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Israel-Iran war

Iran teaches a bitter lesson to Israel

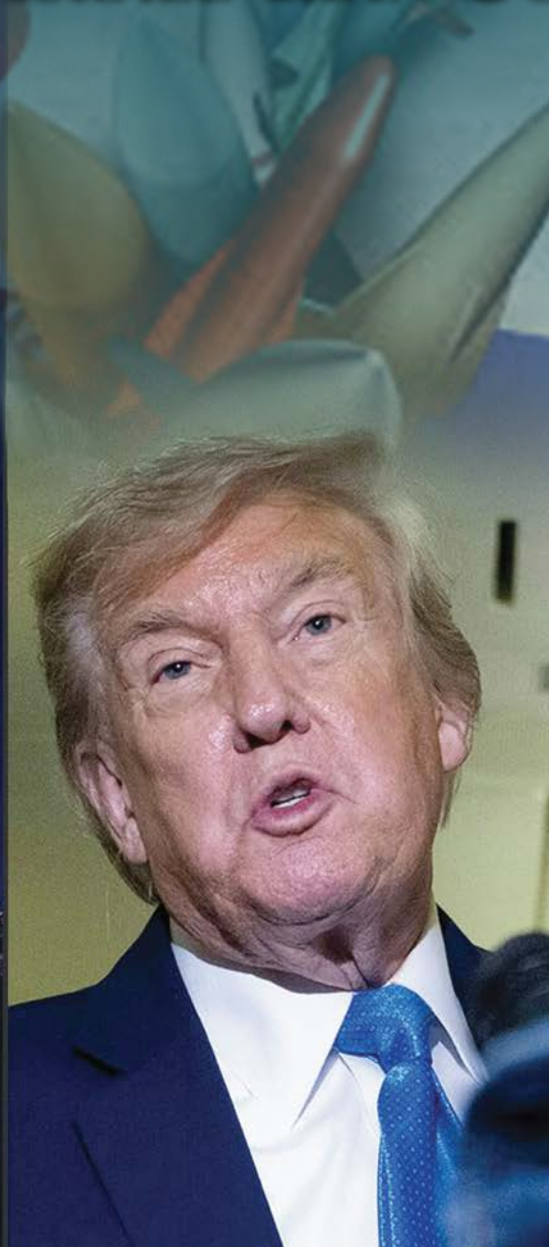
G-7 Summit

A fractured gathering

Writing

An art lost to Artificial Intelligence

CEASEFIRE IN THE CROSSFIRE: TRUMP'S DIPLOMATIC GAMBLE AND ISRAEL'S STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE IN THE ISRAEL-IRAN CONFLICT



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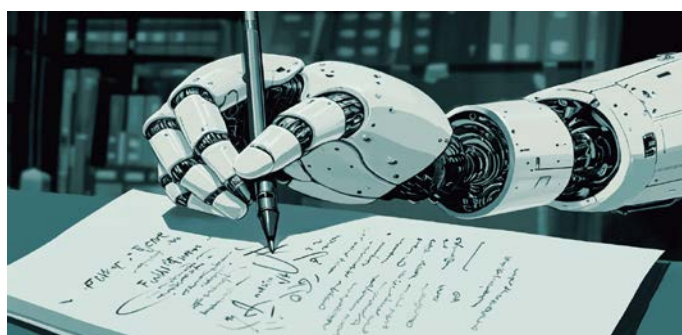


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Fragile Iran-Israel Truce Holds Amid Trump's Uncharacteristic Rebuke of Tel Aviv



The tenuous ceasefire between Iran and Israel, which came into effect on June 24 following Tehran's retaliatory strikes on U.S. bases in Iraq and Qatar, appears to be holding — for now. Despite early reports of minor violations from both sides, the situation has not escalated further, offering a glimmer of hope for stability in a volatile region.

A surprising factor in maintaining this fragile peace has been U.S. President Donald Trump's unusually harsh criticism of both Iran and Israel, delivered just hours after the ceasefire was announced. In a stark departure from traditional U.S. diplomatic posturing, Trump publicly rebuked Tel Aviv for its role in the ceasefire breaches — a move that appears to have contributed to a cooling of tensions.

The recent chain of events revealed a pattern of strategic restraint: both Tehran and Washington issued warnings ahead of their retaliatory strikes, avoiding mass casualties and signaling a desire to prevent full-scale war. Qatar stepped in diplomatically, providing an essential channel for de-escalation, ultimately facilitating the ceasefire.

Despite the restoration of relative calm, all parties are claiming victory. Trump has insisted that Iran's nuclear capabilities have been “completely destroyed,” though a preliminary Pentagon assessment suggests the strikes merely delayed Iran's program by several months. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared a “historic victory,” asserting that Iran's nuclear threat had been neutralized. Iran, for its part, framed the ceasefire as a confrontation it had ended on its terms.

Yet beneath these triumphalist narratives lies a grimmer truth: the conflict has resulted in significant losses on all sides and yielded only marginal strategic gains. More than 600 Iranian civilians are reported to have died in the brief but intense confrontation. The truce's durability remains precarious, with particular concern over potential provocations from Israel, which has a long history of derailing peace efforts under dubious pretexts. Many observers view Israel's initial strikes — carried out while U.S.-Iran nuclear talks were underway — as a deliberate attempt to sabotage diplomacy and push Washington toward open conflict with Tehran.

Now, the onus is on the United States to restrain its ally and send a clear message that further escalation will not be tolerated. American leadership must prioritize regional stability over geopolitical gamesmanship, especially in a region critical to global energy markets.

The broader consequences of renewed violence would be catastrophic. The region is already reeling from ongoing crises in Gaza and Ukraine, as well as economic shocks from U.S. trade policies. A flare-up in the Middle East could plunge the global economy into deeper turmoil.

One unavoidable conclusion has emerged from the recent crisis: when the United States chooses to assert its influence, it can check Israel's military excesses. That it has long refused to do so — particularly in Gaza, where it continues to supply weapons and diplomatic cover for what many call a humanitarian disaster — underscores a troubling complicity in the destruction. For now, the ceasefire holds. But whether this brittle peace can endure depends on whether the United States is willing to uphold its responsibilities as a global power — not just in word, but in action.

Ceasefire in the Crossfire: Trump's Diplomatic Gamble and Israel's Strategic Offensive in the Israel-Iran Conflict



By Kanwal Munir

Introduction

In a region long marked by deep-rooted geopolitical tensions and intricate military conflicts, the sudden outbreak of open warfare between Israel and Iran in mid-June 2025 reverberated around the world. What started as targeted Israeli airstrikes on Iranian weapons shipments and nuclear facilities quickly escalated into a fierce 12-day conflict. This rapid escalation featured intense missile exchanges, precise strikes on critical nuclear sites, and the unprecedented direct military involvement of the United States under President Donald Trump. Although Iran's actions significantly influenced the course of the fighting, the dominant narrative was shaped largely by the high-profile roles of Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

This article traces the unfolding of the conflict, emphasizing Trump's portrayal of himself as the chief architect of peace, Israel's calculated military objectives to dismantle Iran's strategic capabilities, and the fragile ceasefire that, despite broad international support, remains

uncertain. Through this analysis, the article explores the wider consequences of the conflict for regional security and international diplomacy.

The Eruption: A Sudden Slide into War

Tensions between Israel and Iran have long simmered beneath the surface, rooted in deep-seated ideological, political, and military rivalries. Yet on June 13, 2025, these tensions erupted into open warfare. The spark came when Israel launched a series of preemptive airstrikes targeting Iranian weapons shipments allegedly en route to Hezbollah, as well as key nuclear research and missile development sites. Israeli intelligence claimed these targets posed an immediate and existential threat. Within hours, Iranian forces retaliated by firing a barrage of missiles into southern Israel, striking the city of Beersheba and triggering a dangerous cycle of escalation.

What made this conflict distinct from previous confrontations was the unprecedented direct involvement of

the United States military. Under the leadership of President Donald Trump, the U.S. abandoned its posture of restraint and took decisive action by authorizing bombing runs deep into Iranian territory. For the first time in over two decades, American B-2 stealth bombers and cruise missiles struck major Iranian nuclear installations in Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan—an operation later confirmed to have been named “Midnight Hammer.” Trump declared that these targets had been “completely and fully obliterated,” signaling a dramatic shift in U.S. policy toward Iran's nuclear ambitions. The U.S. entry into the conflict transformed what could have been a limited regional skirmish into a high-stakes confrontation with global ramifications.

Trump's Calculated Entry: From Ally to Mediator

From the very beginning of the 2025 Israel-Iran conflict, President Donald Trump pursued a dual-track approach, combining strong military support for Israel with efforts to establish himself

as an indispensable peace broker. Early in the confrontation, the Trump administration swiftly approved expedited arms shipments to Israel, overturning restrictions that had been in place under the previous U.S. government. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu openly praised Trump, calling him “the greatest friend Israel has ever had in the White House,” a sentiment that resonated widely across Israeli media and public opinion.

The conflict escalated dramatically when Iran launched over a dozen missiles targeting the U.S.-operated Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar. Thanks to advanced missile defense systems, these attacks were largely intercepted without casualties. In response,

emphatically, “THE CEASEFIRE IS NOW IN EFFECT. PLEASE DO NOT VIOLATE IT!” This declaration came just hours after Iran launched waves of missiles that struck Beersheba, killing four civilians, as confirmed by Israel’s national ambulance service.

Trump played a central role in coordinating the ceasefire negotiations. He initially secured Israel’s agreement through direct talks with Prime Minister Netanyahu. Subsequently, Trump contacted the Emir of Qatar, seeking help to persuade Iran to agree to the truce. Qatar’s Emir and Prime Minister successfully engaged Iranian officials, facilitating their tentative acceptance of the ceasefire.

When Trump announced the ceasefire on Monday, he suggested that Israel and Iran would be granted time to complete ongoing military operations before the ceasefire took full effect, describing the process as staged. This phrasing highlighted the complexities involved in halting hostilities in a conflict marked by rapid escalation and deep mistrust between the parties.

Netanyahu’s War Doctrine: Hitting Strategic Objectives

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu portrayed the 2025 conflict with Iran as a necessary defensive war aimed at preserving national security in the face of an imminent threat. From the outset, Netanyahu asserted that Iran’s growing missile capabilities, its deepening ties with Hezbollah, and its suspected nuclear advancements left Israel with no choice but to act. The decision to initiate preemptive airstrikes was, according to him, a calculated move to neutralize these perceived existential threats before they materialized into a direct assault on Israeli territory.

The Israeli Air Force conducted a series of surgical operations targeting Iranian nuclear infrastructure, particularly sites believed to be involved in uranium enrichment and ballistic missile development. These included facilities in Natanz and Isfahan, both of which had long been under international scrutiny. Beyond nuclear targets, Israeli warplanes also focused on strategic command and control centers in Tehran that were believed to coordinate Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) operations and communications with regional proxies.

One of the most striking and controversial incidents of the war was the Israeli strike on Evin Prison, a notorious detention center in Tehran known for housing political dissidents, journalists, and activists. Video footage circulated globally showed the prison’s heavily fortified gates blasted open, with smoke billowing from the compound and reports of mass prisoner escapes. Netanyahu defended the strike by alleging that Evin also functioned as a covert intelligence hub for senior IRGC operatives involved in coordinating attacks on Israel. Human rights organizations expressed



the Trump administration launched a major military campaign dubbed “Operation Midnight Hammer.” This operation focused on crippling Iran’s nuclear capabilities by striking three critical sites: Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan. President Trump later declared that these facilities had been “completely and fully obliterated,” marking what he described as a decisive moment in the short but intense war.

Despite this aggressive military posture, Trump was keen to cultivate diplomatic prestige. On June 24, he announced a “complete and total ceasefire,” claiming that both Israel and Iran had agreed to halt hostilities. According to Trump, the ceasefire was to be implemented in phases: Iran would cease fire first, followed by Israel within 24 hours. Trump took full credit for brokering what he called “the most important peace deal in decades.” In a Truth Social post, he declared

Simultaneously, a high-level U.S. diplomatic team comprising Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff engaged in direct and indirect communications with Iranian representatives. As negotiations progressed, Vance and Qatar’s Prime Minister worked together to finalize the logistical arrangements for the ceasefire. This complex, multi-track diplomatic effort was crucial in paving the way for the formal truce announcement.

Just before Trump’s official ceasefire declaration, eyewitnesses reported hearing explosions in Tel Aviv and Beersheba. Israel’s military confirmed that Iran had launched six waves of missiles, which resulted in the first Israeli civilian deaths since the ceasefire announcement. Iran’s semi-official SNN news agency later reported that Tehran had fired its final missile salvo before the truce officially took effect.

concern over the targeting of a prison, but Israeli officials maintained that it was a legitimate military objective.

Even after President Donald Trump announced a phased ceasefire, Netanyahu remained cautious. In a televised address, he warned, “This ceasefire will be tested by actions, not words,” signaling that Israel would not hesitate to resume operations if Iran breached the terms or continued hostile activities.

Iran’s Reaction: Denial and Retaliation

Iran’s response to the 2025 Israel-U.S. military campaign was marked by a mixture of defiance, conditional diplomacy, and retaliatory strikes. Following President Donald Trump’s announcement of a phased ceasefire, Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi publicly denied that any formal agreement had been reached. He stated unequivocally that Iran would not fully halt its military operations unless Israel did so first. This stance contrasted sharply with Trump’s optimistic framing of the ceasefire as “complete and total,” revealing the diplomatic disconnect between the involved parties.

While there was a brief pause in missile activity immediately after Trump’s declaration, Iran soon resumed hostilities. Waves of rockets were launched toward southern Israel, including Beersheba, resulting in four civilian deaths and several injuries. This act significantly undermined hopes for a stable ceasefire and demonstrated the fragile nature of the truce. Iranian officials insisted that these missile attacks were a response to ongoing Israeli provocations and airstrikes, many of which continued even after the ceasefire announcement.

Iran’s retaliation also extended to American targets. On June 23, Iran fired multiple missiles at the U.S.-operated Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, a critical hub for American military operations in the Middle East. Fortunately, all projectiles were intercepted, and no casualties were reported. However, the attack signaled Iran’s willingness to escalate the conflict beyond Israeli borders and directly challenge U.S. involvement.

Humanitarian organizations, including the Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, reported alarming levels of civilian casualties inside Iran. According to their data, at least 300 Iranian military personnel were killed, along with 14 children and 18 women. Entire neighborhoods near Natanz and Isfahan—key nuclear targets—suffered collateral damage. The civilian toll further intensified global criticism and fueled concerns that the war had spiraled far beyond its intended military objectives.

Human Cost and Humanitarian Impact of the War

The 12-day conflict between Israel and Iran inflicted a severe humanitarian toll, with both nations experiencing death, destruction, and widespread displacement. While military operations dominated headlines, the lives of ordinary civilians were upended by relentless airstrikes, missile barrages, and the collapse of critical infrastructure.



In Israel, the conflict resulted in significant loss of life and overwhelming pressure on public services. Cities like Beersheba, Ashkelon, and Sderot came under repeated missile fire from Iran, triggering mass evacuations and plunging local hospitals into crisis mode. Emergency rooms filled beyond capacity, and the national ambulance service operated at its limits.

- 24 Israeli fatalities were confirmed, including 4 civilians killed in Beersheba after Iran’s missile attack following the ceasefire announcement.

- Over 1,000 people were wounded, many suffering serious blast injuries and burns.
- 12 schools and 4 hospitals were damaged in southern Israel.
- Thousands of residents were displaced from high-risk border towns.

Meanwhile, the Iranian civilian population endured far greater devastation. The combined force of Israeli and U.S. airstrikes targeted not only military and nuclear facilities but also surrounding urban areas. This led to mass casualties and sparked a humanitarian emergency, especially in Isfahan, Natanz, and Tehran’s suburbs.

- More than 600 Iranian civilians were reportedly killed, including 58 children and 31 elderly individuals.
- Over 300 IRGC personnel and military staff were also killed in direct strikes.
- 14,000+ civilians were displaced from their homes, seeking refuge in remote villages and makeshift shelters.

- The Iranian Red Crescent warned of critical shortages of clean water, medicine, and basic supplies.
- Social media revealed harrowing footage of mass funerals, collapsed buildings, and refugee encampments, despite a government-imposed media blackout.

The scope and scale of the civilian suffering added a deeply tragic layer to a war framed by leaders as strategic or defensive. With international aid slow to arrive and tensions

still simmering, both nations now face the daunting task of healing wounds—many of which may remain far beyond the battlefield.

Global Reaction to Trump's Ceasefire: Relief, Skepticism, and Strategic Caution

President Donald Trump's declaration of a "complete and total ceasefire" between Israel and Iran drew a wave of global reactions, ranging from cautious optimism to strategic doubt. While the announcement momentarily cooled global tensions, it failed to convince many observers that the conflict had truly come to a halt.



In Europe, governments cautiously welcomed the ceasefire but warned that its enforceability remained in question. Diplomats from France, Germany, and the EU Commission stressed the need for concrete verification mechanisms and third-party monitoring. European foreign ministries argued that ceasefires in the region have often collapsed due to miscommunication, mistrust, and lack of transparency—especially when no formal, written agreements are signed.

The Gulf states, particularly Qatar, found themselves in a complicated position. Despite playing a key intermediary role in brokering communications between the U.S., Israel, and Iran, Qatar publicly condemned Iran's launch of missiles at the U.S.-operated Al Udeid Air Base, calling it a "violation of Qatar's airspace and sovereignty." This attack drew strong condemnation not only from Doha but also from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Jordan, and Egypt, who viewed it as a destabilizing move in an already volatile region.

Meanwhile, the global energy markets reacted swiftly and sharply. With fears of an all-out regional war temporarily alleviated, both crude oil benchmarks fell sharply. Investors interpreted the ceasefire as reducing the immediate threat to Middle Eastern oil exports and global energy supply.

- Brent crude oil dropped by 3.3%, landing at \$69.13 per barrel.
- West Texas Intermediate (WTI) fell to around \$66.15–\$66.21 per barrel, marking a two-week low.
- Major stock markets rallied, including

the S&P 500, Nikkei, and EuroStoxx, buoyed by reduced geopolitical risk.

Still, analysts warned that the truce might be more of a temporary pause than a durable peace. Iran's parliament considered closing the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic chokepoint that handles roughly 20% of the world's oil shipments. Energy experts warned that a full closure could send global oil prices surging to \$120 per barrel or higher, depending on the extent and duration of the disruption.

