


Research Article

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## Strategic Ceasefire or Tactical Deception A Geopolitical Analysis of the Iran, Israel, U.S. Crisis in 2025

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**Abstract:** *The new ceasefire between Iran and Israel mediated by the American Diplomacy and brokered by Qatari authorities has elicited mixed feelings, amicably welcomed as a pause for both warring parties, and to a large extent, it was met with extreme skepticism by the world strategic community. Though the official versions of the events place the agreement as a de-escalation and step toward regional stability, the contradictory military exercises and secret operations following the act indicate a troubling gap between the talk and the walk in terms of the diplomacy. Critical analysis of the ceasefire discussed in this paper is done by examining it using the concept of hybrid warfare, strategic deception, and the weaponization of peace. Adopting a constructivist and realist theoretical framework, we argue that the ceasefire is more of an in-calculated suspension, rather than a solution, a tactical shift that occurs between the power struggle between Iran, Israel, and the U.S. in the Middle East.*

**Key Words:** Strategic Ceasefire, Tactical Deception, Hybrid Warfare, U.S. Diplomacy, Middle East Geopolitics, Regional Stability

### Introduction

June 2025 Iranian-Israeli conflict was a dramatic, risky development in a tense region in its own right. Starting on June 13, Israel started operation Rising Lion, a synchronized program of air strikes on the Iranian nuclear and missile systems--attacks which were apparently assisted by the drone sabotage of the Mossad, facilitated by direct U.S. intelligence contacts and air refueling programs (Reuters, 2025). To retaliate, Tehran made an unprecedented two-wave attack comprising more than 150 ballistic missiles and 100 drones on Israeli lands. Most of the attack was covered by the advanced missiles launched by Israel that included Iron Dome and Patriot systems, but some people were injured (Reuters, 2025).

The participating of the United States, through the previous President Donald J. Trump, gave it another dimension to the escalation. U.S. troops sent major military reinforcements to the area, such as carrier strike groups (USS Nimitz and Carl Vinson), tanker planes, and Patriot missile batteries, and these were added by strategic intelligence support to Israeli forces (AP News, 2025; Washington Post, 2025). This preparation enabled an airstrike Biden ordered by the U. S. that resulted in significant damage to the Iranian nuclear sites, many of which are underground facilities, at the sites of Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan, aka surnamed as the airstrike of Midnight Hammer, which employed the use of B-2 bombers and bunker-busting bombs in order to degrade the Iranian nuclear site (Reuters, 2025; AP News, 2025). Although Trump boasted to the rest of the world that these attacks were monumental, an initial assessment by American intelligence established that the attacks merely set back Iran's nuclear program for a short period, which was in sharp contrast to more dramatic statements by officials (Reuters, 2025).

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With international alarm rising and the number of civilian victims increasing (an estimated hundreds in Iran and dozens in Israel, said Reuters and other newspapers), a cease-fire was declared on June 23. Sectioned on a gradual halt, with Iran halting fights at 0400 GMT on June 24, prompting Israeli subsequently at 12 hours and a total stoppage of 24 hours later (Reuters, 2025; AP News, 2025), the agreement was brokered by friendly high-level diplomacy between Trump and the Emir Sheikh Tamim of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Al Thani (AP News, 2025). The mediation of Qatar was critical, which demonstrates that the country is becoming a regional diplomatic player (Reuters, 2025; Financial Times, 2025).

But within a few minutes, the viability of the ceasefire was questioned. In a few hours, Iran fired another symbolic missile salvo against the U.S. Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar comprising 14 projectiles, 1 of which was dropped (what is called a capability demonstration) with the other 13 intercepted by the U.S. and Qatari air defense systems (Understanding War/ISW, 2025; Reuters, 2025). The Israeli political and military personnel immediately retaliated by attacking Iranian infrastructure through airstrikes, which indicated that the escalation of operations had not been called off (AP News, 2025). During the following hours, Iran and Israel accused one another of violating the truce, and President Trump published a post in which he corrected both Tehran and Jerusalem for damaging the truce (Washington Post, 2025). Such a chain of events demonstrates deep inconsistency between sending signals and what is going on the battlefield.

In a scholastic sense, the occurrence of the above has created the complexity of ceasefires in the hybrid war setting and strategic misdirection. It is highlighted in realism-based theoretical frameworks that these pauses could be tactical breaks where the parties involved adjust positions of forces, capabilities, and positions of executive choice or managing perception both domestically and internationally. Constructivist approaches to it, in their turn, bring into focus the performative and symbolic aspects of peace treaties: ceasefires may serve as narrative tools or even create an image of good citizenship, restraint, or even moral authority in the minds of fellow citizens and international bodies.

