

The US, Israel, and Iran are teetering on the brink of a major war

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1. The current situation in the Middle East

Active hostilities on all fronts have been temporarily suspended. Only local clashes are being conducted. The United States successfully blocks the Strait of Hormuz, not allowing Iranian ships and oil tankers of all other countries to pass through the strait. Iran, for its part, has threatened to fire missiles at U.S. ships that may be or are in the war zone and within range of Iran's weapons. The United States and Israel do not bomb or missile strike on Iran, and Iran, for its part, does not strike American bases in the region and Israel. That is, there is a temporary lull in hostilities between two opposing sides – the coalition of the United States and Israel against Iran.

2. What conditions can influence a change in the situation?

The temporary lull on the fronts is caused only by the fact that both opposing sides have simply ceased hostilities without reaching a real truce or peace and are in standby mode. Let us analyse what circumstances can affect the change in the current situation

The first circumstance is that the United States needs to decide whether it will continue military action or not. This must be done in the very near future, since President Donald Trump will need to obtain the approval of the US Parliament (Congress) and its upper house (Senate) to continue military operations against Iran. This approval would de jure mean that the United States is officially entering a real war with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

If the consent of the Senate and Congress is not obtained, which is highly likely to happen, since there are likely more opponents of the conflict in the US Parliament and its upper house, then the United States will have to end the conflict and withdraw from it on the terms on which it will be able to agree with Iran. At the same time, hostilities will cease, but a peace treaty will not be signed. The situation is very close to the one formulated by the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Soviet Federative Republic, Leon Trotsky, in 1918 during negotiations with Germany – "no peace, no war", which meant the cessation of hostilities. The phrase has become a symbol of a desperate attempt to manoeuvre in the face of critical military and political defeat.¹ In this case, Israel will also have to withdraw from the conflict by stopping hostilities, since another (second) circumstance will begin to operate against both the United States and Israel.

The second circumstance: a significant portion of the US and Israeli air defence assets and conventional weapons (ammunition, bombs, etc.) have been expended during the military operations with Iran since February 28. They will not be able to be replenished quickly, as the EU countries that could have provided the US and Israel with missile systems have refused to do so, and their domestic industry is unable to produce the required quantities during the short period of the precarious ceasefire and cessation of hostilities. Replenishing them will take years. Iran's air defence system is disorganised but not suppressed, and individual Iranian anti-aircraft missile systems are capable of effectively countering US and Israeli air forces. Consequently, the US and Israel will not be able to achieve a radical solution to the problem of destroying Iran's entire air defence system.

The third circumstance is that the Israeli forces unexpectedly suffered significant losses in military equipment and personnel, comparable to those that Israel suffered in 1967 and 1973 in the wars with the regular armies of Egypt and Syria and in the early 1980s in the military conflicts with the armies of Lebanon and Iraq. At present, Israel is fighting with non-professional (rogue) Hezbollah fighters² and the losses to the Israeli army are very large. It is possible that after the cessation of hostilities against Iran, Iran could support Hezbollah by supplying powerful long-range missiles than what Hezbollah currently has to strike Israel. Given this possibility, it is not profitable for Israel to stop fighting against Iran, but, on the other hand, given the not very good current state of the armed forces and economy of Israel, it is not profitable for Israel to continue them. A *Zugzwang* situation is developing.³

The fourth circumstance: as a result of Iran's attacks on Israel, the Israeli economy, military-industrial complex, scientific and manufacturing sectors suffered significant losses, and Israel will not be able to recover from these losses quickly enough to successfully confront the neighbouring Arab countries. Such a unification is entirely possible as one of the consequences of Israel's attack on Iran.

If Israel ceases hostilities without solving the problem of defeating the Hezbollah movement, without solving the problem of reaching the area of the Litani River near the southern border of Lebanon, considered as a strategic security zone of Lebanon, without solving the task of defeating Hamas⁴ and taking control of the Gaza Strip,⁵ then Israel will be perceived in the eyes of its Arab neighbours, as a country incapable of seriously opposing the united front of Arab. Consequently, Israel, without achieving a full-fledged victory by reaching the Litani River and defeating Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas, and the Gaza Strip, has no advantage in ceasing hostilities against Iran.

The fifth circumstance: a US admission of defeat in the conflict with Iran, a peace treaty, or even a cessation of hostilities against Iran would spell a grave geopolitical catastrophe for the United States, a powerful global power capable of suppressing any adversary on the planet (except the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China). In turn, the image of Israel, as an alliance with the United States capable of suppressing any adversary in the Middle East, would be thoroughly destroyed.

