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REGIME CHANGE

It's war! Israel and the US start "major combat operations" against Iran

In the early hours of 28 February 2026, the United States and Israel conducted coordinated air and missile strikes on targets inside Iran, including sites in and around Tehran. The U.S. Department of Defense stated that the operation targeted facilities linked to Iran's missile development and nuclear infrastructure. The Israeli government described the strikes as a necessary measure to counter what it considers an existential security threat.

Within hours, Iranian forces launched missile strikes against Israeli territory and against U.S. military installations in the Gulf region. Several bases were targeted.

According to U.S. officials, diplomatic efforts earlier this year to secure limits on Iran's ballistic missile program and expanded nuclear verification measures had failed. Washington framed the strikes as a response to Iran's continued development of sensitive capabilities.

Iranian authorities reiterated that their nuclear program is peaceful and denied any military intent. At the same time, state media framed the strikes as evidence of Western hostility and warned of further retaliation.

The central issue now is not whether military exchanges will continue, but whether sustained aerial and missile strikes can produce political transformation inside Iran.

Historical precedent suggests caution. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, regime change did not occur through air campaigns alone. In Iraq in 2003, the collapse of Saddam Hussein's government followed a full-scale ground invasion and prolonged occupation. In Afghanistan, the Taliban regime fell only after a combination of U.S. air power, special forces, and local ground allies. Even then, long-term political stabilization proved elusive.

Air power can degrade infrastructure, disrupt command structures, and weaken military capabilities. It is far less effective at dismantling entrenched political systems that possess internal security institutions, ideological cohesion, and control over domestic coercive apparatuses.

Iran's system combines elected institutions with clerical oversight bodies and a powerful security establishment, particularly the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). External military pressure has strengthened rather than fractured Iran's security elite. In moments of external threat, internal dissent often recedes, replaced by consolidation around national defense narratives.

Iran is geographically large, demographically complex, and institutionally consolidated. It possesses layered security services, regional proxy networks, and significant experience operating under sanctions and external pressure. Unlike smaller or fragmented states, it is not structurally vulnerable to rapid political collapse from air strikes alone. Absent a ground invasion, sustained internal uprising, or elite fragmentation, regime change through aerial bombardment alone remains historically improbable.

THE END OF THE US-RUSSIA DETENTE?

As Washington escalates its economic war against Russia, emboldening the more hawkish elements within the Russian establishments, peace appears as elusive as ever.

By Thomas Fazi

Since last August's meeting in Alaska between Putin and Trump, Russian officials have frequently invoked the "spirit of Anchorage" to describe the framework of understanding purportedly reached between the two leaders. In practice, we can surmise that this sought to reconcile Trump's transactional instincts, in the form of economic arrangements beneficial to US companies and Trump's own prestige, with Putin's insistence on the need to address the "primary roots of the conflict": namely the need for a new security arrangement in Europe. This agreement, however, always rested on very shaky grounds, precisely because the two parties invested Anchorage with two very different meanings. From Moscow's standpoint, what is at stake is nothing less than a fundamental renegotiation of the rules underpinning European and global security; Washington, by contrast, sees the matter in narrower terms: a specific conflict to be managed and contained, without disturbing the broader structure of international power that suits Washington just fine.

Russia has sought to manage this tension through what might be called a double-track approach. On the one hand, it has tasked Kirill Dmitriev — the Harvard-educated financier who heads Russia's sovereign wealth fund — with negotiating a large-scale economic deal with the US. Meanwhile, senior diplomats, above all the veteran foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, have worked in parallel on the broader geopolitical settlement. This approach has so far failed to yield concrete results, prompting the diplomatic track to ratchet up its rhetorical pressure on Washington. The clearest sign of this came in a recent interview in which Lavrov spoke of the Trump administration in unprecedentedly harsh terms.

Lavrov openly challenged the idea that the US is working towards the cooperative framework meant to emerge from the Anchorage talks. He claimed that Russia had accepted Washington's proposals on resolving the war in Ukraine, only to find the US backing away from them in practice. "They made an offer, we agreed — the problem should have been resolved. Having accepted their proposals, we believed we had fulfilled the task of resolving the Ukrainian issue and could move on to full-scale, broad, mutually beneficial cooperation. But in practice everything looks the opposite".

Lavrov accused the US of not only failing to take concrete steps to rein in Kyiv — most likely an implicit reference to Ukraine's continued drone strikes on Russian territory, which could not be carried out without US intelligence and satellite support — but, more fundamentally, of actively intensifying its economic war on Moscow. He cited new sanctions, Washington's campaign against Russian tankers in international waters, and efforts to pressure India and other partners into abandoning Russian oil. "This is pure 'Bidenism'", Lavrov remarked, offering it as proof that the US's true objective remains that of "achieving economic domination".

