

An expert's lens on the Israel-Iran war



An Israeli Air Force F-16 fighter jet taking off for strikes in Iran last month. Photo: Handout from IDF

In a JNF Australia webinar hosted by CEO Doron Lazarus late last month, Israel's Channel 13 News reporter Alon Ben-David – a leading authority on Israeli security and strategic affairs – shared his insights about the Israel-Iran war and what it could mean for the Middle East.

ALON BEN-DAVID: June 22, 2025 was a truly historic day. I think it is a dramatic achievement for the State of Israel and for its leadership, that we were able to mobilise the Americans to do something that we wished for so many years – destroying underground nuclear facilities in Iran.

It seems like Fordow will not be able to go into use again, as the damage is quite severe to it.

They will likely never be able to reconstruct that enrichment facility.

The same goes for the one in Natanz, which is the second largest enrichment facility in Iran.

And the same goes for Isfahan, which is where they convert the uranium – a crucial part of creating a military nuclear program.

Three main links of the Iranian nuclear program were demolished – the enrichment, the conversion and the weaponising – by eliminating the top scientists who were developing the knowledge on how to create a military nuclear device.

Many of those scientists eliminated in the opening strike of the operation were very careful during cyber attacks, not to put their knowledge on electronic media.

So, lots of knowledge was carried in their heads and now those heads are gone.

I spoke earlier today with the IDF Chief of Staff [Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir]

and he is assessing that the damage to Iran's nuclear program is at least a delay of five years.

We went into this campaign with two main goals: to destroy the nuclear program as much as we can and to destroy Iran's conventional ballistic missile capabilities.

This operation started with the Iranians having an arsenal of 2500 ballistic missiles capable of carrying heavier warheads into Israel.

The heavier ones weigh 1800kg and their impact is vast – you've seen the damage those can do in cities like Tel Aviv, Ness Ziona and Beersheba.

The Iranians fired about 600 of those 2500 and Israel destroyed about 800 more.

So, the Iranians still possess a capability of 1000 ballistic missiles.

We have eliminated the production [facilities] of ballistic missiles in Iran, which is very important.

Because until two weeks ago, they were producing some 300 missiles per month and were hoping to reach 8000 ballistic missiles [within two years] – something that would make life almost impossible in Israel.

We realised that even without nuclear capabilities, we cannot allow them to develop such capabilities, because that's an existential threat.

Overall, looking at what was achieved [against Iran], I think it was beyond our expectations.

We'd basically been hitting any



Alon Ben-David.

target that we wished in Iran and got to the point that we needed to consider the best time to stop.

You speak to the pilots here in Israel and they cannot believe what they've been through in the last two weeks, flying in and out of Iran twice a day, with zero malfunctions, which is remarkable.

But the risk of something bad happening becomes greater the longer a campaign like that goes.

So, Israel became in a position where we had lots of chips on our side – achievements – and at some point needed to get off the table and cash in those chips, before we started losing them.

If you have followed the career of Ali Khamenei, the Islamic Republic of Iran's Supreme Leader, although being a very radical ideologist, he is



Doron Lazarus.

not suicidal – he's quite careful.

Khamenei thought that he could go on with endless negotiations and believed that while the US was negotiating with him, Israel would not dare to launch a military strike.

That was his grave mistake.

And Israel's earlier strikes on Iran, in April and October 2024, made Israel's military leaders think, hey, we can actually achieve great things in Iran and this is not beyond reach because of the distance after all.

So, my assessment is that Khamenei wouldn't launch an all-out retaliation against the Americans.

And [from a US perspective] it seems like Iran will be ripe for negotiations.

At the end of the day, this is in the Israeli interest, because despite the damage to the nuclear program that I



Iranian ballistic missiles and a portrait of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, displayed at Baharestan Square in Tehran.

Photo: AP/Vahid Salemi, via Times of Israel



A handout satellite picture provided by Maxar Technologies, taken on June 22, 2025, showing Iran's Fordow nuclear enrichment plant after US strikes on the largely underground site.

Photo: courtesy of AFP/Times of Israel

described earlier, a nuclear program cannot be entirely eliminated by kinetic means.

There's still an issue of 408kg of enriched uranium to the level of 60 per cent that Iran has accumulated.

This uranium was not damaged. It was [likely] buried underground.

What the American attack did is seal the openings of the tunnel where we believe a large part of those 408kg are being held [if not moved by Iran earlier].

Ultimately, the only thing that would allow us to know that Iran will not have a nuclear bomb is a strict monitoring and inspection regime, that would be placed on them by a new deal.

And that's where we need to go.

The problem that we had with the Americans during their earlier negotiations [with Iran] is that the Americans sent great negotiators, but people who are not very professional about the nuclear issues.

