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The folly of a war with Iran

Chris Hedges 16 June, 2025, 00:00

[Print](#)*And now a word from our monster.* | Mr Fish

THE neoconservatives who orchestrated the disastrous wars with Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya — and who were never held accountable for the profligate waste of \$8 trillion taxpayer dollars, as well as \$69 billion squandered in Ukraine — look set to lure us into yet another military fiasco with Iran.

Iran is not Iraq. Iran is not Afghanistan. Iran is not Lebanon. Iran is not Libya. Iran is not Syria. Iran is not Yemen. Iran is the seventeenth largest country in the world, with a land mass equivalent to the size of Western Europe. It has a population of almost 90 million — 10 times greater than Israel — and its military resources, as well as alliances with China and Russia, make it a formidable opponent.

Iran launched retaliatory attacks today on Israel following waves of Israeli strikes that hit nuclear facilities and killed several top Iranian military commanders and six nuclear scientists. There have been dozens of explosions over the skyline in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. There is video footage of at least one large explosion on the ground in Tel Aviv from an apparent missile strike and reports of other explosions in some half dozen sites in and around Tel Aviv.

'Our revenge has just started, they will pay a high price for killing our commanders, scientists and people,' a senior Iranian official told Reuters. The official added that 'nowhere in Israel will be safe' and that 'our revenge will be painful.'

'They think it'll be an easy war,' said Alastair Crooke, a former British diplomat and member of British intelligence (MI6) who spent decades in the Middle East, told me of the neocons when I interviewed him. 'They want to reassert American power and leadership. They feel that every so often throwing a small country against the wall and smashing it up is good for this.'

These neocons, bonded with the Israeli leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu, he went on, 'will not tolerate any rival power, any challenge to American leadership and American greatness.' They will create facts on the ground — a war between Israel and Iran — that will 'pull Trump into a war with Iran.'

While Iran's air force is weak, with many of its fighter planes decades old, it is well supplied with Russian air defence batteries and Chinese anti-ship missiles, as well as mines and coastal artillery. It can shut down the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most important oil chokepoint that facilitates the passage of 20 per cent of the world's oil supply. This would double or triple the price of oil and devastate the global economy. Iran has a large arsenal of ballistic missiles it can unleash on Israel, as well as on American military installations in the region. While initial waves can be intercepted, repeated attacks would swiftly deplete the Israeli and US air defence stockpiles.

Israel is not equipped to endure a war of attrition, such as the eight year conflict between Iran and Iraq that ended — despite US support for Saddam Hussein's regime — in a stalemate, or as in Israel's 18 year occupation of southern

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Lebanon that eventually forced it to withdraw in May, 2000, after repeated losses suffered from Hezbollah.

When Iran, in its Operation True Promise, launched over 300 ballistic and cruise missiles at Israel's military and intelligence sites on April 13 and 14, 2023, in retaliation for an Israeli strike on the Iranian embassy in Damascus, the US intercepted the vast majority.

'Israel cannot fight off an Iranian missile attack,' John Mearsheimer, a West Point graduate and a professor in the political science department at the University of Chicago, told me. 'You have this very interesting situation where not only can Israel not win these wars, but they've turned [them] into protracted wars' in which 'Israel is heavily dependent on the United States.'

'We have lots of assets in the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean, as well as in Israel itself and in the Red Sea,' he said. 'These [are] designed to help Israel in its various wars. This includes not just Iran. It also includes the Houthis. It includes Hezbollah. So we are deeply involved in helping them fight. That was not the case in 1973 or any time before this war.'

Israel and its neocon allies believe they can eradicate Iran's nuclear enrichment program by force and decapitate the Iranian government to install a client regime. That this non-reality-based belief system failed in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya, eludes them.

Israel, at the same time, wants to divert world attention from its genocide and mass starvation in Gaza and the accelerated ethnic cleansing in the West Bank. Internet connection has been completely shut down in Gaza. The West Bank has been placed under a total blockade.

'The Israelis understand that if you have a general conflagration, people will not be paying much attention to the Palestinians,' Mearsheimer said. 'People will be willing to give Israel more of a pass than they would in peaceful times. So let's really ramp things up. Let's have a general conflagration, and the end result will be that we can cleanse, on a massive scale, in Gaza and hopefully in the West Bank as well.'

