

CSAG INFORMATION PAPER:

“Change in Iran’s Trinity Through the Lens of the Israel-Iran Conflict,” a First Analysis

CSAG

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1. **Subject:** “Change in Iran’s Trinity Through the Lens of the Israel-Iran Conflict,” a First Analysis
2. **Purpose:** Reflect the CSAG’s analysis to understand the changes in Iran’s “trinity,” government, military, and populace during the Israel-Iran conflict.

3. **Introduction:**

The decades-long rivalry between Israel and Iran has become increasingly bitter, especially since 7 October 2023, resulting in two direct but limited exchanges of fires, and then erupting into open warfare in June 2025. The U.S. intervened with strikes on Iran’s key nuclear sites, culminating in a ceasefire on June 24, 2025.

Over the course of twelve days, Iran’s trinity, underwent a significant transformation in response to the crisis. The government saw unity across its political spectrum rallying around national defense. The military, initially caught off guard, rapidly adapted its strategy. The Iranian people demonstrated remarkable cohesion, defying external expectations of internal dissent and instead reinforcing the regime’s stability.

These rapid adaptations within Iran’s trinity offer critical insights into the country’s resilience and future posture. Understanding these changes is essential for evaluating Iran’s evolving position in the region and assessing the prospects for renewed conflict or lasting stability.

4. **Impact of the Conflict:**

Government

a. **Leadership**

Iran’s leadership ordered retaliatory operations while ensuring internal stability. Iran’s Supreme Leader rapidly appointed new commanders to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to fill the leadership vacuum left by the Israeli “decapitation” attacks. Moreover, in an unprecedented move, the Supreme Leader held consultations with the Assembly of Experts to identify potential successors in the event of his assassination.

b. **The President and Parliament**

Iran's parliament backed closing the Strait of Hormuz, but implementation required approval from the Supreme National Security Council, which had not been granted.

Furthermore, they formally declared U.S. military bases as legitimate targets. These declarations were accompanied by a series of nationally broadcasted sessions aimed at reinforcing nationalist sentiment. However, it is important to note that these measures were largely symbolic, serving more as strategic messaging than real actions.

c. Control

The government quickly tightened cyber and communication networks to curb disinformation and foreign interference. At the same time, security forces upheld internal order, controlled protests, preventing those dissenting against the regime and rallying those in support while keeping protests limited. On the economic front, despite ongoing sanctions, the government implemented stabilization efforts, such as price controls, fuel subsidies, and welfare programs, to protect citizens and project resilience.

d. Foreign Policy

Iran launched a focused diplomatic effort, condemning Israel for violating international law to gain global support. The Foreign Minister's visit to Russia underscored efforts to strengthen ties with key allies, including Russia and China. Meanwhile, the Supreme Leader affirmed that the Israeli strikes had not harmed Iran's nuclear facilities, emphasizing that the country's nuclear ambitions remain intact.

Conclusion

- a. Iranian authorities moved quickly in response to the conflict, striving to project an image of effective crisis management to regional and international audiences
- b. Noting the significant damage incurred by U.S. and Israeli strikes, and particularly the freedom of action in Iran's airspace demonstrated by both countries and therefore the vulnerabilities laid bare, Iran may opt for higher uranium enrichment as a strategic deterrent, balancing between nuclear capability and avoiding full weaponization (nuclear latency dilemma).

Military

a. Command Disruption and Leadership Losses

There has been a temporary disruption in high-level command and control (C2) continuity within the IRGC, particularly affecting its aerospace and missile units. These interruptions have stemmed from targeted strikes and leadership losses, weakening strategic coordination. The affected units are critical to Iran's deterrence and power projection in the region. Leadership gaps have led to delays in operational responses and reduced efficiency.

b. Weapons Capabilities

Iran has experienced notable degradation of both its defensive and offensive military capabilities. Its air defense (AD) systems and air force have suffered from precision Israeli strikes, reducing their ability to counter aerial threats. Simultaneously, Iran's offensive capabilities, particularly missile launchers, UAV infrastructure, and munitions stockpiles, have been significantly depleted. These losses limit Iran's capacity to project force and respond effectively to Israeli/U.S. operations. Rebuilding these systems will take time and resources, potentially weakening Iran's strategic posture in the near term.

c. Proxies

Iran's regional proxy network has remained largely restrained, avoiding direct large-scale engagements. Despite this, Iran continues to provide logistical support, ensuring their readiness and operational capacity. Groups such as Hezbollah and various militias in Iraq and Syria maintain their positions. Iran's backing includes weapons shipments, intelligence sharing, and financial aid.

d. Information Domain

Iran has used cyber tools for intelligence and media to sway regional opinion. These efforts aim to maintain influence, specifically among Middle East countries, despite military setbacks. On June 16, 2025, Israel bombed the headquarters of Iran's state broadcaster in Tehran during a live television broadcast, dealing a blow to Iranian narrative of strength and control.