At the same time, Lavrov framed all this as part of a broader "neo-imperial" strategy on Washington's part that extends well beyond Russia. "The West," he said, "is reluctant to relinquish its formerly dominant positions... With the arrival of the Trump administration, this struggle to constrain competitors has become particularly obvious and explicit" — a reference to the White House's hyper-bellicose posture over recent months, including the capture of Nicolás Maduro, the escalation of US pressure on Cuba, and the growing threats against Iran. The current deadlock is emboldening the more hawkish elements within the Russian security establishment.

In a recent article, Sergey Karaganov, who heads the influential Council for Foreign and Defence Policy think tank, openly criticised the Kremlin's "muffled responses to open aggression" by the West: especially the Europeans. Karaganov argues that Russia's excessive restraint to date — its refusal to retaliate against Nato for Western-backed attacks on Russian territory, or to launch decapitation strikes against Kyiv's political and military command centres — has in fact increased the risk of all-out war between Russia and Nato, by emboldening the West to keep escalating, in both practical and rhetorical terms.

Karaganov's prescription is stark. Europe, he argues, is preparing for a future confrontation with Russia, and will likely deploy the reconstituted remnants of the Ukrainian army to prosecute it. The only way to stop this, in his view, is for Russia to demonstrate a genuine willingness to strike the command centres, infrastructure and military bases of those European countries most actively involved in operations against Russia. Should conventional strikes prove insufficient, he argues, Russia must be prepared to escalate to strategic nuclear weapons. One might dismiss this as mere sabre-rattling — and it is quite possible that such options would never be seriously entertained by the Kremlin — but the mere fact that these scenarios are being openly debated in Russia ought to send a shiver down the spine of every European.

By allowing tensions with Moscow to keep rising, we are constructing a situation whereby a single miscalculation — an errant strike, a misread signal, an escalatory move that spirals beyond anyone's intentions — could set off a chain of events that no single actor would be able to arrest. The gravest wars in history have not always begun with conscious decisions; they have begun with incidents that spun out of control. That possibility grows more real with every week the conflict remains unresolved.

Yet if that's partly true of Russia itself — what with the hawkish language of its outriders, and its continued assaults on Ukrainian soil — European leaders appear reckless themselves. At the recent Munich Security Conference, the assembled Brussels elites and their attendant apparatchiks took turns stoking the drumbeat of war, ramping up their own hawkish rhetoric while offering little in the way of serious strategic reflection. Politico captured the prevailing mood with uncomfortable precision. "Western countries see World War III coming", it said, a headline that glossed over the inconvenient fact that many of those sounding the alarm are themselves among the most vigorous advocates for continued escalation. As Nato's Secretary General Mark Rutte recently put it, Europeans "must be prepared for the scale of war our grandparents and great-grandparents endured". There is something deeply troubling about a European political class that cultivates war hysteria while remaining seemingly indifferent to where that hysteria might lead. The situation is particularly disconcerting when set against the backdrop of Europe's ongoing industrial decline. One might expect a weakening continent to seek accommodation and de-escalation; instead, European leaders continue to think in rigidly unipolar terms, dismissing Russia's security concerns as illegitimate while remaining blind to the material reality of a world that is rapidly becoming multipolar — a shift that is already translating into Europe's own economic and geopolitical marginalisation.

https://www.thomasfazi.com/p/the-end-of-the-us-russia-detente

The Trump Regime proves again to be the single largest danger to humanity's future

Here Trump's disturbing 8-min speech with an analysis of all the classical psycho-political delusions, hubris, arrogance and the blindness of military power. It can only go wrong now.

By Jan Oberg

There were only two things that surprised me - and would have been fitting - namely that he had been dressed in military battle uniform (I predict that, as Supreme Commander, he will soon show up in that), and that he did not argue that he deserves the Nobel Peace Prize even more for what he has now announced.

That said, here is how you speak when you are a danger to the world:

WE ARE THREATENED BY EVIL ITSELF

You accuse Iran of being a threat to the American people - while the US itself is the biggest military power on earth and has surrounded Iran, not the other way around. Only an insane mind would see Iran as capable of attacking the US homeland or occupy it or, for instance, conduct a regime shift in Washington.

WE ARE VICTIMISED

You present yourself as a victim - Trump gave examples of how Iran has (allegedly) killed US militaries who were deployed illegally abroad, for instance in Syria. He omits the US killings of Iranian - civilians and militaries - for instance his own liquidation of General Solimani.

WE ARE INNOCENT

You play innocent, we never did anything wrong - not a word, of course you may say, about US harassment of Iran for decades, the US/British coup against the first democratically elected Iranian leader in 1953, the support to the ruthless Shah, giving Israel nuclear weapons; not a word about the US economic sanctions since 1979.