The world community will remember this geopolitical defeat of the United States and Israel for a long time, and the reputation of Iran, having defeated the strongest enemy, will increase dramatically and receive world recognition.

What could this mean for the US and Israel? The first consequences quickly became apparent. For example, the Sultanate of Oman declared that if the US does not compensate Oman for economic losses incurred as a result of Iranian strikes on American military bases and other facilities in Oman and does not help repair the damage (for example, the Salalah seaport, and others), which Oman believes is the fault of the US and Israel, which started the war with Iran, then Oman will abandon the dollar and switch to yuan for oil payments. Another striking example signalling an impending financial collapse: the UAE leadership has announced the possibility of switching to the yuan for oil payments if the US fails to resolve the Iranian problem. Other countries of the Arab world may also follow Oman and the UAE, with which international supplies

of hydrocarbon energy (oil, gas) – the basis of the economy of any country have so far been paid mainly in dollars.

In this case, the U.S. dollar as the main reserve currency of the world will cease to be such, and it will be replaced by the yuan. As a result, the United States will lose the status of an issuing country, a state that issues the international reserve currency (the U.S. dollar) and other financial assets: securities (shares, bonds), payment and settlement documents.

While previously the US could use the dollars it printed to buy everything it needed from the rest of the world, under these new conditions the US will have to pay with the products of its own industrial sector: machinery, machine tools, technology, fertilizers, agricultural products, weapons, and the like, rather than printed green paper with portraits of the Founding Fathers. The United States is heading straight towards the end of the petrodollar era, which lasted from 1945, after the signing of the famous ‘Quincy Act’ (CA-71) between Franklin Roosevelt and a representative of the Saud dynasty, which preceded the creation of Saudi Arabia.⁶

As a result, the US will need to increase industrial production at home in order to compensate for the loss of the dollar's status as the world's reserve currency. Economically, the United States may become non-competitive, given the fact that the US national debt (over \$36 trillion, March 2026) exceeds its gross domestic product (\$32.38 trillion, forecast for 2026) by seventeen percent.

The conclusion that follows from this is that, under the current circumstances, it is not beneficial for the United States, as well as Israel, to cease military action against Iran.

3. Conditions for ending or continuing the war in Iran

The following factors may play against the continuation of hostilities in Iran:

- The need to obtain the consent of Congress and the Senate to continue the war with Iran, which will immediately change the legal component of the conflict – de jure it will become a full-fledged war between the United States and Iran.
- A huge expenditure of weapons by the United States and Israel, which cannot be replenished in a short time.
- Israel's huge losses in the confrontation with Hezbollah and Hamas.

The following factors could contribute to continued hostilities in Iran:

- A cessation of hostilities, as they currently exist de facto, and especially if a peace treaty with Iran is concluded, would be viewed by the international community as a serious defeat for the world's leading geopolitical power – the US-Israel alliance – at the hands of the "Third World" Iran.⁷ This would lead to dire economic consequences for the US, as well as for Israel due to its isolation and greater economic and possibly military pressure on Israel from neighbouring Arab states.
- It is possible that in this case, Turkey would not remain on the sidelines of this conflict, as it has repeatedly made harsh statements against Israel, claiming the status of world leader of Sunni Islam. Since Israel is the main adversary of Sunni Islam, Turkey would oppose Israel to prevent it from controlling and dividing Sunni Islam. Before the conflict, Turkey did not have such a pretext or opportunity, but now such an opportunity has appeared, since the Israeli army has exhausted its potential.

4. What should the world expect?

First scenario

A gradual fading of the military conflict without the formal conclusion of a peace treaty. This "neither peace nor war" situation will be perceived as a defeat for the US and Israel, but it will also be believed that the US and Israel still have a chance to improve their international image, since the fighting has not seemingly ceased, but merely subsided for the time being.

But in this case, hostilities could resume at any moment. A *serious provocation*, which could be presented as a terrorist attack by Iran, could serve as a pretext for a renewed conflict.

One of the possible scenarios could be a strike on civilian Iranian targets – Iranian oil wells, bridges, and power plants – which would lead to a retaliatory strike on Israel's energy infrastructure. Unlike Iran, Israel has only two fully operational power plants, which Iran could easily destroy. Israel would be left without electricity; serious problems would arise with power supplies to the Dimona nuclear research centre; and obtaining electricity from neighbouring Arab countries that are not sympathetic to Israel would likely be impossible, as their leaders, if allowed, would find themselves pariahs in their own countries.