In response to the Iranian missile attacks, the U.S. military quietly repositioned assets in the Gulf region. By mid-June, the Pentagon had relocated approximately 40 aircraft from Al Udeid Air Base, and restricted base access, citing the need for enhanced security and preemptive defense against further Iranian aggression. The U.S. Navy also intensified patrols in the Persian Gulf, signaling a raised alert level despite diplomatic overtures.

- 40 U.S. aircraft were pulled from

Qatar's Al Udeid Air Base (between June 5–19).

- U.S. Central Command restricted operational access to the base.
- Additional naval vessels were dispatched to monitor Iran's maritime activities.

Undermining the ceasefire's credibility further, Iran launched six waves of missile attacks at Israeli targets after the truce was declared. These attacks killed at least three civilians and injured eight more in southern Israeli towns. The barrages also triggered renewed air raid sirens in Tel Aviv and Beersheba, forcing civilians back into bomb shelters. Israel responded with interceptors but refrained from resuming full-scale retaliation—likely in deference to ongoing U.S. mediation.

- 6 Iranian missile waves hit Israel post-ceasefire.
- 3 Israeli civilians killed, 8 injured.
- Air raid sirens sounded again in Tel Aviv and Beersheba.

Despite Trump's celebratory tone on Truth Social, global leaders remain skeptical. Without a binding agreement and in the absence of public confirmation from either Iran or Israel, the ceasefire appears to be more of a political statement than a tangible peace accord. As ongoing skirmishes and diplomatic tension continue, the situation remains fluid—balancing on a knife's edge between fragile calm and renewed conflict.

The 12-Day War: Tactical Victory or Strategic Illusion?

President Donald Trump has dubbed the conflict the "12-Day War," portraying it as a swift, high-stakes confrontation that concluded through decisive American diplomacy. In public statements and posts on Truth Social, Trump emphasized that the war was a demonstration of American resolve and leadership, claiming that U.S.-led diplomacy was the key factor in halting further bloodshed between Israel and Iran. He hailed the ceasefire as one of his administration's greatest foreign policy successes and used it to reinforce his image

as a wartime president capable of delivering peace—especially as he campaigns for re-election in November 2025.

However, military analysts and regional experts remain skeptical of Trump's framing. They argue that the ceasefire is more of a tactical pause than a strategic resolution. While the destruction of Iran's Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan nuclear facilities was a significant blow, it is widely acknowledged that Iran possesses the technical expertise and underground infrastructure to resume nuclear enrichment if it chooses. The Islamic Republic's nuclear ambitions have survived sabotage, sanctions, and assassinations in the past, and this conflict is unlikely to extinguish them permanently.

Iranian officials, meanwhile, have condemned the strikes as acts of aggression and vowed to continue resisting what they describe as "Zionist-American hostility." Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei declared that Tehran's "path towards scientific and defensive progress will not be deterred by foreign threats." Tehran has also warned that any future attempts to target its nuclear facilities will be met with "unprecedented retaliation," and Iranian proxy groups in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq have promised to escalate operations against

Israeli and U.S. interests in the region.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has declared that Israel achieved its primary objectives: degrading Iran's ability to attack and sending a message of deterrence to Hezbollah and other Iranian proxies. However, the cost may be long-term instability. Iran's regional allies have vowed retaliation, and Hezbollah has reportedly begun regrouping along Israel's northern border.

Meanwhile, Trump's domestic critics argue that his aggressive posture and decision to authorize U.S. strikes deep into Iranian territory risked broader regional escalation. Nonetheless, among his base, the "12-Day War" has strengthened his image as a decisive commander-in-chief who can protect allies, crush threats, and still close the deal on peace.

Conclusion

The latest Israel-Iran conflict underscores the enduring volatility of Middle Eastern geopolitics, where historical grievances and strategic ambitions continue to fuel tensions. The ceasefire, while a welcome respite, serves only as a temporary pause rather than a lasting solution. Deep-rooted issues such as Iran's nuclear aspirations, its

support for regional proxy groups, and Israel's insistence on safeguarding its security interests remain unaddressed, ensuring that the seeds of future confrontations persist.

President Donald Trump's role was pivotal in shaping the course and resolution of the conflict. By combining military support with diplomatic engagement, he positioned himself as both a staunch ally of Israel and a broker of peace—bolstering his domestic standing in an election year. Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu leveraged the opportunity to strike decisively against Iran's nuclear and military infrastructure, reinforcing Israel's deterrence capabilities. Iran, despite suffering significant losses, remains defiant and committed to its regional ambitions, signaling that it views this conflict as one episode in a larger, ongoing struggle.

What unfolded in June 2025 was far more than a conventional military clash; it was a complex theater of power projection, political maneuvering, and fragile diplomacy. The durability of the ceasefire will be tested in the coming months, and whether peace prevails or the conflict reignites will profoundly shape the security landscape of the Middle East—and beyond—for years to come.



Iran teaches a bitter lesson to Israel during the 12-day war



By Javed Mahmood

Iran fired countless missiles at Israel during the 12-day war, launched by Israel on June 13, 2025, by attacking nuclear sites and military installations of Iran. In retaliation, Iran showered countless missiles, including the long-range intercontinental ballistic missiles, on Israel, causing huge and unexpected damage to Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa, and other cities of Israel. According to security analysts, Israel faced a shortage of weapons during this 12-day war, while its defense system collapsed as a result of which scores of Iranian missiles hit the target in the cities quoted above. In this unexpected scenario, the United States gave Israel a face-saving by announcing an immediate ceasefire on June 24, 2025. Donald Trump spoke with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu about the ceasefire, while US Deputy President JD Vance and the Qatari ruler discussed the ceasefire with Iranian officials to achieve the goal of enforcing it.

A few hours before the implementation of ceasefire, Iran fired more missiles on Israel and the Israeli emergency medical service official, Magen David Adom, confirmed that five people were killed and approximately 20 others injured in a series of Iranian missile strikes on Tuesday, just

hours after U.S. President Donald Trump announced a "complete ceasefire" between Israel and Iran, signaling an end to a bloody 12-day war.

According to Israeli military officials, Iran launched multiple waves of missiles targeting Tel Aviv, Beersheba, and other southern regions. The barrage inflicted severe damage to infrastructure and buildings, with three of the fatalities reported in Beersheba—marking the first Israeli deaths since the ceasefire was announced late Monday night. Eyewitnesses described hearing powerful explosions across several cities. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) confirmed that six distinct waves of missile attacks were carried out by Iran, raising questions about the ceasefire's credibility and enforcement.

Trump had earlier proclaimed the end of what he called "THE 12 DAY WAR" via his Truth Social platform, praising both Iran and Israel for their "stamina, courage, and intelligence." However, the rapidly evolving situation on the ground has cast serious doubt over the ceasefire's viability.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, nonetheless, clarified that Tehran's agree-

ment to the ceasefire was conditional: Iran would only honor the truce if Israel ceased its "illegal aggression". He indicated that Iran's final decision to cease hostilities was still pending at the time of the strikes. Iranian state-affiliated media described Tuesday's missile barrage as the final salvo before the ceasefire was meant to fully take effect. Trump later stated that the ceasefire would be implemented in phases, allowing both nations to conclude any "ongoing operations."

Behind the scenes, diplomatic activity intensified. Qatar's Prime Minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, played a key role in convincing Tehran to tentatively agree to the ceasefire. The White House confirmed that Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and special envoy Steve Witkoff maintained contact—directly or indirectly—with Iranian officials during negotiations.

Despite these efforts, the region remains on edge. The Israeli military issued two evacuation alerts for residents of Tehran in a two-hour window, highlighting fears of further retaliatory action. Sirens also blared in the Golan Heights amid aerial threat

warnings. Tensions had dramatically escalated over the weekend when Israel—backed by the U.S.—carried out massive airstrikes on Iran’s nuclear infrastructure, targeting underground facilities in Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan with bunker-busting bombs.

Israel has justified the strikes as a preemptive move to thwart Iran’s alleged pursuit of nuclear weapons. Iran has repeatedly denied such ambitions, though Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei recently warned, “If Iran ever decides to build nuclear weapons, no one can stop us.”

While diplomatic channels remain open, the bloodshed and conflicting messages have left the ceasefire hanging in uncertainty—and the region bracing for what may come next.

Interestingly, Iran coordinated with Qatari officials before launching missile strikes on the U.S. Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, providing advance warning to reduce the risk of casualties. The New York Times reported, citing Iranian sources familiar with the operation. According to the report, Tehran notified Qatar of the impending attacks as part of a calculated move aimed at delivering “symbolic” retaliation against the United States while allowing room for diplomatic de-escalation. Three Iranian officials described the strategy as deliberately restrained, designed to signal resolve without provoking uncontrollable escalation.

The approach mirrored Iran’s 2020 retaliation for the assassination of General Qasem Soleimani, when Tehran warned Iraq in advance of ballistic missile strikes on a U.S. base to avoid American fatalities.

The attack was carried out under the name Operation Bashayer Al-Fath (Annunciation of Victory), during which Iranian forces claimed to have launched “destructive and powerful missile attacks” on the Al Udeid base. However, Qatari air defenses intercepted the missiles, and no casualties were reported. Qatar officially condemned the strikes. A senior White House official confirmed that the U.S. was aware of potential threats to Al Udeid and had been closely monitoring the situation. In response to the developments, the U.S. Embassy in Qatar issued a security adviso-

ry urging American nationals to “shelter in place.”

The strikes were Iran’s response to U.S. attacks over the weekend on key Iranian nuclear facilities, ordered by President Donald Trump. Iran’s military leadership warned that the U.S. actions would not go unanswered. On Monday (June 23), Iran’s Chief of Staff, Maj. Gen. Abdolrahim Mousavi, declared that the recent U.S. assaults on nuclear infrastructure had crossed a red line.

Iranian FM appreciates Iranian military’s role in war against Israel

Moreover, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi expressed deep appreciation for the country’s armed forces on Tuesday, praising their continued retaliation against Israel “until the very last minute” in response to what Tehran calls unprovoked aggression.



“The military operations of our powerful Armed Forces to punish Israel for its aggression continued until the very last minute, at 4 a.m.,” Araghchi posted on X (formerly Twitter). “Together with all Iranians, I thank our brave Armed Forces who remain ready to defend our dear country until their last drop of blood, and who responded to every attack by the enemy.”

Araghchi reiterated that Iran is prepared to halt its military operations—provided Israel also ceases its aggression. His comments followed an earlier statement reacting to U.S. President Donald Trump’s claim of a ceasefire agreement between Iran and Israel. On Monday, Trump announced

that both nations had agreed to a full ceasefire, potentially bringing an end to the 12-day war that displaced millions in Tehran and sparked fears of a wider regional conflict. Trump said the phased ceasefire would begin with Iran stopping attacks, followed by Israel 12 hours later.

Vance claims Iran is no longer capable of making nuclear weapons

Meanwhile, after Israeli and the United States attacks on the nuclear sites of Iran, U.S. Vice President JD Vance declared that Iran is no longer capable of producing a nuclear weapon following recent American airstrikes on key nuclear infrastructure across the country.

“We are now in a place where we weren’t a week ago. A week ago, Iran was very close to having a nuclear weapon,” Vance told Fox News. “Now, Iran is incapable of

building a nuclear weapon with the equipment they have, because we destroyed it.”

His remarks came just hours after President Donald Trump announced a ceasefire agreement between Iran and Israel, signaling a potential end to nearly two weeks of direct hostilities between the two adversaries.

“Tomorrow really is a new day — the end of the 12-Day War, the end of the Iranian nuclear program, and I really do believe the beginning of something very big for peace in the Middle East,” Vance added. Tensions between Washington and Tehran escalated dramatically over the weekend when U.S. forces joined Israeli military operations, launching coordinated

airstrikes on three critical Iranian nuclear facilities — including the fortified Fordow uranium enrichment site.

In retaliation, Iran fired a salvo of ballistic missiles at the U.S.-operated Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar. The White House has framed the strikes as both a decisive military success in dismantling Iran's nuclear capabilities and a potential catalyst for new diplomatic momentum in the region. The ceasefire, announced by President Trump, outlines a phased de-escalation: Iran is to begin halting military activity first, with Israel following 12 hours later. If upheld, the conflict will officially conclude 24 hours from the start of the truce. Since June 13, Israel has launched repeated strikes inside Iran, targeting military, nuclear, and civilian infrastructure. Tehran has responded with its missiles, raising fears of a broader regional war.

Kremlin Offers Support to Iran Amid Israel Conflict

Notably, the Kremlin announced on Monday that Russia is prepared to support Iran as hostilities with Israel escalate, though any concrete assistance will depend on the specific requests made by Tehran.

“We have offered our mediation efforts — this is tangible. We’ve also clearly expressed our position, which in itself is an important gesture of support for Iran,” Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said during a press briefing in Moscow.

Peskov's comments come as tensions in the Middle East reach a boiling point following Israel's surprise aerial strikes on multiple Iranian military and nuclear facilities on June 13. In response, Iran launched retaliatory missile attacks, triggering one of the most serious escalations between the two nations in recent memory. The situation intensified further after U.S. forces carried out airstrikes on three major Iranian nuclear sites early Sunday. President Donald Trump claimed the strikes inflicted “severe damage” and effectively “obliterated” the targeted facilities.

Peskov confirmed that Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi is currently in

Moscow for high-level consultations. “This visit presents a key opportunity for both sides to exchange views and for Iran to present its ideas for resolving the ongoing crisis,” he stated.

The Kremlin expressed concern about the growing number of foreign actors involved in the conflict. “We are witnessing a dangerous broadening of participation in this escalation — a development we condemn and deeply regret,” Peskov warned. He also revealed that the Iranian crisis had been a recurring topic in recent conversations between Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Donald Trump. However, Moscow was not informed in advance about Washington's latest military actions.

Responding to Trump's recent remarks suggesting the possibility of regime change in Iran, Peskov issued a firm rebuttal: “The leadership of any country must be chosen by its own people — not imposed by foreign powers.”

Despite the rapidly worsening situation, Peskov stressed that Russia's dialogue with the United States would continue. He described the Kremlin's engagement with both Iran and the U.S. as “parallel and independent tracks.” He also addressed global concerns about environmental risks stemming from the attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities. “The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has reported no signs of radiation leakage so far, but naturally, the situation remains under close scrutiny,” Peskov said. Russia, a longstanding ally of Iran in both regional and global forums, continues to advocate for diplomatic solutions and restraint amid the mounting crisis between Tehran and Tel Aviv.

Iran Arrests Over 700 in Spy Crackdown, Executes Third Alleged Mossad Agent Amid Rising Tensions

Iranian authorities have launched a sweeping crackdown on alleged espionage networks linked to Israel, with state media reporting the arrest of more than 700 individuals across the country. The crack-

down follows recent U.S. and Israeli airstrikes targeting Iranian nuclear sites and marks a sharp escalation in Iran's internal security measures.

As part of the campaign, Iran announced the execution of another individual accused of working for Israel's Mossad intelligence agency—bringing the total number of alleged Israeli spies executed to three in just one week. Officials claim the suspects were involved in sabotage operations and gathering intelligence on critical infrastructure. The arrests and executions signal a hardened Iranian response to what Tehran describes as intensifying foreign aggression and covert warfare aimed at undermining the Islamic Republic. In a defiant statement on Monday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi reaffirmed Iran's determination to continue its nuclear programme, dismissing international pressure to curtail it.

“Iran will not relinquish its nuclear achievements,” Araghchi told local media. “A war has been imposed on us under the pretext of nuclear weapons. Our scientists have made immense sacrifices, and we are determined to defend our progress.”

The crackdown follows a series of coordinated strikes by the U.S. and Israel on Iran's nuclear facilities at Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan. While Iranian officials acknowledged structural damage, they insist that the core infrastructure remains functional and that nuclear operations have not been derailed. Analysts say the mass arrests and intensified rhetoric serve both as a domestic show of force and an international signal of resilience amid mounting pressure. The Iranian leadership appears determined to portray strength in the face of what it views as an escalating campaign of external destabilization.

Iran Accuses IAEA Chief of Bias in UN Complaint

Iran has filed a formal complaint with the United Nations Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, accusing International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi of political bias, interference, and negligence regarding Iran's nuclear program. According to reports from Iranian state-linked

media, Tehran claims that Grossi has taken a “politicized” stance toward Iran while remaining conspicuously silent on repeated Israeli military strikes targeting Iranian nuclear facilities.

In a letter to the UN, Iran’s Permanent Representative, Amir-Saeid Iravani, sharply criticized Grossi’s “failure to take a clear and principled position” on what Tehran calls illegal Israeli attacks that endanger nuclear security and violate international law. Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization chief, Mohammad Eslami, echoed these accusations on Thursday, warning that Tehran may pursue legal action against Grossi for what he called “inaction in the face of direct threats” to Iran’s nuclear infrastructure.



The diplomatic clash follows recent statements by Grossi in which he warned that Iran had not provided sufficient transparency or cooperation. “The Agency is not in a position to assure that Iran’s nuclear programme is exclusively peaceful,” Grossi said earlier this month. He reiterated his concerns during an address to the UN Security Council on Friday, warning that the security situation around Iranian nuclear sites had “seriously deteriorated” following a series of attacks—widely believed to have been carried out by Israel.

This growing standoff between Iran and the IAEA comes amid deepening instability in the region and a continuing impasse over the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Efforts to restore the agreement have stalled, while Iran has steadily expanded its uranium enrichment efforts.

Tehran maintains that its nuclear activities are strictly for peaceful, civilian purposes. However, the IAEA and several Western nations have repeatedly voiced concerns over Iran’s lack of transparency and restrictions placed on international inspectors. As diplomatic tensions mount, Iran’s unprecedented complaint against the head of the UN’s nuclear watchdog underscores the erosion of trust and the fragile state of global nuclear diplomacy.

IAEA has no proof of Iran making nuclear weapons: Grossi

Veteran CNN journalist Christiane Amanpour has prompted International

day, Israel launched targeted strikes on Iran’s Natanz and Fordow nuclear facilities. The coordinated attacks also included assassinations of several Iranian military commanders, scientists, and civilians in the early hours of Friday.

The nuclear obligations referenced in Grossi’s report are tied to the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), from which the United States unilaterally withdrew in 2018 under then-President Donald Trump. Critics argue that Grossi conflated those JCPOA-specific provisions with Iran’s legally binding commitments under the Safeguards Agreement — an entirely separate framework that remains in force. The IAEA’s credibility and impartiality have come under renewed scrutiny as regional tensions escalate and Iran’s nuclear program remains a flashpoint in global diplomacy.

Grossi seeks access to the nuclear sites of Iran after the US-Israeli attacks

The head of the United Nations’ nuclear watchdog has called for an immediate halt to hostilities in the Middle East and urged Iran to grant renewed access to its nuclear facilities following joint U.S. and Israeli strikes. Rafael Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), made the appeal during an emergency meeting of the agency’s Board of Governors in Vienna on Monday.

