

Regional Power Dynamics After Israeli Strikes on Iran

The June 2025 Israeli military operation against Iranian nuclear facilities has fundamentally altered Middle Eastern geopolitics, creating distinct winners and losers among regional and global powers.

[The Washington Post +2](#) **Saudi Arabia emerges as the primary beneficiary**, having positioned itself strategically to gain from reduced Iranian nuclear threats while avoiding direct confrontation costs.

The strikes targeted Iran's nuclear infrastructure at Natanz, Isfahan, and Arak facilities, killing over 200 Iranians including nuclear scientists and military commanders. [Wikipedia +5](#) Iran retaliated with missile and drone attacks killing 24 Israeli civilians, creating the first direct Israel-Iran military confrontation in decades. [Wikipedia +6](#) This escalation occurs against the backdrop of Iran's uranium enrichment reaching 60% purity—just weeks away from weapons-grade capability. [Isis-online +7](#)

Saudi Arabia positioned as the strategic winner

Saudi Arabia has masterfully positioned itself to maximize benefits while minimizing risks from this crisis. The Kingdom has **transformed from Iran's primary regional rival into a strategic mediator**, leveraging its 2023 China-brokered reconciliation with Tehran to play all sides effectively. [Rasanah-iiis](#)

[Wikipedia](#)

The nuclear threat removal represents Saudi Arabia's greatest gain. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman previously declared that "if Iran developed a nuclear bomb, we will follow suit as soon as possible." [The Soufan Center](#) [Washingtoninstitute](#) The Israeli strikes have eliminated this pressure for Saudi nuclear development, allowing the Kingdom to focus resources on Vision 2030 economic transformation rather than an expensive nuclear program.

Strategic positioning as regional mediator has elevated Saudi diplomatic influence. The Kingdom condemned Israeli strikes while simultaneously offering to mediate between Iran and the United States. Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman's April 2025 visit to Tehran delivered King Salman's message urging Iran to engage seriously in nuclear negotiations—positioning Saudi Arabia as the responsible regional power. [Reuters](#) [Reuters](#)

Economic advantages are substantial. Saudi Arabia maintains its position as the region's economic leader while avoiding the costs of military confrontation. The Kingdom's \$78 billion defense budget and \$142 billion US arms package provide security without requiring deployment. [Eia +2](#) Meanwhile, regional instability has maintained oil price premiums benefiting Saudi revenues, while the Kingdom's spare production capacity of 2.5 million barrels per day provides market leverage. [Eia](#) [Reuters](#)

Israel achieves tactical success with strategic costs

Israel successfully implemented its Begin Doctrine of preemptive strikes against nuclear facilities, significantly damaging Iran's enrichment capabilities at Natanz and other key sites. (Wikipedia +2) The operation achieved its primary objective of **setting back Iran's nuclear program** by potentially years, eliminating the immediate threat of Iranian nuclear weapons. (Atlantic Council +2)

However, Israel now faces **direct confrontation with Iran** rather than proxy warfare, fundamentally altering regional dynamics. The strikes have **strengthened Iranian resolve** and may accelerate nuclear development efforts. (Atlantic Council) International criticism has been significant, with the IAEA condemning attacks on nuclear facilities (laea) and Gulf states expressing concern about environmental contamination. (Amnesty +2)

Deterrence calculations have shifted dramatically. While Israel demonstrated its capability to strike deep inside Iran, it now faces the prospect of sustained direct conflict rather than manageable proxy confrontations. The 24 Israeli civilian casualties represent a new vulnerability that Iran can exploit.

(NPR +2)

Gulf states benefit from reduced nuclear threat

The UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, and other Gulf states gain significantly from reduced Iranian nuclear capabilities while maintaining strategic distance from the conflict. **Environmental security concerns** drove much of their position—UAE leaders warned that contamination of Persian Gulf waters from attacks on Iran's Bushehr nuclear plant would be catastrophic for desalination-dependent economies.