Iranian attacks would eventually leave hundreds, then thousands dead. Iran will appeal to Shi'ite Muslims through the region in what the Iranian leadership will describe as a war against Shi'ism, the second largest branch of Islam. Saudi Arabia — which condemned the attacks on Iran — has two million Shi'ites who live in the oil-rich Eastern province. There are significant Shi'ite communities in Pakistan, Bahrain and Turkey. Shi'ites form the majority in Iraq.

The Shi'ite-dominated government in Baghdad will side with Iran. Yemen will continue to disrupt maritime traffic in the Red Sea and hit Israel with drone attacks. Hezbollah, however crippled, will renew attacks on northern Israel. Expect terrorist attacks on US bases in the region and perhaps even US soil, as well as widespread sabotage of oil production in the Persian Gulf.

Iran will soon have enough fissile material to produce a nuclear weapon. A war will be a powerful incentive to build a bomb, especially with Israel possessing hundreds of nuclear weapons. If Iran acquires a nuclear weapon Saudi Arabia will be next, with Turkey, Iraq and Egypt not far behind. The efforts to blunt nuclear proliferation in the Middle East will evaporate.

A war, as Mearsheimer points out, will also solidify the alliance between Iran, Russia and China.

'The United States has pushed China, Russia, North Korea and Iran very close together,' he noted. 'They form a tight knit bloc. Largely as a result of the Ukraine war, the Russians and the Chinese have been driven together, and given what's happening in the Middle East, the Iranians and the Russians have been drawn together. The United States may be helping Israel, but it's important to understand that the Russians are helping Iran. It is not to America's advantage to have China and Russia aligned closely against Washington. It's not in America's interest to have Russia and Iran working together against Israel and the United States.'

'There's always the possibility that if a war heats up involving Iran on one side and the United States and Israel on the other side, that at some point down the road that the Russians will get dragged into that war, because the Russians now have a vested interest in supporting Iran,' he added.

A war could last months, if not years. It will be an aerial duel, one largely between Israeli warplanes and missiles and Iranian missiles. But to subdue Iran it will require perhaps a million US troops being deployed to invade and occupy the country. An occupation of Iran will end with the same humiliating defeat the US experienced in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The fantasy of Israel and the neocons is that they can break Iran with aerial assaults, an updated version of Shock and Awe, the bombing campaign in Iraq in 2003. But the amount of ordinance required, especially to pulverize Iran's underground nuclear facilities, will be massive. Israel, in its decapitation of the leadership of Hezbollah in Beirut, including Hezbollah's General Secretary Hassan Nasrallah, had to employ Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) 2,000-pound bunker-buster bombs.

'If you're going to fly F-35's with JDAM missiles, each of those is about 14 tons,' Crooke said. 'It's not just the weight, but the fuel they use. So you have to refuel maybe once, refuel twice, then you'll have to fight your aircraft to suppress their defences. You're talking about a huge performance. Is America going to be able to do this? The Iranians have multiple air defence systems and good radars, over the horizon radars as well.'

So why go to war with Iran? Why walk away from a nuclear agreement that Iran did not violate? Why demonise a

government that is the mortal enemy of the Taliban, along with other Takfiri groups, including al-Qaeda and Islamic State in the Levant? Why further destabilise a region already dangerously volatile?

The generals, politicians, intelligence services, neocons, weapons manufacturers, so-called experts, celebrity pundits and Israeli lobbyists are not about to take the blame for two decades of military fiascos. They need a scapegoat. It is Iran. The humiliating defeats in Afghanistan and Iraq, the failed states of Syria and Libya, the proliferation of extremist groups and militias, many of which we initially trained and armed, along with the continued worldwide terrorist attacks, have to be someone else's fault.

The chaos and instability we unleashed, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan, left Iran as the dominant country in the region. Washington empowered its nemesis. It has no idea how to reverse this other than to attack it.

International law, along with the rights of almost 90 million people in Iran, is ignored just as the rights of the people of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and Syria were ignored. The Iranians, whatever they feel about their leadership, do not see the United States as allies or liberators. They do not want to be attacked or occupied. They will resist. And we, and Israel, will pay.

ScheerPost.com, June 14. Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who was a foreign correspondent for fifteen years for The New York Times, where he served as the Middle East Bureau Chief and Balkan Bureau Chief for the paper.

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