Current Events in the Middle East:

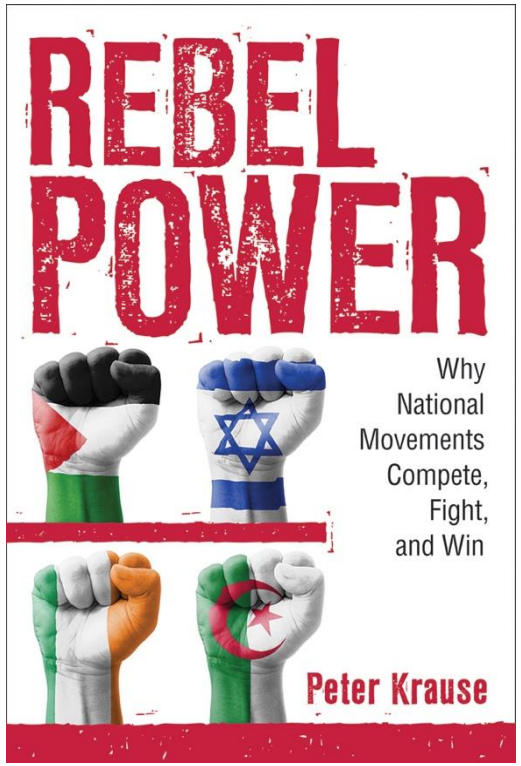
U.S. Politics, Iran, and the Road to 2028

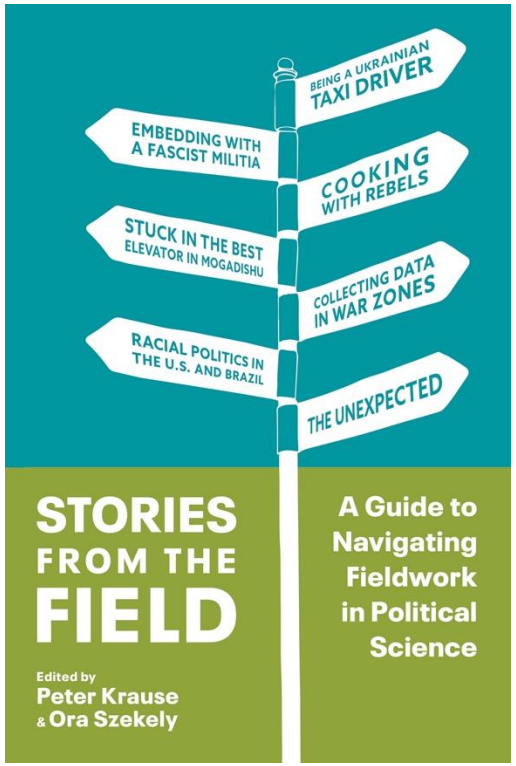
Peter Krause

Associate Professor, Boston College
Research Affiliate, MIT

MCRC@ADVIS
November 9, 2026

My Background and Perspective









High School teacher for 2 years

Led ~1,000 conversations on topic

Taught at BC & MIT on Israeli and Palestinian politics for 14 years

Work with Israeli-Palestinian P2P peacebuilding orgs

Did/do Track-II negotiations

Lived and researched for ~4 years in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Ramallah, Beirut, Amman; 100s of interviews

Monday, November 9, 2026| 10:00 - 11:30 AM

Current Events in the Middle East: U.S. Politics, Iran, and the Road to 2028

Friday, February 26, 2027 | 10:00 - 11:30 AM

Complex Issues, Constructive Conversations

Friday, April 16, 2027 | 10:00 - 11:30 AM

The Past, Present, and Future for Israelis and Palestinians

Plan for Today's Session

1. The Effects of the Midterms on U.S. Foreign Policy

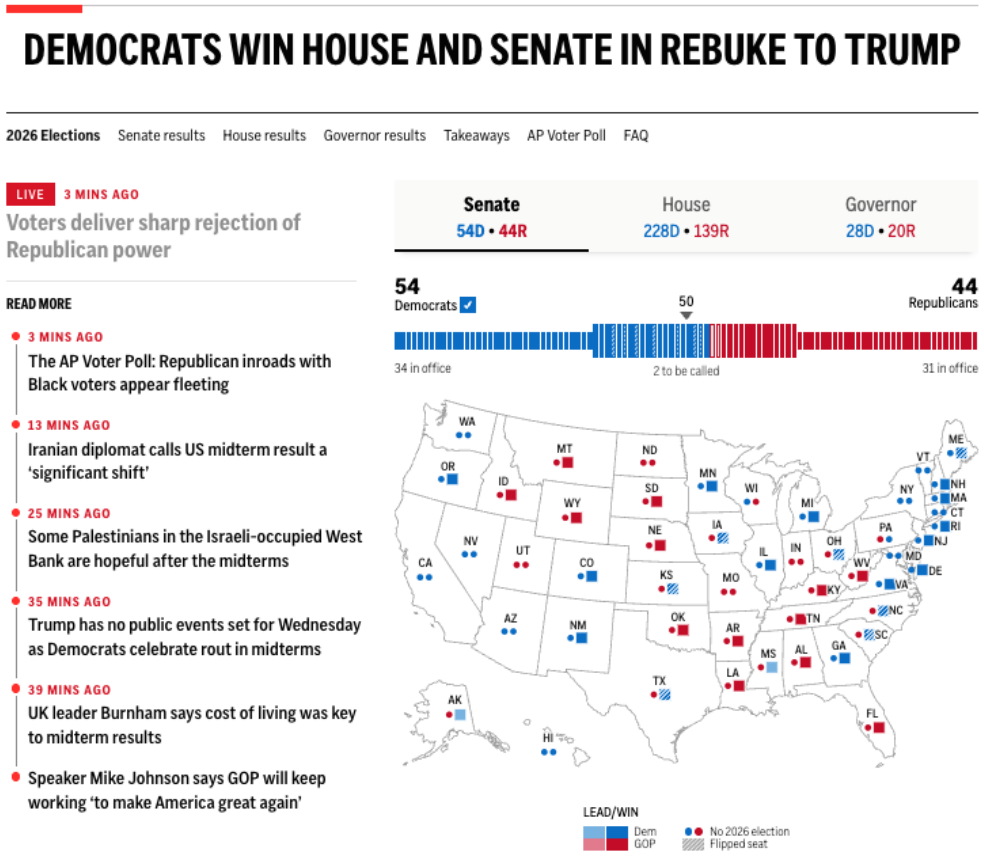
2. The Past, Present, and Future of the War with Iran

3. How to Learn and Talk About These Issues in the Classroom and in Your Community?

Participant Introductions and Questions



Effects of the U.S. Midterms on U.S. Policy in Middle East



- Earthquake for Democrats in Congress
- Dem control: appropriations, conditions and reporting requirements on Israel aid (Leahy Law) and potential U.S.-Saudi defense treaty
- Trump says U.S. will cut off $4 billion in aid to Israel by the end of 2026: From “aid” to “partnership”?

How do U.S. Midterms Impact 2028 Elections?