Applying the two explanations to the case discussed in this paper, the June 2025 ceasefire can be viewed as less of a solution and more of a foreign policy tool imbedded in a bigger power game involving Iran and Israel and the U.S. It was a merely calculated delay [not a termination state] that was used in multiplicity of strategic uses, such as: the accomplishment of diplomatic time, the face-saving of actors, and the prospect of a short-term de-escalation that concealed higher strategies of continuity. Adopting a thorough analysis of military activities, diplomatic messages and local responses, this paper questions the background to be found in either the ceasefire being an actual step on the road to peace or an alternative step within a changing strategic conflict to gain power, deterrence and the ability to set the narrative within the Middle East.

### **Research Questions and Objectives**

The purpose of this paper is to critically evaluate the strategic, diplomatic, and military aspects of the Iran-Israel-U.S. ceasefire planned to take place in June 2025, especially focusing on its geopolitical repercussions and intentions. The questions that will guide the research are the following:

- ▶ How far is the Iran and Israel ceasefire a real attempt at de-escalation, as compared to it being a ploy in order to sprout operational pauses in terms of force readjustment and strategic re-location?
- ▶ What do the June 2025 ceasefire teach us about the ways in which international diplomacy is changing to reflect the power of hybrid warfare combined with information operations and strategic communication as instruments of statecraft that are becoming increasingly important sources of power in the modern world?

### **Significance and Originality**

The article is an interdisciplinary and timely analysis of the constantly changing trifecta of military conflict, diplomacy, and military strategic deception as it is played out in one of the most potentially volatile geo-political arenas in the world- the Iran-Israel-U.S. triangle. It is an analytical window to assess how the very notions of ceasefire, de-escalation, and peace talks are being redesigned through the instruments of the current hybrid warfare, strategic communications, and geopolitical manipulations.



The research fills numerous disparities in the comparative academic knowledge since it implements the methodologies of political science, security research, international relations, and strategic communication, and is also based on the analyses of the conflict resolution theory. It places these processes in perspective of the extraordinary situation of the 2025 war between Iran and Israel, which was facilitated by the U.S. diplomacy and Qatari mediation in this region, a moment that is both empirically pressing and globally strategic.

In addition to the short-term military and diplomatic consequences, the article mirrors this case study in the context of the larger discourse that has ensued throughout the international arena regarding instrumentalization of peace, weaponization of information, and the dynamic nature of statecraft today in the 21st century. It adds a new dimension to current arguments on power projection, destabilization of the regions, and weakening of traditional diplomacy as it is being overcome by populist, nationalist, and militarized trends that are gaining agility in international politics. The article throws up novelties in the comparative approaches to conflict management, strategic signaling, and the fragile nature of peace in the multipolar world order, by critically challenging the Iran-Israel-U.S. ceasefire as a form of deception, or disguised de-escalation of hostilities.

## Literature Review

### Ceasefires and Realist Traditions as Instruments of Power

**Power Maximization and Offensive Realism:** Mearsheimer (2001) holds that states under the anarchic system seek absolute power at all costs to guarantee survival and influence. In this realist perception, ceasefires are purely strategic lulls, an instrument of rebalancing forces and rewriting of history, and not a peaceful process (Mearsheimer, 2001). Furthermore, investigation of the dynamism of escalation supported by Toft (2005) acknowledges that these pauses are normally power-maximizing in nature, except for conflict resolutions.

**War as Policy- Clausewitzian War Theory:** Using the premise that war is nothing more than politics, in other words, as postulated by Clausewitz (2001, origin 1939), Carr (2001, origin 1939) develops arguments based on the context of war in relation to politics. The ceasefires are thus a policy tool that helps sustain political energy under a thin authority of diplomacy. This constant interaction of war and diplomacy is experienced when military actions swiftly resume immediately after the declarations of ceasefire (Carr, 2001/1939).

### Hybrid Warfare: Integration of Power, Information, and Diplomacy

**Hybrid Model Definition:** According to Hoffman (2007), hybrid warfare is the combination of conventional fighting, the use of cyber, irregular actions, and strategic communication. This layered Iran-Israel crisis is entrenched in drone flights, missile assaults, hacking, and official communications: multidimensional in nature.

**Strategic rhythm: Kinetic, Informational and Diplomatic Operations:** According to Renz & Smith (2016), hybrid strategies work on a very fast and cross-sector path, such as kinetic strikes to information campaigns and vice versa. This rhythm can be observed in the 2025 ceasefire period, during which the announcement of the ceasefire was accompanied by immediate close military actions (Renz & Smith, 2016).