WE ARE EXCEPTIONAL

We can do what what others cannot do because we are exceptionally good - we will never allow Iran to acquire nuclear weapons (an invented event anyhow) while we never mention Israel's nukes or our own. Since we are the - exceptionally - good guys and they are the bad guys, that is morally defensible. They can never have what we have and what we threaten them with. The same applies to long-ranger missiles. We have plenty of them, but Iran cannot have it - we threaten no one, but Iran does.

Since we are exceptional, international law does not apply to us.

WE ARE SUPERIOR & INVINCIBLE

We have the raw power to humiliate and beat them into submission - a God-given right to humiliate and defeat others, and we do it to achieve our exceptionally noble goals. Our military is second to none, and no one should ever challenge us. If you do, we promise total destruction. Because we can.

WE DICTATE THE RULES OF THE GAME, NO COMPROMISE

We set the conditions, the rules of the game - you morally and otherwise weak Iranian military have to either surrender or face death. You are a bunch of killers, we provide freedom to all Iranians and sacrifice our own servicement for this - "noble" mission. Conspicuously, Trump did not mention the ongoing negotiations which we must assume now served only to win time to get the US military in place.

WE DO HARD REGIME CHANGE AND DON'T CARE ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS OR INTERNATIONAL LAW.

We generously sacrifice to liberate you because you asked us for our help - you, the fantastic Iranians, and we know that 100% of you hate your leaders, so what could be more right and noble for the US but to hear your call? Norms and ethics are long out of the US window.

GOD IS ON OUR SIDE

Perhaps it is a ritual but rounding off this speech with "God save..." means exactly that. In contrast to, say, the European leaders, Trump propagates Christianity as he goes to war. That is significant since the US is constantly at war with presumed inferior Muslim countries. If he can appeal to God to save American lives, he probably feels that he has a nice backup and confirmation from up above - and American love that in God's own country. Fortunately, we cannot know what God thinks about Trump and US policies, but we can imagines various interpretations...

These are classical psycho-political elements of militarism/fascism operators legitimating going to war - absolutely nothing new. Also no lessons learned - for instance, that changing the top leader(ship) usually is no guarantee that a better society emerges - think Iraq, Syria, Libya.

The whole thing is delusional. It overestimates one's own power, the evil of 'the other,' the righteousness of 'our' course and how noble 'we' are - and how we are threatened in spite of being innocent and doing good. It denies that conflict is about problems that stand between parties and assumes that conflict is only cause by the other side.

It signifies how manifest it is that where military might goes in, analysis, truth, consequence evaluations, ethics and decency goes out. It's called hubris...

There was not one word based on any intellectual analysis or aiming at prudent statesmanship and caution. It was a speech worthy of a gangster.

What will happen now?

Well, the USrael attack may "succeed" in either taking over the leadership in Iran, in mass killing civilians on the way, in destroying more military installations (which it has already done before), in providing for Israel to continue to create a Greater Israel, in getting a lot of American soldiers killed and US installations in the region destroyed - and perhaps in getting the Strait of Hormuz closed.

It may "succeed" in getting some Arab countries to gang up against Iran and, perhaps, getting the Shah's son back.

None of this will be a political success or create a better life for a single Iranian. It will be a long-war catastrophe for all involved and become a predictable fiasco for Trump and the US Empire.

And even if a short war, it will cause an indefinite hatred among people throughout the region and the rest of the world - also on top of the Gaza genocide, Venezuela, Greenland, etc. Under all circumstances, Iran will be moving into uncharted lands because of this completely unnecessary war, unnecessary simply because, throughout the Western world, intelligent diplomacy is now a thing of the past.

The West now runs exclusively on a world-endangering kakistocratic and militarist mindset. And it will continue until death does it part from the Rest. In that - tragic - perspective, the war that started today will become yet another nail in its coffin.

https://thetransnational.substack.com/p/the-trump-regime-proves-again-to

The Illusion of Trump as the Peacemaker

Trump won campaigning for peace, now he loves war.

Donald Trump's political rise was accompanied by a clear foreign-policy promise: the United States would retreat from costly military entanglements and prioritize domestic renewal. He criticized the Iraq War, denounced "forever wars," and presented himself as a corrective to bipartisan interventionism. This positioning helped consolidate a coalition that was not necessarily anti-imperial in principle, but deeply skeptical of the human and financial costs of prolonged overseas conflicts.

That framing now sits uneasily alongside a renewed willingness to employ force abroad. The recent escalation with Iran marks a further departure from the restrained posture Trump once advertised. Rather than signaling confidence, this shift may reflect mounting constraints at home. Historically, leaders who anchor their legitimacy in personal authority often respond to domestic weakness with heightened external assertiveness. The trajectory of Trump's presidency increasingly fits that pattern.