The details of the next deal are crucial, because it's all in the details.

What they [Iran's regime] will need is a ladder that will help them climb down with some sense of respect and that should be no threshold conditions for the negotiations to start.

DORON LAZARUS: One of the questions here is the capacity for, be it Russia or China, to restock or provide weapons to Iran. Where do you see that right now?

ALON BEN-DAVID: It seems like Russia doesn't have very much weapons to spare these days and they're using everything that they have against Ukraine.

The Chinese could always replenish the stocks of the Iranians.

But pay attention to the fact that Iran wants to be a self-reliant power in the region – how everything you see in Iran is indigenously produced.

One of the missile types that we were absorbing is a copy of a North Korean missile, but Iran produces it.

So, the deal that hopefully will be achieved with the Iranians soon, will have to refer to ballistic missiles as well – as they are a regional threat, even to nations in Europe.

DORON LAZARUS: Besides the Houthis, there's also Hezbollah and they too did not participate in the Iran-Israel war. What are your insights into those Iranian proxies?

ALON BEN-DAVID: We are not entirely relieved of the risk that Hezbollah might resume fighting, but Hezbollah is in a very different position internally in Lebanon these days – it's not the strongest force it used to be.

Other factions in Lebanon, like the Christians and the Sunnis, are challenging

Hezbollah and saying to them, you've brought enough destruction into our country and now you need to stay quiet.

Hezbollah lost not only their lines of supply from Syria, but Syria was also the bank of Hezbollah, transferring it cash.

Now it's gone [the Assad regime] and Hezbollah has no money.

On Yemen, several American generals came to Israel to assist us, who had experience fighting there.

And their words were to bear in mind that the Houthis are like herpes, in that once you're infected, it doesn't go away!

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Alon Ben-David
Channel 13 reporter

The only thing that would stop the fire of missiles from Yemen into Israel is a cease-fire in Gaza.

But the Houthis also don't have a plethora of missiles that they can just use freely.

DORON LAZARUS: Do you think there has to be a change of regime in Iran to stop its nuclear program for sure, or not?

ALON BEN-DAVID: Basically what the Israel Air Force was trying to do in Tehran from today [June 23, until what turned out to be the US-led ceasefire starting the night after this webinar] was destroy some 'secondary' targets – of the capabilities of the Iranian regime itself – like the Basij headquarters, the internal force that is terrorising the lives of Iranians.

And by doing that, weakening the regime.

But we need to be careful not to be caught up in illusions.

I don't believe that you can change the regime using the Israeli Air Force. Iran is a nation of 92 million people.

And you can never know what would be the repercussions of regime change.

From Israel's perspective, it wants to make it clear to the Iranian people that: I'm striking what threatens me, but I don't have a conflict with you, the people.

Maybe they can bring about change.

The Supreme Leader is now 86, with cancer and not going to live forever.

So, what we need is to use Khamenei now – who has already tasted our strength and how painful it is – and have a deal with him.

A new leader right now would try to prove themselves as being stronger than their predecessor.

DORON LAZARUS: Is there increased potential for a growing regional conflict, or less potential now?

ALON BEN-DAVID: It seems we're getting further from a regional conflict, because the Iranian axis is gone.

This war really started on October 7, 2023, with the Middle East divided between two main axes – the Shiite axis led by Iran and in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon [via Hezbollah] and Hamas [in Gaza] – and also the moderate Sunni axis of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries.

Now we have three axes, the remains

What we are seeing is the tectonic plates shifting, opening many new opportunities for us, like maybe normalisation with Saudi Arabia and even Lebanon and Syria. It is a new Middle East.

DORON LAZARUS: Most Israelis felt a sense of unity that the war in Iran was needed. Do you see that sense of unity, in society in general, continuing?

ALON BEN-DAVID: Israeli society is still divided [on several key issues], but there is something that gives me hope and that's the magic that occurs in our armed forces.

I visit our amazing servicemen and women in the north and the south once per week, and they have been leaving all political disputes outside the gates of their bases and outside of their units, while fighting for Israel, together, for the last 21 months.

There hasn't been a single generation in Israeli history that has had to face such a long challenge, like them.

After their army service, I can't see them calling each other traitors, like we hear in the Israeli public discourse.

When I look at them, I see a good future for Israel.

They also often say to me, if Israel won't be safe, no Jew would be safe.

So, we Israelis feel that we are going into this war with the whole of the Jewish people behind us.

And, all the good things that you do with JNF Australia, for Israel, shows us that in the most practical sense.



An Israeli F-15 fighter jet flying over Israel en route to carry out strikes in Iran.
Photo: Handout from IDF