



By: The Editorial Board

Iran has made a move, but others will decide on further developments in the Middle East



In the days following Israel's bombing of the Iranian consulate in Syria, one of the dilemmas that most caught the attention of the global public was whether Iran would launch direct military action against Israel in retaliation.

TA did not rule out that possibility and **estimated** that it would be a poor decision for Tehran because it did not have enough military capacity or interest; therefore, it would be less likely.

Most observers gave a similar assessment, guided by rational calculations. However, Iran still attacked Israel for the first time in history, setting a precedent that will likely change the Middle East in the long run.

As hundreds of missiles from Iran approached Israel late Saturday, former Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) spokesman Lt. Col. Jonathan Concriscus told the BBC that it was "the first day of a new Middle East".

The right to make such bold forecasts is granted by the precedent that Iran was unable to resist—directly assaulting Israel.

The train of thought of the regime in Tehran

Since April 1st, when some of its most important military commanders were killed in the bombing of the consulate in Damascus, the Tehran regime has been torn between strong domestic pressure to retaliate against Israel, guided by rational risk assessments.

Given the choice between 2 equally risky solutions, Tehran opted for the middle option, which is how a large Iranian air attack on Israel appeared.

The decision on direct action against Israel was made. The attack was carried out with more than 300 drones, ballistic missiles, and cruise missiles.

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This was the reason for thousands of supporters of the regime to pour into the streets of Iranian cities and celebrate. The parliament joined in general euphoria as the deputies celebrated the attack on Sunday morning, shouting "Death to Israel!" and Death to America!"

However, was what we saw in the dramatic night really the epic attack that they have been dreaming of in Iran since the 1979 revolution and that the theocratic authorities have been promising ever since?

One-night attack

It seems that it was not. While Israeli air defence, together with allied forces, was shooting down Iranian missiles, Iran's mission to the UN **announced** that "the matter could be deemed concluded".

From that moment on, it was clear that no new wave of Iranian attacks would follow and that Tehran would stop at that scale of the conflict, which it estimated would be enough to satisfy the passion for revenge at home.

Even before the announcement of the Iranian mission to the UN, there were assumptions that it was a one-night attack.

The use of slow-flying drones over the long distance between Iran and Israel (more than 1,000 miles) seemed to give Israel enough time to prepare its defences. As if Tehran's message was supposed to mean—we have no intention of making a big deal out of this attack, and it will be a very limited attack.

Whatever the calculations of the planners in Tehran, the line has been crossed. Even if the attack was consciously designed to be one-off and limited, the fact is that Iran set a major

precedent, ending its 45-year refrain from directly attacking Israel.

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If they wanted to test the strength of Israel's defence, as they have been doing for years through their proxies in Lebanon, Syria, Gaza, and Yemen, they received a very convincing answer that the effect of their direct attack was zero.

99% of the missiles were **shot down**, there were no casualties, and damage to military installations in the Negev desert (apparently one of the primary targets) was minimal and would not disrupt regular base operations.

If Tehran wanted to test the readiness of Israel's allies to come to its aid, then they got a direct answer for that. The forces of the US, UK, France, and even regional partners directly participated in the defence against the Iranian attack.

Iran's warning to the US a few days ago to stand aside in the event of a direct attack turned out to be an empty threat, which Washington understood correctly.

The same was true regarding Tehran's threats to regional players not to come to Israel's aid by allowing its activities in their airspace.

What will be Israel's response?

Iran has made its move, perhaps the most dramatic in the Middle East in half a century, and now has little option but to wait for others to respond.

The fact that it might have had the intention to strike in a limited manner and without the ambition to "destroy Israel" does not absolve it of responsibility for having crossed the line of direct conflict, which was firm until Saturday

evening.

It will not help Iran much that it sought justification for the attack using the right to self-defence, as prescribed by the UN Charter. After the attack on Israel, its position with the allies was severely shaken.

This is particularly true regarding China, whose ambitions to play a more important role in the Middle East were set far back by Iran's attack on Israel, long before it managed to broker a diplomatic peace between Iran and Saudi Arabia in March of last year.

The direction in which the situation in the Middle East will move does not depend on Iran. It demonstrated its intentions on Saturday night and found itself at a crossroads, halfway between 2 equally risky options.

The situation will depend on Israel's decision as to whether and to what extent it will respond to the Iranian attack or perhaps abstain altogether.



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Benjamin Netanyahu's government received much-needed oxygen with the Iranian attack and re-established itself as the centre of defence, successfully resisting a major Iranian attack and regaining some respectability.

It once again gained the trust and solidarity of the largest Western partners, even though, until yesterday, it was despised for refusing to accept a ceasefire and resolve the humanitarian disaster in Gaza.

Netanyahu will comply with recommendations to hold off on taking direct military action against Iran, probably coming from the US and its allies. A new conflict with the Israeli PM's most significant allies is unnecessary at the moment.

However, few will be able to prevent Israel from taking more decisive actions against Tehran's proxies in the environment, given that they pose the biggest threat after the dramatic Iranian attack.

This will be sufficient to maintain Israel's long-term security, and after a direct Iranian strike, considerably more will be permitted than previously.

Iran became even more isolated overnight, even among its allies, because none of them were comfortable with the precedent that Tehran did not have the strength and wisdom to resist.