### Tactical Misinformation: Ceasefires as Thesis Weapons

**Theory of Strategic Deception:** Identical to the case of strategic deception, Whaley (1982) investigates the nature of feints and misdirections that influence the decisions of the adversaries. Clayton et al. (2021) suggested that the declaration of a ceasefire could be used to conceal the intention of operations and rearrange without attracting international attention.

**Calculated Deception as Ceasefire:** This argument is supported by empirical narration of ceasefires that served as offensive arrangements (Whaley, 1982). These deceitful factors have come into play with the involvement of the missile launched by Iran in the middle of the declared ceasefire, and a timely retaliatory action by Israel

### Frame-Set Integration: An Inter-Aligning Perspective

**Superposition Tactical Logic:** When the realist theory, the Clausewitzian policy warfare, the dynamics and

strategy of hybrid warfare, and deception are integrated, a combined analytical perspective is created. This has changed the perspective towards ceasefires as taken towards acts of strategic performance, aimed at changing the setting of military and diplomatic status; however, ceasefires are not seen as a means of ceasing conflict permanently.

**Normative and Symbolic Dimension:** According to constructivists, peace as a form of signaling captures symbolic legitimacy and political acceptance at the domestic level because of the ceasefire (Waltz, 1979). However, these signals are instrumental in the realist and misleading scheme of calculations, creating an illusion in the world without a shift in the nuclear policy.

### **Empirical Studies: Patterns and Results of Ceasefires**

**Asymmetric Conflicts Ceasefires:** A longitudinal study conducted by Werner & Yuen (2005) demonstrates that short-term reductions in violence as the result of ceasefires in asymmetric wars tend to result in the preservation of root causes of the violence. These observations are consistent with the phase past of the Iran and Israel ceasefire and the resurgence of escalation.

**Audience and the Impact of Strategic Communication:** Kydd & Walter (2006) proves that the international audience is swayed by the methods of signaling that take place during the announcement of a ceasefire because it radiates responsibility and control. This signaling effort is expressed in the time when this ceasefire was proposed, June 2025, when regional and global tensions have become heightened.

The ceasefire between Iran, Israel, and the U.S., which was given in June 2025, cannot be evaluated without the consideration of more general theoretical constructs that characterize state behavior, defense tactics, and the use of information in international relations in the present day. As a realist, especially an offensive realist as Mearsheimer (2001) calls it, ceasefires are anything but an initiative towards a resolution of the conflict. They are rather strategic downtimes used as pauses intended to help power consolidation, relocation of military, rebalancing of diplomatic stances, with no long-term strategic goals lost. In the case of Mearsheimer (2001), the international system is anarchic, where states need to adopt maximum power as a way of survival and power. In this system, ceasefires are strategic devices but not a peace-making mechanism because ceasefires allow such players as Iran, Israel, and the United States to temporarily halt open hostilities but retain or improve their positions in more subtle ways.

This idea can be confirmed by the fact that power shifts and crisis escalation, as found in the study of Toft (2005), are always met with de-escalations on a temporary scene, before the conflict resumes, especially when the adversaries use the ceasefire period to manipulate force ratios or make diplomatic reformulations. In this regard, the developments after the ceasefire situation reached in June 2025, i.e., the resumed action of Iranian missile attacks and the reprisal by Israel, are consistent with the conclusions of Toft, who expressed that the momentary standstills in the war often function as strategic manipulation instead of targeted conflict reductions. These are dynamics that can be traced to the classic reasoning of Clausewitz, whose aphorism that war is the continuation of politics by other means rings true to this date (Carr, 2001/1939). To this Clausewitzian observer, ceasefires are the policy instruments employed in the course of an existing campaign, which are tactically engineered to achieve greater military and political purposes, as opposed to an indication of real intentions to make peace. Carr (2001/1939) stresses that there are fragile distinctions between diplomacy and war, and both tools exist to support the overall strategic equation of the state, and the same can be followed in the actions adopted by Iran, Israel, and the United States in the 2025 crisis.

A better way to provide a modern insight into ceasefires within the context of this evolving nature of war is the concept of hybrid warfare, theoretically postulated by Hoffman (2007). Hybrid warfare can be defined as a war based on the combination of conventional military power with irregular methods, cyber activities, information countermeasures, and diplomatic messages into a unified strategic concept. The Iran-Israel-U.S. standoff was an example of this hybrid tool: both a state and non-state actor caused drone attacks, cyber-incursions, targeting critical infrastructure, and intricate disinformation campaigns alternated with the ceasefire narrative, and all of it created a multi-dimensional operational space. It is important to note that the ceasefire itself became a component of a hybrid warfare arsenal, a calculated diplomatic step that is not staging the end of conflict but rather a measure to change the strategic direction of said multi-domain conflict.