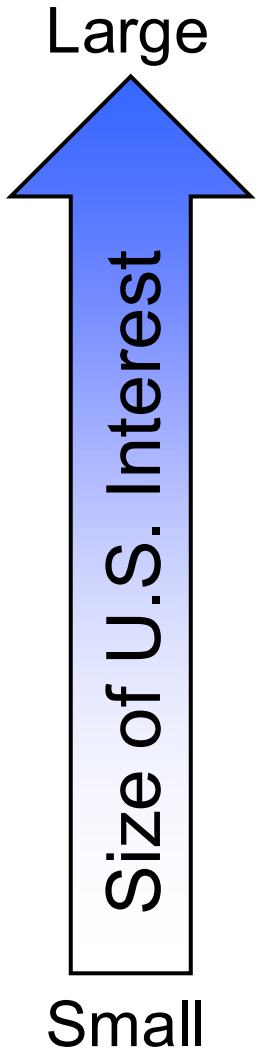




- Dry run for what worked/didn't in terms of policies and messaging
- 2028 more likely a change election than a continuation election?
  - Impact on Vance, Rubio, DeSantis and Republicans in general
- Democratic (and Republican) civil war over U.S. policy on Israelis and Palestinians?

US Foreign Policy and Public Opinion

U.S. Interests in the Middle East



Primary Interests

- No regional hegemon
- Nonproliferation of nuclear weapons
- The free flow of oil
- No significant terrorist attacks on the U.S.
- The security of U.S. regional allies

Secondary Interests

- Democracy promotion
- Regional peace and stability

U.S. Grand Strategy in the Middle East

Deep Engagement/Primacy

- Reassure allies, deter enemies, promote peace
- Access to oil
- Counterterrorism

vs.

Restraint

- Costly "forever wars" that U.S. rarely wins
- ME energy resources losing their importance
- Anti-U.S. public opinion

U.S. Grand Strategy in the Middle East

U.S. deeply engaged in Middle East

U.S. out of Middle East

?



Trump: Leaving or Leading Middle East?

- Trump administration is torn between those who want a more active and more restrained (MENA) foreign policy
- Trump has declared that the era of U.S. nation-building in MENA is over, as is meddling in the affairs of MENA countries, and yet…
- Trump is fighting major war with Iran, chairing Board of Peace for Gaza with new U.S. military advisors in Israel, pushing for disarming Hezbollah and Hamas, giving Qatar security guarantees, making Saudi Arabia major non-NATO ally, supporting Syria regime transition, working to counter China in MENA…



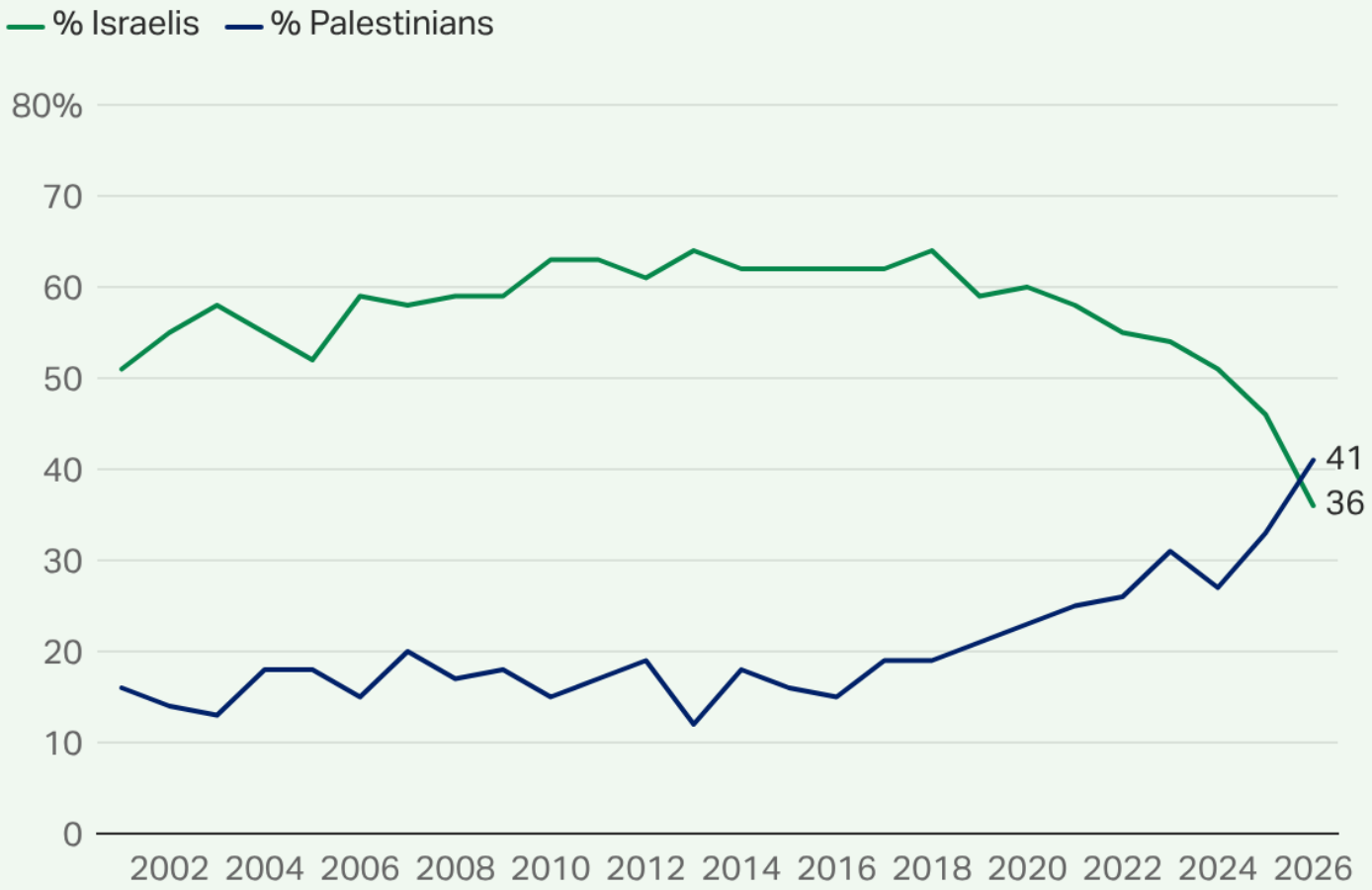
U.S. Grand Strategy in the Middle East



Where do 2028 candidates stand?

Americans' Sympathies in the Middle East Situation

In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with the Israelis or more with the Palestinians?