“Iran, Israel, and the Middle East need peace,” Grossi stated, warning that the region is at a critical juncture. “To achieve that, we must return to dialogue. As a first step, Iran must allow IAEA inspectors to re-enter its nuclear sites and verify its uranium stockpiles—especially the 400 kilograms enriched to 60 percent.”

Grossi revealed that Iran had sent a letter on June 13 indicating the implementation of “special measures” to protect its nuclear assets, but stressed that the agency currently lacks full access to assess conditions on the ground.

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi to publicly acknowledge that the agency has no proof of Iran making systematic efforts to develop nuclear weapons. In an exchange shared on her X (formerly Twitter) account, Amanpour quoted Grossi as saying:

“What we informed and what we reported was that we did not have — as in coincidence with some of the sources you mentioned there — that we did not have any proof [of] a systematic effort to move into a nuclear weapon.” Grossi’s admission comes in the wake of the IAEA Board of Governors’ approval of a controversial censure resolution against Iran last week, which accused Tehran of failing to meet its nuclear obligations. The resolution was based in part on Grossi’s latest quarterly report — criticized by some as biased and lacking substantiated evidence. Just hours after the resolution was adopted on Thurs-

“Hostilities must cease to ensure the safety of our inspectors and to create conditions under which proper monitoring can resume,” Grossi added. The remarks come just days after the United States bombed three Iranian nuclear facilities, joining Israel’s ongoing campaign targeting Iran’s missile infrastructure, military leadership, and nuclear program.

Grossi confirmed that satellite imagery now shows visible craters at Iran’s Fordow enrichment site, where uranium is refined to near-weapons-grade levels. “The use of ground-penetrating munitions appears to have inflicted significant structural damage,” he noted, though he cautioned that the full extent of the underground damage remains unknown.

Iran’s nuclear programme has long been a source of global concern, with Western nations accusing Tehran of pursuing atomic weapons under the guise of civilian use—a claim Iran firmly denies.

Iran Launches Major Missile Strikes on Israel, Hits Strategic Sites

Earlier, a day before the ceasefire announcement, Iran launched a wave of ballistic missiles into Israeli territory, striking at least 14 strategic military and industrial sites, according to Iranian military sources. One of the reported targets was a power plant in southern Israel, resulting in widespread electricity outages across several towns. Both Iranian and Israeli sources confirmed the disruption.

The missile barrage set off a series of powerful explosions across Israeli cities, with air-raid sirens blaring for nearly 35 minutes—the longest uninterrupted alarm since the conflict began. Thousands of residents rushed to bomb shelters as the alerts sounded. Iranian officials described the strikes as a legitimate act of self-defence, aimed at retaliating for recent Israeli airstrikes on key Iranian sites.

The attacks followed Israeli bombardments of Iran’s Fordow nuclear facility, which allegedly caused severe structural damage, and strikes on Shahid Beheshti University and the Iranian state television headquar-

ters. Tehran condemned the attacks as blatant violations of international law. In the aftermath, Iranian authorities issued a stern warning, vowing to defend the country’s sovereignty “by any means necessary” as regional tensions continue to spiral.

Trump allows China to buy oil from Iran

U.S. President Donald Trump today announced that China would be allowed to resume oil purchases from Iran following a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Iran, signaling a possible easing of U.S. sanctions enforcement.

“China can now continue to purchase oil from Iran. Hopefully, they will be purchasing plenty from the U.S. also,” Trump said in a post on social media.

His remarks came just hours after Israel agreed to halt military action against Iran, marking a de-escalation in a volatile regional conflict. Trump, who had shown hesitation toward deeper American involvement in the war, played a central role in pushing both sides toward a fragile ceasefire. Market reactions were swift. Oil prices dropped sharply and global markets rallied on Tuesday as fears of a prolonged conflict eased. Analysts said the ceasefire also reduced concerns that Iran might attempt to close the Strait of Hormuz, a critical maritime route through which roughly 20% of global oil supply flows.

West Texas Intermediate crude fell more than 8% to about \$67 per barrel on Monday afternoon, with prices dipping to \$65 in extended trading. Brent crude, the international benchmark, slipped to \$70 a barrel. Trump’s administration has enforced a hardline sanctions regime on Iran since pulling out of the 2015 nuclear deal in 2018, targeting Iranian oil exports and penalizing companies—especially in China—for violating sanctions. Three major Chinese oil importers were sanctioned during Trump’s term, significantly reducing purchases from Tehran.

However, with tensions cooling in the Middle East and economic concerns mounting, Tuesday’s comments suggest a shift toward more flexible enforcement—potentially opening the door for

renewed trade flows between Iran and its top oil buyer, China.

Trump opposes regime change in Iran

U.S. President Donald Trump has publicly stated that he does not support regime change in Iran, cautioning that such a move would plunge the country into chaos. Speaking during an interview on Monday, Trump emphasized that while he remains critical of Iran’s leadership, forcibly removing the regime would be a mistake.

“I’m not in favor of regime change in Iran. That would lead to chaos—far worse than what we’re seeing now,” Trump said, adding that toppling governments often leads to unintended consequences, including regional instability and the rise of more extreme factions.

His remarks come amid growing tensions between Iran, Israel, and the United States, following a series of military strikes and retaliatory attacks in recent days. Some U.S. lawmakers and analysts have raised the possibility of regime change as a long-term strategic goal.

However, Trump warned against repeating past mistakes in the Middle East. “We’ve seen what happens when you try to impose political change from the outside. Just look at Iraq and Libya,” he said. Trump’s comments signal a more cautious approach compared to some in Washington pushing for a more aggressive U.S. posture toward Tehran.

12 days of devastation: From war to ceasefire

The war between Iran and Israel paused on Tuesday, bringing a temporary end to 12 intense days that saw the region teeter on the brink of full-scale conflict. The world watched as U.S. President Donald Trump veered between extreme threats—including the evacuation of Tehran, assassination of Iran’s leadership, and regime change—and surprisingly conciliatory statements wishing “God bless Iran.”

While no formal ceasefire has been signed, Iranian Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi announced that Tehran has

agreed to halt strikes on Israel, provided the Israeli government refrains from further aggression.

The war, triggered by Israeli and U.S. attacks on Iranian territory—including nuclear facilities and residential areas—sparked fears of a wider regional conflagration. American military involvement escalated the conflict, prompting retaliatory strikes from Iran and raising alarms among regional leaders concerned the fallout would spread across West Asia. Despite the lull, the ceasefire remains fragile. Iran has warned that its restraint depends on Israel's behavior, and historical patterns of broken truces by both the U.S. and Israel have left neighboring countries wary of renewed violence.

Western Media Narratives and Unspoken Realities

Western coverage has largely depicted Iran as weakened, while downplaying the internal damage in Israel and avoiding discussions of strategic failures by the U.S. and its ally. Yet behind the media gloss lies a more complex picture—one in which Washington and Tel Aviv suffered significant setbacks.

How Did the War Begin?

The conflict erupted early on June 13 when Israel, with U.S. support, launched coordinated strikes on Tehran's residential areas, nuclear facilities in Natanz and Isfahan, and several military sites. The attacks also included the targeted killing of senior Iranian military leaders and nuclear scientists. At the time, Iran was preparing for a sixth round of nuclear talks with the U.S., making the timing especially provocative.

Iran responded that same night, launching 22 waves of missile and drone attacks across Israeli-occupied territories, with the final wave occurring just minutes before the ceasefire took effect on June 24. Initially, U.S. officials denied involvement in the Israeli strikes, but on June 22, American forces carried out direct attacks on Iran's nuclear sites in Natanz, Isfahan, and Fordow.

Why Did the U.S. and Israel Strike Iran?

The stated aim was to halt Iran's alleged pursuit of nuclear weapons. But this justification was contradicted by recent U.S. intelligence assessments, which concluded that Iran was neither close to building a bomb nor showing intent to do so. The IAEA also confirmed, after the attacks began, that there was no evidence Iran was weaponizing its nuclear program.

Many observers believe the true goal was regime change. U.S. and Israeli officials appeared to hope that military pressure, combined with internal discontent, would trigger a popular uprising. They even staged a media event featuring the exiled son of the former Shah of Iran, presenting him as a potential replacement leader. Key to this strategy was the decapitation of Iran's military leadership. Dozens of high-ranking officers were assassinated or threatened. Leaked audio revealed Iranian officials being warned to abandon their posts or face attacks on their families.

What Did the U.S. and Israel Achieve?

Despite the scale of the assault, the primary objectives of regime change and nuclear dismantlement were not achieved.

Iran successfully relocated its enriched uranium before U.S. strikes on Fordow. Satellite images and expert analysis confirm that Iran's underground nuclear facilities remain largely intact.

The strikes only appeared to strengthen national unity. Public support rallied behind Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and the nation's resolve seemed to harden rather than fracture. In the end, the most tangible result of the offensive was the death of at least 606 people in Iran and limited infrastructure damage—far short of what was likely intended.

What Were the Consequences for the U.S. and Israel?

The repercussions were more severe than

either Washington or Tel Aviv anticipated. For 12 days, Iranian missiles and drones battered Israeli cities, leaving one-third of Tel Aviv in ruins and damaging critical military and intelligence infrastructure in Haifa and Be'er Sheva.

The psychological impact on Israeli society was profound. Despite official travel restrictions, thousands attempted to flee—some via smugglers to Cyprus or overland through Egypt. For many Israelis, the war marked the first experience of large-scale domestic destruction.

Hebrew media reports estimate Israel's financial losses during the conflict exceeded those incurred over 20 months of fighting in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria combined. The U.S., meanwhile, faced strategic and reputational damage. Trump's credibility on the global stage took a hit after launching attacks while nuclear negotiations were still ongoing. For the second time under Trump's presidency, Iran successfully struck a U.S. base—in this case, the Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar. Trump claimed 13 of 14 missiles were intercepted, but video from the ground shows multiple impacts.

Domestically, the war eroded Trump's popularity. His approval rating dropped to 41%, with critics highlighting the contradiction between his campaign promise to end foreign wars and his decision to provoke another.

What Did Iran Lose and Gain?

Iran suffered the loss of key military leaders, nuclear scientists, and civilians. Yet, compared to the damage inflicted in Israel, the physical toll inside Iran was less severe.

Strategically, Iran emerged from the war with its military and political structure intact and arguably more resilient. Its ability to withstand two nuclear-armed adversaries without collapsing surprised many. Perhaps most importantly, the war has pushed Iran toward a more unified stance on the future of its nuclear program—a topic that previously divided the political establishment.

1953, 1963..... and now 2025

Iran fights for its soul



By Naqi Akbar

As the war in the Middle East rages on between Israel and Iran; there might be developments towards escalation as well as towards a brokered uneasy peace. Whatever may be the ground situation, the current situation invariably leads the observer and the student of Middle Eastern history towards the troubled relationship between Iran and the west; specifically, the United States of America.

Holder of centuries old civilization, cradle of Islamic thoughts from the days of Omar Khayyam, Shams Tabriz to the current wave of Islamic resurgence in the 20th century, Iran has been a difficult ball game for the United States ever since its development into a modern nation state. The early encounters with parliamentary democracy in the start of the 20th century, even when United States was not the dominant global player, saw the radical role of clergy or Rouhanioun in keeping the local dictatorships and external influences at bay, in whatever way it was possible for the stakeholders. The abdication of Raza Khan in 1941 during the second world war, followed by the ascendance of the Shah of Iran Mohammad Raza Pahlavi and rise of the United States as a dominant power posed new challenges to the Iranians.

The 1950s saw the rise of Mohammad Mosaddeq as a nationalist leader of mass

following, despite being under the tutelage of the monarchy led by Mohammad Raza. Mosaddeq pushed for the nationalization of Iranian oil fields which was secretly opposed by the Shah and openly opposed by the British and Americans. The nationalization of 1951 brought Iran into a very favorable playing field with the western powers emerging from the damage inflicted by the second war.

For very apparent reasons, the western powers led by United States were not to sit idle. The events in 1953 to oust the nationalist Prime Minister Mosaddeq resulted in counter coup, where the Shah has to flee the capital towards western destination. The CIA and MI5 orchestrated the coup in the favor of restoration of the Shah soon after and the pro west Shah of Iran was restored back to throne on August 19, 1953 with the help of factions within the army, among the religious right, the left wing as well as street support engineered by the CIA operatives working with strong arms of the city, the Iranian equivalent of Goondas, as well as anyone who can muster support among common man through fake slogans, necessary for any coup like situation.

Later documents available in the George Washington University National Security Archives reveal that cash from the British

and US intelligence agencies flowed like anything to muster support for the coup and in the favor of Shah, or a ruler supported and backed by the West. That was literally the first ever encounter between the emerging Iran and the west.

The restored Shah after the coup cracked down upon the nationalist elements like any other despot and that period was punctuated with suppression and executions. It was not before 1963, when the pro-western moves by the Shah were met surprisingly by the religious leader whose name was Ayatollah Khomeini. The west led reforms and the bill for special status for the American advisors sparked outrage in 1963 when people came out in the streets against what they called a fraudulent referendum installing the Shah in a constitutional manner or paper work.

The 1963 disturbances, led to Khomeini exile first to Turkey and then to Najaf Iraq in 1964. The Iranian political spectrum, shocked by the suppression of dissent in 1953 and again in 1963, led to the conclusion that armed response to the monarchy was the only option available. Incidents in early 1971 when US Air Force advisors were killed by Mujahideen Khalq Islamic armed group led to the SAVAK infiltrating the group and orchestrating a Marxist coup, the type of intelligence operations

witnessed in neutralizing dissident groups to date in other neighboring nation states.

The 1979 revolution was the high point when the Iranian society tried to carve a path for itself. There were teething problems in the start, however, closer look suggested that the western powers were never sold to the Idea of an Iran managing itself independently. Iran had its dose of civil wars encouraged and instigated by the western powers to the point that the splinter groups were able to strike deep into the leadership centers and kill key figures in the administration as well as in the parliament. The Summers on 1981, remain the period in the history when the battle lines within the Iranian society were exploited optimally by the distractors. A type of situation again experienced in the opening salvo of the IDF attack on Iran, when top leadership, specifically in the IRGC was targeted whether they were at the residences or were at command centers elsewhere in the capital Tehran. The foreign intelligence assets especially the MOSSAD made full use of the angry Iranians, not happy with the Nezam or the Islamic Republic to make their operations a success.

Without fail the early hours of the IDF strikes presented a situation of Iran being taken off guard and not even able to strike back effectively. It was not before the passage of 72 hours and after when Iran struck back with full force, making Israel and equal hell in the process. Estimates



show that one third of Tel Aviv is shambles and the same is the case with Haifa.

With 46 years into the movement which succeeded in 1979, that movement has its supporters as well as distractors. What has been witnessed in today Iran is that both groups are clearly standing with what they want to do. The part of society opposing the Nezam is making no bones about its distraction to the system and the ones for the Nezam are making it for others to feel.

The infiltration of Israel into the Iranian society is the indicator of people opposed to the Nezam, while those standing with Nezam, now include not traditionally the religious devout, but secularized Iranians, women not taking the mandatory scarf, who feel that the 'Akhund' or the 'Mullah regime has taken care of the national honor

as were the Mosaddeq supporters in 1953.

It is ironic that the gadgetry purchased by the deposed Shah like the F 4 and F 14 jets which were meticulously preserved by the Nezam are now being pinpointed by the distractors of the Nezam for an obvious repeat of the 1953 August 19 coup. The son of the deposed Shah seems to be the convenient figurehead for 'regime change' or 'MIGA', as recoined by Trump administration.

Conclusively, the conflict between the supporters and distractors of Nezam, known to the world as conflict between the United States and Israel on one side and Iran is likely to be an attrition and a long drawn one, with honestly no quick solution and no guarantee which side will prevail. For Iran, it is again a fight for its soul.



Crisis in the Middle East: Trump's Iran Strikes and Pakistan's Diplomatic Tightrope



By Romana Afsheen

The Spark that Lit the Fuse

In early 2025, the Middle East was thrust into yet another security crisis; one that threatens not just regional peace, but also the fabric of international law. On the heels of growing tensions over Iran's nuclear program, Israel launched a series of unprecedented airstrikes on key Iranian nuclear facilities, including Natanz, Isfahan, and Fordow. These facilities, long at the center of global debate over Iran's atomic ambitions, were reportedly crippled in an operation carried out with covert but clear U.S. logistical and intelligence support.

What followed was an eruption of global outrage, fierce diplomatic maneuvering, and mass protests. From Tehran to Islamabad, Beijing to Moscow, and in every major Muslim capital, the chorus was unmistakable: the strikes were a dangerous violation of sovereignty and a provocation that could ignite a catastrophic regional war.

At the heart of the controversy, however, lay a striking contradiction and that is Pakistan's diplomatic about-face. Within a 24-hour span, Islamabad nominated former U.S. President Donald Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize for diffusing a brief India-Pakistan standoff, only to condemn him the next day for orchestrating a bombing campaign on Iran that risked plunging the region into chaos.

The Strikes on Iranian Nuclear Sites

The airstrikes themselves were surgical, but symbolically explosive. Israel's decision to target Fordow which is a fortified underground uranium enrichment facility carved into the mountains, and the central nuclear hubs at Natanz and Isfahan marked a major escalation. These were not shadow operations or covert assassinations of nuclear scientists, which had characterized earlier episodes in the Iran-Israel shadow war. This was a direct, visible, and deliberate act of aggression.

Israeli sources claimed the operation was aimed at delaying Iran's ability to develop a nuclear weapon. But Iran maintains that its program remains peaceful and under IAEA oversight. Tehran's response was swift and forceful: it condemned the strikes as unprovoked acts of war, and blamed both Israel and the United States. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian called the attacks "a calculated assault on Iranian sovereignty," and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian described them as "a violation of every norm of international conduct."

The UN Security Council: Pakistan, China, and Russia Take a Stand

The international reaction was immediate. The United Nations Security Council convened an emergency session, where Pakistan, China, and Russia co-sponsored a resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire and the cessation of Israeli and U.S. hostilities in Iran.

Russia's permanent representative to the UN, Vasily Nebenzya, was blunt: "The United States has once again shown complete contempt for international norms, opening a Pandora's box of instability." He noted the West's double standards condemning Iranian actions while shielding Israeli aggression and ignoring Palestinian suffering.