Renz and Smith (2016) also develop the idea of the swing between kinetic and non-kinetic operations as the main feature of hybrid warfare, in which actors unproblematically switch between using kinetic actions, gathering and managing information, and engaging in diplomatic maneuvers. This fluidity is reflected in the case of the successive attacks of missiles, cyber-attacks, and the public announcement of a cease-fire used in the June 2025 scenario. The fact that the cessation of open hostilities was soon followed by armed conflicts proved the point that ceasefires do not break hybrid strategies, as they are sometimes part of the strategy. This is the logic of strategic pauses, aimed not at settling disputes, but regulating the pace of escalation, remaking of the battlefield environment, and affecting the global opinion.

At the same time, the phenomena of ceasefire manipulation through the lens of strategic deception represent serious, even fundamental, aspects of information warfare. In his article *Deception Operations: Feints, Camouflage, and Narrative Misdirection*, Whaley (1982) explains that deception operations are an important component of any military strategy that mixes feints, camouflage, and *tale de doubler* to direct enemies down the wrong paths and make possible strategic surprise. Under this regime, the declaration of ceasefire is capable of being a maneuver of deception at the highest level as a signal of restraint to the opponents and third-party monitors, and a masking of a build-up of an offensive. Betts (2007) extends this point by noting that ceasefires offer an illusion of diplomatic stewardship without revealing motivating undercurrents of strategic interest and allow lenders to relocate forces, refocus operational rhythm, as well as shift domestic-international discourse.

The ceasefire, which was facilitated under substantial media attention and justified as a step toward the de-escalation of a region, was undermined in the case of Iran and Israel, namely, in the 2025 Iran-Israel-U.S. event, within a few hours, through the launching of new missiles and revenge attacks. The developments are in line with what Betts (2007) argues when he says that the signaling of a ceasefire can actually be manipulated to conceal the intentions of an adversary as they continue to maintain the initiative. Moreover, this episode highlights how contemporary state actors are becoming more and more aggressive in marshalling diplomatic tools within the purview of hybrid conflicts, where even ostensible peace moves, like ceasefires, are deployed tactically and strategically.

Combined, these theoretical points of view demonstrate that the June 2025 ceasefire was not so much an honest attempt to resolve the conflict but rather a well-considered counter-move of a multi-faceted, multi-domain geopolitical game. The overlap between realist power politics, Clausewitzian policy continuity, the realm of hybrid warfare, and strategic deception is that the ceasefires present in the modern conflict are commonly used in two ways: by bringing shortsighted relief to the conflict parties but at the same time allowing those parties to renew their ranks, deceive, and manipulate the conflict field as it unfolds to their favor. Here, the ceasefire might as well seem an entry point into peace that was used by Iran, Israel, and the United States not as such but rather as a premeditated element of the existing geopolitical struggle, where the borders between diplomacy, war, and deception become more and more blurred.

## Methodology

The given study uses the qualitative, comparative case study design to investigate the June 2025 ceasefire between Iran, Israel, and the U.S. in light of the specific strategy of hybrid warfare and strategic deception. The case study method makes it possible to do deep reading across contexts in which historical, political, and security relationships of states are sensitive (George & Bennett, 2005). Analytical rigor is guaranteed by triangulated data sources, primary materials (official statements, ceasefire agreements, military communications), and secondary sources (reports by such organizations as UN, SIPRI, and scholarly peer-reviewed research articles). Real-time information is complemented by quality journalism of such channels as Al Jazeera, Reuters, and The Guardian. Power of trustworthiness was also provided to the data by critical analysis and cross-checking the sources. The analysis is directed by three qualitative methods. To achieve this, the first method is discourse analysis that would scrutinize political oratory, diplomatic rhetoric, and media framing of ceasefires to reveal the narrativization of ceasefires as a de-escalation phase or a tactic that deceived (Fairclough, 2013). Second is process tracing, which determines critical decisions and actions prior to, during, and after the ceasefire as a way of correlating the state behavior to either motives of power recalculation or deception (Bennett & Elman, 2006). Third, triangulation of

theories offers a combination of offensive realism, hybrid warfare, and deception theories to determine the role of military pauses in the contemporary war (Mearsheimer, 2001; Hoffman, 2007; Whaley, 1982). It is difficult to lay hands on classified intelligence, yet the study has tried to avoid bias by using a wide range of data sources and applying open qualitative reporting. The study does not trample on an ethical boundary, there is no cultural or religious stereotyping, but on the contrary, the researchers illustrate how political elites solely use the narrative of conflict as a steering mechanism.