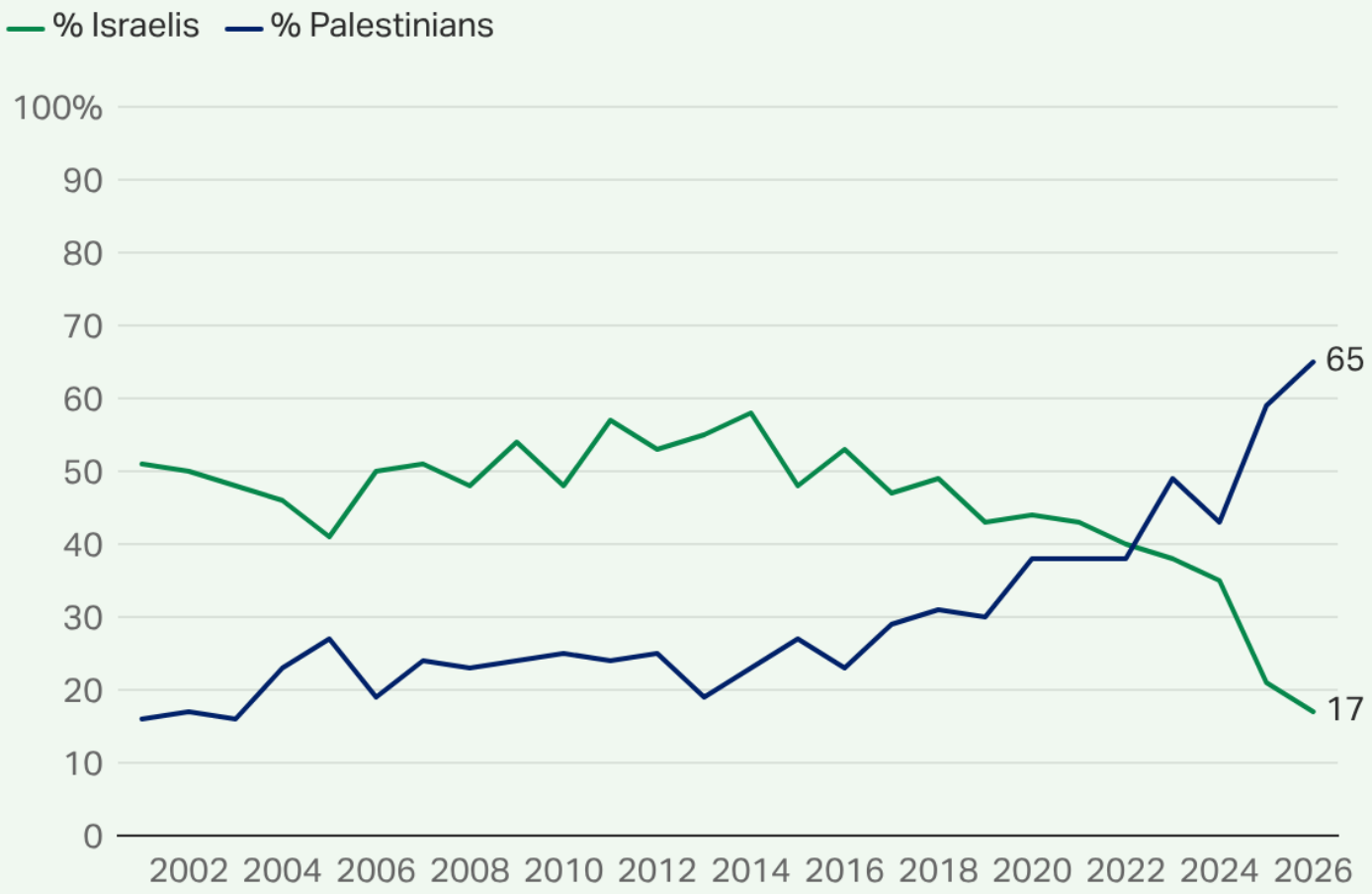
Trend from Gallup World Affairs surveys

Percentages who say both, say neither or do not have an opinion are not shown.

GALLUP

Democrats' Sympathies in the Middle East Situation

In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with the Israelis or more with the Palestinians?



Trend from Gallup World Affairs surveys

Percentages who say both, say neither or do not have an opinion are not shown.

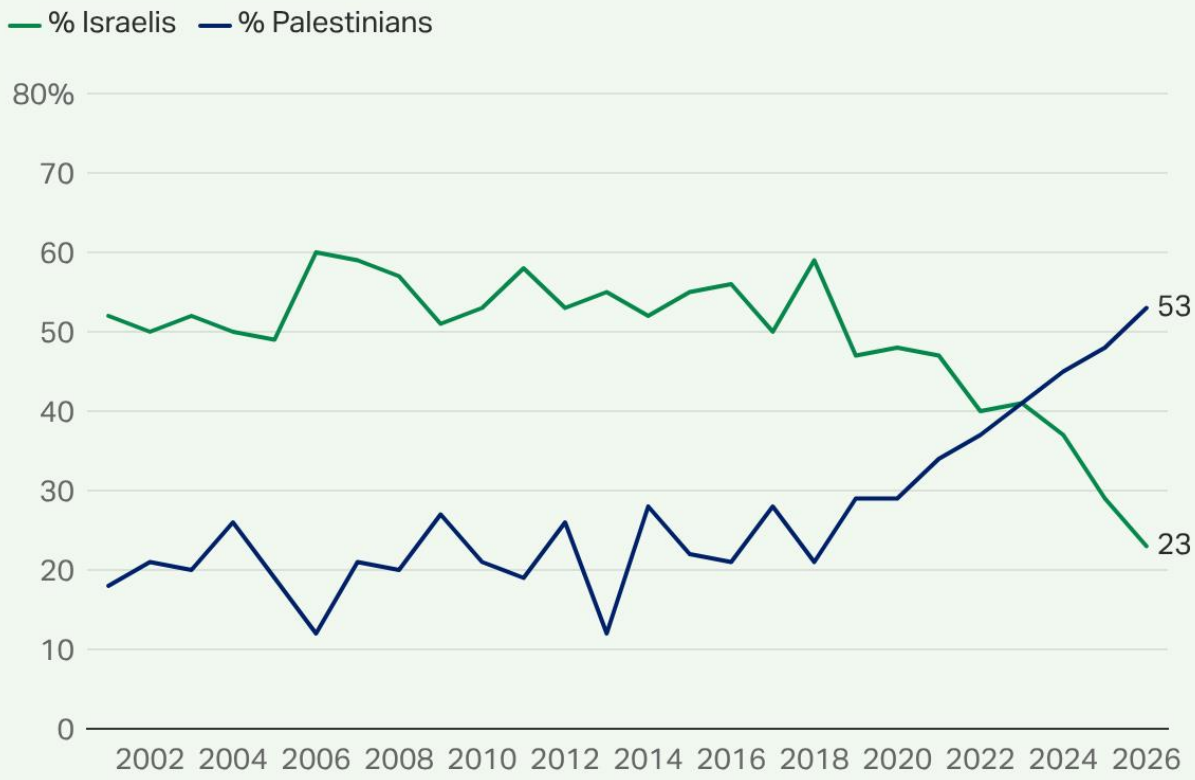
GALLUP

Americans' Sympathies in the Middle East Situation, by Age

In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with the Israelis or more with the Palestinians?

Use the tabs to compare age groups.

