

# How an Iranian Attack on Israel Can Influence Politics Among Palestinians and Israel

For the first of this two-part story, [click here](#).

If an attack on Israel comes from Gaza, what will the repercussions be on the purported upcoming Palestinian Authority elections? Will the terrorists avoid, or specifically engage, such a threat?

Yes, even terrorists calculate the potential impact of their actions on political influence and power, though rarely consider the well-being of the civilians for whom they allegedly advocate.

There are many variables as to whether a Palestinian Authority election will take place regardless of anything to do with Iran. Already, seeds have been sown to blame Israel for something as a pretext for canceling the elections if Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas feels a threat to his 15-year hegemony.

There are even odds that the election will never happen, but if it does, will Hamas firing dozens of rockets at Israel, risking a more severe Israeli response, help or hurt? Hamas might stand to gain, leveraging Palestinian Arabs' suffering. In an election season, the rival parties would probably not criticize Hamas for causing more suffering because they would look like wimps on fighting Israel.

These and many other factors, and possible targets, underscore the range of issues regarding the Iranian threat to retaliate within their sphere of the Arab and Islamic world. But the threat of and possible impact from an Iranian attack also impacts Israeli elections and the formation of a possible

government following the recent election.

If Israel is unable to form a government in the coming weeks and is thrust into an unprecedented fifth election in less than three years, any Iranian threat will become a political issue. Typically, security is the main issue that rallies Israelis at the ballot box. Israelis vote according to the prospective threats and who can stand up to the threat best and keep Israel safe.

A significant attack and response in the short term could play into the hands of the effort by Prime Minister Netanyahu and his Likud party to form a government now, following the most recent election. Though the voting took place, there's yet to be a government formed, and coalition talks continue. However, when security is threatened, Israelis turn right. Rockets from Gaza, Lebanon or further away could bring together even the most rivaling of parties. Conversely, Israel responding and it not going well could have the opposite effect.

Netanyahu is sophisticated enough to use this to his advantage. Some are even suggesting that now, specifically, he is being particularly aggressive, and public, about Israeli actions in, and regarding, Iran. It's hard to imagine the depth of this kind of action just for political gain, or to make something up as cover for a "Wag the Dog" scenario, even though he is on trial for various charges of corruption and breach of trust. If Israel did hit the Natanz nuclear facility, it had good reason. Israel may also be trying to prevent an all-out war with Iran with carefully targeted strikes. It's unlikely that Netanyahu chose to do this now, just because of political or his personal legal considerations. But if the opportunity or need were to come up to hit Iran again, that doesn't mean he wouldn't consider leveraging it.

As much as it might bring together right-wing parties, even those who have sworn that they won't join a government under

Netanyahu as prime minister, one thing that is likely is that were Israel to strike back Palestinian Arab terrorists, or Arabs in Lebanon and even Syria, Israel's Arab parties will most likely take their usual anti-Israel stance and oppose Israel, no matter how much it is justified. That's more reflexive than anything else but could impact government negotiations or the outcome of yet another election.

Specifically, this year as never before, there's a willingness for the Islamist Ra'am party to support the formation of a government, even under Netanyahu. But rest assured, as soon as a conflict arises and Israel is forced to hit back at Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon or possibly others, Ra'am would withdraw its support. Any government relying on that would collapse.

Unlike other operations for which Israel is blamed, but typically makes no comment about, in this case there have been broad enough suggestions that Israel is responsible and gleeful. Was that a slip that needs to be investigated or a deliberate leak in order to send a public message, perhaps particularly as the U.S. and other world powers continue to want to renew the flawed 2015 Iran deal?

Odds are that it was planned for some time and executed when the conditions warranted. Nevertheless, extra eyebrows were raised as the U.S. Secretary of Defense arrived in Israel just after the incident. Assuming Israel launched this, was it coordinated with the U.S. like the Stuxnet virus that damaged Iran's centrifuges a decade ago, or was this a strictly Israeli operation?

Or is this all part of a Netanyahu political power grab, even if the military action was needed and justified?

There are many more questions than answers, and one thing is certain: The sound of the "boom" that exploded the deep underground Iranian nuclear facility will echo far and wide for some time to come. {eoa}

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