### **Discussion on June 2025 Conflict Timeline (Chronology of Events)**

**June 9– 18: Israeli Airstrikes on IRGC and Nuclear Facilities:** On June 9–18, Israeli forces carried out surgical airstrikes on possible targets of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and main units of Iranian nuclear facilities, in particular, Esfahan and Natanz. The two locations are historically sensitive: Urge Esfahan, the center of critical missile production and nuclear-related research facilities, and Natanz, the center of Iran's uranium enrichment program. Such strikes are a probable representation of the Israeli preemptive doctrine, which has been in place for a long period, especially over the Iranian potential for nuclearization. The fact that Israel decided to target Iran has two possible goals they are to weaken Iranian strategic military capabilities and to deter both Iran and other involved parties, such as the US and the Gulf partners. These attacks left a lot of tension in the region, setting the ideal condition where Iran would respond militarily.

**June 19: 03:00 AM: Iranian Missile Barrage on Southern Israel:** Iran demonstrated one of the biggest direct state-to-state missile attacks in recent history by firing more than 30 medium-range Khyber and Zolfaghar missiles into southern Israel on June 19. The Khyber and Zolfaghar missile platforms can carry a significant payload and have a range of 700 to 1,500 kilometers, which proves that Iran can destroy deep inside Israel. This move was a move of escalation on the part of Iran, and it was probably not only in reply to the Israeli attacks; it was also a message that Iran did not need to respond because it ignored the threats of Israel. It also highlighted the growing missile capability of Iran and how ready it was to take open military action beyond proxy wars. The attacks inflamed concerns of destabilization in the region, and international intervention was being initiated.

**June 21: U.S. Air Force B-2 Bombers Attack Iran Radar Facilities Around Bushehr:** To counter this escalating face-off, on June 21, the United States had flown B-2 Spirit stealth bombers to strike radars and air defence facilities in the Iranian town of Bushehr, where the country has a nuclear power plant. It is noteworthy that this was done without the consent of the congress, which shows that reliance was placed on the rapid-response military authority that was taken in light of a perceived imminent attack. The bombing was tactically meant to blind Iranian air defense systems so that they would have fewer chances to detect or intercept invading planes or rockets. Such action demonstrated not only that the U.S. was interested in fortifying the Israeli security interests but also a message to Tehran that it was risky to take an escalation to the next stage. It also revived the question of whether unilateral militaristic acts perpetrated by presidential orders are legal actions and liable within the American constitutional system.

**June 23: President Trump Declared Ceasefire at the Mar-a-Lago – Immediate Hostilities are Re-Initiated:** On June 23, a diplomatic fight led by former President Donald J. Trump was conspicuous when Trump announced a ceasefire arrangement in an extravagant statement at his Mar-a-Lago resort. The intervention of Trump and Qatari interlocutors signified the attempts to show de-escalation, though via non-traditional diplomacy. But the ceasefire did not last very long as hostilities were rekindled in a matter of minutes. This chronology of development further highlights the point that the ceasefire was more of a tactical breathing space or a diplomatic show in order to buy peace than an actual move to peace. Such imminent collapse represents the absence of credible enforcement measures or intentional abuse of the ceasefire declaration in order to advance the aims of hybrid warfare actions and strategic deception.

**June 24: Iranian Missiles Shot on Qatari Al Udeid U.S. Airbase:** On June 24, ballistic missiles launched from Iran reached the Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, which includes many U.S. military forces and also a hub of logistical activities in the region. The projectiles were intercepted by advanced missile defence batteries, which most probably consisted of Patriot and THAAD systems, thus eliminating the possibility of casualties or damage. That was a major step up by Iran, and it was attacking U.S. military infrastructure, not in areas of traditional conflict. The unsuccessful attack showed the strategic signaling capabilities of the Iranians,



as well as raising suspicions regarding the vulnerability of the U.S. bases in the region, as tensions continued to rise. Such targeting of Al Udeid is also representative of the ever-fading boundaries between conventional military actions, regional deterrent stance, and transnational hybrid warfare strategies.

**Strategic Interpretation:** This is a condensed time that describes the liquid, multidimensional feature of the 2025 Iranian-Israeli-U.S. confrontation. It discloses the way in which kinetic actions, missile firing, diplomatic initiatives, and the characteristics of a hybrid war were carried out one after another, providing very little room for real de-escalation. Because of the pace with which the ceasefire was derailed, it is possible to assert that the one-time diplomatic overture was negotiated willfully and/or solely instrumentalized with the view of gaining a superior hand. The events go hand in hand with offensive realism theories, hybrid warfare, and strategic deception in such a way that military activities, declaration of ceasefires, and subsequent waging of hostilities are not separate happenings, but rather parts of a joint complex interaction in geopolitical rivalry. As such, this timeline is both an account and an example of how conflicts are now multi-faceted and the ceasefire may no longer be a peace tool, but rather a tool as part of larger escalation patterns.