China's UN ambassador Fu Cong echoed this sentiment, calling the strikes a "dangerous violation" of international law and the UN Charter. "We are deeply concerned about the risk of the situation spiraling out of control," he said, urging Israel to halt its military actions to prevent a regional conflagration.

Pakistan's UN envoy, Asim Iftikhar, used the opportunity to reposition his country diplomatically. "We call for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and express full solidarity with the Islamic Republic of Iran," he stated. "This crisis demands diplomacy, not destruction."

OIC Emergency Session and the Formation of a Contact Group

While the UNSC deliberated, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) convened an emergency summit in Istanbul. The 57-member body released a rare, unanimous declaration condemning the Israeli strikes and denouncing the U.S. role as an enabler of regional instability. The OIC described the attacks as a "barbaric violation" of international law and a threat to peace across the Muslim world.

More importantly, the OIC launched a ministerial contact group to spearhead diplomatic engagement. The group, tasked with liaising with the UN, the IAEA, and major global powers, aims to mobilize international pressure on Israel and prevent further military escalation. The OIC further demanded that the IAEA condemn the strikes and called for Israel to immediately join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons (NPT) and open all nuclear sites to inspection.

The message from the OIC was clear: regional security could no longer be held hostage to Israeli militarism or American exceptionalism. The Muslim world was ready to take collective diplomatic action.

The Trump Factor: Peacemaker One Day, Instigator the Next

The timing of these events clashed bizarrely with Pakistan's domestic political messaging. Just a day before the strikes, Islamabad had formally announced its intention to nominate Donald Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize for mediating an end to a short military standoff with India in May. "President Trump demonstrated exceptional statesmanship and strategic foresight," said a Foreign Office press note on June 21.



But less than 24 hours later, as news broke that Trump, still wielding influence over U.S. defense and intelligence, had authorized the strikes on Iran, Islamabad scrambled to walk back its endorsement. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif personally called Iranian President Pezeshkian to offer condolences and condemn the attack. The Foreign Office issued a new statement: "The decision to bomb Iranian nuclear facilities violates international law and risks plunging the region into deeper conflict."

The contradiction did not go unnoticed. Both domestic critics and international media outlets ridiculed the abrupt policy shift. Pakistan's own Information Ministry and Foreign Office declined to comment on the apparent diplomatic whiplash.

Public Outrage in Pakistan

Back home, the airstrikes triggered mass protests across Pakistan. In Karachi, thousands marched in a "Down with Israel"

rally, stomping over U.S. and Israeli flags bearing Trump's image. Chants rang out against both countries, and against India—a longtime regional adversary—underscoring the broader anger sweeping the region.

Religious and political leaders alike condemned the strikes. Shi'ite organizations in particular expressed solidarity with Iran, warning the Pakistani government not to be seen as complicit in Western aggression. The protests highlighted a rarely-seen convergence between public opinion, clerical networks, and mainstream political voices.

Social media exploded with hashtags such as #IranUnderAttack, #NoWarOnIran, and #OICUniteNow, trending across South Asia and the Gulf.

Double Standards and the Nuclear Question

The strikes reignited debates over the glaring inconsistencies in the international nuclear order. Iran is a member of the NPT and remains under the strict supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In contrast, Israel widely believed to possess over 80 nuclear warheads refuses to join the treaty or allow any form of inspection.

In the OIC's Istanbul declaration and at the UN, multiple states called out this imbalance. Pakistan's UN representative declared: "Selective non-proliferation cannot ensure peace. It only deepens mistrust and emboldens unlawful actors."

Russia and China were even more forceful.

Both countries accused the U.S. of facilitating nuclear hypocrisy by turning a blind eye to Israeli arsenal stockpiles while punishing Iran's civilian nuclear program. "We cannot allow international law to be dictated by power politics," said Fu Cong.

Iran's Response: Legal Measures Now, Retaliation Later?

Despite widespread domestic calls for an immediate response, Iran has chosen, for now, a path of legal and diplomatic escalation over military retaliation. In a strongly worded address to the UN General Assembly, Iranian Ambassador Amir Saeid Iravani declared the strikes as "premeditated and unprovoked acts of aggression," placing full blame on both Israel and former U.S. President Donald Trump. He invoked Article 51 of the UN Charter, stating that Iran retains "the lawful right to respond in self-defense at a time of its choosing."

Iravani's remarks were echoed by President Masoud Pezeshkian, who described Iran as an "independent, peace-seeking nation" but warned that it could not tolerate repeat attacks on its sovereignty. Iran's leadership signaled a strategy of "measured restraint," even as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) was reportedly tasked with preparing a range of response options, from cyber operations to mobilizing proxy forces.

A Broader Strategy: Turning to International Law

Iran has also submitted a formal complaint to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), arguing that the strikes violate international law and Iran's sovereign rights as a United Nations member state. Although the ICJ lacks enforcement mechanisms, especially since the United States does not recognize its compulsory jurisdiction, the move is symbolic and strategic. Tehran is attempting to frame the crisis not as a military conflict, but as a test case for international order and legal norms.

Legal experts around the world have supported Iran's position. Many argue that under international law, no justification

exists for preemptive military action against a sovereign state's nuclear facilities, when those facilities are under international inspection. Article 2(4) of the UN Charter strictly prohibits the use of force unless in self-defense or authorized by the Security Council. Neither condition applied to the Israeli-U.S. strike.

Trump's Legacy and Political Calculations

Media reports suggest that Donald Trump personally ordered U.S. support for the Israeli strikes in coordination with Israeli officials and intelligence agencies. According to senior diplomats cited by international outlets, Trump approved the



operation during a transitional period before leaving office, viewing it as a legacy-defining action to demonstrate his commitment to "peace through strength."

However, his involvement has drawn criticism at home and abroad. Many U.S. analysts warn that Trump's action—without Congressional approval or public debate—sets a dangerous precedent. Foreign policy experts have raised questions about whether an outgoing president should be allowed to authorize military action with long-term geopolitical consequences.

Within the U.S., the move has polarized opinion. Some conservative commentators applauded the strikes as a show of strength, while liberal voices criticized them as reckless and destabilizing. Globally, even Washington's European allies expressed muted concern, though few openly condemned the strikes—highlighting the diplomatic constraints facing NATO partners.

China and Russia Seize the Diplomatic Stage

China and Russia have taken advantage of the crisis to expand their influence in Middle East diplomacy. Moscow has proposed a new Gulf-wide dialogue involving Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Qatar, aimed at regional security architecture outside U.S. influence. Russian diplomats describe this as a "collective security platform" modeled after the OSCE.

Beijing, fresh from its success in brokering rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia in 2023, has proposed the revival of a "JCPOA Plus" framework. This new nuclear agreement would include broader

regional actors and stronger guarantees—positioning China as a stabilizer in a historically volatile region.

Both countries have framed their actions as a response to what they describe as "Western double standards" and "selective rule enforcement." China's ambassador at the UN said, "If nuclear non-proliferation is to be credible, it must be universal. One state cannot be above the law."

OIC's Assertive Repositioning

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) emergency session in Istanbul and the subsequent establishment of a ministerial contact group marked a notable departure from the OIC's often symbolic resolutions of the past. The contact group, including countries such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Qatar, has initiated behind-the-scenes diplomacy to de-escalate tensions.

The OIC's demands included a halt to Israeli air operations, condemnation of U.S. involvement, and an IAEA-led inspection mission to verify the status of Iran's nuclear infrastructure post-strike. The group also urged all Muslim-majority nations to reconsider their defense and intelligence cooperation with Israel or the United States, unless accountability is ensured.

Some analysts view this as a watershed moment for the OIC—a shift from being a reactive forum to taking initiative in regional crisis management. The success of this pivot, however, remains contingent on sustained coordination among major Muslim nations, many of whom have divergent foreign policies and economic interests.

Pakistan's Domestic and Foreign Policy Realignment

Nowhere is the diplomatic fallout more apparent than in Pakistan. The country's abrupt policy U-turn—from praising Trump to condemning him—sparked fierce domestic debate. Opposition parties criticized the government for embarrassing the nation on the international stage. The nomination of Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize was mocked as a diplomatic blunder, while the condemnation of his Iran policy was welcomed across ideological lines.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif sought to calm domestic outrage by calling Iranian President Pezeshkian, offering condolences and stressing Pakistan's "deep solidarity with the people and government of Iran." Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar later clarified that the Nobel nomination was "based on Trump's role in de-escalating India-Pakistan tensions and predated the Iran strike."

Strategically, Pakistan has drawn closer to China and Russia, aligning itself with their joint UNSC resolution and adopting stronger anti-Israel rhetoric. However, it must tread carefully: Pakistan relies on Western financial institutions for economic support and maintains significant trade ties with the EU and U.S. A full pivot to the China-Russia bloc would come with economic costs.

This has led Pakistan to pursue a "multi-vector foreign policy," engaging with all major powers while avoiding alignment in bloc politics. In the words of one senior diplomat: "Pakistan cannot afford to pick sides—it must pick peace."

Global Implications: Three Scenarios Ahead

Experts tracking the crisis outline three plausible trajectories:

1. **Controlled Escalation:** Iran engages in symbolic retaliation—perhaps through cyberattacks or regional militia proxies—but avoids direct confrontation. Diplomatic channels hold, and the UNSC facilitates a tense but sustainable ceasefire.



2. **Diplomatic Reset:** Under sustained international pressure, including from the OIC and China-Russia bloc, the UNSC imposes a ceasefire. A new diplomatic framework emerges, potentially under IAEA or EU oversight, to resume Iran nuclear talks.

Markets have already signaled alarm. Brent crude briefly touched \$110 per barrel, while insurance premiums for tankers crossing

the Strait of Hormuz rose sharply. Economic fallout could ripple across Europe and Asia if hostilities are prolonged.

Conclusion: A Defining Moment for Global Diplomacy

The 2025 Iran-Israel-U.S. crisis has laid bare the fragility of the post-Cold War security architecture. With Israel bypassing international mechanisms and the United States authorizing strikes outside global consensus, smaller powers are forced to reassess their strategic alignments.

Pakistan's reversal—first applauding Trump, then condemning him—captures

this moment's ambiguity. It reflects both the volatility of real-time diplomacy and the enormous pressure countries face to navigate a multipolar world order shaped by sudden crises.

What remains to be seen is whether this moment will catalyze a new era of balanced multilateralism—or plunge the region further into a cycle of endless retaliation, international impunity, and moral double standards.

If the OIC, China, Russia, and middle powers like Pakistan can maintain coordinated pressure, diplomacy might yet triumph. If not, the world could be one miscalculation away from a devastating regional war.

War Without End: U.S. Military Campaigns in the Middle East Exceed \$8 Trillion, Claim Nearly 1 million Lives



By Hina Urooj

The U.S. involvement over the past 20 years has exacted a staggering financial bill—exceeding \$8 trillion—and immense human suffering, challenging policymakers to weigh future military action against long-term costs.

Rising U.S. Defense Budgets

Despite troop drawdowns and public fatigue with “forever wars,” the United States continues to ramp up military spending. In 2024, the U.S. Department of Defense budget hit a record \$997 billion, accounting for 37% of global military spending — more than the combined total of China, Russia, India, the UK, and several NATO countries.

This surge in spending reflects a strategic pivot to counter both geopolitical threats (like Russia and China) and renewed instability in the Middle East.

Latest Example: The Iran Strikes

The cost of maintaining global dominance is not just historical — it’s current. In early 2025, the U.S. launched a dramatic air campaign targeting Iran’s nuclear facilities in Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan in response to intelligence indicating accelerated uranium enrichment.

- The assault involved at least 125 U.S. aircraft, including seven B-2 stealth bombers, each valued at \$2.1 billion.

- The bombers dropped 14 bunker-buster bombs, each weighing 30,000 pounds, designed to penetrate hardened nuclear facilities — weapons costing millions of dollars each.
- Hundreds of millions were spent on aircraft fueling, logistics, coordination, and follow-up surveillance.

These attacks, while tactically successful, have further escalated regional tensions, drawing condemnation from allies and sparking retaliatory threats from Tehran.

Mounting Questions About Return on Investment

While U.S. officials maintain these interventions are crucial to maintaining international order, critics — including some lawmakers, defense analysts, and veterans’ groups — have increasingly questioned whether the cost is worth the benefit.

Dr. Neta Crawford, co-director of the Costs of War project, argued that the war on terror “has not made the world safer” but instead “destabilized regions, strained American democracy, and diverted resources from urgent domestic needs like healthcare and education.”

Even within the Pentagon, there is growing discussion about the “sustainability of global military commitments” and whether a shift toward diplomatic and economic tools might yield better long-term results.

A Legacy Still Unfolding

As the U.S. grapples with rising debt, a weary public, and an evolving global landscape, the legacy of its post-9/11 wars is far from settled. The financial burden will continue for generations, particularly in the form of veterans' benefits, interest payments on war-related debt, and the costs of reconstruction in devastated regions.

The question now facing Washington — and voters — is not just how to manage these wars, but how to prevent future ones that come with similarly catastrophic costs.

A Strategic Crossroads: Balancing Security Aims with War Costs

The staggering figures laid out by the Costs of War project underscore a critical and unresolved dilemma for U.S. policymakers: How should future military interventions be weighed against their long-term economic burden and human consequences?

Since the post-9/11 era began, successive U.S. administrations — from George W. Bush to Joe Biden — have justified overseas deployments in the name of counterterrorism, regional stability, and non-proliferation. Yet, the returns on these investments remain contested.

Despite the capture of Osama bin Laden and the temporary dismantling of groups like ISIS and the Taliban, the U.S. presence in the Middle East and South Asia has not fully eliminated extremist threats, and in some cases, may have fueled anti-American sentiment that feeds radicalization.

“Twenty years on, we need to ask whether permanent military footprints really bring peace,” said Dr. Linda Bilmes of Harvard, a former advisor to the Congressional Budget Office. “Or are we undermining our own strategic standing by exhausting national resources and leaving regions more unstable?”

Reassessing the Tools of Power

A growing chorus within Washington, including voices from both major parties, is calling for a redefinition of national security — one that incorporates diplomacy, economic aid, and cybersecurity alongside traditional military strength.

In 2023, a bipartisan group of senators introduced legislation requiring cost-benefit analysis and sunset clauses for any future military intervention exceeding 90 days. The measure reflects public fatigue with protracted conflicts and mounting concern about domestic needs — including healthcare, infrastructure, and education — being sidelined in the face of near-trillion-dollar defense budgets.

Meanwhile, some military strategists argue that global threats are evolving. Cyber warfare, artificial intelligence, and economic coercion may increasingly shape global conflict, while boots-on-the-ground wars like Iraq and Afghanistan may become less frequent — though not less costly when they do occur.

The Political Risk of Inaction

Still, others warn that inaction or withdrawal carries its own strategic and humanitarian risks. The U.S. pullout from Afghanistan in 2021 led to the rapid collapse of Kabul, the return of Taliban rule, and a deepening humanitarian crisis. Critics say it damaged American credibility and left a power vacuum that adversaries like China and Russia are eager to fill.

“This is the strategic tension,” said Gen. (Ret.) David Petraeus in a recent interview. “Do too much, and you drain your treasury. Do too little, and you forfeit influence and invite chaos.”

Afghanistan (2001-2021)

Afghanistan war represents the longest conflict in U.S. history. Its staggering \$2+ trillion cost and near 940,000 battlefield and non-combat deaths highlight the immense financial and human toll of sustained large-scale military interventions.



Financial Cost

DoD Military and Reconstruction Spending

From 2001 through 2020, the U.S. Department of Defense spent approximately \$825 billion on operations in Afghanistan and an additional \$130 billion on reconstruction and development, bringing the total to \$955 billion

Extended Financial Burden

When including costs for veterans' benefits, interest on war-related borrowing, and post-2020 obligations, the total expenditure rises to over \$2.3 trillion.

- o By April 2021, combined military operations and reconstruction exceeded \$2.26 trillion, with \$296 billion allocated to veteran care and \$530 billion spent on interest

Human Toll

U.S. Military and Contractors

- o U.S. service members killed: ~2,459
- o Wounded in action: ~20,769, with an additional ~1,822 civilian contractors killed.

Afghan Security Forces

- o Afghan military and police fatalities: 66,000–69,000 over the course of the war.

Civilians

- o Afghan civilian deaths: around 47,245
- o Broader estimates, accounting for victims of disease, displacement, and infrastructure breakdown, suggest a death toll possibly as high as 106,000–170,000

Opposition Fighters

- o Taliban and affiliated insurgents killed: approximately 5000

Summary Breakdown

Category	Estimated Figures
Direct Military Cost	\$955 billion (2001–2020)
Total Cost (incl. future)	\$2.3+ trillion
U.S. Military Fatalities	~2,459
U.S. Wounded	~20,769 + 1,822 contractors
Afghan Forces Killed	66,000–69,000
Civilian Deaths	~47,245–106,000+
Insurgent Fatalities	~51,000

One of the most critical aspects of America's 20-year war in Afghanistan is the way it was financed. Much of the nearly \$2.3 trillion spent on the conflict was not paid through immediate tax revenue but rather borrowed, adding significantly to the national debt. As a result, interest payments on this war-related borrowing are expected to exceed \$530 billion, and they will continue to burden U.S. taxpayers for decades to come.

A large portion of the long-term cost is tied to the ongoing care of U.S. veterans. While the \$2.3 trillion estimate already includes current medical and disability benefits for service members, researchers project that these costs could double, reaching an additional \$2 trillion by 2050. This is due to the long-term physical and mental health needs of veterans who served in Afghanistan, many of whom will require lifelong support.

Moreover, the human toll of the war extends well beyond the battlefield. The estimated 47,000+ civilian deaths from direct violence do not account for the tens of thousands who may have perished indirectly. The war devastated essential infrastructure—disrupting access to electricity, clean water, and health-care—contributing to preventable deaths from disease, malnutrition, and displacement.

Even after the U.S. military withdrawal in August 2021, Afghanistan remains deeply unstable. The country faces a humanitarian

crisis worsened by the return of Taliban rule, an economic collapse, and limited international recognition. Political uncertainty, a weakened public sector, and widespread poverty mean that the legacy of the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan will continue to shape the country's trajectory—and global perceptions of American foreign policy—for years to come.

Iraq (2003-2011, and later)

Financial Cost

- o Direct costs by 2013: ~\$1.7 trillion.
- o Including long-term obligations (veterans, interest): projected \$2.9–6 trillion by 2050.

Human Toll:

- o Combined Iraq & Afghanistan deaths: ~480,000–507,000.
- o Civilian deaths in Iraq & Afghanistan: ~244,000–266,000.

Pakistan (Drone strikes, 2004-present)

Financial Cost:

- o Included in \$8 trillion+ Cost of War totals.