Trump's initial foreign-policy approach sought selective retrenchment. The aim was not isolationism in a classical sense, but reprioritization: reduce commitments in the Middle East and concentrate economic and strategic pressure on China. The administration's tariff regime, export controls, and rhetoric around technological competition were central to this recalibration.

China's entrenched position in global supply chains — particularly in the processing of rare earth elements essential for advanced manufacturing, renewable energy systems, and defense technologies — limited Washington's leverage. When Beijing signaled potential restrictions on rare earth exports, it exposed American dependencies that tariffs alone could not offset.

The trade confrontation did not produce the decisive rebalancing that had been promised. Instead, it evolved into a protracted standoff with mixed economic outcomes and limited reshoring of high-value industry. At the same time, domestic economic conditions have eroded the plausibility of a politics centered on protection and control. Elevated borrowing costs, persistent inflation in essential goods, high housing prices, and rising healthcare expenses have strained household finances. While macroeconomic trends are influenced by global factors and Federal Reserve policy, electoral accountability often attaches to the executive.

Trump's electoral coalition includes significant numbers of working- and middle-income voters particularly exposed to price volatility. Assertions that economic distress is exaggerated or politically manufactured are difficult to sustain when cost-of-living pressures are widely experienced. The promise of national strength becomes harder to defend if material security appears fragile.

In addition, controversies linked to elite misconduct — including renewed attention to the Epstein case and the networks surrounding it — have complicated Trump's longstanding effort to position himself as an adversary of entrenched corruption. Even absent legal consequences, proximity to scandal weakens claims to moral differentiation from the political class he criticizes.

When leaders rely heavily on personal dominance as a source of legitimacy, visible constraints can trigger compensatory behavior. Political science literature on diversionary conflict suggests that governments facing domestic vulnerability may pursue external confrontation to shift public attention, consolidate support, or reassert decisiveness.

Trump's increasingly forceful rhetoric toward foreign actors — including explicit references to securing access to strategic resources — reflects this dynamic. Earlier threats involving Ukraine and Greenland were framed in economic-strategic terms, particularly access to minerals relevant to advanced technologies. Such statements blurred the line between geopolitical competition and overt resource politics.

The military action against Iran represents a sharper turn. Public justification emphasized deterrence and security, but the broader political context matters. With approval ratings under pressure and domestic debates intensifying, a high-visibility strike offers immediate evidence of executive capacity. It creates a spectacle of action that contrasts with the slower, more ambiguous realm of economic policy.

However, the risks are substantial. Targeted strikes can escalate unpredictably, especially in regions characterized by proxy networks and fragile balances of power. The removal or weakening of established leadership structures may generate power vacuums rather than stability. Recent Middle Eastern history demonstrates that regime disruption rarely produces swift or orderly transitions.

The escalation also aligns Washington more closely with Israel's security posture. Israeli leadership, confronting its own domestic pressures and regional threats, has strong incentives to maintain a posture of sustained confrontation with Iran and its allies. Convergence between U.S. and Israeli objectives can reinforce momentum toward broader conflict.

Yet alignment does not eliminate structural constraints. Sustained military engagement would require financial resources, logistical capacity, and political capital. After two decades of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, American public opinion remains cautious about large-scale deployments. Polling following the Iran strikes indicates limited enthusiasm for prolonged involvement.

If escalation were to evolve into a broader regional conflict, the United States could face renewed fiscal strain and strategic overextension at a time when competition with China continues to demand attention and resources. The original "America First" logic — conserve strength for great-power rivalry — would be further diluted.

Trump's political identity has been built around the projection of personal efficacy: the leader who imposes order, compels respect, and secures advantageous outcomes. This model depends less on institutional trust and more on perceived individual capability. Its vulnerability lies in its zero-sum nature. Authority must appear continuous and decisive; visible compromise or constraint invites doubts about the entire premise.

In such systems, displays of force can become substitutes for structural achievement. Domestic opponents are cast as existential threats. External adversaries are confronted with maximalist rhetoric. Military action functions symbolically as proof of resolve.

The difficulty is that spectacle does not resolve underlying constraints. Global supply chains remain interdependent. Domestic inequality persists. Fiscal limits constrain sustained military expansion. When external escalation fails to generate tangible improvement in economic security or geopolitical advantage, it risks amplifying perceptions of overreach rather than restoring credibility.

The recent strike on Iran should not be read solely as a discrete security decision. It is also embedded in a broader pattern: economic confrontation that failed to deliver decisive gains, domestic pressures that undermine narratives of protection, and a political style that equates authority with visible dominance.

As domestic room for maneuver narrows, external assertiveness becomes more tempting. Yet such moves can entangle the United States in new commitments that contradict earlier promises of retrenchment. If military escalation expands, it may weaken rather than reinforce the image of control it is intended to project.