(CNN)

Regional stability benefits these states' economic development models. The UAE's position as a regional business hub and Qatar's mediation role have been enhanced by their diplomatic stance. **Water security** remains paramount—Gulf states depend entirely on desalinated Persian Gulf water, making any nuclear contamination an existential threat. (CNN)

These states have demonstrated **unprecedented unity** in supporting diplomatic solutions while privately welcoming reduced Iranian nuclear capabilities. (Axios) (Foreign Affairs) Their position as responsible regional actors has been strengthened relative to more confrontational approaches. (Mei)

Turkey balances competing interests

Turkey faces complex calculations from the Iranian nuclear crisis. The country **benefits from reduced nuclear proliferation risks** along its 560-kilometer Iranian border while maintaining its role as a regional mediator. (Wikipedia) (Rusi) Turkey's condemnation of Israeli strikes as "state terrorism" positions it as a balanced actor in the crisis. (CNN) (Newsweek)

Economic interests remain mixed. Turkey-Iran trade has potential but remains constrained by sanctions, falling from \$10.76 billion in 2017 to \$3.44 billion in 2020. (Rusi) The conflict provides Turkey

opportunities to expand its mediation role but also increases regional instability affecting economic development.

Turkey's **strategic hedging** continues, maintaining relationships with both Iran and Israel while pursuing independent regional influence. (Newsweek) The country's planned "Steel Dome" defense system represents pragmatic preparation for regional instability. (Reuters)

Russia and China exploit US regional challenges

Russia's 20-year strategic partnership with Iran, signed in January 2025, positions Moscow as a key supporter while avoiding direct military commitments. (Reuters +3) The treaty notably **excludes mutual defense clauses**, allowing Russia to provide limited support without triggering direct confrontation with Israel or the United States. (The Moscow Times)

Geopolitical advantages for Russia include weakening US regional influence and demonstrating alternatives to Western-led security architectures. The crisis validates Russia's approach of building partnerships with US adversaries while maintaining strategic flexibility.

China faces more complex calculations. While **economic interests** in Iran remain significant—importing 1.5 million barrels per day of Iranian oil—(Reuters) the conflict threatens Belt and Road Initiative investments. (Mei) (Atlantic Council) Chinese companies have begun evacuating Iran, highlighting risks to economic engagement. (CNN)

Strategic competition with the United States remains China's primary interest. The crisis allows Beijing to position itself as an alternative mediator while criticizing US unilateralism. However, direct military conflict threatens Chinese economic interests in the region.

Mixed outcomes for US domestic politics

The crisis presents **political opportunities and risks** for the Trump administration. Support for Israel's action against Iranian nuclear facilities appeals to foreign policy hawks, while the prospect of US military involvement concerns "America First" supporters—with 53% of Trump voters opposing US involvement in Iran-Israel conflict. (Wikipedia)

Intelligence and credibility issues echo Iraq War concerns. Questions about the accuracy of intelligence suggesting Iran was "weeks away" from nuclear weapons capability, contradicting earlier assessments of a three-year timeline, create domestic political vulnerabilities. (CNN)

The administration's **oscillation between threats and diplomacy** reflects these competing pressures. Trump's two-week ultimatum to Iran demonstrates strength to supporters while creating negotiating space for diplomatic resolution. (CNN +2)

Conclusion

Saudi Arabia emerges as the conflict's primary beneficiary, having eliminated a nuclear threat while enhancing its regional diplomatic position without bearing military costs. The Kingdom's strategic transformation from Iran's primary rival to regional mediator represents a masterful navigation of complex geopolitical dynamics. [Orfonline](#)

Israel achieved its immediate tactical objective but faces unprecedented strategic challenges from direct Iranian confrontation. Gulf states benefit from reduced nuclear threats while maintaining diplomatic flexibility. [Baker Institute](#) Global powers—Russia and China—exploit regional instability to challenge US influence, while Turkey continues its strategic balancing act.

The crisis has fundamentally altered Middle Eastern power structures, with traditional alliance patterns shifting toward new configurations based on pragmatic interests rather than ideological alignment. Saudi Arabia's position as the region's stabilizing power, combined with elimination of immediate nuclear threats, positions the Kingdom as the clear strategic winner in this new regional order.