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The 'frog' is simmering:

Iran's strategic patience pressures Israel

Iran's patient but deliberate retaliation strategy is to steadily ramp up pressure on Tel Aviv by exploiting its military, economic, and energy vulnerabilities before overwhelming Israel's defenses.



(Photo Credit: The Cradle)

Since Israel's targeted assassination of Hamas Political Bureau Chief Ismail Haniyeh in the heart of Tehran in late July, speculation has mounted about how [Iran will strategically retaliate](#).

Several officials within the Islamic Republic have vowed a harsh response, reaching Israel's upper echelons of power, with even the country's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei [declaring](#), "We consider it our duty to avenge his blood."

Boiling the frog: A war of attrition

As the situation unfolded, it became clear to those unfamiliar with Iran's [modus operandi](#) that Tehran would not act recklessly or swiftly. Instead, the collective response of the region's [Axis of Resistance](#) would be measured and strategic, with some officials even suggesting a very delayed Iranian response.

Ali Mohammad Naini, spokesman for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), [remarked](#) last month, "Time is in our favor, and the waiting period for this response could be long." Ali Bagheri Kani, then acting foreign minister, similarly [posited](#) that Iran would retaliate at the "right time" and in the "appropriate" manner.

Following Iran's [retaliatory strikes](#) in April against the trade state – in response to the attacks on its consulate in Damascus – Campaign Director at NGO Avaaz, Fadi Quran, in a [post](#) on social media, drew a parallel between the Iranian response and a military strategy masterclass he attended at Stanford University. Similar to a hypothetical US stealth jet revealing its capabilities, Quran said Iran's use of conventional weapons in April forced Tel Aviv to expose its anti-missile defenses, providing Iran with valuable intelligence for future attacks. He also noted:

Netanyahu and the Israeli government prefer a quick, hot, and urgent war where they can pull in America. The Iranians prefer a [longer war of attrition that bleeds Israel](#) of its deterrence capabilities and makes it an ally for Arabs and the US that's too costly to have.

Quran's comments shed light on a critical but often overlooked aspect of the shadow war involving Iran, Israel, and the US: the actual *strategic objectives* of Iran and its allies in an irregular war.

Several months before Iran's direct retaliation against Israel, there was an attack on US military outpost [Tower 22](#) on the Jordanian–Syrian border by Iraqi resistance faction Kataib Hezbollah, which resulted in the deaths of three US soldiers and the wounding of 35 others.

Then, days before Haniyeh's assassination, the Yemeni Ansarallah-aligned military launched a [drone strike](#) near the US embassy in Tel Aviv, killing one Israeli and injuring 10 others.

Both attacks fit within Iran's overarching strategy, which involves targeting vital security, military, and energy infrastructure in Israel. These tactics are designed to not only damage the occupation state's resources but also to send shockwaves of panic through its government and population in what can be best described as [cognitive warfare](#).

Undermining Israel's energy security

Iran and its allies have previously demonstrated their ability to disrupt Israel's [vital energy infrastructure](#). In 2022, Hezbollah directed drones toward Israel's [Karish gas field](#), mainly to show that it could. Israel struggled to intercept these attempts, and that threat lingers – a [similar breach](#) was made just over a month ago.

Israel's reliance on gas platforms, particularly Tamar, Karish, and Leviathan, which supply around 70 percent of the gas used in electricity production, leaves these facilities highly vulnerable. As one Israeli energy official was quoted as [saying](#), "Gas rigs are sensitive, and when a rig is active, it can turn into a ticking bomb."

Israel's control of strategic ports, either through direct occupation or alliances with neighboring countries, particularly around the Bab al-Mandab Strait, is another area of concern for Tel Aviv.

The entrance to the Red Sea is vital for global trade, and recent events have demonstrated that this is another battleground in Iran's strategy. The entry of Yemen into the conflict and its ability to block commercial ships destined for Israeli ports have severely [impacted Israel's economy](#).

For example, the blockade of the Red Sea caused an [85 percent drop](#) in shipping traffic at the Israeli port of Eilat, according to its CEO, Gideon Golbert. This sharp decline in trade led to significant financial losses, ultimately forcing the port into bankruptcy and closure. This blockade, along with strikes on Israeli ships, represents a major threat not just to Israel but also to global trade through one of the world's most important sea corridors.

Iran's shift from diplomatic to military posture

In the wake of Haniyeh's assassination, Israel attempted to frame the event as a covert security operation, but Iran viewed it as an overt act of military aggression that violated its sovereignty and warranted retaliation.

Iranian affairs expert Ahmed Farouk tells *The Cradle* that while Iran must consider the broader geopolitical impact in its response, diplomacy may play a larger role in the short and medium term. In the long term, Tehran's military posture could shift significantly, especially with the potential for [nuclear deterrence](#) coming into sharper focus. Iran's exit from the ambiguity surrounding its nuclear program and its progress toward nuclear capabilities could transform the region's strategic dynamics.

One of the most [dangerous scenarios](#) for the occupation state is the possibility that Iran's response might involve all of its regional allies in a coordinated and prolonged [multi-front conflict](#). With internal divisions growing within Israel's political and military

establishment, particularly regarding the northern Jewish settlements bordering Lebanon, in addition to the stubborn refusal by the government to reach a ceasefire agreement with Hamas, the situation is becoming increasingly precarious.

Israel's protracted struggle in Gaza, now nearing its one-year mark, has failed to deliver any significant strategic victory while the occupation state reels from casualties, global censure, and its population's growing discontent with the war.

These internal pressures, coupled with the threat of external escalation, are pushing Israel toward a critical tipping point. The widespread sentiment among Israelis is that they can no longer endure living under the constant threat of attack, both from the south and the north nor even the prospects of widespread [energy blackouts](#). And every day that passes without Iran's retaliation, that pressure only rises.

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