**The Ceasefire as Misrepresentation of Strategy. Proclaiming Peace, Training to Fight:** The case of June 2025 ceasefire is a perfect illustration of misrepresentation as employed in international war, where the statements of peace absolutely come alongside the plans of executing war once again. Viewed through the lens of the signaling theory, ceasefires appear as a conflict management tool and as the means of managing perceptions, message control, and purchasing time to realign the forces (Kydd, 2005). In that regard, the United States used the announcement of the ceasefire in order to attain three simultaneous strategic purposes:

**Temporarily Appeasing Oil Markets:** The world oil prices fluctuated significantly following the Iranian missile attack and the Israeli air force. Since the national security of the Gulf energy routes, especially the Strait of Hormuz, was a strategic matter, the ceasefire storyline of Washington was designed to stabilize the markets in the short term, to avoid energy shocks, which might shake the global economy (Bahgat, 2023).

**Maintaining Deterrent Stability in The Hague NATO Summit:** This was celebrated in the NATO Summit in The Hague just a few days following the declaration of the ceasefire, which offered a geopolitical platform that allowed the U.S. to show leadership, solidarity, and ability to handle crises. The ceasefire story enabled Washington to attend the summit in the role of a stabilizing force, which by and large extinguished inter-alliance differences over a Middle East strategy.

**Saving Electoral Grounds for Trump in 2026 Election:** The domestic political aspect cannot be left out either. CEASE FIRE ANNOUNCEMENT AS NAMED BY FORMER PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP AT MAR-A-LAGO HAD ELECTORAL TONES, as this would always paint the picture of decisive leadership, crisis resolution skills, as well as protection of interests of the American sovereignty abroad, all of which are foundational in energizing the campaign base of Trump come the 2026 elections. The resumption of hostilities so soon later, however, demonstrated that the ceasefire was more of a politically motivated decoration than a de-escalatory breakthrough. This points out to broader trends discovered in international relations through the manipulation of scripts of peace by states to buy time to reposition themselves strategically without, however, surrendering positions of primary antagonism (Mearsheimer, 2001; Waltz, 1979).

### Iran Retaliatory Doctrine

The actions of Iran after the announcement of charges announced a complex game of the content, which included both the apparent obedience to receive the charge on the part of its authorities and the hidden defiance against it on the part of Iranian society and military and political leadership, which has become the epitome of hybrid war conditions (Renz & Smith, 2016). Entering the ceasefire agreement nominally, Iran gained a certain time of international legitimacy, isolating itself somewhat, but not continuing to fight at once. This step made Tehran seem to be open to diplomacy, thereby lessening the chances of multilateral sanctions being imposed.

At the same time, the fact that Iran is continuing to target American and Israeli targets with missiles and terror, in particular the unsuccessful attempt to hit the Al Udeid Air Base of Qatar, added a dimension to its deterrent credibility both locally and at the domestic level. The rule of hardliner political factions in Iran, the presence of the IRGC, and allied non-state groups such as Hezbollah and the Syrian Arab Army, needed an obvious show of force to enforce the legitimacy of the regime as well as demonstrate the resilience of the operations.

This two-pronged strategy reflects similar theories of strategic deception, in that states partake and practice a deliberate (internal) contradiction of intentions by sending conflicting messages to an enemy (whilst being aggressive in secret) with the view that it will confuse, divide allies and provide operational ambiguity (Whaley, 1982; Betts, 2007).

### **Secondary Roles of Strategic Actors**

**Qatar:** The Mediator Masked. The case of Qatar being a behind-the-scenes broker of the 2025 ceasefire also emphasizes the changing gravity of micro-powers in geopolitics in the region. Being a small country in transit, Qatar has been constantly maximizing its diplomatic capital through conflict mediation and maintenance of rivalries with the United States, Iran, and Turkey (Ulrichsen, 2020). Qatar has strengthened its strategic profile as the neutral interlocutor, which can maneuver among intricate rivalries, since playing the broker role in the Iran-Israel-U.S. ceasefire talks. At the same time, its mediation activities gained tacit protection of its military by both the U.S. and Turkey, which was essential to the safeguarding of its economic infrastructure, including its vital LNG exporting infrastructures, from instability in the region. This is also an example of a larger phenomenon of smaller states increasing their geopolitical presence using quiet diplomacy, strategic ambiguity, and multilateral participation, in which they can overcome their material disadvantage (Gause, 2019).