18 to 34 | 35 to 54 | 55 and older



Trend from Gallup World Affairs surveys

Percentages who say both, say neither or do not have an opinion are not shown.

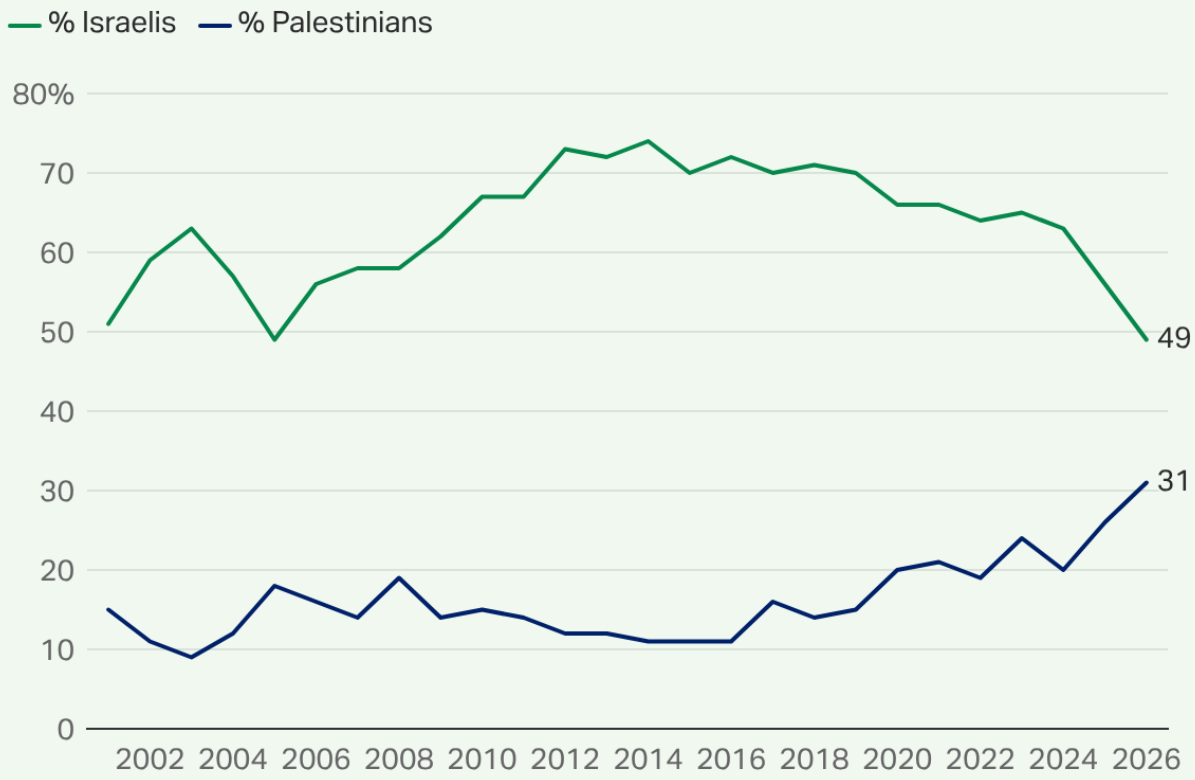
GALLUP

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GALLUP

Participant Questions



Historical Context for Iran War

Israeli-Iranian-US Relations under the Shah



El Al office in Tehran



- Iran de facto recognized Israel in 1950, second Muslim majority country to do so after Turkey
- Israel argued that Iran was natural ally against Arabs, complemented Shah stressing Iran's Persian identity over its Muslim one
- Shah saw Arab-Israeli conflict as somewhat beneficial for Iran, allowed it to focus on dominating the Persian Gulf
- Shah criticized Palestinian leaders, but also said Israel should vacate territories occupied in 1967

Khomeini Gains Control of Iran (1979-1981)





- Khomeini creates Revolutionary Guards as separate military force to "protect the (Islamic) revolution"
- Vilayat-i-faqih: theocratic rule based on sharia and religious leadership; elections for President and Majlis, but final authority rests with ulama and the Supreme Leader
- New regime saw itself as struggling against colonialism/imperialism, capitalism, the West (U.S. and Israel)

Iran Foreign Policy: “Axis of Resistance”

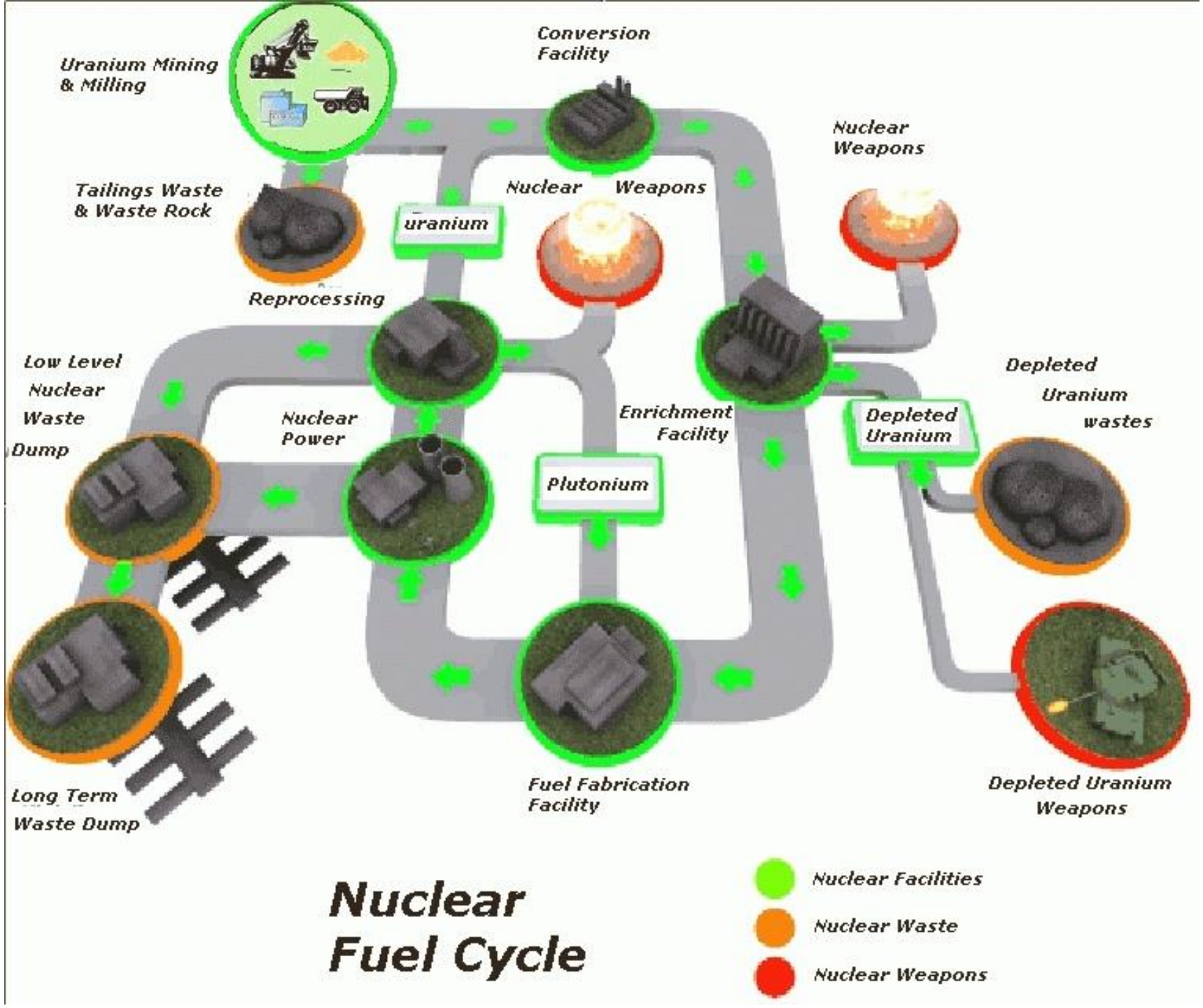


The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)