Human Toll:

- o Civilians killed in Pakistan by U.S. drone operations: ~67,000.



U.S. War on Syria / ISIS Operations (2014-Present): A Costly and Complex Campaign

The United States' military involvement in Syria, primarily aimed at dismantling the Islamic State (ISIS), began in 2014 under Operation Inherent Resolve. This campaign has since evolved into a prolonged and multifaceted operation, with significant financial and human consequences.

Financial Cost

The estimated direct cost of the U.S. military intervention against ISIS in Syria and neighboring Iraq is approximately \$53 billion,

according to data compiled by the Costs of War Project at Brown University and other defense budget analyses. These expenses include:

- Deployment of U.S. troops and special operations forces.
- Airstrikes, intelligence gathering, drone surveillance, and logistics support.
- Training and equipping local Kurdish and Arab fighters, including the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).
- Operational costs of maintaining a sustained military presence in Syria and Iraq.

While not as extensive as U.S. military spending in Afghanistan or Iraq, the Syria campaign represents a sizable commitment, especially considering its length and strategic ambiguity.

Human Toll

The human cost of U.S. involvement in Syria is part of the broader toll of post-9/11 wars. The direct deaths associated with conflict in Syria—including combatants, civilians, and allied forces—are included in the more than 480,000 fatalities recorded across U.S.-led post-9/11 war zones.

While it is difficult to separate U.S.-related fatalities from the wider civil war in Syria, U.S. airstrikes and support for local militias have been linked to numerous incidents of civilian harm. Independent watchdogs, such as Airwars, have documented thousands of civilian casualties allegedly caused by U.S.-led coalition actions, particularly during intense fighting in cities like Raqqa and Mosul.

Context and Impact

The U.S. mission in Syria has drawn criticism for its lack of clear end goals. Initially aimed at defeating ISIS, the mission has since taken on additional objectives, such as deterring Iranian influence and protecting Kurdish allies. Despite the territorial defeat of ISIS in 2019, U.S. troops remain stationed in northeastern Syria, fueling tensions with local actors and global powers like Russia and Iran.

The legacy of this intervention includes:

- A devastated infrastructure in northern Syria.
- Continued displacement of civilians.
- Ongoing instability in areas previously controlled by ISIS.

U.S. involvement in Syria remains one of the most geopolitically sensitive aspects of its broader post-9/11 military footprint in the Middle East, raising persistent questions about the long-term strategic benefits versus humanitarian and fiscal costs.

Yemen (2002-Present): Financial and Human Costs

Since 2002, Yemen has been a lesser-known but significant front in the U.S.-led "War on Terror," with financial and human costs that have grown in recent years. Drone operations alone are estimated

to have cost the United States between \$3 billion and \$5 billion. In 2025, the escalation of U.S. bombing campaigns—part of intensified operations against perceived militant threats—added approximately \$1 billion in military spending within just the first month of renewed strikes.

The human toll, though smaller in scale than in Afghanistan or Iraq, remains deeply concerning. In 2025 alone, approximately 224 Yemeni civilians were reportedly killed due to U.S. airstrikes, according to monitoring groups. By the end of 2024, cumulative civilian deaths from direct U.S. military actions in Yemen were estimated at around 258, though these figures may underrepresent the total number, especially given the lack of independent access in many conflict areas.



Yemen (2002-present)

Financial Cost:

- o Drone campaigns: ~\$3–5 billion.
- o 2025 bombing escalation cost: ~\$1 billion in first month.

Human Toll:

- o 2025 alone: ~224 civilian deaths.
- o Cumulative civilian deaths up to 2024: ~258.

Broader Impact

- Budgetary strain: U.S. defense spending reached nearly \$1 trillion in 2024, or 37% of global military expenditure
- Veteran care burden: High rates of physical injuries, psychological trauma, and suicides have added significant long-term costs
- Global consequences: These conflicts displaced tens of millions, reshaping geopolitical alliances and contributing to widespread regional instability

These figures underscore a critical question for U.S. policymakers: how should future military actions balance strategic goals with the immense economic costs and human consequences of long-term overseas engagements?

A Human Toll of Historic Proportions

The cost in human life is equally devastating. Between 905,000 and 940,000 people are estimated to have died as a direct result of the wars, including:

- Civilians: Over 432,000.
- U.S. military personnel: Approximately 7,052.
- Private U.S. contractors: About 8,189.
- Allied troops and coalition partners: Around 14,874.
- Opposition fighters (Taliban, ISIS, other militant groups): Estimated 280,000+.

Beyond the battlefield deaths, researchers warn that the indirect toll — from displacement, infrastructure collapse, hunger, and lack of access to healthcare — likely pushes the total death count into the millions.

For example, Afghanistan saw a massive internal refugee crisis, with over 5 million displaced, while Iraq endured sectarian violence, regional instability, and widespread civilian suffering long after the official end of combat operations.

A Need for Strategic Clarity

As the U.S. confronts new challenges — from a resurgent Russia to rising tensions with Iran and China — its policymakers must reconcile past lessons with future goals. The \$8 trillion price tag and nearly one million lives lost serve as a potent reminder that war, while sometimes necessary, is rarely without long-lasting consequence.

Future military actions will not only require clearer definitions of victory, but also exit strategies, financial accountability, and ethical clarity about when — and why — to fight.



Context & Global Impact

The scale of U.S. military investment in the post-9/11 era continues to shape both domestic and international landscapes. In 2024, the U.S. defense budget alone reached \$997 billion, accounting for 37% of total global military spending—more than the next nine countries combined.

Beyond the battlefield, the toll on U.S. service members is profound. The wars have led to tens of thousands of veteran suicides, severe physical injuries, and long-term psychological trauma, placing immense strain on the healthcare system and support services.

Globally, these conflicts have caused the displacement of tens of millions of people, exacerbated regional instability, and redrawn geopolitical alliances. From refugee crises in Europe to increased tensions in the Persian Gulf and beyond, the ripple effects of these two decades of war continue to reshape global security and humanitarian priorities.



Trump's High-Stakes Lunch: Welcoming Pakistan's Top General to the White House



By Hina Kashif

U.S. President Donald Trump welcomed Pakistan's Army Chief, General (Field Marshal) Asim Munir, to a private lunch meeting at the White House, marking the first time a Pakistani military leader was hosted without senior civilian officials.

The lunch, held in the White House Cabinet Room on June 18, was an unusually private engagement, with no senior Pakistani civilian officials present—a first since 2001. This deliberate decision underscored the purely military and strategic nature of the talks. Both leaders appeared intent on engaging in candid, unfiltered dialogue on security matters, reinforcing the significance of military diplomacy between the two nations.

Key Highlights:

De-escalation of India-Pakistan Tensions:

President Trump explicitly credited Pakistan's Army Chief, General Asim Munir, alongside Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for preventing last month's India-Pakistan skirmish from spiraling into a potential nuclear conflict.

Speaking after their private White House luncheon, Trump remarked that both leaders "decided not to keep going with that war," averting what he described as "a potential nuclear flashpoint". In a gesture of gratitude, General Munir reportedly offered to nominate Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize—an honour Trump said he found deeply "honoring".

Talks on Iran and Regional Stability:

During the private luncheon at the White House, President Trump emphasized Pakistan's distinctive perspective on Iran, noting that Islamabad understands Tehran "better than most". According to reports, the two leaders delved into broader geopolitical issues, especially the escalating tensions between Israel and Iran—an area where Pakistan's regional insights were valued. Trump acknowledged Pakistan's strategic role in interpreting Iranian behavior and motivations, suggesting that their shared assessment could inform U.S. policy in the region. Additionally, the dialogue covered Pakistan's public condemnation of the recent Israeli airstrikes on Iranian territory. Trump and General Munir

exchanged views on how these strikes not only breach international law but also pose serious threats to regional stability—a stance Pakistan has consistently voiced.

Nobel Peace Prize Nomination:

During the lunch at the White House on June 18, General Asim Munir proposed nominating President Trump for the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize. This unexpected gesture was offered in recognition of Trump's role—alongside Munir and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi—in helping to avert a potentially nuclear escalation during last month's India-Pakistan standoff. Trump responded by calling the recommendation "honoring," expressing gratitude for Munir's acknowledgment and underscoring how meaningful it was to have his efforts publicly validated by the Pakistani Army Chief.

This development highlights Trump's aspiration for global recognition as a peacemaker—a theme that has permeated his approach to diplomacy, from the Abraham Accords to détente efforts in South Asia. For Munir, the nomination served as both a personal compliment and a diplomatic

signal, reflecting Pakistan's view of U.S. engagement as instrumental in de-escalating one of the region's most dangerous crises.

Trade Discussion & Modi Call:

During a media briefing following his White House meeting with Pakistan's Army Chief, General Asim Munir, President Trump noted that he had also recently spoken with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In that conversation, Trump emphasized the importance of focusing on economic collaboration rather than geopolitical tensions: "Trade — not mediation — should be the central focus moving forward," he asserted. He suggested that a shift towards robust trade ties among the U.S., Pakistan, and India could serve as a stabilizing force in the region.

high-level and highly sensitive nature of the discussions. Held in the Cabinet Room behind closed doors, the meeting notably excluded senior civilian officials, signaling a diplomatic strategy focused squarely on military and intelligence collaboration. The presence of both the COAS and the ISI chief highlighted the dual importance of operational security and strategic defense priorities in the bilateral dialogue, further emphasizing Washington's intent to engage with Pakistan's military leadership directly.

Broader Context:

Historical Diplomatic Shift:

The lunch meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and Pakistan's Army Chief, General Asim Munir, marked a historic

Pakistan-China Ties:

Pakistan is significantly expanding its military cooperation with China, which recently culminated in negotiations for an order of 40 J 35A fifth generation stealth fighters, potentially the first such sale to a foreign nation. Widely reported to include cutting-edge radar and air-defense systems, this deal could give Pakistan a technological edge in South Asia and signal Beijing's intent to challenge Western dominance in high-end military exports. China's accelerated timeline—moving deliveries forward by six months to early 2026—reflects heightened strategic objectives amid regional tensions. Alongside weaponry, Pakistan and China participate in joint military exercises like Shaheen and share defense industry projects such as the JF 17, reflecting a mature and deep military alliance.

Geopolitical Balancing & Strategic Significance

Providing J 35s boosts China's defense export credentials and deepens Pakistan's military capabilities, presenting a strong counterbalance to India and U.S.-India alignment.

By engaging both Washington and Beijing, Pakistan hedges its security bets, secures economic leverage (e.g., IMF support, trade discussions), and resists encirclement due to hostile relations with India.

The J 35 acquisition could prompt India to fast-track its own stealth and defense upgrades, potentially escalating a technological arms race in South Asia

U.S. Counter-terror Partnership:

Earlier in April 2025, a bipartisan delegation from the U.S. Congress met with Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, General (Field Marshal) Asim Munir, at the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi, in a significant diplomatic engagement that laid the groundwork for his subsequent visit to Washington. The meeting underscored the importance the U.S. continues to place on Pakistan's strategic role in regional security, particularly in relation to the evolving dynamics in South Asia and the broader Middle East.



Trump tied this economic approach to his broader diplomatic strategy, as he reaffirmed his claim that U.S. pressure—including potential trade incentives—played a role in convincing India and Pakistan to halt the May skirmish. He stated that encouraging renewed trade talks "helped bring them back from the brink" and urged both nations to prioritize commercial cooperation over conflict

Accompanying Delegation:

During the June 18 lunch at the White House, General Asim Munir was accompanied by Lieutenant General Asim Malik, the current Director-General of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI)—an inclusion that underscored the

shift in U.S.-Pakistan relations—signifying renewed attention after years of focus skewed heavily toward India. Hosting Pakistan's military leader without any senior civilian officials underscored the rising prominence of military diplomacy in Washington's strategy toward Islamabad. The closed-door, military-centric format of the visit highlights a deliberate recalibration, as both nations seek to strengthen defense ties, counterterror cooperation, and economic engagement outside the traditional civilian-led diplomatic channels. Analysts view this visit as not only symbolic—a return to high-level U.S.-Pakistan military engagement—but also practical, laying the groundwork for expanded strategic collaboration amid evolving regional dynamics.

During the discussions, U.S. lawmakers emphasized the enduring importance of U.S.-Pakistan military-to-military ties and acknowledged Pakistan's continued cooperation in counter-terrorism operations, including efforts against ISIS-K and other transnational terror networks. The Congressmen also reportedly praised Pakistan's evolving role as a stabilizing force in the region, particularly in the wake of recent flare-ups between Iran and Israel, and escalating tensions in Afghanistan.

General Munir, in turn, reiterated Pakistan's commitment to global counter-terrorism norms and its willingness to engage in constructive dialogue with all regional actors to ensure peace and stability. He also highlighted Pakistan's strategic challenges, including cross-border threats and the need for continued technological and intelligence collaboration with the U.S.

This April visit by U.S. lawmakers helped reinvigorate trust and mutual understanding after years of strained relations, and served as a diplomatic bridge leading to General Munir's high-profile engagement at the White House in June. The continuity between the two meetings reflects a deliberate recalibration of U.S.-Pakistan relations—where military diplomacy plays a central role amid shifting global alliances and growing multipolar competition.

What It Means:

For Pakistan:

- General (Field Marshal) Asim Munir's unprecedented meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump at the White House in June 2025 has been widely viewed as a high-profile international endorsement of his leadership and Pakistan's emerging role on the global stage. In what many analysts are calling a symbolic and strategic breakthrough; the visit marked the first time a Pakistani Chief of Army Staff (COAS) was hosted in Washington without accompanying senior civilian officials—an uncommon diplomatic gesture that placed Pakistan's military diplomacy front and center.
- The closed-door nature of the meeting, along with the presence of Pakistan's powerful ISI Chief Lt. Gen. Asim

Malik, further underscored the weight of the engagement. The discussions ranged from de-escalation efforts in South Asia, to broader regional stability, U.S.-Pakistan trade potential, and Iran-Israel tensions. Most notably, Trump credited Munir for playing a pivotal role in averting a potential nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan following the April Kashmir flare-up. In return, Munir reportedly nominated Trump for a Nobel Peace Prize, signaling mutual recognition of each other's strategic relevance and decision-making influence.



- For General Munir, the meeting was more than a diplomatic encounter—it served as validation of his stature not only as Pakistan's top military commander but also as a figure with significant geopolitical clout. His leadership in navigating Pakistan through complex regional dynamics—such as its ongoing balancing act between deepening ties with China (including recent talks over acquiring J-35 stealth jets) and re-engaging with Washington—demonstrates his calculated and globally aware approach.
- This visible endorsement by a U.S. president has given Munir international recognition at a time when Pakistan is seeking to reassert itself as a key player in regional stability, counterter-

rorism, and global diplomacy. It also sends a message to other global powers, including China, India, and Russia, that Pakistan's military leadership retains considerable influence in shaping not just national security policy but also broader foreign relations.

- In essence, this White House meeting elevated General Munir's profile from a national military leader to a regional statesman—cementing his role as one of the key architects of Pakistan's evolving global posture in a multipolar world.

For the United States:

The meeting allows President Donald Trump to position himself as a key peacemaker in South Asia, enhancing his image as a diplomatic dealmaker. Simultaneously, it opens the door for renewed U.S.-Pakistan engagement in areas of economic collaboration and security cooperation, signaling a potential recalibration of bilateral ties in a shifting geopolitical landscape.

Regional Impact:

- The meeting between President Donald Trump and Pakistan's Army Chief General Asim Munir underscores a significant strategic recalibration in South Asia, affecting key regional players including India, Pakistan, and Iran, as well as the

- broader role of the United States. This high-profile engagement signals a renewed U.S. interest in stabilizing a historically volatile region by strengthening ties with Pakistan while maintaining delicate relations with India. The discussions reportedly addressed pressing geopolitical challenges such as the escalating Israel-Iran tensions, highlighting Pakistan's unique regional insights, especially regarding Iran, which adds a new dimension to U.S. diplomatic calculations.
- Furthermore, the direct involvement of Pakistan's military leadership reflects an acknowledgment of the army's influential role in shaping the country's foreign policy, especially in matters related to security and counterterrorism. The meeting may encourage more direct military-to-military dialogues, potentially ease longstanding tensions and open channels for conflict de-escalation, particularly between India and Pakistan.
- Simultaneously, this development challenges India's preference for bilateral conflict resolution without third-party mediation, as evidenced by Prime Minister Modi's clarification that the recent ceasefire was the result of direct talks between Indian and Pakistani military officials.
- Overall, the meeting marks a shift in the U.S.'s South Asian policy approach, balancing its strategic partnerships with India and Pakistan, addressing regional security concerns, and exploring new opportunities for cooperation amid broader geopolitical complexities. This recalibration could influence power dynamics, economic collaboration, and peace initiatives across South Asia and the wider Middle East region.

Why Trump's Meeting with Pakistan's General Asim Munir Has Stirred Controversy in India

Indian media and many Indians have expressed anger and concern over the

meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and Pakistan's Army Chief General Asim Munir for several reasons:

Perceived Undermining of India's Position:

India is very sensitive about any third-party involvement in its disputes with Pakistan, especially over Kashmir and cross-border tensions. The meeting, particularly with Pakistan's top military leader and without Indian civilian officials, is seen by many as the U.S. giving legitimacy to Pakistan's military establishment, which India often blames for supporting terrorism in the region. Indians fear that such meetings could embolden Pakistan's hardline stance and weaken India's diplomatic leverage.



Concerns About Third-Party Mediation:

India has consistently maintained that Kashmir and bilateral issues with Pakistan should be resolved directly between the two countries, without outside mediation. Trump's claims of mediating the recent ceasefire were rejected by Indian officials, who say the truce happened solely through direct military communication. Indian media and officials see Trump's statements and the meeting as interference in a sensitive bilateral issue, which India considers its internal matter.

Strategic Implications and Security Concerns:

The fact that the meeting was held privately, with no senior Pakistani civilian leaders

present, signals a close military-to-military engagement that some in India view as problematic. India perceives Pakistan's military as the main driver behind cross-border terrorism and destabilization in Kashmir and fears the U.S. engagement with Pakistan's military could shift regional power dynamics unfavorably.

Timing and Political Sensitivity:

The meeting took place amid heightened regional tensions and shortly after a skirmish between India and Pakistan, which was one of the most serious in years. Many Indians feel that holding such talks so soon without prior consultation with India disregards Indian sensitivities and interests.

Narrative of Unequal U.S. Treatment:

Some Indians view the meeting as an example of the U.S. not being a neutral party, suspecting that the U.S. is trying to balance its ties with Pakistan against its strategic partnership with India. This perception fuels frustration in India that the U.S. might be rewarding Pakistan's military establishment despite its alleged involvement in destabilizing activities.