Will the US attacks on Iran improve prospects for Euro-Russian relations?

By Ian Davis

The US and Israeli airstrikes on Iran that commenced on 28 February 2026 have jolted European foreign-policy circles and will have far-reaching consequences. One future possibility is a rapid reshaping of the debate over whether Europe should reopen direct diplomatic channels with Moscow, driven not by ideological alignment but by strategic necessity, energy security and a growing desire for European strategic autonomy from an increasingly belligerent, destabilising United States ally.

Before the attacks, the European discourse was already split. On one side, Germany, the Baltic states and EU High Representative Kaja Kallas have warned that any dialogue with Moscow would signal weakness and undermine the moral unity that has underpinned Europe's response to Russia's invasion. On the other side, leaders such as French President Emmanuel Macron and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni argued that the EU could no longer afford to be a passive observer while Washington dictated terms that directly affect the continent. They warned that the United States' pursuit of a separate peace with Moscow on Ukraine would leave Europe sidelined on issues ranging from post-war arms control to regional stability.

The airstrikes on Iran have amplified the arguments of the second camp. While the joint statement from France, Germany and the UK focused their condemnation on Iran's retaliatory attacks, criticism of the US-Israeli strikes has been widespread. This criticism has ranged from outright condemnation by some US domestic politicians and groups, global powers and humanitarian organizations to "deep concern" from European and Arab allies who feel sidelined or endangered by the escalation. Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has been the most vocal European critic, rejecting the "unilateral military action" as a risk to the international order. NATO's response has focused on heightened vigilance and defending member states from potential spillover, while itself remaining officially uninvolved in the US-Israeli offensive.

As a clear unprovoked violation of international law, however, the US-Israeli strikes give Moscow a potent rhetorical weapon to deflect criticism of its own war in Ukraine. This development makes it harder for European capitals to maintain a unified moral stance against Russia while their principal ally conducts unilateral military operations. The United States, long the guarantor of the liberal-democratic order, is again acting in a manner that erodes that very order.

Energy considerations add another layer of urgency. The threat that Iran has closed the Strait of Hormuz—a chokepoint for roughly 20% of global LNG—is triggering a massive spike in energy prices. Europe, already grappling with high energy costs and anaemic economic growth forecast at only about 1% for the Eurozone in 2026, cannot afford another shock. In the wake of the crisis in the Middle East, renewed trade with Russia becomes a pragmatic necessity for economic and political survival. Russia remains Iran's key partner, and while a coordinated Russian Iranian response to Western pressure currently seems unlikely, if it were to occur it could further destabilise global markets.

Strategic autonomy, a phrase that has floated through Brussels (via Paris) for years, now feels even more immediate. Washington's 'regime-change' agenda—embodied by the strikes on Iran and previously Venezuela, alongside threats to seize Greenland—is a direct and indirect threat to European security. The sense of being caught off-guard by the scale and timing of the attacks is likely to intensify calls for Europe to further develop its own diplomatic channels, capable of managing escalation and hybrid risks both in Europe and elsewhere independently of US directives. The EU already has some diplomatic channels (the High Representative, European External Action Service, etc.,) but the missing element has been a lack of consensus among EU member states to use them to develop a truly collective approach, especially regarding engagement with Russia. Instead of being a neglected channel new forms of limited dialogue with Moscow have become a more pressing priority. It could serve as a safety valve, allowing Europe to communicate more clearly with the Kremlin, more accurately read its intentions, and thereby reduce the risk of catastrophic misreadings on the continent.

While there is no unified call from European business interests for a return to trade and energy cooperation there is significant pushback from specific sectors facing severe economic strain, such as the shipping and energy sectors. Sanctions fatigue and domestic political pressure from parties with pro-Russian sympathies have already pushed European governments in Hungary and Slovakia toward a more conciliatory stance. Proposals such as an EU Special Envoy for Dialogue, backed by Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Italy and Luxembourg, illustrate how diplomatic innovation is gaining traction even as opposition from Germany and the Baltic states remains fierce.

Yet the path toward dialogue is fraught with potential contradictions. While the war may reinforce the myth of an emerging "Russia-Iran-China" axis, it also heightens European fears of being dragged into a multi-front global conflict by US-Israeli unilateral aggression. The imperative to break this duality strengthens the case for direct European Russian dialogue to de-escalate tensions in Europe and assert independence from Washington's more hawkish foreign policy. Moral clarity may now have to yield to strategic calculation to safeguard Europe's own security and stability.

