



## Briefing Paper 4

May 10, 2025

### **Getting Iran Right: Defeating – Not *Enabling* – the Threat; Do Not Give the Regime More Time, Help the Iranian People Bring it Down** *Don't Needlessly Put the President in Harm's Way; Skip a Fraught Trip Behind Enemy Lines*

#### **The Top Line**

By maintaining the reputation of being powerful, determined and resilient, the United States secures the confidence of our allies in the Middle East – making them more willing to carry the burden of regional defense. It unnerves our enemies and can effectively deter and even destabilize them, and thus securing the peace, at least for a time.

That said, given our other global priorities, the United States would like to have, notwithstanding its many abiding and critical interests in the region, a lower profile there and to avoid involvement in another Mideast war. Unfortunately, that approach invites a widespread perception of U.S. retreat and aversion to conflict, with the predictable effect of undermining the deterrence necessary to sustain calm in the region, thus *increasing* the likelihood of major war and entanglement.

The only way that conundrum can be overcome is by having regional allies who are powerful, loyal and thus capable of fill the gap between U.S. interests and reduced commitments.

#### **The importance of Israel and the US-Israeli relationship**

Our regional enemies calibrate their challenge to the United States in the region, and perhaps globally, through the power and success of our allies as part of our defense structure. **There is no ally in the Mideast that is: as powerful; self-reliant in maintaining its defense; integral to our own values as a civilization; advanced in its contribution of military capabilities to the overall Western defense; and loyal and pro-American as Israel.**

Israel's power, success and geo-strategic posture thus constitute the pillar of America's defense in the region and enable broad U.S. disengagement while still securing our regional interests and allowing a diversion of precious American resources to other parts of the world.

At the same time, **no nation in the Middle East threatens Western civilization more than Iran.** It is strategically relentless in challenging American regional interests and sapping American strength. It works to undermine and gut American values via influence operations even inside the United States. It prepares for global nuclear confrontation against not only Israel and other regional allies but the United States at home, as well as elsewhere. And it has murdered not only many American citizens and servicemen but is plotting to assassinate President Trump and other top officials. In short, *it is at war* with America.

Iran's regime is defined around its war to destroy Western civilization led by the United States; that aim is not a policy, but *its essence*. Its "death to America" and "America is the Great Satan" chants bespeak the core of its ideology and condemn Iran under this regime to a terminal zero-sum struggle with the United States. The conflict is not over any American action past or present, but over what Iran's Islamic Revolution is and its hatred of our values. The conflict is thus both irreconcilable and unnegotiable for Tehran.

### **Exploit the Window of Opportunity Created by Israel**

Israel delivered Iran a devastating blow on October 26, 2024. The Jewish State: destroyed the underpinnings of Iran's proxy structure (which operates not only locally, but globally, including in Latin America, with other enemies of the United States); eviscerated its air defense structure; destroyed a key bottleneck in Iran's nuclear weapons program; and eliminated a substantial portion of its regional missile forces that threaten not only Israel, but U.S. troops and other regional allies.

Most importantly, Israel exposed the Iranian regime – which thrives on an image of omnipotence and terrifying ruthlessness – as impotent, frightened and hunkering down. That has set the stage for the Iranian people, who have shown consistently that they detest the mullahs and their oppression, to take matters into their own hands. The regime was so rattled that it also caused an internal ideological crisis, which further induces regime paralysis, internecine tensions and turncoat behaviors.

In this way, Israel has opened a *once-in-decades* window of opportunity not only to strip Iran of its nuclear and ballistic ambitions that increasingly seek global reach. But to do so with dominance over Iranian airspace and with the strong possibility of triggering such an internally destabilizing chain of events that it threatens the very regime itself.

Moreover, Chinese regional penetration, the increasingly tight strategic relationships between Iran, Pakistan, Turkey and China, as well as Egypt's economic, political and other crises, create a condition of regional strategic instability that demands the threat posed by the mullahs be shut down in a permanent fashion while this narrow window of opportunity exists.

Fortunately, **American does not have to do that unilaterally**. Israel is willing to assume the mantle of the West's regional defense against Iran and exploit the window of opportunity it has opened to permanently disable the regime's security apparatus and, thereby, create conditions that could lead to its toppling by the Iranian people.

Others in the region also see Israel as the vanguard of American power, and allies seek thus to align with her and enemies focus on destroying her. Israel's success and support for the United States, thus, is the single greatest foreign contributor to sustaining U.S. defense interests in the Middle East; securing our vital interests; enhancing our global reputation; and organizing a pro-American regional defense architecture.

