

The Political Future of Iran

An Analysis from an Iranian Anarcho-Syndicalist Perspective

Anarchist Front of Iran and Afghanistan

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Recent geopolitical developments in the Middle East, particularly the escalation of military tensions involving the United States, Israel, and the ruling Islamic Republic of Iran, raise significant questions regarding Iran's political future and regional stability. This research article analyzes potential political trajectories in Iran under wartime conditions through the theoretical lens of anarcho-syndicalism. It explores several scenarios, including the consolidation of power within military-security institutions, the persistence of the current political structure, and the emergence of internal crises. The study also considers the likelihood of civil conflict, elite fragmentation, and the broader implications for regional power dynamics.

The escalation of military conflict involving Iran and external actors represents one of the most significant geopolitical crises in the contemporary Middle East. Large-scale military operations targeting strategic infrastructure raise questions regarding the stability of political institutions and the potential transformation of the regional order.

However, analyzing Iran's political future solely through the framework of interstate competition provides only a partial understanding. Critical perspectives, particularly anarcho-syndicalism, emphasize the role of state structures, social organization, and class dynamics in shaping political outcomes.

The beginning of the second joint war of the U.S. military-security forces ("Epic Rage") and Israel ("Roaring Lion"), and the intense, destructive, and deadly bombings that have continued from February 28, 2026 until today, have still not been able to force the Islamic government ruling Iran to surrender. Perhaps they did not expect that so soon and so easily they would be able to force the regime to relinquish power without deploying several thousand infantry troops on the battlefield, even after eliminating Ali Khamenei and many other key decision-makers within the government.

What can be observed from street scenes in Iranian cities is a kind of hidden martial law established by the "Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps" and its auxiliary arm, the "Basij paramilitia," in order to try to prevent the possible emergence of any street protests or uprisings. Therefore, under the current circumstances:

- Can scenarios such as the occurrence of a kind of classic coup with the cooperation of the army and a segment of opportunistic politicians inside and outside the country be imagined?
- Is the possibility of a widespread civil war likely in the short-term horizon ahead?
- Is the possibility of a popular armed uprising to overthrow the entirety of the "Islamic Republic system" feasible?
- The probability of three real but complex scenarios dependent on the current wartime conditions

A) Concentration of power in the hands of military forces

In many countries during external wars, military forces take greater political control. In Iran as well, the "Revolutionary Guards" possess military power, an extensive economic and security structure, and a political network within the government. As a result, the government may in practice — and without officially declaring a coup — be run in the form of a military-security state, something similar to a "soft coup within the system."

B) Formal coup

This scenario would be more likely if the leadership structure faces a vacuum, or if a severe split emerges among power institutions. In that case, part of the Revolutionary Guards and the army might seize power to “preserve the system” (which, according to Ayatollah Khomeini’s emphatic statement, is “the most necessary of obligations”) or to “save the country.” However, the reality is that in Iran the Revolutionary Guards themselves are the main pillar of the system. Therefore, a real coup against the government is less likely.

C) Preservation of the status quo

2 – Is civil war likely?

Although this is one of the greatest concerns, several necessary conditions are required for a civil war to occur.

- First condition) Collapse of the central government

As long as the Revolutionary Guards, Basij paramilitia, and security forces can maintain control of the country, civil war will be unlikely.

- Second condition) Widespread arming of social forces seeking overthrow

Since at present the working class and other laboring groups in Iran are not widely armed, the probability of a civil war similar to Syria or Libya is lower.

- Third condition) Emergence of rival armed forces

In some regions such as Kurdistan, Baluchistan, or other border areas, armed groups exist. If the central government weakens, nationwide (local-regional) conflicts and a form of popular armed uprising – not necessarily a classic civil war – could emerge.

The most realistic scenarios for the future of Iran and the Middle East

Considering the evaluation of the data accessible up to today, we may face these possible paths:

A) A short war and a return to negotiations

According to what has been openly declared so far, the main objective of the U.S.-Israel alliance is the complete destruction of the nuclear program and missile infrastructure, not necessarily the overthrow of the ruling Islamic government nor the establishment of democracy in Iran. If this position does not change, the war may continue for several weeks or months, and then a ceasefire or new negotiations may emerge. This type of scenario has been very common in the history of the Middle East.

B) Severe weakening of the Iranian government but preservation of the system

In this case, military and economic infrastructures suffer heavy damage, but the “political system” remains intact – similar to Iraq in the 1990s, Serbia during the Milošević era (Balkan wars), or Ukraine – and does not collapse.

C) Internal crisis and political change

If severe economic crisis, major military defeat, and a split among the ruling elites occur simultaneously, then the possibility of political change within the system or a transfer of power may arise. This usually begins from within the elites, not from the streets.

D) The future of the Middle East

If this war continues, several major consequences are likely:

1. Expansion of involvement by regional forces such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hashd al-Shaabi in Iraq, the Houthis in Yemen, and others.
2. Economic shock to markets due to sharp increases in oil and gas prices as a result of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf.
3. Weakening of governance in Iran would shift the regional balance of power, strengthening instead the governments ruling Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Israel.