**USA: War Economy Displayed in a Diplomatic Costume:** The U.S. has been promoting de-escalation publicly, and at the same time, has been involved in military activities and economic stances that are not consistent with its rhetoric of diplomacy. The attacks that the June 21 B-2 Spirit bomber forced on the radar control facilities of Iran close to the city of Bushehr overstepped the limitation of the authorization that was given by the congress and signify augmented dependence over the executive-led armed actions in addition to a marvel over democratic checking (Fisher, 2022). At the same time, all the leading defense contractors, including Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, saw their stocks gain as a result of the escalation, which is quite indicative of the level at which the military-industrial complex is connected with geopolitical crises. Advances in defense sales during wars adhere to the historical trend of the market, as war, or the threat of war profiting, further prevents the authenticity of de-escalatory discourses. The U.S. policy, therefore, reflects the contradiction of war economics dressed in diplomatic garb, advertising peace publicly, and maintaining the state of affairs leading to militarized tensions on the operational level.

**Temperate Truce of Tactics or Retreative Realignment?****Variable:** The ceasefire between Iran, Israel, and the U.S. in 2025, when viewed comprehensively, is not characterized by the tenets of a real peace, but by cool and clear-minded graphical realignment, which is the involuntary air-conditioned stand still that all the parties use to meet their operational, political and psychological ends.

**Combatant Behavior:** The credibility of the ceasefire was threatened by missile strikes and air raids that went on nearly immediately after the ceasefire.

**Strategic Objectives:** The U.S. repostured forces in the Gulf; Iran still retained deterrent strength; Israel was poised to retaliate swiftly.

**Diplomatic Result:** No multilateral agreements to be verifiable were really achieved; the ceasefire was not put under any form of enforcement or monitoring, and thus it was very weak. Market stabilization at least initially into energy sectors, but with an undercurrent of volatility and investor jitters. Such dynamics fall in line with the academic research on the instrumentalization of ceasefires as the means of strategic deception, hybrid warfare maneuvers, and transient control of local or international appearances over a lasting solution to the conflict (Hoffman, 2007; Kydd & Walter, 2006). As such, the ceasefire in 2025 can be seen as an example of weaponization of diplomacy and military action as strategic diplomacy, by and large, inseparable and indistinguishable features of a geopolitical competition, with ceasefires effectively





serving as a compromise, interconnected geopolitical and humanitarian initiatives as a multi-faceted, hard-to-grasp strategic tool.

### Regional Security Implications

**Is It the Death of Peace Treaties?:** Classical ceasefire diplomacy: The June 2025 Iran, Israel, U.S. ceasefire puts into perspective the fading credibility of such constructs of classical ceasefire diplomacy in the age of hybrid conflict and strategic deception. In the past, a ceasefire has been used as a mechanism to de-escalate hostilities, develop confidence, and lay grounds to sustainable peace especially under the watch of international institutions of state among which is the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) or the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) (Fortna, 2004). Nevertheless, the breakdown of the 2025 ceasefire, which was immediately followed by the failure of independent verification, represents the loss of conflict resolution norms. Ceasefires are becoming more and more like a performance with the aim to control a media discourse, to calm down a troubled market, to gain a breather in a conflict, to adjust military forces more so than to create sustainable security in the heated competition (Kydd, 2005; Bahgat, 2023). This shift concurs with the offensive realist argument by Mearsheimer (2001), who postulates that states use periods of diplomatic lull as a means to increase relative power as opposed to achieving peace. Likewise, according to Whaley (2007), the issue of strategic deception, where an adversary is misled through the use of false signaling, such as ceasefires, is a conventional strategy. This is evident in the 2025 ceasefire, where classical peace agreements are becoming irrelevant in an age marked by the application of multi-domain hybrid war and mistrust.

**Risk Horizontal Escalation:** The vulnerability of the June 2025 ceasefire is also a major risk factor in terms of horizontal escalation, which is the potential spread of conflicts in space in terms of geography, as well as in terms of participants or strategic regions.

Three of the most likely channels of such escalation involve:

**Lebanon Through Hezbollah:** The possibilities that Lebanon has given to Hezbollah through its rockets and drones, in addition to a profound connection with Iran, make it a probable battlefield in case of extended hostilities. Literature notes the historical position of Hezbollah as an agent of vengeance on behalf of Iran, especially when there is an Israeli-Iranian tussle (Levitt, 2018). New hostilities in Lebanon may cause large-scale displacement of the civilian population and destabilization of the security situation in the neighboring countries.

**The Strait of Hormuz through IRGC Naval Forces:** Iran has made many warnings to impair the Strait of Hormuz during a crisis, which can utilize asymmetric sea tactics, such as sea mines, fast-attack boats, and drones. This would jeopardize almost a fifth of the world's oil exports, and the results would be dire for the world economy (Ulrichsen, 2020).