## A Truly “Special” Relationship

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is the strongest advocate and most pro-American and culturally and politically aligned of Israel’s leaders. His strategic vision secures not only Israel’s but also the United States’ interests, values and our ability to thrive in the region as a great power.

So, Iran, the Muslim Brotherhood, China, and others see a rupture of the relationship between President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu as the single most important, powerful and promising tool at their disposal to both sabotage U.S. regional power, interests and alliance structures, as well as leave Israel isolated.

Thus, these enemies are relentless in their behavior, policies, initiatives, negotiations and influence operations to tap those arguing here in the United States and even in Israel for a rupture in not only Israeli-American ties, but particularly relations between Trump and Netanyahu. Recent reports that such a rupture has occurred appear at this writing to be “fake news.”

Yet, we must be alive to this danger, given Iran’s critical need – and for that matter, that of the Muslim Brotherhood and Qatar – to stave off defeat by sabotaging the U.S.-Israeli relationship. Without a strong partnership and a robust Israeli strategic posture, America cannot both withdraw from the region and still remain a great power there with its interests secured. Without Israel, the United States would have to choose between full-on regional retreat or endless and extensive presence and engagement in combat – which our enemies know is unsustainable.

## Toxic Influence Operations

There are several avenues that Iran, Qatar and the jihadist camp have employed to disrupt US-Israeli relations. The most important has for years been by **engaging and cultivating influential American elites and communities** to give voice within the United States to policies designed to drive a wedge between the parties to the vital U.S.-Israeli relationship. These influence operations have penetrated not only the left and educational institutions in the United States, but have also lately swayed some within the conservative movement.

Indeed, America’s vital interests with respect to preventing the Iranian mullahs from realizing their longstanding goal of bringing “Death to Israel” and “Death to America” are currently being jeopardized by some *even inside the U.S. government*, and certainly by others on the outside who are effectively working with Tehran and are determined to protect its tyrants from Israeli and/or American attacks.

Look no further than the apparent collaboration between individuals like **Michael DiMino**, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East, and **Trita Parsi**, a man Ayatollah Khamenei’s regime has actually described as a leader of “the Iran Lobby” and one with whom DiMino previously worked by publishing extensively through the Koch Brothers’ Quincy Institute.

The former is a champion of **Obama-Bidenesque “restraint” towards Iran**. DiMino has: long opposed the Abraham Accords; insisted that challenging Houthi threats to international shipping need no response; contended that there are “no vital or existential U.S. interests in the region”; and opposed Israel’s war on Hezbollah to bring to justice many on America’s most-wanted terror list.

DiMino has, moreover, promoted policies of accommodation and appeasement that have helped underwrite and otherwise perpetuate the mullahocracy that brutally oppresses its own people and threatens ours. Dimino is now in a position to preside over steps like the removal of long-range B-2 bombers from Diego Garcia. Such actions visibly diminish America's power-projection capabilities in the name of "confidence-building" meant to improve the prospects for resumed U.S.-Iran nuclear negotiations on Sunday.

For his part, Parsi has long been a top influence operator for Iran including in his role as a leader of the National Iranian American Council, a proven Iranian front organization. During the Obama administration's negotiations on the so-called "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action," he was actually allowed to serve as an informal adjunct to the U.S. negotiators, as well as tireless public advocate for the Iranian position – a role he continues to play with his colleagues at the Quincy Institute.

Such inside- and outside-game proponents of what might be better described as U.S. "retreat" are being enormously aided by Tucker Carlson, whose powerful media reach and presence among the highest circles of the U.S. government makes him today's most formidable enabler of Iranian efforts to buy time.

President Trump and America are being badly served by such influence operators now promoting anti-Israel sentiment, divisions within the American body politic and what the Iranian regime can only perceive as exploitable weakness, irresolution and opportunities for aggression, certainly regionally and even here at home.

### **Threats to the Lives of the President and Prime Minister**

So central are President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu to navigating the United States and Israel into this new, powerful strategic partnership and the safe reduction of the U.S. presence in the Middle East that it can make possible that Iran's operatives have tried to murder Prime Minister Netanyahu several times, including by once targeting his house with drones (hitting Bibi's bedroom). Similarly, among the many other indicators of the true nature of the ayatollahs' intentions is the fact that they have made no secret of their determination to kill President Trump. Ditto recent social media and official statements by Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps leaders.