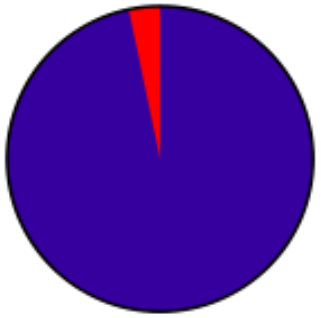
- The NPT went into effect in 1970
- Signed by 190 countries, including the U.S., Britain, France, Russia, China
- India, Pakistan, North Korea, and Israel have nuclear weapons and are not parties to the NPT; Iran is a signatory
- Three key parts of the NPT
    - Nonproliferation
    - Peaceful use of nuclear energy and technology
    - Eventual disarmament
- The NPT helped create the “nuclear taboo”



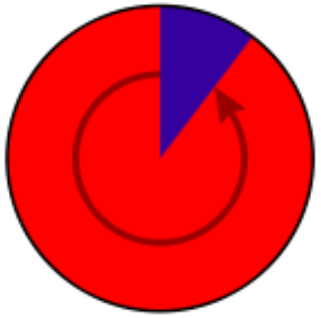
The challenges of “Dual Use”



Natural uranium
> 99.2% U-238
0.72% U-235



Low-enriched uranium
(reactor grade)
3-4% U-235

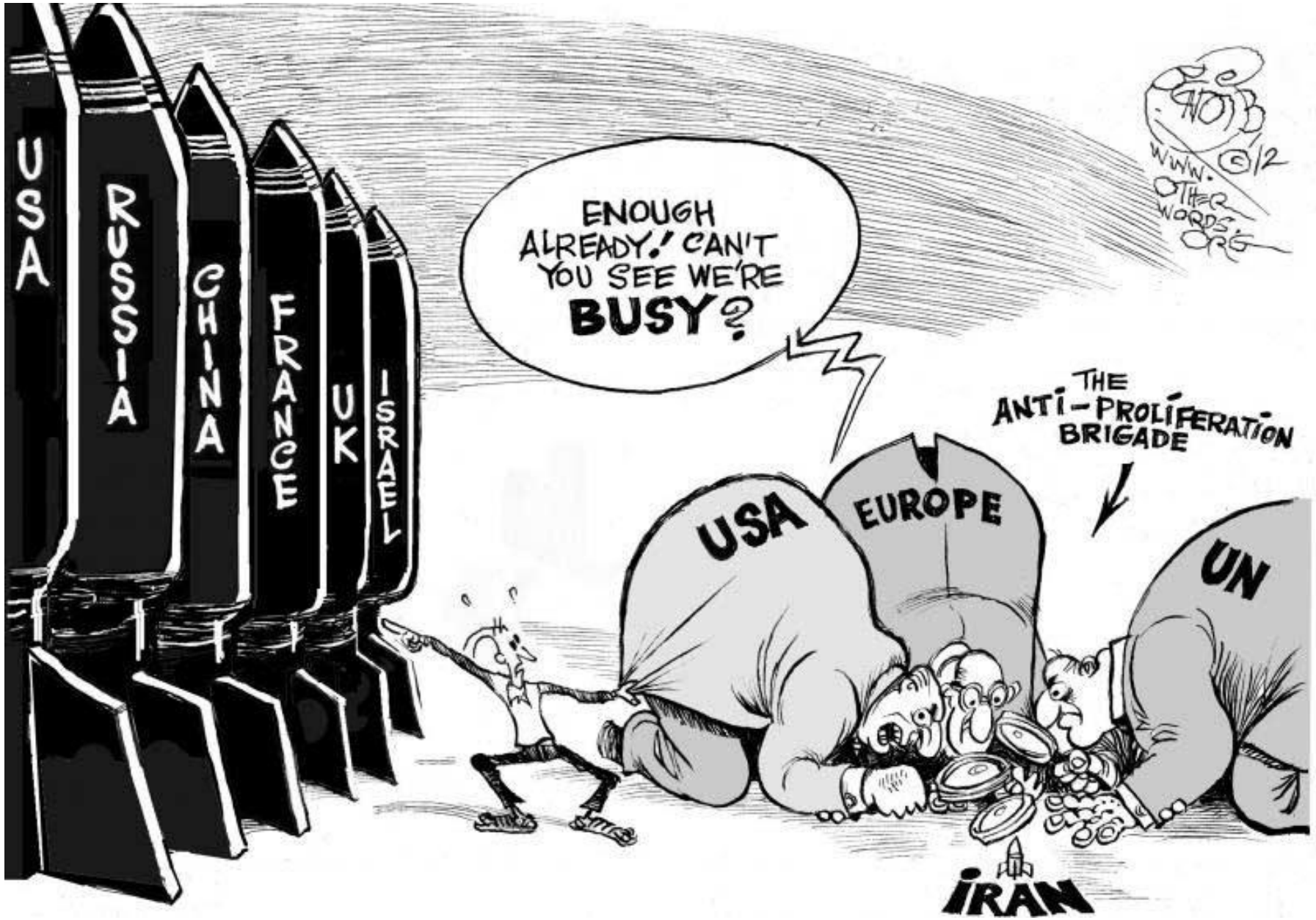


Highly enriched uranium
(weapons grade)
90% U-235

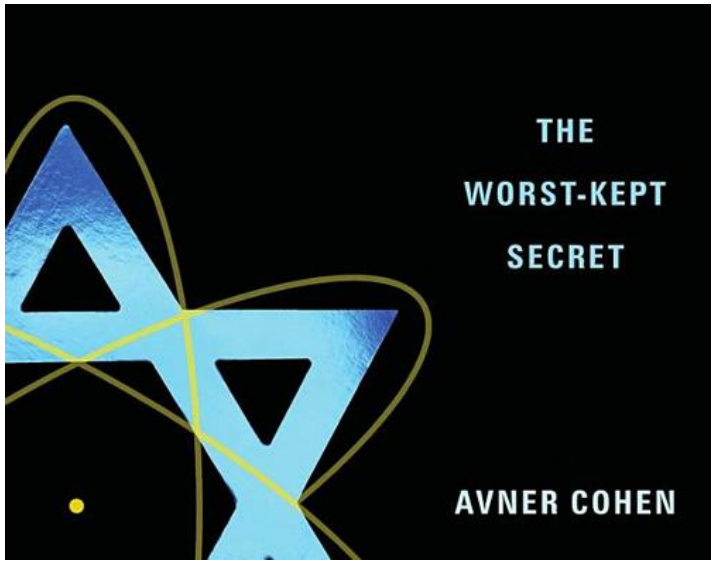
Uranium enrichment is a lengthy, costly process whereby natural uranium is converted to LEU for energy or HEU for weapons



