's

protective umbrella. *This situation leaves Israel in pursuit of an agreement with Saudi Arabia before it takes decisive action against Iran.*

Saudi Arabia could potentially reach that point ahead of Israel. Just under a month ago, it signed a \$142 billion arms procurement agreement during President Trump's visit. If Iran's intelligence agencies possess any level of competence, they would interpret the saying "The enemy of my enemy is my friend" to suggest that the Ayatollah's time in Tehran is limited, possibly due to an unforeseen alliance formed from shared interests.