Notably, Iran has officially released nearly a half-dozen videos fantasizing about their successful assassination of President Trump, and they have been caught organizing terror teams with the purpose of doing just that. It is not rhetoric; it is a plan they relentlessly work to operationalize. Persistent reports of the presence in the United States of "hit squads" tasked with assassinating him and former senior members of his administration indicate just how committed and relentless Iran is to acting on such ambitions.

### **This is Not the Time for a Presidential Visit to the Arab World**

Because so much rides now on President Trump himself and his relationship with Prime Minister Netanyahu, it is an invitation to disaster to increase immeasurably at a time such as this the likelihood of further attacks on their lives – to say nothing of the increased *probability of success* by placing Mr. Trump in any of the three Arab nations he is scheduled to visit within days.

As a practical matter, *it is simply impossible* these days to assure the President's security in either Qatar, the United Arab Emirates or Saudi Arabia. That is especially true insofar as the threat could come from not only Iranian operatives, but Sharia-adherent jihadists linked to the Muslim Brotherhood or any of its various terrorist organizations that, to varying degrees, abound in these putative U.S. "allies" countries, as well.

### **The Case for Decisive Action**

The best way to achieve and maintain stability and peace is by Israel's victory and the ayatollahs' defeat. Israel inflicted a devastating blow against Iran last October – both against Tehran's terrorist proxies and against the enabling wellspring of their jihadism, Iran itself. Israel's strikes not only diminished Iran's missile forces and opened up Iran's skies for full air-dominance by forces of the United States and Israel. It also demonstrated that when faced with a determined response, Iran's regime stands paralyzed.

The Iranian regime blustered vociferously for retaliation Israel's attack, but it never did so. Instead, it began to pull its proxies back and left room for the ceasefires that then were negotiated with the looming threat of a resolute American policy re-emerging under President Trump. The mullahs understood that, if the crushing power of Israel were backed up by real U.S. support and the absence of any perceived daylight between the United States and Israel (neither of which conditions applied during President Biden's term) – their hold on power would be in jeopardy. In short, Israeli strength, her strikes and U.S. support have created a temporary, and possibly fleeting, opportunity to act.

### **There are Greater Risks from Inaction than Action**

At this juncture, there is only one relatively safe way to reduce the U.S. footprint in the region while avoiding a profound destabilization that, predictably, would result in decades of wars in the Middle East that are not only increasingly dangerous, but that are ever-less likely to be limited to the region. That would be to tighten U.S.-Israeli, and especially Trump-Netanyahu, relations with a view to enabling Israel to address the Iranian problem decisively while this unique window of opportunity still exists.

Of course, that will require us to discontinue the latest effort at nuclear negotiations into which the Iranian government has, yet again, entered in bad faith. As before, the regime in Tehran simply seeks to buy time to enable it to brazen through its most perilous period since the 1979 Revolution. In particular, the ayatollahs are desperate to stave off an Israeli strike that they know can threaten their hold on power and against which they have no effective answer or defense.

To be sure, as with any use of force, there are risks involved with supporting Israel in its confrontation with Iran. These include the possibility of significant Iranian attacks on our other regional allies and forward deployed U.S. forces and even here. There appear to be far more significant risks, however, associated with passivity in the face of such threats and allowing this possibly fleeting window for action to pass.

In point of fact, Iran knows it has very limited options to respond to an Israeli strike – which led to its paralysis in October 2024 – and that any escalation instead against Western interests would be suicidal.

**This is a moment when we need President Trump *in place* and *as secure as possible* inside the United States, advised by national security professionals who understand that *we are already at war with Iran* – whether we acknowledge it *or dangerously persist in refusing to do so*.**

### **The Bottom Line**

As a practical matter, the only choice we have is between: a) helping our *actual* ally, Israel, devastatingly degrade the IRGC security apparatus that keeps the mullahs in power, allowing the Iranian people finally to liberate themselves; or b) affording those jihadist clerics the time to finish acquiring nuclear weapons and perhaps use them against Israel and/or us.

The first option would be consistent with the Trump Doctrine of enabling and, as deemed desirable, *helping* regional allied nations deal with threats to their security – while avoiding direct U.S. involvement in costly “endless wars.” The second option may be dressed up as an exercise of sensible “restraint.” But, in practice *it will assure our involvement*, in due course if not very shortly, in a devastating shooting war at a time and under circumstances of our known enemy’s choosing.

Sadly, the choice may not be ours to make for long. We must help Israel and the people of Iran end the threat posed to them, our Arab friends and us *now*.