A Perspective From Iran



Israel's Nuclear Program





- Israel's nuclear program was hidden from U.S. from 1957-1969 by Israel (and France)
- Israel developed its first nuclear bombs in 1966-1967, though it maintains public ambiguity about its arsenal
- Israel likely has ~100 nuclear warheads and the nuclear triad, says it will not be the first country in the Middle East to use nukes



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Netanyahu says Iran nuclear deal is 'historic mistake'

By HERB KEINON LAST UPDATED: 11/24/2013 17:00

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Israeli official: Jerusalem will continue efforts to ensure that Tehran does not produce nuclear weapons.



Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu giving a statement about Iran interim deal, November 24, 2013. Photo: Hayim Tzah/GPO

Trump Abandons Iran Nuclear Deal He Long Scorned

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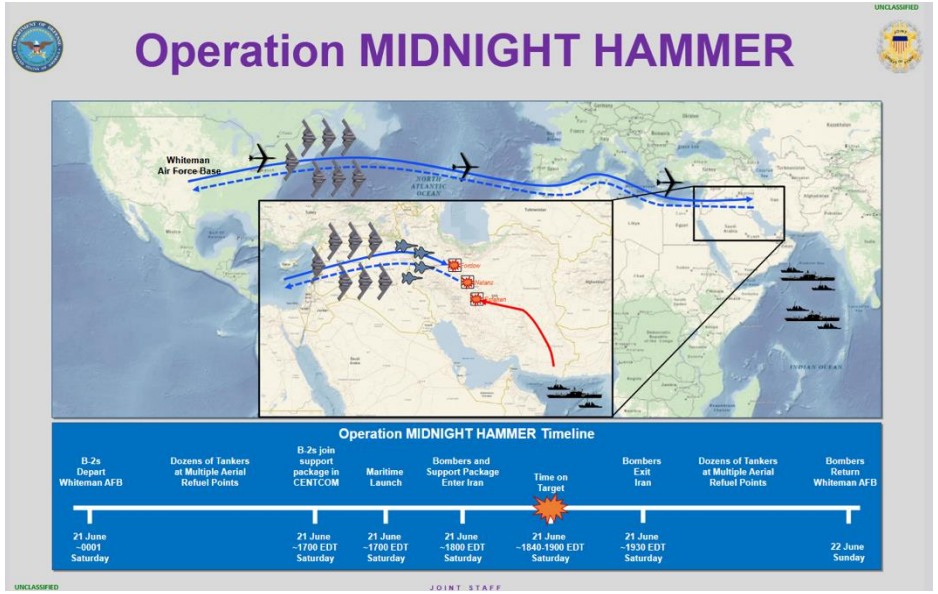
President Trump said pulling out of the Iran nuclear deal sends a message that "the United States no longer makes empty threats." Doug Mills/The New York Times