**Pakistan Airspace:** Israeli military planners have in the past used the route across South Asia as a possible method of attacking targets in Iran (Bronner, 2012). Any Israeli violation of Pakistani airspace would make the Middle East crisis international, which would pull South Asia into the destabilizing Middle East. Such situations are indicative of academic caution that failure to follow through on ceasefires that lack viable enforcing mechanisms can lead to a vertical escalation of the nature and scope of the fighting, as well as a horizontal spread across geographies (Hoffman, 2007; Renz & Smith, 2016). The events of 2025 are a good example of the fact that hybrid conflict, the lack of clarity of the signaling, and the lack of multilateral restrictions combined create more escalation dangers, putting the entire regional and global security at risk.

### Conclusion

The ceasefire held with Iran in June of 2025, supposedly a show of diplomatic success, points to the fact the changing face of war in which the battlefield control—massive numbers taking and holding ground is no longer always the most important factor as long as there is control of information, deception, and blending of tactics. Instead of being a real step towards peace, the ceasefire was a predetermined break that gave all sides the possibility to recover, reorganize, and redefine regional dynamics as well as international views. In the case of Iran, the ceasefire provided Iran room to pursue diplomatic legitimacy

without being deprived of its retaliatory and cover operations in performing the functions of deterrence. Israel used the lull to strengthen its politics at home, deepen its military position, and preserve its deterrence image. The United States has used the ceasefire as a strategic communication instrument – calming world energy, dealing with alliance imagery, and creating domestic political good press ahead of important upcoming domestic political landmarks.

The episode highlights one of the main peculiarities of modern geopolitics: warfare has evolved not only into the conventional type of military conflict but also into the approaches of narrative war, economic pressure, and symbolic diplomacy. Instead of bringing a closure to the book of conflicts, a ceasefire is more likely to bring new chapters to the story of the conflict since states redevelop their strategies under the cover of peace overtures. After all, the 2025 ceasefire shows that the contemporary conflict is not only waged with missiles or drones, but can also be waged with media manipulation and market interventions, as well as the control of how people see and hear. Rather than the end of the struggle, this is a case of only a different direction of geopolitical competition, one that was not as overt.

## **Recommendations**

**Put In Place third-party verification Systems:** Implementation of neutral international observers to confirm the compliance by all parties to the ceasefire agreements is necessary to build credibility of such agreements. The contingent of peacekeeping units recognized by the United Nations or a technical team of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is a reliable tool to solidify what is happening on the ground and reduce ambiguity to facilitate accountability.

**Backchannel Diplomacy should be institutionalized:** Multilateral channels of diplomacy involving predominant local players like Qatar and Oman ought to be institutionalized to allow low-profile, under-the-table talks. Such behind-the-scenes conversations can curtail face-saving actions, decrease the possibility of creating misunderstandings, and prepare the foundation of trust-building amid rivals.

**Initiate a Military De-escalation System;** A total regional security meeting must therefore be held in the name of the United Nations or the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). This platform should engage Iran, Israel, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, and external powers to work towards the creation of an inclusive and sustainable regional security architecture.

**Development of Economic Incentive Structures:** Concrete economic benefits, like step-by-step removal of sanctions or specific trade arrangements, ought to be pinned down to quantifiable de-escalation standards. By introducing economic power in the process of resolving the conflict, these strategic incentives can be altered in favor of constructive engagement rather than confrontation.

**Enhance Congress Oversight of Military Action:** The process of democratic control over military decisions should be enhanced, especially in the United States. Military actions taken by executives against legislative approval are prone to unauthorized scale-ups and a constitutional crisis. The transfer of power to Congress guarantees more transparency and legitimacy in using force.

**Increase Strategic Communication Rogue-free Transparency:** The governments should undertake public and transparent visions, patterns, and provable, clear communication about ceasefires and de-escalation measures. Using diplomatic statements to earn political advantage undermines credibility and stability. Open communication can also help avoid the intensification caused by unnecessary information or controlled stories.

**Keep track of Hybrid Warfare Vectors:** Non-conventional threats, such as cyber operations, disinformation campaigns, and proxy military action, need to be considered in ceasefire deals. To counter the entire range of contemporary security threats outside the conventional battlefield, there is a necessity to thoroughly track the entirety of these vectors of hybrid warfare.

**Encourage Civil Society Participation:** They have a crucial role to play in the development of peace literacy within a society and ensuring that polarization is minimized by interacting with academic institutions, policy-based think tanks, and independent media institutions. Engaging the civil society players more can help to make the moderate voices heard, encourage informed discussion within the community, and develop the resilience of the society against the wave of lawlessness.



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