In sum, the US and Israeli war on Iran may act as a catalyst, accelerating a shift in European thinking from cautious disengagement to a more active, albeit cautious, engagement with Moscow. The debate is no longer purely about values versus interests; it is about preserving Europe's ability to act autonomously in a world where great-power actions can have immediate, destabilising spillover effects. If Europe collectively—through the EU, European NATO or some new common security entity—wishes to remain a credible actor on the global stage, it must develop diplomatic tools that allow it to navigate the complex interplay of security, energy and economic imperatives—tools that include, paradoxically, a measured reopening of dialogue with Russia.

https://natowatch.org/default/2026/will-us-attacks-iran-improve-prospects-euro-russian-relations

CAN NATO BE DRAGGED INTO THE IRAN WAR?

The war that began on 28 February 2026 with coordinated United States and Israeli strikes on Iran has rapidly transformed from a bilateral or regional confrontation into a crisis with potential global security implications. Among the most widely discussed concerns in strategic circles is whether the conflict could draw in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), either directly through military engagement or indirectly through obligations to member states. Although leaders of NATO countries have emphasized that the alliance is not currently a participant in the conflict, the evolving military and geopolitical situation has created several pathways through which the war could expand and involve the alliance. Understanding this risk requires examining the origins of the conflict, the immediate military dynamics, and the strategic interests of NATO members as well as non-Western actors such as Russia, China, and regional powers.

The war began when the United States and Israel launched coordinated air and missile strikes across Iran, an operation known in U.S. military planning as “Operation Epic Fury” and in Israel as “Operation Lion’s Roar.” The strikes targeted military installations, senior officials, and strategic infrastructure across the country. One of the most consequential outcomes of the opening phase was the assassination of Iran’s supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, during a strike in Tehran. The attack had the potential to trigger a leadership crisis in Iran and marked an unprecedented escalation in the long-running confrontation between Iran, Israel, and the United States.

Iran responded almost immediately with missile and drone attacks across the Middle East. Retaliatory strikes targeted American and allied facilities in multiple countries including Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar, where U.S. military installations and regional infrastructure were hit or threatened. The scale of these attacks demonstrated Tehran’s ability to project force beyond its borders through both direct missile launches and regional networks.

Within days, the conflict had begun to affect strategic shipping routes, energy markets, and civilian populations across the region. Reports indicated that the fighting disrupted one of the world’s most important energy corridors in the Persian Gulf, while retaliatory strikes spread instability across neighboring states. The broader humanitarian and economic consequences quickly became global concerns.

In this context, NATO’s position has been carefully calibrated. Officially, the alliance has stated that it is monitoring developments but is not involved in the war. NATO spokespersons emphasized that the organization is “closely following developments in Iran and the region” but have not announced any alliance-wide military role in the campaign.

However, the distinction between non-involvement and indirect participation is complicated by the fact that several NATO members—most notably the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Turkey—have strategic roles in the Middle East. The United States is both a NATO member and one of the principal belligerents in the conflict. Although NATO as an institution has not authorized the operation, the actions of individual member states can still have implications for the alliance.

One of the most significant developments raising concerns about NATO involvement occurred when an Iranian ballistic missile entered Turkish airspace and was intercepted by NATO-linked air defense systems. Turkey is a NATO member, and any direct attack on its territory has potential implications for the alliance’s collective defense clause, Article 5. While officials indicated that the incident was unlikely to trigger the clause, it nonetheless marked the first instance of the war directly affecting NATO territory.

Article 5 states that an attack on one member is considered an attack on all. It has been invoked only once in NATO’s history, following the September 11 attacks in 2001. The Turkish missile incident therefore raised immediate questions among analysts about escalation pathways. If Iranian strikes were to cause casualties on NATO territory or target alliance infrastructure, pressure could mount for a collective response.

At the same time, NATO members have shown differing levels of support for the U.S.-Israeli campaign. Some European governments have offered logistical or diplomatic backing, such as granting base access or supporting maritime security operations to protect shipping routes. Others have taken more cautious positions or openly opposed escalation. Spain, for example, publicly rejected participation in the war, reflecting divisions within Europe about the legitimacy and risks of the conflict.

These differences reflect broader debates within NATO about the alliance’s role outside its traditional geographic area. Historically, NATO interventions beyond Europe—such as in Afghanistan or Libya—have required consensus among member states and formal political authorization. In the current situation, no such consensus exists. This means that while individual NATO members may support or participate in military operations related to the conflict, the alliance itself remains institutionally separate from the war.

Nevertheless, several structural factors could increase the probability of NATO becoming more deeply involved. The first is geographical spillover. Iranian retaliation has already targeted multiple states hosting U.S. forces or Western infrastructure. If attacks extend further into Mediterranean or European NATO members—whether intentionally or accidentally—the alliance could face pressure to respond collectively.

A second factor is maritime security. The Persian Gulf and surrounding sea lanes are essential for global energy trade. Any disruption to these routes affects NATO economies directly. If Iran or its allies were to target shipping at scale, NATO navies might become involved in escort or interdiction missions similar to past operations against piracy or threats to commercial traffic.