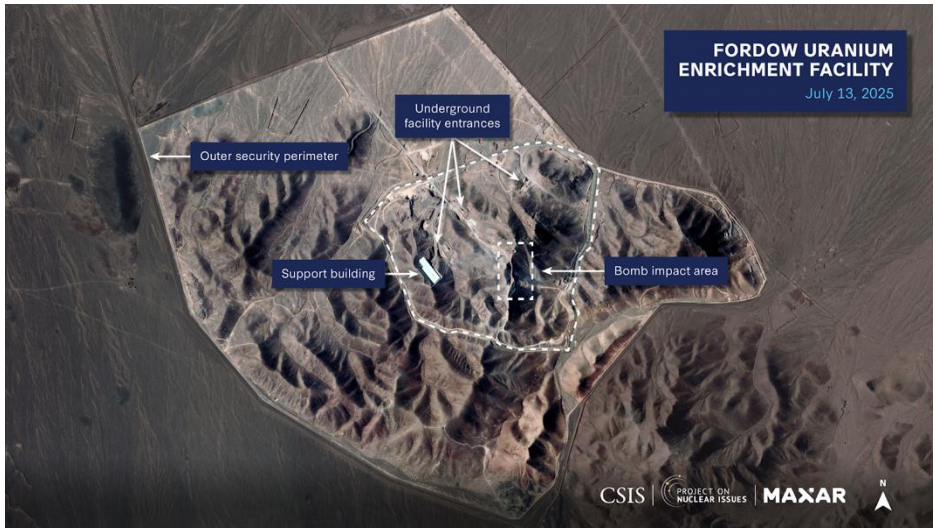
By Mark Landler

May 8, 2018

Today’s War

U.S. and Israeli Strikes on Iran in June



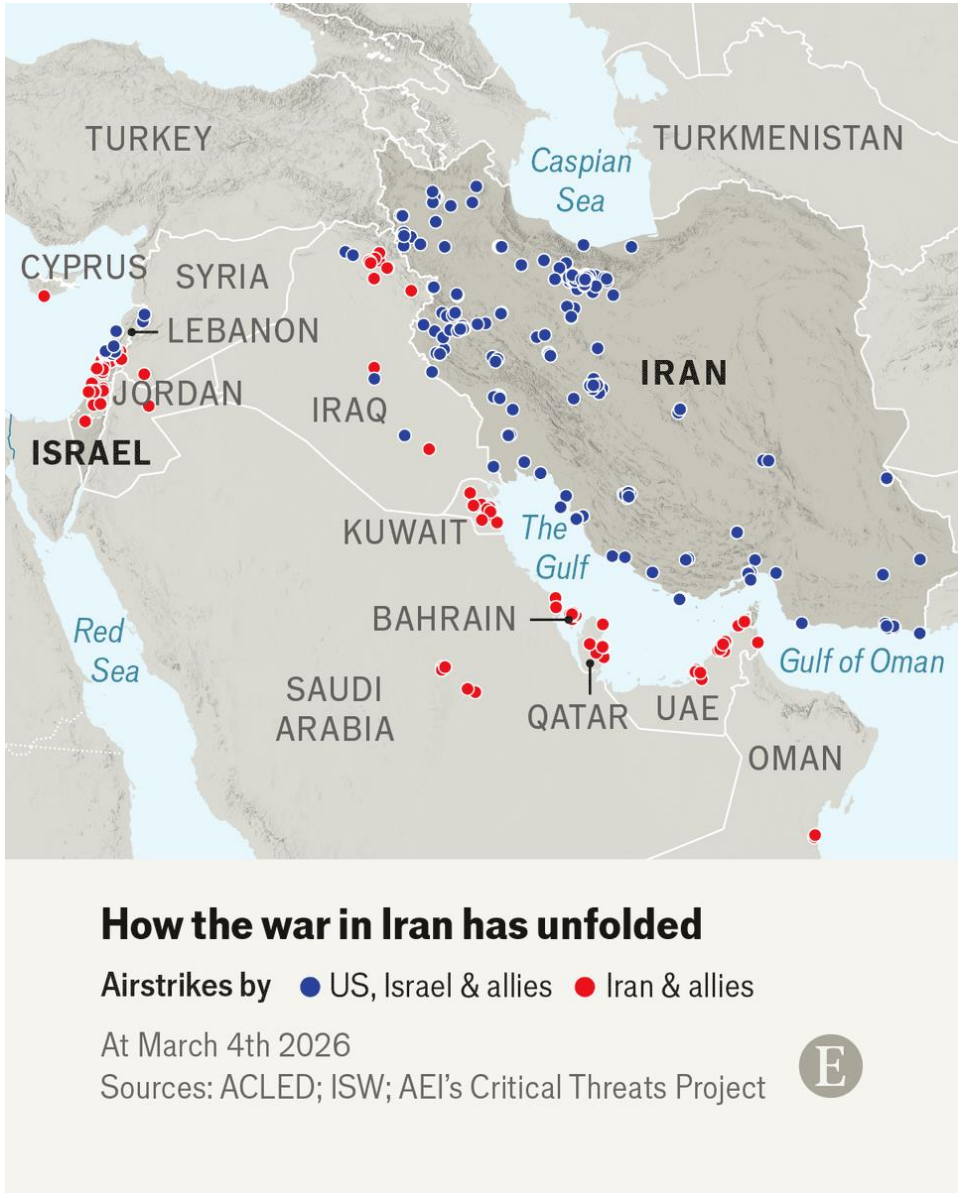


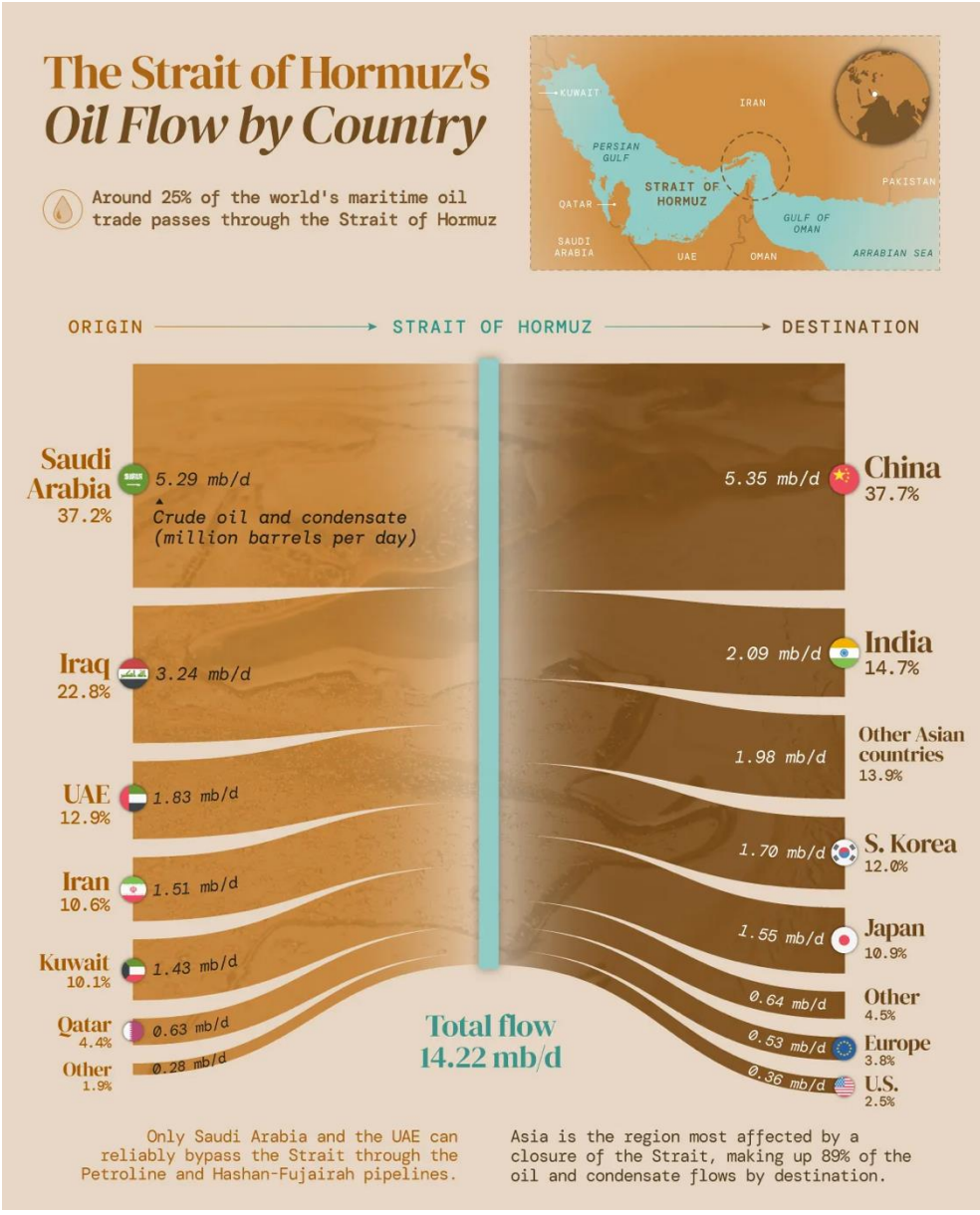
- Operation Midnight Hammer (June 21) marked U.S. entry into Israeli-led bombing campaign, which began June 13
- Key targets: Natanz, Fordow, Isfahan
  - Natanz: Centrifuge halls "likely destroyed", IAEA warns of internal contamination
  - Fordow: Hit with U.S. bunker buster bombs, damage levels still uncertain
  - Isfahan: Uranium conversion center partially destroyed; stockpile likely moved
- Over 600 Iranians killed, including nuclear scientists
- Pentagon intel: Program set back ~6 months, not "obliterated" as Trump claimed
- Iran denies severe damage; IAEA has limited access, CSIS report

The Current War(s)



The Current War(s)





WORLD NEWS

Saudi Arabia signs a mutual defense pact with nuclear-armed Pakistan after Israel's attack on Qatar



1 of 5 | Saudi Arabia signs a mutual defense pact with nuclear-armed Pakistan after Israel's attack on Qat... Read More

MENASource | April 20, 2026

'They have been exposed': The Iran war upends Gulf states' security and business model

Egypt's Arab 'NATO' proposal rejected by Qatar and UAE amid rising regional tensions

OLAMILEKAN OKEBIORUN | 21 September 2025 11:27 AM

Egypt's renewed push for a joint Arab military force modelled on NATO has stalled after Qatar and the United Arab Emirates rejected the proposal.