The anger and concern stem from fears that the meeting could undermine India's position on Kashmir, legitimize Pakistan's military role in regional issues, and interfere in bilateral matters that India prefers to handle directly.

G7 Summit 2025: A Fractured Gathering in a Fracturing World



By Romana Afsheen

Against the dramatic backdrop of Canada's Rocky Mountains, world leaders convened for the 50th G7 Summit on June 16–17, 2025. But any hopes of unity among the globe's wealthiest democracies were quickly overshadowed by geopolitical ruptures, an early presidential departure, and stark divisions over war, trade, and diplomacy.

Far from a ceremonial commemoration, the Kananaskis summit exposed the fragility of the liberal world order. The world is facing a convergence of crises—Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine, escalating military confrontation between Israel and Iran, a destabilized Middle East, and simmering global economic uncertainty. This year's G7, instead of showing strength through unity, struggled to manage its internal contradictions.

Trump's Early Exit: An Abrupt Reordering of Priorities

One of the summit's defining moments occurred even before it could gain momentum. U.S. President Donald Trump left the gathering in Kananaskis abruptly on June 16, cutting short his participation in crucial

negotiations. "I have to be back, very important," Trump told reporters as he boarded Air Force One for Washington.

While the official reason was the escalating conflict between Israel and Iran, the early departure dramatically disrupted the summit's dynamic. For many European leaders, it brought back memories of the 2018 G7 summit—also held in Canada—when Trump had disavowed a joint communiqué after accusing Canadian leadership of dishonesty.

His exit was more than symbolic. It derailed the possibility of a comprehensive joint statement on Ukraine, pushed climate discussions further down the agenda, and underscored deepening transatlantic rifts. In private conversations, summit attendees voiced frustration, with one senior diplomat quoted saying, "Without the U.S. president, we were left with photo ops, not real consensus."

Iran-Israel Conflagration: The Elephant in Every Room

Although the Ukraine war and global economic coordination were expected to

dominate the agenda, the sudden flare-up between Israel and Iran stole the spotlight.

As the summit commenced, news broke that Israel had launched an aerial bombardment campaign targeting Iranian nuclear facilities. Iran retaliated swiftly, deploying drones and missiles across several fronts. While full details remain classified, reports indicate a significant strike against Iran's Fordow enrichment site—one of its most heavily fortified nuclear locations.

French President Emmanuel Macron, addressing the issue in closed-door meetings and public statements, warned against further escalation. "The greatest mistake today would be to pursue regime change in Iran through military means, as that would lead to chaos," he said. Macron's remarks appeared to target Trump's known hawkish instincts toward Tehran, particularly given that Trump had reportedly authorized greenlighting the Israeli attack prior to the summit.

Diplomats confirmed that Oman-mediated talks between the U.S. and Iran—previously seen as the last diplomatic off-ramp—were cancelled after Israel's strikes began. European leaders, particularly from France, Germany, and the UK,

were left fuming. They questioned why Trump had not waited for talks to conclude, especially since U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi were allegedly close to finalizing a ceasefire framework.

Strategic Fallout: A Nuclear Domino?

The deeper concern haunting leaders in Kananaskis was the potential domino effect of Israel's attack. Iran has long maintained its nuclear program is peaceful. However, the strikes on its facilities—combined with its international isolation and widespread domestic unrest—may accelerate what many fear: a rush toward nuclear weaponization.



Richard Nephew, a former deputy special envoy to Iran under the Biden administration, laid out the technical stakes in Foreign Affairs: "Iran's most dangerous uranium enrichment site at Fordow has been attacked, but there is no confirmation that its defenses have been breached. If Iran's centrifuges are still functional, Tehran may be able to reconstitute a nuclear weapons program in just weeks."

He added, "Iran could, for example, ship its hoard of 60% enriched uranium to Fordow—or a secret site—for further enrichment, quickly giving it enough uranium to make a bomb."

Even more alarming, public demonstrations in Iran have taken a sharp turn. What began as patriotic solidarity against foreign strikes has morphed into calls from both the streets and politicians urging the regime to develop nuclear arms as a matter of survival.

Israeli officials reportedly believe their strikes may provoke a political upheaval in Tehran, possibly even toppling the Islamic Republic. However, Western diplomats warned that rather than weakening the regime, the bombardment risks rallying moderates and hardliners alike in nationalist defiance.

No Consensus on Ukraine: The Missing Communiqué

Amid the Israel-Iran tensions, Ukraine's war effort was expected to receive renewed support. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy traveled to the summit to appeal directly for sanctions expansion and

military aid. Instead, he faced a divided room.

European leaders reaffirmed their solidarity with Ukraine. Canada announced fresh sanctions on Russian defense and tech industries. NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte pledged continued alliance support. But the glaring absence of a joint G7 statement on Ukraine was telling.

A senior Canadian official initially blamed the U.S. for blocking consensus, citing Trump's preference for negotiation with Russia. Later, Prime Minister Carney's spokesperson walked back the claim, stating that "no draft statement was circulated." Either way, it was evident that disagreement within the group prevented a unified position.

"There is support, but it's no longer strategic—it's transactional," said one European analyst. "Ukraine cannot rely on the G7 as

a whole anymore. They have to build a coalition within the coalition."

Economic Themes Take a Backseat

Although meant to be a central pillar of the summit, economic discussions were diluted by global security concerns. Still, a few notable developments emerged.

President Trump and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer finalized a long-anticipated bilateral trade deal. The agreement reduces car tariffs from 27.5% to 10% and lifts duties on aerospace goods, expected to protect tens of thousands of British jobs. A symbolic moment occurred when Trump dropped the official documents during a press event, prompting Starmer to quickly pick them up. "A very important document," he quipped, underlining the stakes.

Trump framed the deal as a sign of mutual respect, saying, "The UK is very well protected... because I like them." But some UK industries, like steel and pharmaceuticals, saw less favorable outcomes. British steel remains subject to a 25% tariff, although both sides vowed to "work toward 0%."

Trump's broader "Liberation Day" tariff policy—imposing 10% across-the-board import levies and higher duties on strategic materials—sparked quiet dismay from allies. Canada, France, and Germany raised concerns over global recession risks, but Trump appeared unmoved.

Even as the Israel-Iran conflict and Trump's early departure dominated headlines, the G7 leaders sought to recalibrate the summit by shifting attention toward long-term global coordination—particularly in technology, critical minerals, and economic resilience. Though the summit struggled to achieve unity on major geopolitical crises, there were glimmers of coordinated policy action that could shape the global economy and digital order in the decades to come.

Critical Minerals: Securing the Building Blocks of the Future

One of the summit's most tangible achieve-

ments was the launch of the G7 Critical Minerals Action Plan, a collective response to growing anxieties over resource security, technological dependence, and supply chain fragility.

Critical minerals—such as lithium, cobalt, and rare earth elements—are essential for clean energy transitions, digital economies, and national security. As tensions with China continue to loom over the Indo-Pacific and global trade corridors, Western nations are increasingly wary of their dependence on single-country sources for these strategic materials.

The action plan outlines four key pillars:

1. Diversification of mineral supply through new partnerships with emerging economies and resource-rich regions like Africa and Latin America.
2. Investment Promotion in responsible mining and local value chains, including processing and refining facilities outside of China.
3. Innovation Acceleration to develop recycling technologies and reduce dependency on virgin mineral extraction.
4. Sustainability and Transparency, with a focus on environmental and labor standards, traceability, and community rights.

“We remain committed to transparency, diversification, security, and sustainable mining practices,” the leaders declared. António Costa, President of the European Council, emphasized: “It is our duty and obligation to build resilient critical mineral supply chains not just for ourselves, but in partnership with developing countries that are too often left behind.”

Artificial Intelligence: Shaping a Human-Centric Digital Future

Another key policy area that gained traction despite the summit’s geopolitical turbulence was the governance of artificial intelligence (AI). In a forward-looking Statement on AI for Prosperity, the G7 reaffirmed a shared vision for a

“human-centric, trustworthy, and secure” AI future.

With AI applications rapidly expanding across industries and borders, the G7 leaders recognized the need for shared governance, particularly to prevent abuse and ensure equitable adoption. The statement includes commitments to:

- Support AI adoption in the public sector, especially in areas like education, healthcare, and infrastructure.
- Launch an AI adoption roadmap for SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises), helping them integrate AI tools responsibly and efficiently.
- Address the energy intensity of AI systems, promoting sustainable architecture and computing efficiency.
- Deepen partnerships with emerging and developing economies, ensuring that the benefits of AI are globally inclusive.



The G7’s approach aims to balance innovation with regulation, enabling both economic competitiveness and social responsibility. The summit acknowledged the growing risk that AI might worsen inequality or be misused by authoritarian regimes, and pledged to “counter digital authoritarianism through openness, values-based design, and human oversight.”

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, called it “a turning point for AI ethics,” adding that “if we do not shape the rules now, we will be shaped by others’ rules tomorrow.”

Quantum Technologies: Defining the Next Technological Frontier

Recognizing the transformative power of quantum technologies, the G7 unveiled the Kananaskis Common Vision for the Future of Quantum Technologies. This document outlines coordinated investment in quantum computing, sensing, and communications—a field that could revolutionize cryptography, logistics, defense systems, and drug development.

Although still in its infancy, quantum research has already attracted heavy state and corporate investment. The G7 aims to create a multilateral framework to pool resources, harmonize standards, and ensure that quantum advancements are guided by democratic values rather than weaponized by rogue actors.

“Quantum is not science fiction anymore,” said Canadian Prime Minister Mark

Carney. “We must ensure that as this technology matures, it is directed toward peaceful innovation and not toward exacerbating conflict or surveillance.”

Key provisions include:

- Public-private funding initiatives to accelerate development.
- Cross-border research cooperation among universities and research institutions.
- Ethical guidelines for quantum surveillance and encryption use.

The EU's Diplomatic Balancing Act

Throughout the summit, one entity stood out as a stabilizing force: the European Union. Represented by Council President António Costa and Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, the EU played a quiet but essential mediating role amid intensifying divisions between Washington and European capitals.

When Trump departed abruptly, EU diplomats took the lead in maintaining engagement with key stakeholders. They convened side meetings with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, NATO officials, and Middle Eastern envoys. The EU also coordinated messaging with G7 partners like Canada and Japan, ensuring continuity on shared positions even in Trump's absence.



"We continued working to align our actions for international peace and security," Costa said, summarizing the EU's role. "In a moment of global fragmentation, Europe showed that it can still be a bridge."

Moreover, the EU advocated for more inclusive diplomacy—calling for closer partnerships with non-G7 countries and global institutions. Leaders from India, Brazil, and the African Union were present in working sessions focused on trade, development, and migration. Their involvement marked a shift toward a more pluralistic G7, though concerns about tokenism and exclusion remained.

Fire, Migration, and Security: Protecting Communities

Beyond technology and trade, the G7 took symbolic steps to address planetary threats that transcend borders. In response to record-breaking wildfires devastating forests across continents, the leaders adopted the Kananaskis Wildfire Charter. This pact commits members to:

- Prevent and mitigate wildfires through climate resilience and forest management.
- Strengthen global capacity to prepare for and respond to mega-fires.
- Rebuild for resilience, integrating wildfire risks into urban planning and infrastructure.

Leaders also confronted a surge in transnational repression—a growing practice in which authoritarian states intimidate or harm dissidents abroad. The G7 issued a joint statement condemning such practices and vowing to raise awareness, support targeted communities, and hold perpetrators accountable.

On migration, the summit reaffirmed commitments to fight migrant smuggling and human trafficking, dismantling criminal networks while safeguarding vulnerable populations. The language was careful not to criminalize migration itself, and European leaders insisted that humane treatment and international refugee law

must guide policy.

"We are committed to protecting the most vulnerable, including refugees and forcibly displaced persons," read the joint declaration.

Energy Security and Climate: Unfinished Business

While energy security was referenced in multiple sessions, especially in light of Russia's war in Ukraine and the Iran-Israel standoff, there was little progress on climate action.

Out of deference to the Trump administration, climate was reportedly erased from the formal agenda—a move criticized by environmental groups and some G7 leaders. Canadian host Mark Carney admitted that climate talks were "not productive under current conditions" and instead pointed to the wildfire charter as a proxy for environmental cooperation.

Nonetheless, the failure to advance on climate targets—particularly in a summit hosted by a resource-rich country like Canada—left a bitter aftertaste for many.

As the final day of the G7 Summit in Kananaskis unfolded under the shadow of President Donald Trump's early departure, the absence of a collective center became more palpable. Discussions continued, policy papers were drafted, and joint statements were carefully worded—but the fractured unity of the world's wealthiest democracies could no longer be concealed.

While long-term initiatives like critical mineral security, artificial intelligence, and wildfire resilience were tabled with some consensus, the summit failed to deliver on what the world expected most: coordinated responses to immediate and escalating crises. In particular, the volatile triangle of Israel, Iran, and the broader Middle East cast a long shadow over the proceedings.

The Israel-Iran Conflagration: A Diplomatic Vacuum

The most dangerous and consequential issue on the G7 agenda—Israel's strikes on

Iranian nuclear facilities and the growing risk of regional war—remained unresolved. The summit, at best, managed to deliver a muted joint statement reaffirming that “Iran can never have a nuclear weapon.” But no clear roadmap or diplomatic breakthrough emerged.

The situation was made worse by the abrupt cancellation of Oman-mediated talks between U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, which had offered a fragile hope of backchannel de-escalation. According to European officials, the cancellation was due to Trump allegedly greenlighting Israeli strikes before the talks concluded—an act that not only collapsed diplomacy but also reinforced suspicions about U.S. intentions.

European leaders, particularly from France, Germany, Italy, and the UK, held private calls and side meetings urging de-escalation. Macron, who emerged as the loudest voice of restraint, publicly warned:

“The greatest mistake today would be to pursue regime change in Iran through military means, as that would lead to chaos.”

Inside the summit, European diplomats pressed Trump for an explanation. There was no consensus on whether Iran’s uranium enrichment capabilities had been fully neutralized. Analysts like Richard Nephew, a former U.S. deputy special envoy for Iran, wrote in *Foreign Affairs*

that Fordow, one of Iran’s most fortified enrichment sites, was hit but not destroyed.

Nephew warned:

“If Iran’s centrifuges are still around and its stockpile of 60% enriched uranium is intact, Tehran could reconstitute a nuclear weapons program in weeks.”

The risk that Iran may draw the lesson that only a nuclear deterrent can protect its sovereignty was echoed by demonstrators in Tehran and even some Iranian lawmakers. What Israel and its allies may have hoped would be a knockout blow could instead become a justification for Iran to exit the Non-Proliferation Treaty and rush toward weaponization.

Meanwhile, Israel continued strikes into Syria and southern Lebanon, signaling that it had no intention of halting operations even as Western leaders warned of the risk of igniting a regional war involving Hezbollah, Iraq-based militias, and possibly even Gulf states.

A Communiqué That Never Was

The collapse of consensus on the Iran-Israel issue contributed to a wider breakdown in summit documentation. For only the second time in G7 history—after the infamous 2018 Charlevoix summit—no final communiqué was issued.

Canadian host Mark Carney had anticipat-

ed this outcome and instead planned for individual issue-specific statements on topics such as AI, critical minerals, and Ukraine. Still, the absence of a single, unified document was a powerful symbol of division.

The EU worked tirelessly behind the scenes to hold the summit’s diplomatic integrity together. Council President António Costa and Commission President Ursula von der Leyen coordinated language for the joint statements, even as U.S. delegates objected to language on Ukraine, Gaza, and steel tariffs.

One senior EU official commented anonymously:

“It’s a diplomatic tragedy. We had alignment on 80% of the issues, but the other 20%—the most urgent ones—couldn’t be papered over.”

The European stance reflected a balance of principled positions and pragmatic diplomacy. The EU condemned Iranian nuclear violations but also opposed preemptive strikes. It supported Israel’s right to self-defense but insisted on de-escalation and protection of civilians in Gaza, where the humanitarian toll had reached catastrophic levels.

The Zelenskyy Equation: Support with Strings

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy attended the summit in hopes of rallying



G7 unity behind Ukraine's long-term defense. His presence symbolized the endurance of Ukraine's struggle, yet tangible outcomes were sparse.

While Canada pledged additional sanctions on Russia, the U.S. delegation—under instructions from Trump—reportedly resisted issuing a joint statement or committing to further arms deliveries. Trump, sources say, wanted more room to “renegotiate peace” with Russia, a notion met with skepticism by the rest of the G7.

Nevertheless, Zelenskyy made headlines by publicly thanking G7 partners and reaffirming Ukraine’s “unconditional ceasefire” offer. He also used the summit to lobby for a global reconstruction fund, similar to a modern-day Marshall Plan, though no concrete commitments were made.



The UK-US Trade Deal: Diplomacy Meets Pageantry

Amid the turmoil, there was at least one moment of scripted success: the announcement of a U.S.-UK trade deal. Trump and newly elected UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer met in front of reporters to sign what Trump called “a fair deal for both,” covering tariffs on cars and aerospace.

In a now-iconic image, Trump dropped several pages of the signed agreement in front of the cameras, prompting Starmer to bend down and retrieve them, saying:

“A very important document.”

While largely symbolic, the deal does include significant concessions. Aerospace tariffs are set to drop from 10% to 0%, and car tariffs will fall from 27.5% to 10%, with a quota of 100,000 vehicles annually. However, the agreement fell short of full zero-tariff status for UK steel and pharmaceuticals—a point left unresolved by Trump’s ambiguous comments.

Starmer described the agreement as a “sign of strength” in the UK-US relationship. But critics noted that the UK remains constrained by U.S. protectionism, particularly as Trump’s broader “Liberation Day” tariffs on allies still stand.

A Summit of Symbols

As the leaders prepared to depart Kananaskis, the summit’s final scenes told

a complicated story. The family photo—missing Trump—was emblematic of the West’s new disorder. The mountain backdrop stood in ironic contrast to the storm brewing across the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

The 50th anniversary of the G7 Summit, meant to commemorate five decades of cooperation among democracies, instead exposed just how fragile those ties have become.

Japan’s Prime Minister summed it up diplomatically:

“The G7 remains essential—but we must modernize it to meet today’s challenges. Our strength lies not only in our economies but in our ability to stand for something

together.”