Iran's retaliatory strike on Israel's power grid will be portrayed in the US and Israeli media as a horrific and monstrous atrocity by an 'aggressive' Iran, which, in the US and Israel's view, should justify Iran's defeat to the international community. However, given what the US and Israel themselves have done in Iran (destroying up to 91,000 residential buildings, damaging up to 43 medical centres, 6,000 commercial facilities, and hundreds of educational institutions,⁸ destroying the B1 bridge connecting Tehran with western Iran, and damaging or destroying tens of thousands of other civilian facilities), such a justification for Iran's defeat will raise serious doubts among the rest of the world.

The most likely provocation, portrayed as an act of terrorism by Iran, would likely be the alleged use of chemical weapons or a 'dirty bomb' against Israel – the dispersal of some of its uranium dust over Israel during the detonation of an Iranian warhead, which Israel could then portray as a nuclear attack.

This could serve as a pretext for one of two things: either launching a large-scale US and Israeli ground and air operation against Iran, or launching a nuclear strike on Iran with 20-25 warheads⁹ to completely "destroy Iran as a civilization". (In early April 2026, U.S. President Donald Trump issued an ultimatum to Iran, warning that "a whole civilization will die tonight" unless the country agreed to a deal to end ongoing hostilities and reopen the Strait of Hormuz). This would have dire consequences for neighbouring countries, with catastrophic consequences for the US and Israel.

Nuclear power states may come to support Iran. For example, Pakistan could respond harshly to Israel, ignoring the fact that Pakistan is a Sunni state¹⁰ and Iran is Shiite.¹¹ And since both Pakistan and Iran belong to the Muslim world, Pakistan could support Iran in its war with the US and Israel. It's also possible that North Korea, which has long-range intercontinental missiles and enough warheads to completely destroy Israel, could also support Iran.

Russia's position in support of Iran is clearly evident. On April 27, Russian leader Vladimir Putin held talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in St. Petersburg. The Russian

president emphasised that Russia will do everything in the interests of Iran and other Middle Eastern countries to end the conflict in the region as quickly as possible.¹²

That same day, at a meeting of defence ministers of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation member states in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov held talks with Iranian Deputy Defence Minister Talaei-Nik Reza. He stated: “*We advocate for a resolution to the conflict exclusively through diplomatic means. We support Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia will support Iran no matter how the situation develops.*”¹³

It is still debatable what China, another major nuclear power might do. China is attempting to maintain neutrality, positioning itself as a responsible mediator, seeking to act as a peacemaker, expressing concern about the impact of the war on energy supplies and regional security, and supporting the pursuit of stability in the Middle East.

Iranian leaders clearly understand the full extent of the danger of Israel's complete defeat, owing to the risk of escalating to a full-scale war and the possible use of nuclear weapons. To prevent this and avoid succumbing to provocations, Iran is unlikely to completely destroy Israel's power grid. Rather, it will likely launch retaliatory strikes against individual nodes of the power grid, research centres associated with Israel's nuclear programme, and Israeli military-industrial facilities to reduce Israel's combat capabilities. Such a response by Iran would not provide a pretext for a large-scale invasion of Iran by the US and Israeli armies.

Second scenario

A full-scale peace agreement on terms acceptable to Iran. Iran will not agree to a peace treaty on terms that are unfavourable to itself. Moreover, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps also supports this,¹⁴ demanding that peace be concluded on terms that would be truly acceptable to Iran.

Iran has presented the US and Israel with a ten-point proposal for ending the war (as of April 2026). The key demands include a cessation of military action against pro-Iranian groups, international security guarantees, and financial compensation for damages.

Iran's key conditions for signing peace include:

- Complete lifting of all sanctions: Removal of American economic and political restrictions.
- Nuclear programme recognition: Formal recognition of Iran's right to use nuclear technology.
- Compensation: Full compensation for material and moral damage caused by the actions of the United States and Israel.
- Security guarantees: Cessation of military operations, non-interference in internal affairs and international guarantees of non-return to conflict.
- Acceptance of jurisdiction: Acceptance of Iran's legal jurisdiction.
- Troops withdrawal: Ending the presence of foreign troops, including limiting the activities of the US 5th Fleet in the region.