Conclusion

- a. Iran has implemented a structured succession plan to maintain command continuity.
- b. Iran used a strategy aimed at exhausting Israeli air defense (AD) systems.
- c. While Iran's current military posture is primarily defensive and focused on reconstitution, it retains a degree of offensive capability, specifically its short-range missiles.
- d. Iran's proxy network remains intact but tightly controlled, reflecting caution about U.S. escalation. Their limited presence during key moments raises doubt about Iran's willingness to fully deploy this crucial pillar.
- e. Iran utilizes the full spectrum of the information domain to influence domestic and international audiences.

Peoplea. Mobilization of Iranian population

The conflict rallied many Iranians behind the regime, with state propaganda framing it as a defense against external aggression, boosting national unity temporarily.

b. Counterintelligence

Israel leveraged covert "fifth column" operatives to destabilize Iran, targeting key figures and sowing distrust within communities. In response, Iranian authorities intensified security measures, arresting hundreds suspected of espionage. The regime's crackdown silenced potential opposition, leaving no prominent voices to challenge the government's narrative.

c. Displacement

Israeli airstrikes displaced thousands, particularly in the Tehran area, as people fled bombarded areas.

Conclusion

- a. Israel launched covert campaigns, including propaganda and cyber operations, to incite unrest among Iranians, targeting youth and minority groups, but gained limited traction.
- b. The regime deployed mass surveillance, internet blackouts, and Basij paramilitary forces to suppress dissent, arresting activists and enforcing strict curfews to maintain order.
- c. No cohesive social movement emerged due to missing key elements: lack of unified leadership, fragmented grievances, and suppressed communication channels, constraining collective action.

5. What is Next:

Government

- a. **Control:** The regime will tighten control, expanding surveillance and cracking down on protests to prevent internal challenges, especially in urban centers.
- b. **New Talks:** Iran will push to revive nuclear talks to lift sanctions, seeking economic relief while maintaining a tough public stance against the U.S.
- c. **Nuclear Ambitions:** With support from external countries/experts, Iran will accelerate its nuclear ambitions, focusing on advanced centrifuges and enriched uranium stockpiles.
- d. **Economy:** Iran is likely to rebuild its infrastructure quickly. However, with its economy strained by ongoing sanctions, Iran must carefully prioritize its investments. These choices will likely have the greatest impact on the Iranian people.
- e. **Influence in the Muslim (Sunni/Shia) community:** Iran will leverage its defiance to bolster ties with Shia and some Sunni groups, continuing to position itself as a regional anti-Israel leader.

Military

- a. **Lessons Identified:** Iran's military will study Israel's modus operandi, like cyber warfare and precision strikes, to bolster its defenses and adapt strategies.
- b. **Counterintelligence:** Enhanced vetting and surveillance will target internal leaks, aiming to thwart foreign infiltration, especially Israel's "fifth column."
- c. **Re-built and Re-prioritize:** Despite the damage, Iran retains a large standing military, significant missile and drone arsenals, and robust local manufacturing capabilities. Recovery of its conventional capabilities may take 1-3 years. Iran will prioritize missile development, air defenses, and possibly new asymmetric tactics to counter regional threats.
- d. **New Generation:** Younger commanders may push for modernized views of Iran's government and military structure, since many commanders of the older generation were killed in the attacks.

Population

- a. **Social Movement:** In times of crisis, Iranians rally for survival, but economic hardship and repression may fuel underlying discontent. But without opposition leaders or cohesive social movements, significant challenges to the regime are unlikely to surface, especially in the face of active suppression.

6. Conclusion:

Although Iran has suffered a significant setback, it is likely to endure the current difficulties and recover. In doing so, it may emerge even more formidable and potentially pose a greater challenge in the future.