United Arab Emirates Says It Will Leave OPEC in Blow to Oil Cartel

The Gulf government has long complained about the group's quotas, which officials believe unfairly limited its exports. Its departure is expected to weaken OPEC's influence.

Middle East

Trump Hosts Abraham Accords Signing Between Israel, UAE and Bahrain

By Patsy Widakuswara
Updated September 15, 2020 04:09 PM



Bahrain's FM Abdullatif al-Zayani, Israel's PM Benjamin Netanyahu, US President Donald Trump and United Arab Emirates (UAE) FM Abdullah bin Zayed participate in the signing of the Abraham Accords, at the White House, Sept. 15, 2020.

SPECIAL PROJECT



Morocco Is The Latest Arab Country To Normalize Israel Ties

Arab countries in the Middle East and Africa that have normalized ties with Israel



Source: News reports

statista

U.S.-Saudi-Israeli Treaty?

NATO: Keep the US in, the Soviets out, and the Germans down.

U.S.-Saudi Treaty: Keep the US in, China (and Russia?) out, and Iran down.

Arab states think U.S. wants to pivot to Asia. They want to engage with Israel and balance against Iran, but they need path to Palestinian state



'60 Minutes': Trump Says No Plans to Escalate Iran War, Defends Israeli Leadership

Newsmax Wires
Mon, November 9, 2026 at 9:07 AM EST
2 min read

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2



President Donald Trump (Getty Images)

President Donald Trump defended his decision to go to war with Iran during a "60 Minutes" interview Sunday, insisting the military campaign prevented Tehran from obtaining nuclear weapons.

He also signaled no plans for further escalation.

Audience Questions



How Can We Learn and Talk About These Issues?

Sources in Context

Engaging with multiple Israeli and Palestinian media and scholarly sources will expose you to stories and perspectives you may not regularly encounter, giving you a more complete picture of the situation on the ground. The following lists include a healthy mix of Israeli and Palestinian perspectives from different time periods and parts of the political spectrum.

Some of these sources will include arguments that you disagree with or believe to be factually inaccurate. Their inclusion on this list does not mean that I endorse them as always accurate or that I agree with the arguments they present. As with any sources of information, you should maintain a healthy skepticism about the information presented, while also learning about different community experiences and narratives. Engaging with these different perspectives will help you learn and connect, even if your goal is to become a better advocate for a particular outcome or community.

Regional News Sources in English

Israeli News Sources

•*Israel Democracy Institute:* en.idi.org.il

•*Ha'aretz:* www.haaretz.com

•*Israel Hayom*: www.israelhayom.com

•*Jerusalem Post:* www.jpost.com

•*Times of Israel:* www.timesofisrael.com

•*Ynet:* www.ynetnews.com

Palestinian News Sources

•*Palestine Center for Survey and Policy Research:* www.pcpsr.org

•*Al Shabaka*: www.alshabaka.org

•*Ma'an:* www.maanews.com

•*Palestine News Network:* english.pnn.ps

•*Palestine Chronicle:* www.palestinechronicle.com

•*WAFA:* english.wafa.ps

Middle East News Sources

•*Al-Jazeera*: www.aljazeera.com

•*Al-Monitor*: www.almonitor.com

U.S. Grand Strategy in the Middle East

Deep Engagement/Primacy

vs.

Restraint

Make a list of the costs and benefits of each strategy

U.S. Grand Strategy in the Middle East

Where would <u>you</u> fall on this spectrum, and why?

U.S. deeply engaged in Middle East



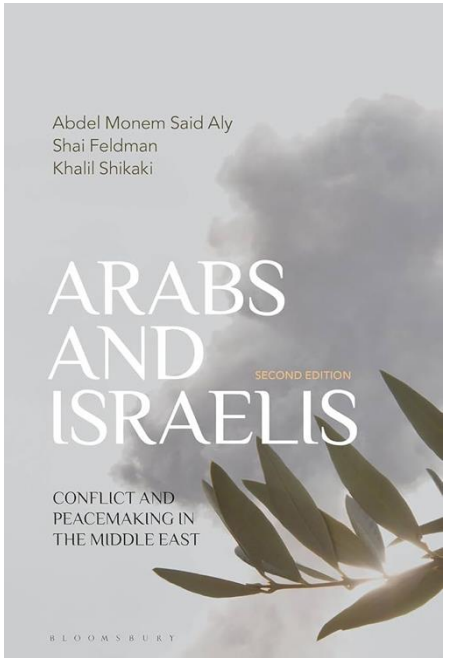
U.S. out of Middle East

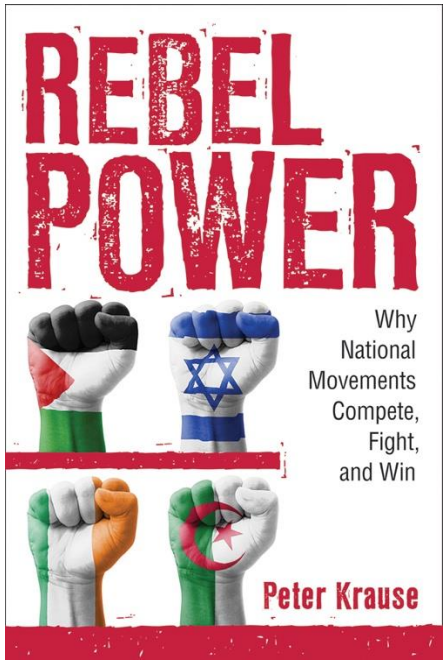
	Competitive Conversation	Clinical Conversation	Constructive Conversation
Best for	Advocating, negotiating	Establishing facts	Building relationships, navigating disagreement
Goal	Win	Find truth	Understand and connect
Mindset	Combative	Analytical	Growth
Others in the conversation are...	Enemies or Allies	Co-Investigators	Partners
Sensitive Words	Used as weapons to wield against opponents	Avoided altogether or used delicately to remain objective	Used as discussion points to understand the situation and different perspectives
Emotions	Amplified to make points and win support	Compartmentalized in the pursuit of objectivity	Shared and recognized as a source of bonding
Response to problems	Escalating, making personal attacks, shutting down	Seeking better evidence, moving to a new topic	Pause, Check-in, Reset (PCR), sharing pain and laughter, remaining resilient
Examples	Political protests, cable news debates, social media comments	University lectures, medical diagnoses, legal analysis	Dialogue sessions, heart-to-heart talks with friends, Track-II discussions

Bring Multiple Perspectives into the Conversation

You should seek to bring in alternate narratives which

- broadens viewpoints
- disarms critics
- allows people to see those from other side learn about them/their views
- reveals diversity of thought <u>within</u> Palestinian and Israeli communities
- considering both sides is not <u>concluding</u> both sides





Engage with facts *and* narratives

You can't teach or discuss 1948, Oct 7 and Gaza, or much else without both

Participant Questions



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The Past, Present, and Future for Israelis and Palestinians

Thank you

I look forward to the discussion



www.peterjpkrause.com