The US described these conditions as "maximalist". Negotiations on these terms are ongoing, and were discussed at meetings in Pakistan, among other places. Under this scenario, a peace

agreement would be clearly perceived as an official defeat and complete, unconditional surrender of the US and Israel in the conflict.

Third scenario

The Congress and the Senate authorise the allocation of significant funds to restore the potential of the US armed forces, conduct a partial mobilisation of reservists, deploy combat groups in sufficient numbers (6-7 aircraft carriers, 120 ships of other classes, 2-3 submarines with Tomahawk missile weapons, 2-2.5 thousand aircraft, 1.5 million troops, etc.)¹⁵ in the territories adjacent to Iran and in the waters of the northern part of the Arabian Sea to begin a full-scale operation against Iran, similar to the one (“Desert Storm”), which was carried out by the United States and its allies in 1991, and “Iraqi Freedom” (initially named “Shock and Awe”) in 2003.

Israel is also making similar preparations. The US and Israel are attempting to secure the consent of neighbouring Arab countries to participate in a full-scale conflict.

Fourth scenario

Transition to the use of nuclear weapons.

5. Which scenario is most likely?

Most likely, further development of the situation in the Middle East will unfold according to the following scenario. Let's consider its driving forces.

The previously irreconcilable, aggressive, and harsh rhetoric of both sides is becoming less aggressive. President Trump no longer declares that “Iran's civilization will die”,¹⁶ that its leaders will be destroyed, and that Iran's entire air defence and army will be destroyed.

The diplomatic actions of President Donald Trump's team, the highly probable refusal of the Senate and Congress to wage a full-scale war with Iran, the diplomatic missions of Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi to Pakistan, Oman, and Russia to end the conflict, the developing economic situation in the United States and Israel, the exhaustion of necessary air defence capabilities, and the destruction of Israel's energy and other infrastructure indicate that the United States and Israel must cease military action against Iran.

The United States will try to force Iran to make peace with the United States on terms acceptable to the United States in order to ‘save face’ in the eyes of the global public. Acceptable conditions, which will be widely disseminated by Western media, may include the removal of uranium from Iran (in reality, a sham removal) and the cessation of Iran's nuclear programme (in reality, its continuation).

For the United States and for Donald Trump personally, this will mean that they have achieved their goals in the conflict. Iran, for its part, could claim that it has limited its nuclear programme but has not stopped its research component.

The question of establishing ultimate peace will be less about actual peace-making efforts than about persuading the public, interested state leaders, and international organisations to believe that the war has ended on terms acceptable to the United States. Statements will be sought and declarations issued regarding a cessation of hostilities and a speedy peace agreement will be made to create the appearance of a US-Israeli victory in the conflict.

The likelihood that events will play out according to this scenario can be assessed as moderate.

Another option – a cessation of hostilities without any acceptable peace agreement, followed by a serious provocation justifying a full-scale war – is also possible. However, the US and Israel have almost no time left to organise such a provocation, for example, with chemical weapons or radioactive dust. The only thing they can do now is launch a powerful missile strike on Iran's bridges and power plants. What follows is described in paragraph 4 (see above).

Note: When this article was completed, news came that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had ordered the Israeli army to launch powerful strikes against Hezbollah targets in Lebanon. American leader Donald Trump cancelled the trip of his negotiators – Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner – to meet with representatives of Tehran, arguing that “we will no longer take 18-hour flights to talk about nothing.”¹⁷ And the Pentagon is developing plans to strike Iranian military targets in the Strait of Hormuz in the event of a breakdown of the truce. On April 25, the United States deployed a squadron of 12 Marine Corps F/A-18C/D fighters at Al-Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates, according to the Military Air Tracking Alliance. The United States has deployed a squadron of 12 F/A-18C fighter jets to the UAE.¹⁸

The third aircraft carrier "George W. Bush" is headed to the Persian Gulf. At least six US Air Force Stratotanker tankers are constantly observed hanging in the air over Saudi Arabia, indicating the possible preparation of new air strikes by the United States and Washington's ally Tel Aviv. This information is indirectly confirmed by the unexpected call of one of the members of the US-Iran negotiating team, Professor Seyed Mohammad Marandi, who called for the evacuation of a number of countries of the Persian Gulf (!) – the UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, as well as the crews of ships located in the Persian Gulf. This indicates the threat to use nuclear weapons, since, in fact, we are talking about endangering 49 million people. The information that Trump insisted on obtaining the launch codes for nuclear missiles (Daniel Caine, US Air Force general and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, refused to hand them over), indicates that there are grounds for fear.