What the 2025 G7 Summit Revealed

- The G7 is still a relevant platform, but it is no longer guaranteed to produce coordinated responses, especially when global leaders pursue diverging national interests.
- The summit produced substantial frameworks for critical minerals, AI, quantum technology, and wildfire response—but failed to deliver on immediate crises like Iran, Israel, and Ukraine.
- The absence of a final communiqué underscores the difficulty of maintaining unity amid resurgent nationalism and geopolitical turbulence.
- The European Union emerged as a quiet but vital mediator, ensuring continuity and coherence even as other powers pursued more disruptive strategies.
- The world saw a widening gap between strategic ambition and diplomatic reality—a trend that, if left unchecked, could erode the credibility of multilateral institutions.

As the G7 marks its 50th year, the 2025 summit in Kananaskis laid bare a world in flux — one in which the foundations of post-war consensus are increasingly strained by strategic divides and political unpredictability. From the high-stakes standoff between Israel and Iran to the faltering momentum in Ukraine, and the fragile web of economic interdependence, the summit underscored a stark truth: the challenges facing the international order can no longer be managed through symbolism alone. If the G7 is to remain more than a ceremonial gathering of powerful democracies, it must evolve — into a forum that not only debates but decides, not only reacts but leads. The global crises unfolding today demand clarity of purpose, unity of action, and the courage to chart a course through the uncertainty. Amid the fractures and frustrations, there remains space for hope — but only if matched by political will, strategic clarity, and a renewed commitment to genuine multilateralism.

C for Change: Blaise Metreweli's and the Power Shift in Women's Leadership



By Arooj Sabir

Blaise Metreweli's appointment as the first female head of MI6 is far more than a footnote in history—it is a thunder-clap in the quiet halls of British intelligence. It's not just a door being opened; it's a wall being taken down. For the first time in the 116-year history of the Secret Intelligence Service, a woman will take the helm, inherit the iconic title 'C', and replace Sir Richard Moore later this year. But let's ask the obvious question and answer it just as plainly: does this moment matter? Yes, certainly for females—not only residing in Britain, but all over the world.

So why is this moment pivotal? Why should the appointment of one woman to a secretive role in a shadowy service spark such discussion? It is because Blaise Metreweli's rise to the highest is not just about her personal journey; it's about rewriting an entire narrative—one that for too long excluded women from the most powerful rooms.

To understand the significance of this development, one must look at both her impressive credentials and the deeper symbolism wrapped around her ascent. Since 1999, Metreweli has served within MI6 and MI5, working across the Middle East and Europe, and currently leads the technology and innovation division known as 'Q'. She's not new to the world of spying; she's a seasoned warrior from the shadows. At just 47, she already holds the prestigious Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George (CMG), an honor granted for exceptional service in foreign policy. She has not climbed the ladder—she has sprinted up it.

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, Foreign Secretary David Lammy, and outgoing MI6 chief Sir Richard Moore have all publicly applauded her selection. Moore even called her "one of our foremost thinkers on technology." Her brilliance is not whispered about in backrooms; it's

openly celebrated.

But let's pause for a moment on something less expected: her first name—Blaise. That name evokes flair and fire. It's like a spark catching dry leaves—it demands attention. 'Blaise' brings to mind 'Modesty Blaise', the fictional action heroine known for her nerve, style, and swagger. The connection is more than literary coincidence; it's poetic fate. In the same way that Modesty Blaise shattered stereotypes in comic strips and novels, Blaise Metreweli is dismantling them in real life.

Of course, fiction has often surpassed fact. Judi Dench portrayed 'M', the head of MI6, in the James Bond films starting with *GoldenEye* in 1995. Kristin Scott Thomas recently took on the role of an intelligence chief in Apple TV's *Slow Horses*. These portrayals made the idea of a female spy boss familiar with the masses, even comforting. But fiction, for all its drama,

often glosses over the harshness of reality. The truth is, until now, no woman had been deemed capable enough to be entrusted to hold the real-life reins of Britain's most secretive agency.

Why not? Zoe Williams in her article states, "An executive decision was made and never revisited: secret agents can't work for their proxy mum; they can only accept censure from their pretend dad." Funny, but painful. To elucidate: for over a century, MI6 was taking orders only from the father's club—stern, suited, and decidedly male—and females were not given the opportunity and permission to lead. From the very first 'C', Captain Mansfield Cumming, who signed his name in green ink (a tradition still followed), the image of a leader in British intelligence was cloaked in masculinity. The halls of MI6 echoed with deep voices and deeper biases.



But then came Blaise.

She enters not quietly, but like an iron fist knocking down a door that has long been rusted shut. Her appointment disrupts the old order. She is not just the new boss—she's a living symbol that intelligence, courage, and command have no gender.

And what a time to take charge. The world resembles a volatile volcano on the verge of eruption—such is its instability. MI6 faces threats from Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, and a rising tide of cyber warfare. The battleground has shifted from boots-on-the-ground to flickering servers. As the head of the tech division 'Q', Metreweli has already been a key player in

countering China's biometric surveillance and protecting agent identities. Now, as 'C', she must chart MI6's path amid a relentless storm.

And here's the catch: leadership in this field has never been more demanding. It is not enough to be tough. One must be strategic, fast-thinking, emotionally intelligent, and unflinchingly ethical. Metreweli is an amalgamation of all that—and more. Women in positions of power are often told they are either too soft or too severe, too emotional or too cold. It's a no-win game. But Blaise Metreweli played—and plays—against these words like a sage and dismantled these stereotyped statements.

Her effort matters globally. In most intelligence communities across the world—from Washington to Warsaw, Islamabad to Istanbul—female leaders remain as rare as

shooting stars. With her appointment, the UK is sending a clear message: it's time to stop treating authority as a male legacy only. Women can lead, should lead, and do lead. It's not a favor you bestow; it's a fact.

More importantly, her appointment plants a flag for the next generation. Picture a young girl in Birmingham, or Bradford, or even Balochistan, watching the news and hearing that the head of British intelligence is a woman. For her, the horizon just got wider. As the saying goes, "You can't be what you can't see." Blaise Metreweli is now a lighthouse.

But let's not romanticize it too much. Her appointment also reminds us of the resistance women continue to face, which

is limned by the years it took for her to reach this position. The cultural critique embedded in this moment exposes a persistent discomfort with women in control. In many boardrooms and briefings, the reasons for excluding women morph with the moment. Too gentle. Too strong. Too emotional. Too distant. The problem, ironically, is often that there is no consistent problem—only prejudice in disguise.

A research study depicted men's sexist attitude towards women in the following words: "I love women, and some of my best friends are women—I just don't like it when they have authority over me." This kind of thinking is not extinct. It lurks in quiet conversations, in hiring decisions, in glances exchanged during meetings. It is a fear that is etched in the souls of every ambitious woman.

It is not like Metreweli eliminates these fears just with grand speeches. She does it by showing up, doing the job, and doing it well. She has not built her career on buzzwords or tokenism. Her foundation is competence, pure and simple. That, in itself, is revolutionary.

And she steps into her role at a time when the stakes are sky-high. Prime Minister Starmer, speaking at the G7 Summit, described the world as under threat "in a way we haven't seen since the Cold War." From terrorism to cyberattacks, from rogue states to AI manipulation, the enemies of peace are many-faced. MI6 doesn't just need a leader; it needs a visionary—and it found one.

Her rise also reclaims something unexpected: the narrative of the spy genre itself. In the Bond films, the role of 'M' has shifted but always circled around one archetype. As one witty critic noted, even Ralph Fiennes—who currently plays 'M'—seems to channel Judi Dench's steely grace. She set the gold standard, male or female. Now, reality has finally caught up with fiction.

Interestingly, while the fictional 'Q' has never been portrayed by a woman, Metreweli has already lived that reality. She has moved the agency into the future, using technology as both sword and shield. And now, as 'C', she carries forward a legacy of leadership wrapped not in tuxedos or martinis, but in resilience and results.

The UK is also setting a broader precedent. In 2023, a woman became the head of GCHQ, the government's cyber agency. Now, with a female 'C', British intelligence is no longer an old boys' club. It is evolving, modernizing, and embracing diversity—not as decoration, but as necessity.

Why does this matter for countries still debating if women can serve in combat or lead intelligence posts? Because leadership like Metreweli's is the counter-argument—walking, talking, strategizing proof that progress works.

Her story also sheds light on the absurd double standards women face. In tech, they're often seen as too serious to innovate. In politics, too blunt to be relatable. In espionage, too unpredictable to be trusted. Yet research repeatedly shows that diverse leadership brings better outcomes. Metreweli's journey proves the point with elegant certainty.

As writer Jesse Armstrong wittily framed it in his recent series *Mountainhead*, the discomfort with female authority often boils down to arbitrary slogans: "no meals, no deals, no heels." It's satire, but it stings with truth. Intelligence work today demands balance—of instinct and information, of courage and caution. Traits once labeled "feminine"—empathy, emotional intelligence, even intuition—are now central to success.



So, what does Blaise Metreweli truly represent? Not just the top job in a top-secret world. She represents a change in the mindset of what leadership looks like. It should be liberated from gender. She's not just making history—she's changing the script.

Let us be clear: this isn't a one-woman victory lap. It's a call to arms, a signal that the age-old architecture of power is being remodeled. One woman at the top of MI6 won't fix systemic inequality. But it sets a powerful precedent. It tells us what's possible.

Yes, it is a big deal. Yes, it should be shouted from rooftops. Not just because Blaise Metreweli is the new 'C', but because she is showing the world that no role—no matter how secret, how strategic, or how senior—is off-limits to women. The once dark corridors of MI6 are now illuminated.

A new chapter has begun, and Blaise Metreweli is writing it on behalf of women all over the world—with green ink, of course.



New Monetary Policy, Economic Performance, and Challenges Ahead



By Javed Mahmood

At its meeting today, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) decided to keep the policy rate unchanged at 11 percent. The Committee noted that the increase in inflation in May to 3.5 percent y/y was in line with its expectation, whereas core inflation declined marginally. Meanwhile, inflation expectations of both households and businesses moderated. Going forward, inflation is expected to trend up and stabilize in the target range during FY26. The MPC also assessed that economic growth is picking up gradually and is projected to gain further traction next year, supported by the still-unfolding impact of earlier policy rate cuts. At the same time, the Committee noted some potential risks to the external sector amidst the sustained widening in the trade deficit and weak financial inflows. Moreover, some of the proposed FY26 budgetary measures may further widen the trade deficit by increasing imports. In this regard, the Committee deemed today's decision appropriate to sustain the macroeconomic and price stability.

The Committee noted the following key developments since its last meeting. First, the real GDP growth for FY25 is provisionally reported at 2.7 percent, and the government is target-

ing a higher growth of 4.2 percent for next year. Second, despite a substantial widening in the trade deficit, the current account remained broadly balanced in April. Meanwhile, the completion of the first EFF review led to the disbursement of around \$1 billion, which increased the SBP's FX reserves to \$11.7 billion as of June 6. Third, the revised budget estimates indicate the primary balance surplus at 2.2 percent of GDP in FY25, up from 0.9 percent last year. For next year, the government is targeting a higher primary surplus of 2.4 percent of GDP. Lastly, global oil prices have rebounded sharply, reflecting the evolving geopolitical situation in the Middle East and some easing in US-China trade tensions.

Taking stock of these developments and potential risks, the Committee assessed that the real interest rate remains adequately positive to stabilize inflation within the target range of 5 – 7 percent. Furthermore, the Committee emphasized the timely realization of planned foreign inflows, achieving the targeted fiscal consolidation, and implementing structural reforms as essential to maintaining macroeconomic stability and achieving sustainable economic growth.

Real Sector

According to provisional PBS estimates, the economy gained momentum during the second half of FY25, with real GDP growth accelerating to 3.9 percent from 1.4 percent in H1-FY25. This outturn was broadly in line with the MPC's earlier expectations, though with compositional differences. The agriculture sector underperformed relative to FY24 due to a sizable decline in the production of major crops. In contrast, the industry and services sectors contributed to the uptick in real GDP growth, particularly in H2-FY25. Looking ahead, the MPC anticipates the industry and services sectors to continue to drive economic growth in FY26. This assessment is supported by the sustained momentum in high-frequency indicators – including credit to private sector, imports of machinery and intermediate goods, and business sentiments – and easing financial conditions. However, agriculture prospects appear subdued, as indicated by initial information of Kharif crops amidst unfavorable weather conditions. On balance, the Committee expects real GDP growth to increase further during FY26.

External Sector

The current account was almost balanced in April 2025, taking the cumulative surplus to \$1.9 billion during July-April FY25. Imports continued to grow in line with improving economic activity, while export growth decelerated, partly due to the challenging global trade environment. However, workers' remittances continued to remain strong and more than offset the impact of the widening trade deficit on the current account. Based on these trends, the current account is expected to remain in surplus in FY25. Nonetheless, the uncertain global trade environment, coupled with expected continued strong import demand, is projected to turn the current account into a moderate deficit in FY26. Meanwhile, the MPC noted that despite net financial inflows remaining weak so far, the SBP's FX reserves are expected to increase to around \$14 billion by end-June 2025. Going forward, external outlook is susceptible to multiple risks, which mainly stem from heightened geopolitical tensions, volatility in international oil prices, possible adverse impact of proposed budgetary measures, and potential shortfalls in planned financial inflows.

Fiscal Sector

The revised budget estimates indicate that both the overall fiscal and primary balances improved further during FY25. This improvement came on the back of an increase in revenues and relatively contained expenditures, especially PSDP. Meanwhile, amidst a shortfall in budgeted external financing, the government's reliance on domestic financing sources rose significantly. For FY26, the government is targeting further fiscal consolidation and has set the primary surplus target at 2.4 percent of GDP. The MPC emphasized on achieving the envisaged fiscal consolidation by pursuing effective and timely implementation of reforms, especially broadening the tax base and privatizing or reforming PSEs.

Money and Credit

As of May 30, broad money (M2) growth moderated to 12.6 percent from 13.3 percent at the time of the last MPC meeting. This is due to a deceleration in NDA of the banking system, as the growth

in net budgetary borrowing declined. Meanwhile, private sector credit growth remained strong at around 11 percent in the wake of easing financial conditions and improving business sentiments. Textiles, telecommunications and wholesale & retail sectors were the major borrowers, whereas consumer finance also grew at a robust pace. At the same time, the Committee noted a significant uptick in reserve money growth. This is mainly explained by the Eid-related seasonal rise in currency in circulation, which required SBP to increase its liquidity injections to ensure that the interbank overnight repo rate remained close to the policy rate.

Inflation

As anticipated, headline inflation increased to 3.5 percent y/y in May from 0.3 percent in April. This reversal largely reflected the phasing out of the favorable base effect from food prices, along with persistence in core inflation. In contrast, energy prices continued to remain lower than last year, primarily reflecting the impact of moderating global oil prices. Furthermore, the MPC's initial assessment suggests that the recent budgetary measures will have a limited impact on the inflation outlook. Nonetheless, some near-term volatility in inflation is expected before it gradually inches up and stabilizes within the 5 – 7 percent target range. This outlook, however, remains subject to multiple risks emanating from potential supply-chain disruptions from regional geopolitical conflicts, volatility in oil and other commodity prices, and the timing and magnitude of domestic energy price adjustments.

UN Forecasts Modest Economic Recovery for Pakistan Amid Global Slowdown

Rewritten News Story:

Pakistan is projected to experience “moderate growth, stabilising after a period of economic contraction,” with its GDP expected to grow by 2.3% in 2025, according to the UN World Economic Situation and Prospects 2025 report released recently.

The report highlights that declining inflation has created room for monetary easing across much of South Asia in 2025. However, countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka are anticipated to continue fiscal consolidation and reforms under ongoing IMF programs.

Dr. Aneel Salman, Chair of Economic Security at the Islamabad Policy Research Institute, told Dawn.com that the UN's projection reflects a “fragile yet stabilising recovery” for Pakistan after prolonged economic turbulence.

“Inflation has dropped significantly, reaching just 0.3% in April 2025, providing some relief to households and boosting consumer and business confidence,” he noted. “Yet, deep-rooted structural issues, limited fiscal space, and a heavy external debt burden continue to restrict the country's economic flexibility.”

He acknowledged that while the IMF programme has helped restore macroeconomic discipline, it has come at the cost of short-term growth, due to necessary but painful fiscal tightening.

Salman also cited external headwinds—such as global economic slowdown, declining trade, and lingering tariff pressures—that are undermining Pakistan's export performance and investor sentiment. Regional tensions add to the uncertainty.

Still, he struck a hopeful note: “There's room for cautious optimism. Pakistan's economy has proven resilient, and with a shift in focus toward productivity, energy reforms, and the digital economy, we can outperform these projections.”

South Asia and Global Outlook

The UN report forecasts South Asia's economy will remain robust, with growth expected at 5.7% in 2025 and 6.0% in 2026. This is largely driven by strong performance in India and recovering economies like Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

Globally, however, the outlook is more grim. The UN now expects world GDP to grow by just 2.4% in 2025—down from 2.9% in 2024 and 0.4 percentage points lower than January's forecast. A sharp slowdown in global trade, a rise in tariffs,

and persistent policy uncertainty are cited as key drags on growth.

Trade growth is projected to halve from 3.3% in 2024 to just 1.6% in 2025, jeopardising progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The UN warns that this broad-based slowdown is affecting both developed and developing economies.

- **United States:** Growth is expected to slow from 2.8% in 2024 to 1.6% in 2025 due to higher tariffs and reduced private investment.
- **European Union:** Growth is projected to stagnate at 1% amid weak net exports and increasing trade barriers.
- **China:** Forecast to grow at 4.6% in 2025, reflecting weak consumer sentiment, export disruptions, and real estate challenges.
- **India:** Growth is revised downward to 6.3% but remains among the fastest globally.

Rising Inflation and Structural Challenges

Although global inflation has eased from 5.7% in 2023 to 4.0% in 2024, price pressures remain elevated. As of early 2025, inflation in two-thirds of countries still exceeds pre-pandemic levels, with over 20 developing economies grappling with double-digit inflation.

Food inflation—still averaging above 6%—continues to disproportionately impact low-income households, particularly in Africa, South Asia, and West Asia. Trade barriers and climate shocks are compounding inflation risks, the report warns.

Monetary policy across many economies is facing difficult trade-offs. Central banks must balance fighting inflation, partly driven by tariff-related shocks, against supporting sluggish economies. Meanwhile, fiscal constraints limit the ability of many developing countries to cushion the slowdown.

Implications for Developing Countries

For the world's poorest nations, where

growth is expected to slow from 4.5% in 2024 to 4.1% in 2025, declining export revenues, higher borrowing costs, and shrinking development aid threaten to worsen debt distress and limit progress on poverty reduction.