A third factor is the alliance commitments of individual states already involved in the conflict. Because the United States is a NATO member, its military actions inevitably raise questions about alliance solidarity. However, NATO doctrine does not automatically apply collective defense to wars initiated by individual members outside alliance territory. This distinction may become politically contentious if the conflict intensifies or if U.S. forces request additional support from European allies.

Another important dimension involves the reactions of non-Western powers. Russia has strongly criticized the strikes against Iran and warned that the conflict could push the region toward broader humanitarian and economic catastrophe. China has also historically maintained close energy and economic ties with Iran and has emphasized the need for diplomatic solutions. Such positions reflect a wider geopolitical divide over the legitimacy of the war and the potential role of Western military alliances in the Middle East.

From Iran's perspective, NATO involvement would likely be framed as confirmation of a broader Western campaign against the country. Iranian officials and media have long portrayed NATO expansion and U.S. military presence in the Middle East as strategic encirclement. As a result, even limited NATO actions—such as missile defense or maritime patrols—could be interpreted domestically in Iran as part of the war effort.

At the same time, many analysts emphasize that NATO leaders have strong incentives to avoid direct participation. The alliance is already heavily engaged in supporting Ukraine in its war with Russia, and opening a second major theater involving Iran could overstretch military resources and political cohesion. Additionally, the Middle East conflict involves complex regional rivalries and proxy networks that differ significantly from NATO's traditional strategic environment.

The humanitarian dimension also complicates the picture. The first days of the war produced high civilian casualties and destruction inside Iran, including reports of strikes on populated areas such as a school in Minab that Iranian sources say killed large numbers of children. Such incidents increase international scrutiny of the conflict and may shape public opinion in NATO countries, potentially affecting political decisions about involvement.

In summary, the risk of NATO becoming involved in the Iran war exists but remains conditional. At present the alliance is formally outside the conflict, and several member states have signaled reluctance to escalate. However, the war's regional spillover, attacks affecting NATO territory, the presence of U.S. forces across the Middle East, and the strategic importance of energy routes all create scenarios in which NATO could become more engaged.

Whether that occurs will depend largely on the evolution of the conflict in the coming weeks. If the war remains limited to U.S., Israeli, and Iranian forces within the Middle East, NATO's role may continue to be indirect and primarily defensive. But if Iranian retaliation expands toward NATO territory or if alliance members become targets of sustained attacks, the pressure for collective involvement could grow significantly. In that sense, the current situation illustrates a recurring dynamic in international security: even wars that begin as regional confrontations can carry the structural potential to draw in wider alliances and reshape global strategic balances.

This Week in History: March 7–20

On 7 March 1965, civil rights activists led by John Lewis attempted to march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, demanding voting rights. State troopers violently attacked the peaceful demonstrators on Edmund Pettus Bridge. Televised images of "Bloody Sunday" shocked the United States and directly accelerated the passage of the Voting Rights Act later that year.

On 8 March 1917, women textile workers in Petrograd walked out of factories to protest food shortages and war exhaustion. Their strike ignited the February Revolution, which would soon topple the Russian monarchy. The date later became International Women's Day, commemorating the political force of women's collective action.

On 10 March 1959, an uprising erupted in Tibet against Chinese rule, centered in Lhasa. The revolt was crushed by the People's Liberation Army, and the 14th Dalai Lama fled into exile in India. The event permanently internationalized the Tibetan question and hardened Beijing's control over the region.

On 11 March 2011, a massive earthquake and tsunami struck northeastern Japan, triggering a meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. It was the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl, forcing evacuations, reshaping Japan's energy policy, and reigniting global debates over nuclear safety.

On 12 March 1999, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic formally joined NATO, marking the alliance's first eastward expansion after the Cold War. The move symbolized the strategic realignment of post-communist Europe — and deepened Russia's sense of geopolitical encirclement.

On 14 March 1953, Georgy Malenkov announced a new Soviet leadership following Stalin's death days earlier. Though short-lived, the moment marked the beginning of a power struggle that would eventually bring Nikita Khrushchev to the top — and open the door to partial de-Stalinization.

On 15 March 1990, Mikhail Gorbachev was elected the first — and last — President of the Soviet Union. The office was meant to stabilize a system already in decline. Instead, it formalized a transformation that would soon escape the control of its authors.

On 17 March 1992, South African voters approved a referendum ending apartheid-era political structures. The vote cleared the final legal obstacles to multiracial democracy and paved the way for the election of Nelson Mandela two years later.

On 18 March 1965, Soviet cosmonaut Alexei Leonov became the first human to perform a spacewalk. For twelve minutes, he floated outside his spacecraft — a technical triumph achieved at considerable risk, underscoring how Cold War rivalry pushed exploration to the edge of disaster.

