# Future Trajectories of Iranian–American Relations After the June 2025 War




On June 13, 2025, the Middle East entered a new escalation phase when Israeli forces launched a large-scale military assault on military and nuclear sites deep inside Iranian territory. They claimed this pre-emptive move was to prevent Tehran from reaching the "nuclear threshold."

Iran responded with intensive missile and air strikes targeting key sites deep within the Zionist entity in the occupied Palestinian territories. As the scope of operations expanded and the damage to the entity worsened, the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump found itself forced to abandon its policy of "calculated deterrence" and engage in a specific, direct war against Iranian nuclear facilities at Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan. Trump claimed major successes in dismantling Iran's nuclear capabilities before Iran launched an agreed-upon retaliation against the US Al-Udeid base in Qatar. Trump then announced the end of the confrontations and the halt of military operations between Iran and the Zionist entity, praising Iran's response and its acceptance of de-escalation.

These rapid transformations marked a pivotal moment not only in the history of US-Iran relations but also could -have repercussions for the future of the Middle East. Here, the central question of this article is: Where are Iranian American relations heading after this war?

First: The Strategic Contexts of the U.S.–Iran Confrontation

The June 2025 crisis between the two sides cannot be understood without examining the long history of tensions since the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. This relationship was driven by the logic of "strategic hostility," not institutional competition. Trump's withdrawal from the nuclear agreement with Iran in 2018 brought the relationship back to open confrontation, especially with the tightening of economic sanctions on Iran.

While Washington adopted a "maximum pressure" strategy to economically isolate Iran, Tehran responded by increasing its regional actions and speeding up its nuclear program, which worsened mutual threats, failed diplomatic efforts, and deepened mistrust between the parties.

Second: Fundamental Shifts in the Rules of Engagement

The US attack on Iran on June 22, 2025, marked a significant strategic shift. It broke from the previous policy of restraint based on specific engagement rules. Washington had usually avoided direct conflict with Iran, opting for proxy conflicts instead. The June 2025 intervention signified a major change, driven by growing awareness that Tehran now posed a direct threat to its military and economic interests.

Second, the collapse of what remained of the "undeclared mutual deterrence." There were unwritten rules preventing open confrontation, such as avoiding direct targeting of nuclear infrastructure or refraining from bombing Iranian territory. With the June 22 attacks, signs of the conflict potentially escalating to unconventional scenarios became more likely in the upcoming stages.

Third, the erosion of existing diplomatic frameworks. Confrontations with Zionist aggression on Iranian territory began when there were no active communication channels between Iran and the United States. This situation changed when Trump reopened and renewed these relations through Qatar's active role in communicating with Iran. The lack of these channels further hampers efforts toward a political settlement.

Third: Future Scenarios

Within these contexts and transformations, several future scenarios for Iranian–American relations can be identified, as follows:

First Scenario: Gradual Escalation Towards a Comprehensive Confrontation

This scenario considers the possibility of the conflict escalating to encompass the entire region, with the limited confrontation turning into an open war involving multiple parties, influenced by the Trump administration's hostile stance against Iran, fuelled by Israeli pressure and incentives from some regional players. Here, Iran might respond with hybrid tactics, including targeting US forces in Iraq, Syria, and the Gulf, using its armed proxies (the Houthis, Hezbollah, and Shiite militias), and disrupting navigation in the Strait of Hormuz to weaken the global economy.

This could lead to the United States being depleted militarily and politically, a sharp increase in energy prices, disruptions in supply chains, and the exposure of its Gulf allies, who may become vulnerable to Iranian targeting and American bargaining and blackmail.

Second Scenario: Mutual Containment

This scenario assumes that Washington succeeds in dismantling Iran's nuclear capabilities and reverting Iran to a pre–high–enrichment stage, without escalating into a full–scale war. Instead of pursuing direct negotiations, the Trump administration relies on a mix of economic sanctions, regional pressure, and naval deterrence.

This could cause Iran to stay in a long–term state of strategic exhaustion, escalating US rhetoric about regime change in Tehran, and keep tensions in the Middle East without reaching a real settlement.

Third Scenario: Returning to Negotiations on New Terms

Although its likelihood is limited, this scenario remains possible in the near and medium term if certain conditions are met, such as a change in political leadership within Iran or the United States, international pressure to rebuild the nuclear agreement, a mutual understanding that escalation is unsustainable, or the Trump administration adopting a transactional approach.

This could involve returning to more comprehensive negotiations covering Iran's nuclear program, regional influence, and ballistic missile development, with gradual easing of sanctions in exchange for restrictions on nuclear activities. A reshaping of the regional balance, agreed upon by Iran and the United States, would be established under conditions and controls that address the security dilemma in the Gulf region between Iran and Saudi Arabia, as well as the security dilemma between Iran and the Zionist entity.

Fourth: The Factors That Shape These Paths

The likelihood of one of the above scenarios depends not only on the outcome of military confrontations between the involved parties but also on several structural factors, including:

1. The internal power balance within Iran. If escalation increases the Revolutionary Guard's control, it could deepen the cycle of conflict. However, if widespread internal protests erupt, the Iranian leadership might be compelled to reconsider its foreign policy.

2. The position of allies in the Gulf and Europe. The policies of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar could be decisive in determining America's margin of maneuver. The European position could also play a role in restoring balance, given the attempts by European Union countries to reposition themselves in the post–war period between Russia and Ukraine.

3. International geopolitical factors, especially the stances of China and Russia on the US–Iranian confrontation, and the extent of support they can offer Iran, particularly in light of increasing discussions about strengthening the quadrilateral alliance between Iran, Russia, China, and North Korea to oppose US actions under the Trump administration.

4. The repercussions of the June 2025 war on American strategy. This conflict showed that the Trump administration is reconsidering its traditional tools in the Middle East, where deterrence policies through sanctions and rules of engagement have failed to prevent escalation. Instead, it has reverted to using military force. This raises questions about the United States' ability to engage in a new long–term confrontation after withdrawing from Afghanistan and scaling back commitments in Iraq. It also prompts questions about the cohesion of its regional alliances, given some allies' hesitation and the growing complexity of the situation. Additionally, it raises concerns about balancing escalation against Iran with the geopolitical confrontation involving China and Russia.

Considering these factors, it can be argued that all possible scenarios remain plausible, including the worst-case scenarios that logical thinkers might not foresee, which could happen under Trump's presidency in the United States. He does not think logically or follow institutional rules but acts impulsively, almost chaotically, because populism heavily influences his views and policies.

While both sides—the Americans and Iranians—are aware that open confrontation is costly and unsustainable, they are simultaneously unwilling to make significant concessions without internal pressure or changes. Therefore, it can be said that the next phase might involve a mix of tactical escalation and temporary de-escalation, in the absence of a comprehensive strategic settlement. This highlights that the region is moving toward a more violent clash between two opposing projects. However, within the framework of this contradiction, and according to Trumpian logic, chances may arise to build new strategic consensus that can manage this clash.