“Tariff shocks and growing trade frictions are hitting vulnerable economies hard,” said UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Li Junhua. “This is stalling growth, cutting into export earnings, and compounding existing debt challenges—right when investment in sustainable development is most needed.”

The UN warns that escalating geopolitical tensions and weakening multilateralism are further undermining development prospects.

Revitalising global cooperation, upholding a rules-based trading system, and extending targeted support to vulnerable economies will be vital to avoid deeper fragmentation and to ensure sustainable, inclusive global development.



Pakistan Receives \$3.7 Billion in Remittances in May 2025, Posts 29% Yearly Growth

Pakistan received \$3.7 billion in workers' remittances in May 2025, marking a robust increase both on a yearly and monthly basis, according to data released by the State Bank of Pakistan. The inflow was up 13.7% year-on-year, compared to \$3.24 billion in May 2024. On a month-on-month basis, remittances surged 16%, rising from \$3.18 billion in April 2025.

For the first 11 months of the current fiscal year (July–May FY25), total remittances

have reached \$34.9 billion, reflecting a 28.8% increase from the \$27.1 billion recorded during the same period in FY24. Remittances remain a vital pillar of Pakistan's external sector, supporting the balance of payments, boosting household incomes, and stimulating domestic economic activity.

In April, SBP Governor Jameel Ahmad had projected a strong outlook for the current account due to record remittance inflows. “There will be a substantial surplus, and this is the best performance on the external account during the last two decades,” he remarked.

Country-wise Remittance Breakdown (May 2025):

Saudi Arabia

Pakistani workers sent \$913.9 million, the highest among all countries. This represented a 26% monthly increase and a 12% rise year-on-year compared to \$819 million in May 2024.

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Remittances rose to \$754.2 million, a 16% increase over April's \$652.6 million and 13% higher than May 2024.

United Kingdom (UK)

Inflows totaled \$588.1 million, reflecting a 10% rise month-on-month and a 24% jump year-on-year, compared to \$535.1 million in April 2025.

United States (US)

Pakistani expatriates sent \$314.7 million, up 4% from the previous month.

The continued rise in remittances provides much-needed support to Pakistan's economy, especially amid ongoing fiscal adjustments and external financing challenges. Analysts expect strong inflows to remain a key driver in maintaining macroeconomic stability in the months ahead.

Pakistan's Exports Up 5.15% in FY25 So Far, But Trade Deficit Widens Amid Rising Imports

Rewritten News Story:

Pakistan's exports grew by over 5% during the first 11 months of the current fiscal year (2024–25), according to provisional figures released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) on Friday.

From July 2024 to May 2025, exports reached \$29.564 billion, reflecting a 5.15% increase compared to the same period in the previous fiscal year.

However, on a year-on-year (YoY) basis, exports for May 2025 dropped 5.88% to \$2.672 billion, down from \$2.839 billion in May 2024.

In contrast, month-on-month (MoM) performance showed significant improvement, with exports rising 22.91% compared to \$2.174 billion recorded in April 2025.

Imports and Trade Deficit

Imports continued to climb, rising 7.5% YoY during the 11 months to \$53.550 billion, up from \$49.815 billion a year earlier.

In May 2025 alone, imports stood at \$5.273 billion, marking a 7.28% increase YoY but a 5.77% decline from \$5.596 billion in April. The trade deficit widened to \$23.986 billion for the July–May period, driven by the persistent imbalance between export revenues and import expenditures.

Key Export and Import Commodities

Major exports in May 2025 included:

- Knitwear; Ready-made garments; Bedwear and Rice

Top imports during the same month comprised:

- Petroleum products; Liquefied natural gas (LNG); Palm oil
- Electrical machinery

While export growth remains positive overall, the widening trade deficit underscores continued pressure on Pakistan's external account, especially in the face of elevated import demand. Analysts say further diversification of exports and import rationalization are essential to improve trade sustainability.

Market analyst Ahsan Mehanti, CEO of Arif Habib Commodities, said, "The rally was driven by broad-based gains across sectors, catalyzed by the ADB's support package and optimism around fiscal reforms."

He noted the government's newly approved Rs880 billion Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for FY26 and its 4.2% GDP growth target as key sentiments supporting the surge. Expected budgetary incentives for oil refineries, real estate, and agriculture, combined with recent appreciation in the Pakistani rupee, further bolstered the market.



PSX Hits Historic 120,000-Point Milestone on ADB Loan Boost, Sector-Wide Buying

The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) soared to a record high on Tuesday, with the benchmark KSE-100 index closing at 120,450.87 points, up 1,573.07 points or 1.32% from the previous day's close of 118,877.80. This is the first time in history the index has surpassed the 120,000-point mark, fueled by renewed investor confidence following the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) approval of an \$800 million financing package for Pakistan and robust institutional buying—particularly from insurance companies—in banking, fertilizer, and power sectors.

Positive Macroeconomic Backdrop

The rally comes ahead of Pakistan's FY2025–26 federal budget, expected to be presented on June 10, following Eid Al-Adha holidays. Despite a slight uptick in inflation to 3.5% in May, Pakistan's broader macroeconomic indicators have shown improvement in recent months, driven by:

- A stronger current account balance
- Rising remittance inflows
- Falling inflation rates through early 2025

Government officials remain cautious but hopeful, focusing on sustaining stability, advancing key economic reforms, and guiding the country toward gradual, resilient growth in the coming fiscal year.

Your Hard-Earned Money Deserves Legal Protection: Here's Why?



By Irtiza Kazmi

Many overseas Pakistanis earn their income legally abroad and send money home to support their families or invest. However, when remittances are sent through illegal channels such as Hawala or Hundi, serious risks and consequences arise despite the lawful origin of the funds. Using illegal money transfer methods not only jeopardizes the safety of the funds but also exposes senders and recipients to legal penalties, tax scrutiny, and broader economic harms.

Here are some of the points reflecting the hidden costs of Illegal money transfers:

Lack of Documentation and Traceability

Illegal money transfer methods operate outside the formal banking system, leaving no official paper trail or documentary evidence. This absence of documentation creates significant problems for the remitter, especially when returning to Pakistan and needing to prove the lawful transfer of funds. Without bank receipts, official remittance records, or transaction confirmations, it becomes nearly impossible to demonstrate how the money was brought back into the country. This lack of traceability

raises red flags for tax authorities and financial regulators, who may classify such funds as "unexplained income".

Exposure to Tax Evasion Allegations

Pakistan's Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and Financial Monitoring Unit (FMU) actively scrutinize undocumented or suspicious money transfers. Funds sent through illegal channels often do not appear in formal financial records, exposing recipients to allegations of tax evasion. Investigations have revealed cases where large sums were transferred through multiple transactions to various beneficiaries without proper tax payments, leading to legal probes and asset seizures. Legal Penalties and Criminal Charges Illegal foreign exchange trading, including Hawala and Hundi, is prohibited under Pakistan's Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) of 1947.

Violators face severe penalties such as imprisonment for up to five years, fines, and confiscation of involved currency. Additionally, because illegal transfers often overlap with money laundering activities, the Anti-Money Laundering Act 2010

applies, imposing harsher punishments including imprisonment up to 10 years and heavy fines.

Difficulty in Proving Legitimate Earnings

A common scenario involves a worker who earned money legally abroad but used informal channels to send funds home. Upon returning to Pakistan, they lack official proof of how the money was transferred. Without bank statements or remittance receipts, tax authorities may question the source and legitimacy of the funds. This can lead to prolonged investigations, freezing of assets, or demands for back taxes and penalties. The inability to substantiate the origin and transfer of funds creates ongoing legal and financial risks. Broader Economic and Social Consequences Illegal remittance channels undermine Pakistan's financial system by promoting unregulated cash flows that escape taxation and regulatory oversight. This weakens the country's ability to track legitimate foreign inflows, hampers economic planning, and damages Pakistan's international reputation. The widespread use of illegal transfers contributes to the loss of billions in potential tax revenues and foreign exchange

reserves, which could otherwise support national development projects.

How Legal Remittance Processes Protect Your Earnings and Prevent Fraud

Using formal, legal remittance channels is essential to protect hard-earned money, ensure compliance with Pakistani laws, and avoid the costly consequences of illegal money transfers. Legal remittance processes safeguard funds and prevent issues like money laundering and fraud through a comprehensive framework of regulatory compliance, customer verification, transaction monitoring, and secure operational practices. Customer Due Diligence (CDD) and Know Your Customer (KYC) Legal remittance service providers (RSPs) verify the identity of their customers before processing transactions. This KYC process involves collecting and authenticating personal information and establishing the beneficial owner behind the transaction. It ensures funds are sent and received by legitimate individuals or entities, reducing the risk of money laundering or terrorism financing.

Transaction Monitoring and Suspicious Activity Detection

RSPs implement continuous monitoring systems to track transactions for unusual patterns or behaviors indicating fraud or

money laundering. Suspicious activities such as unusually large transfers, multiple small transactions/transfers involving high-risk countries trigger further investigation or reporting to regulatory authorities. Compliance with International AML/CFT Standards Legal remittance channels adhere to Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Counter Financing of Terrorism (CFT) regulations based on globally accepted frameworks like those from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). These regulations mandate licensing, registration, and ongoing compliance monitoring of remittance providers, ensuring strict oversight and robust internal controls to prevent misuse of funds.

Use of Advanced Technology and Risk Management

Many legal remittance providers employ AI-powered risk management tools analysing transaction data in real-time to identify fraud patterns and high-risk transactions. Technologies include multi-factor authentication, encryption protocols, counterparty screening, and machine learning algorithms that enhance fraud detection and prevent unauthorized access to funds.

Secure Communication and Verification Protocols

To prevent fraud, such as phishing scams or fraudulent payment instructions, legal remittance processes incorporate

multi-channel verification methods. Changes in payment details are verified through multiple trusted communication channels, reducing scam risks. Secure portals and encrypted communications protect sensitive financial information during transfers.

Transparent Record-Keeping and Reporting Legal remittance services maintain detailed records of all transactions, providing a clear paper trail for regulators and customers. This transparency aids auditing and accountability. Providers are also required to report suspicious transactions to relevant authorities, contributing to the fight against financial crime. Sending money to Pakistan through illegal channels exposes both sender and recipient to serious risks including tax evasion allegations, legal penalties, and criminal charges due to the lack of documentation and traceability. Illegal transfers also harm Pakistan's economy by undermining financial regulation and causing loss of tax revenue.

Conversely, legal remittance channels protect your funds through stringent customer verification, continuous transaction monitoring, adherence to international AML/CFT regulations, and advanced technological safeguards. These measures ensure your transfers are safe, transparent, and compliant with the law, preserving the integrity and stability of the financial system. For workers and investors alike, using formal, legal remittance channels is essential to protect hard-earned money, comply with Pakistani laws, and avoid costly consequences.



Writing: An art lost to AI?

By Arooj Sabir

Before the advent of ChatGPT, writing was — let's say — sacred. It was original. Hours and hours of thought and consideration, not to mention the tireless and never-ending editing — all to produce one epic piece of writing. But the end result was totally worth it, as it was something created from the flow of emotions — spontaneous, original.

Ah! Those were the times when individuality was the beauty of art.

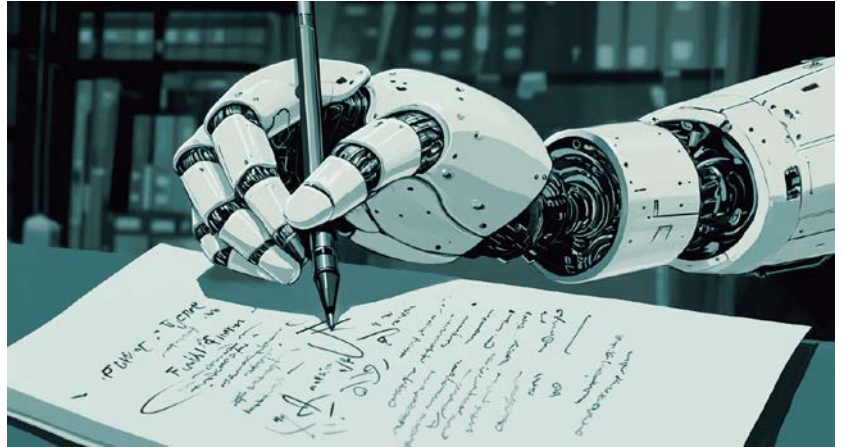
Plagiarism was like giving a death sentence to a writer, as there were people learned enough in every field to correct semantics without software.

Enter AI — the evolution, viz-a-viz, a sponge absorbing cognitive abilities.

Recently, MIT Media Lab carried out a study on “The Cognitive Cost of Using LLMs (Large Language Models),” which explored how language models — especially ChatGPT — affect the brain's ability to think, learn, and retain information.

The study comprised 54 participants between the age groups of 18–39. They were further divided into three groups, each consisting of 18 members: ChatGPT, Search Engines, and Brains Only (No Tools). Each group was given three prompts, out of which they had to choose one to write an essay on. The results were to be judged by two English teachers and two AI judges trained by researchers.

It is not surprising, but the English teachers were able to identify the AI-written essays. I mean, who wouldn't? The monotony of the tone, the lack of individuality, the repetition of ideas constantly weaved in the same way but in different paragraphs, and — not to mention — the rigid writing. The teachers regarded essays written by ChatGPT as “soulless” and claimed that they lacked “personal nuances.”



The brain activity of these participants was measured through EEG. The research established robust evidence that the students who used no tools had a greater sense of satisfaction and brain connectivity compared to the others. Whereas for those who were using AI, it was like their brains had become habitual of crutches. The students were unable to recall their writing or quote things from their text. Moreover, they could not even quote from their essays when asked to recall them by the researchers.

Three sessions with the same group assignment for each participant were conducted. In the fourth, the LLM group participants were asked to use no tools (referred to as LLM-to-Brain), and the Brain-only group participants were asked to use LLM (Brain-to-LLM).

As the level of external help increased, brain connectivity consistently decreased. Participants who relied only on their own thinking — the Brain-only group — showed the most robust and wide-ranging neural activity. Those who used a search engine showed moderate brain engagement. But the group that used a large language model (LLM) like ChatGPT had the weakest overall brain connectivity.

In follow-up interviews, the LLM group also reported the least sense of ownership over the essays they had written. While the Search Engine group felt more connected to their work, it still didn't compare to the

Brain-only group, whose members felt strongly that their writing was truly their own.

When asked to recall or quote from their essays just minutes after writing — in the LLM group — 83.3% struggled significantly recalling what they wrote. In the Search Engine and Brain groups, only 11.1% had difficulty in recalling ideas they had written.

Although using the LLM appeared helpful at first, the results — gathered over four sessions across four months — showed a consistent trend: participants in the LLM group performed worse across every domain we tested, whether it was brain activity, writing quality, or memory.

The Flood of Content, the Drought of Thought

Questions arise after reading this research. The first, basically: since the advent of ChatGPT, the internet has been flooded with all sorts of written content — whether on Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, or Twitter. But the irony is: who is writing all this content, and how much of it is original?

In 2023, the National Endowment for the Arts reported that, over the preceding decade, the proportion of adults who read at least one book a year had fallen from fifty-five percent to forty-eight percent. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, over roughly the same period, the

number of thirteen-year-olds who read for fun “almost every day” fell from twenty-seven percent to fourteen percent. So, the number of readers all over the world is decreasing.

When there is a rarity of readers, how can there be an abundance of writers? Or is this what ChatGPT does — give any Tom, Dick, or Harry the chance to be a writer?

Gone are the days when writing was considered sacred, almost akin to a divine revelation — to put it in Wordsworth’s words, “a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility.” It was the “real language of men.”

The lack of readers is plummeting; the plight of teachers is increasing. Due to social media, they struggle to get their students to read. And even when they are handed an assignment to write, students return with work that is not merely aided by AI, but often completely written by it.

From Zuckerberg’s Promise to AI’s Shadow

We once were living under the “Zuckerberg Parenthesis” — a time defined by the dominance of social media, particularly platforms like Facebook, where online interaction was driven by human conversation, sharing, and digital community. During this era, theorists imagined the internet as a return to an oral, communal mode of communication.

But now, in hindsight, that idea seems almost outdated — quaint — because we’ve entered a radically different phase, shaped not by people talking to people, but by AI talking back.

With the advent of large language models, chatbots, and virtual personas, online interactions are increasingly generated by artificial intelligence, blurring the boundary between human and machine. These AI systems are trained on vast amounts of written text — almost as if books themselves have awakened — repurposing the very medium (text) that was thought to be fading.

The irony is powerful: just as the written word seemed to be losing ground to casual speech and memes, it reasserts its influence in the form of AI that can mimic human

dialogue — reshaping how we value and use language, conversation, and thought in the digital age.

The Vanishing Writer’s Block and the Erosion of Soul

No wonder, rarely anyone goes through writer’s block anymore. (The term “writer’s block” was coined in 1947 by the Austrian psychiatrist Edmund Bergler.) The affliction now known as writer’s block has been recognized throughout history. Writers who are known to have struggled with it include authors F. Scott Fitzgerald and Joseph Mitchell, composer Sergei Rachmaninoff, and songwriter Adele. Another example is Herman Melville, who stopped writing novels a few years after writing *Moby-Dick*.



When output becomes the only focus, the human emotion that once served as the essence of all forms of creation is discarded — and prompts become the new foundation of creativity. Creativity will not merely decline; it will erode. It will become a thing of the past.

When Greatness Was Human

The intervention of technology has led to a scarcity of innovative writing.

If we look back, has the world produced writers of the likes of Rumi, Iqbal, Shakespeare, or Nietzsche? Writers who had a resounding impact not only in their own times but continue to be quoted across a plethora of fields even today?

Some might beg to differ, claiming that J.K. Rowling and Tolkien are renowned names — but their works, though brilliant, remain specific in scope rather than expanding across vast intellectual and emotional horizons.

What set those earlier literary minds apart was their ability to produce great works independent of external resources. The only knowledge they had was that which they consumed from books and the lived experience they carried within. This made their work authentic and deeply individual.

Now, the pressing question that this moment in time poses to mankind is this: Will critical thinking become the first casualty of convenience — brought on by AI?

As the documentary *The Social Dilemma* aptly puts it, “If something is free, you are the product.” The product, in this case, is

humankind — entirely bridled in mind, body, and soul to artificial intelligence. The risk? That we are left, eventually, “brain dead.”

You know what they say: Earth without art is just “eh.”

If creation without human experience ceases to exist, and all that remains are AI models generating art from pre-existing data — where will the essence of emotion go?

It will vanish.

P.S.

Excuse any earlier mistakes — last I checked, to err is human, and perfection divine... or maybe AI, in today’s world.



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