On 20 March 2003, U.S.-led forces launched the invasion of Iraq, citing weapons of mass destruction that were never found. The war dismantled the Iraqi state, destabilized the region, and permanently damaged Western credibility. Its consequences continue to shape Middle Eastern politics and global distrust toward interventionist narratives.

THE EROSION OF TRUST

Why the Mainstream Press Lost Credibility

Trust in mainstream media has eroded so dramatically over the past two decades that it has become one of the defining institutional crises of the modern democratic world. Public confidence in the press has fallen to historic lows across much of the West. The decline is not confined to one country or one political faction; it is visible in the United States, across Europe, and in many other democracies.

This collapse in trust is often explained away by journalists themselves as the product of misinformation, political polarization, or organized campaigns to discredit the press. Those factors certainly exist. Yet that explanation alone is insufficient. It implies that the public has simply become irrational or hostile to facts, while the press itself remains largely blameless. Such a framing avoids a far more uncomfortable possibility: that mainstream media organizations played a significant role in undermining their own credibility.

Journalism remains indispensable. Democracies require institutions capable of investigating power, documenting events, and building an archival record of public life. Major investigative projects, foreign correspondence, and long-form reporting continue to expose corruption and illuminate complex issues. None of that should be dismissed. Yet the existence of good journalism does not negate the structural problems that have accumulated inside the modern media ecosystem.

One of the most significant issues is the transformation of news organizations from public institutions into attention-driven digital platforms. The economic collapse of the print era forced newspapers into an advertising model governed by online traffic. Metrics such as clicks, shares, and engagement now shape editorial incentives. Stories that provoke outrage or confirm the expectations of a particular audience segment tend to travel farther on social media, and newsroom decision-making inevitably adjusts to that reality.

This does not mean journalists consciously fabricate information. More often the distortion is subtler. Headlines become more dramatic than the underlying reporting. Nuance disappears from social media summaries. Complex issues are framed in ways that maximize emotional response rather than understanding. Over time, audiences begin to notice the pattern. Even when the reporting itself is accurate, the framing feels manipulative.

Another source of distrust is the increasing overlap between journalism and political identity. Historically, many large news organizations aimed—at least aspirationally—toward a culture of institutional neutrality. The goal was not perfect objectivity, which is impossible, but a shared professional norm that prioritized skepticism toward all political actors.

In recent years that norm has weakened. Newsrooms have become more socially and politically homogeneous, particularly in major metropolitan centers. Sociologically, journalists tend to share similar educational and cultural backgrounds, often graduating from the same universities and living in the same urban environments. This narrows the range of assumptions that receive internal scrutiny.

When news coverage appears to align consistently with the moral priorities of one social group, audiences outside that group conclude—sometimes fairly, sometimes unfairly—that the reporting itself is ideologically driven.

Another damaging pattern has been the collapse of institutional humility. The modern press often reports on politics with great confidence in its interpretations while acknowledging its own errors only reluctantly. When major narratives prove incomplete or misleading, corrections typically appear quietly, long after the original coverage shaped public opinion.

This problem became particularly visible in moments of intense political polarization. In such periods, media outlets face enormous pressure to interpret events quickly and definitively. Ambiguity becomes uncomfortable; it leaves space for competing interpretations. Yet journalism that rushes to certainty in complex situations risks being wrong in ways that later erode credibility.

Ironically, many journalists respond to criticism by doubling down on the authority of professional expertise. They emphasize that trained reporters, editors, and fact-checkers operate under rigorous standards. But institutional authority is persuasive only when audiences believe the institution itself is capable of self-criticism.

The modern media landscape complicates this dynamic further. The rise of digital platforms has shattered the monopoly that mainstream outlets once held over information distribution. Independent newsletters, podcasts, and social media commentators now compete directly with legacy publications. This competition has revealed something uncomfortable: the authority of the mainstream press was never based solely on accuracy. It also relied on scarcity. When a handful of newspapers and broadcast networks dominated the public sphere, their interpretations carried extraordinary weight. Today, that gatekeeping power has dissolved. Readers can compare narratives instantly across dozens of sources.

The reaction within many news organizations has been defensive. Critics are frequently dismissed as politically motivated or hostile to journalism itself. When trust collapses, however, even the best reporting loses its ability to persuade. A society in which large segments of the population dismiss all mainstream reporting as propaganda cannot sustain a shared understanding of reality.

Rebuilding trust will require more than public appeals to defend journalism. It will require structural and cultural change inside newsrooms themselves: greater intellectual diversity, clearer separation between reporting and activism, stronger editorial skepticism toward dominant narratives, and a willingness to acknowledge institutional blind spots. Journalism does not derive its authority from moral superiority or political alignment but from the slow accumulation of credibility.

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