The expected result is that the truce in the Middle East is close to collapse and a new round of escalation may begin.

The United States, Israel and Iran are again balancing on the brink of a major war.

¹ This "neither peace nor war" stance often proves fatal. Despite attempts to cease hostilities, Germany resumed its offensive, forcing the Soviets to sign a peace treaty under even harsher terms.

² Wikipedia: Hezbollah[a] is a Lebanese Shia Islamist political party with an active paramilitary wing that has been banned by the Lebanese government since March 2026, amid Israel's war on Lebanon.

³ Zugzwang (from the German Zugzwang - "forced to move") is a situation in chess, checkers, and other board games in which any move a player makes results in a worsening of their position or even a loss. In such a situation, a player is forced to move, even though it would be more advantageous to remain where they are.

⁴ Wikipedia: Hamas is a Palestinian Sunni-Islamic fundamentalist, militant, and sociopolitical organization that has governed the Gaza Strip since 2007. Founded in 1987, the movement acts as the de facto governing authority in the Gaza Strip, aiming to create an Islamic state in place of Israel, which it opposes through both political and violent, often terrorist, methods.

⁵ Wikipedia: The Gaza Strip is a 140-square-mile (363-sq-km) coastal territory on the Mediterranean coast, bordering Israel and Egypt, that is de jure one of the two parts of the partially recognized Arab State of Palestine (along with the West Bank).

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- ⁶ The meeting between US President Franklin Roosevelt and the founder of Saudi Arabia, King Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud, took place on February 14, 1945, in Egypt aboard the aircraft carrier USS Quincy. This historic dialogue laid the foundation for a long-term alliance between the two countries. The essence of the agreement was as follows: the US would provide access to Saudi Arabia's oil resources (ensuring supply security), and Saudi Arabia would guarantee US military protection and support (ensuring dynasty security).
- ⁷ Iran is often classified as a developing country (or, in older terminology, a "third world" country), but it demonstrates a high level of development in the military, nuclear, and space sectors, despite years of sanctions. It is a large Middle Eastern state with a developed infrastructure, which, in many respects, outperforms other developing countries.
- ⁸ Different sources provide different data on the scale of destruction.
- ⁹ A nuclear strike on Iran with 2-3 nuclear warheads will not lead to a change in the situation in the country or its complete destruction, except for huge casualties.
- ¹⁰ Sunnis are followers of the largest sect of Islam, comprising approximately 85–90% of all Muslims worldwide. They follow the Quran and the Sunnah (traditions) of the Prophet Muhammad, placing particular emphasis on community. Sunnis predominate in most Muslim countries, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey, and do not recognize the right to the imamate solely as belonging to the descendants of the Prophet's cousin, Ali ibn Abu Talib, and his descendants (imams).
- ¹¹ Shiites are the second largest sect in Islam (after Sunnis), comprising approximately 10-15% of Muslims. They recognize the Prophet Muhammad's cousin Ali ibn Abu Talib and his descendants (imams) as the only legitimate successors. The main difference is the belief that leaders (imams) are appointed by God and possess divine grace.
- ¹² Yana Sergeeva. Putin met with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in St. Petersburg. *Argumenty i Fakty*, 27 April 2026; <https://aif.ru/politics/putin-vstretitsya-s-glavoy-mid-irana-abbasom-arakchi>
- ¹³ Belousov met with the Iranian Deputy Defence Minister in Bishkek. *Kommersant*, 27 April 2026; <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/8624449> (Quote from the press service of the Russian Ministry of Defence).
- ¹⁴ The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is Iran's elite military and political formation, created in 1979 to defend the Islamic Revolution. The IRGC operates alongside the regular army, reports directly to the Supreme Leader, and has its own ground, naval, and air forces, as well as the Quds Force, playing a key role in the country's foreign and domestic policy.
- ¹⁵ Estimates made by the Pentagon.
- ¹⁶ David Gritten. Trump condemned over threat that Iran's 'civilisation will die'. *BBC*, 8 April 2026.
- ¹⁷ Trump cancels US envoys' trip after Iran's Araghchi leaves Pakistan. *Al Jazeera*, 25 April 2026.
- ¹⁸ BREAKING NEWS: Imminent US attack? Deploys 12 F/A-18 fighter jets and 7 tanker aircraft to the UAE. *You Tube*, 26 April 2026; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xb7Eb-y5His>