Summary of scenarios

A) In many wars, the “survival of the system with a concentration of security power” is the most common scenario. When a country is under external attack, security and military forces usually gain more power, the political space becomes more closed, and the government uses the slogan of “national defense” to mobilize forces. In such a situation the Revolutionary Guards and the army may take a far more prominent role in governing the country; the political structure may turn into a centralized security-military government; and some superficial reforms may be carried out to control dissatisfaction. The government weakens but does not collapse.

Historical examples: the Balkans, Iraq, Ukraine, etc.

B) In many countries political change does not necessarily occur through revolution but rather within the ruling elites. In present-day Iran there are three major centers of power: the Revolutionary Guards, the leadership institution, and economic-political networks linked to the government. Therefore, if the war becomes prolonged and the crisis intensifies, some elites may conclude that to preserve the system the leadership or political structure must change. This could take different forms such as transferring power to a leadership council, increasing the role of the military, or constitutional change. Historical examples: changes in the Soviet government after crises, transfers of power in some Latin American military regimes.

C) If military defeat + severe economic crisis + elite division occur simultaneously, then the “collapse of the ruling system” becomes possible. In that case the authority of the central government declines and the possibility of losing control over some regions increases. Under such

circumstances local-regional armed groups, ethnic parties, and other opposition forces may become more active.

However, it must be noted that in Iran's current geography several characteristics—such as a relatively strong central government with fourteen to seventeen security institutions and their armed branches (army + Revolutionary Guards + Basij paramilitia), the severe and ruthless repression of any protest voice from workers' councils and civil institutions, chronic ideological-political divisions and fragmentation among opposition forces, the absence of widespread and stable self-organization and self-management, and most importantly the lack of broad and coherent popular armament — mean that the collapse of the ruling system, contrary to the deceptive propaganda of mainstream media and monarchist supporters under the leadership of Reza Pahlavi (son of Mohammad Reza Shah, the former dictator), would occur not rapidly but with difficulty and gradually.

D) Sometimes external war ultimately leads to major negotiations and political rearrangement. In such a case a regional or international agreement may form.

The government ruling Iran might grant certain concessions and in return obtain partial guarantees for regime security or reduction of sanctions. Historical example: the agreements ending the Iran-Iraq war and past nuclear agreements.

A realistic alternative from an anarcho-syndicalist perspective

In general, no fundamental movement—except one accompanying a libertarian-socialist revolution — would be capable of uprooting, like a powerful tsunami, the foundations of the exploitative and authoritarian capitalist system together with all its various agents and defenders and consigning it, like past social systems, to history.

It should therefore be recalled that anarchism is a school of thought composed of diverse political branches but sharing a common root, including social anarchism, anarcho-syndicalism, communalist anarchism, individualist anarchism, feminist-queer anarchism, ecological anarchism, and others. However, among most of these tendencies several basic principles are shared:

Opposition to any “nation-state” (from small and weak to large and powerful) and struggle against all forms of authority and domination such as hierarchical structures including parliament, army, police, bureaucracy, and prison-torture-execution systems.

Emphasis on revolution and social self-governance alongside participatory-cooperative economics, horizontal self-organization and self-management in societies, the formation of local-regional democratic committees and councils (federalist-confederalist), solidarity, mutual aid, and voluntary free cooperation.

Considering all the general points discussed so far, a specific analysis and conclusion from an anarchist viewpoint can be presented: Essentially, wars, coups, and power competitions among states are seen as the result of the structure of centralized states. That is, states compete with one another to maintain power and influence. Yet it is always the workers and ordinary people who pay the greatest cost of crises, wars, and destruction caused by them.

Therefore anarchism generally shifts the focus of discussion from “which state will win” to the question: how can people organize and manage their lives and society without domination and authority structures of power?

Most scenarios discussed here still fall within the framework of centralized state structures such as: changes within the government, a military state, a reformed republic, or a parliamentary

system. Anarchism, however, believes that even if governments change, as long as centralized power structures remain, the danger of reproducing authoritarianism, inequality, and repression continues.

The alternative proposed by anarchism

In many anarchist theories the proposed alternatives of horizontal self-organization and self-management include: local-regional democratic councils and federal-confederal self-governance, labor-syndicalist unions, independent and free civil-social institutions, and networks of voluntary cooperation and solidarity among diverse ethnic communities instead of a powerful central state. In such a model, all decisions are made participatorily at the local-regional level, and power in society is distributed in a decentralized and non-hierarchical manner.

Even many anarchist thinkers acknowledge that the transition to such a society is usually possible only through a long and gradual process and often develops alongside other political structures. Therefore in the short term, from their perspective, the most important issue may be that if civil society, local-regional networks, and self-organizing institutions are strengthened, society's total dependence on the state will decrease.

Conclusion

If we summarize the entire discussion from an anarchist perspective:

1. Political crises and wars are often the product of competition among centralized states.
2. Changing a government does not necessarily mean the end of structures of domination and authority.
3. The long-term solution lies in expanding social self-management, decentralizing power, mutual aid, voluntary cooperation, and sustainable solidarity among working people.

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