

# Imperatives of governance in cease-fire era

## Iran needs to transition from crisis management to strategic preparedness



By Navid Kamali  
Strategic affairs analyst

### OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The current situation in our country and the West Asian region cannot be described by the conventional concepts of war or peace. We are living in an interwar state or, more precisely, a fragile cease-fire. The recent 12-day war, orchestrated by the United States and executed by the Zionist regime with the aim of redefining the regional balance of power, was imposed upon our nation. Although it was temporarily halted by the decisive response of our armed forces and the enemy's offer of a cease-fire, it was a strategic inflection point, not a transient event. This confrontation marks the end of one chapter and the beginning of a new one in the history of regional conflicts — a chapter in which the logic of governance and the exigencies of state administration differ fundamentally from periods of relative stability and calm. Therefore, the central question facing the concerned elites within our nation's decision-making system is not whether the next round of tensions will occur, but rather how the governance structure can be reconfigured to confront future existential threats and transform this transitional period into an opportunity for the strategic reinforcement of national power.

#### Changing rules of conflict

To answer the above question, we must recognize that the logic of governance under normal circumstances rests on the premise that threats are largely non-systemic, manageable, and separable. An economic crisis, an environmental challenge, or an energy shortage are all considered separate issues, for which sectoral solutions are sought. In an era of cease-fire, however, this logic disintegrates, and the very grammar of conflict is altered. Under such conditions, any domestic phenomenon or shortage, regardless of its origin, can become a variable in the national security equation and a lever of pressure in the hands of the enemy. Threats shift from a symmetrical military nature towards an asymmetric, hybrid, and cognitive character. Iran's growing water crisis and electricity shortages, and their consequences for industry and citizens' livelihoods are no longer merely a technical or welfare issue; It is a strategic vulnerability that, at the critical juncture of a military conflict, can easily devolve into social rupture and an economic-social war of attrition. This shift in the nature of threats necessitates a fundamental re-evaluation of national security and the expansion of its scope to domains previously classified under developmental or social headings.

#### Economy on frontline

An analysis of our nation's political economy as an interconnected production network

illuminates this reality. As various studies and research have shown, economic resilience is not solely dependent on macro-economic indicators but on the health and efficiency of critical nodes within this network. A limited disruption in a key sector — such as energy, transportation, communications, or digital infrastructure — can have cascading and paralyzing effects on the entire system. Understanding this network logic, the enemy no longer focuses merely on the physical destruction of military infrastructure. Instead, it concentrates its attacks on weakening vulnerable points and critical nodes within our nation's governance and economic network to erode national resilience from within. This parallel economic war is not waged only in the physical dimension; It also unfolds in the psychological domain of expectations management and market sentiment. Instilling despair, fueling instability, and undermining public trust in economic policies are themselves effective tools in the enemy's arsenal. Therefore, intelligent governance in this era requires the proactive identification, monitoring, and protection of these critical nodes — a task that transcends the capacity and mission of any single agency and demands cross-sectoral coordination at the highest levels of governance.

#### Architecture of national meaning

In the social dimension, understanding societal dynamics in a conflict environment is of vital importance. The magnificent display of national cohesion and unity we witnessed in Iran during the recent war is a profound phenomenon worthy of reflection. It can be explained using the metaphor of a non-Newtonian fluid: Society may appear pluralistic and even fractured in normal conditions, but under the sudden pressure and shock of an external threat, it rapidly solidifies and becomes cohesive. This situational solidarity is a precious strategic asset, but relying on it without understanding its nature can lead to strategic miscalculation. This state of affairs is less a product of a permanent integration of all groups and more the result of the ascendancy of a dominant national-revolutionary discourse and the marginalization or temporary muting of other discourses, a phenomenon described by the spiral of silence theory.

This social capital, if not managed properly, can quickly dissipate once the initial threat recedes. The duty of the governance system is to transform this temporary cohesion into an enduring national unity. This can be achieved by opening channels for dialogue, strengthening civil society institutions, redefining the state-nation relationship based on mutual trust and participation, and, most importantly, articulating and promoting a unifying national narrative. In the war of narratives, which runs parallel to and is often more intense than the physical war, the



state should not merely be a purveyor of information, but must assume the role of an architect of national meaning — a narrative that acknowledges diversity while charting a common horizon for the future and reinforcing a sense of collective belonging.

#### Reconfiguring machinery of governance

This shift in the nature of social threats and dynamics necessitates a commensurate evolution in the structure and processes of governance. State administration in the interwar period cannot adhere to the bureaucratic, consultative, and time-consuming logic of peacetime. Speed, focus, decisiveness, and structural flexibility become the governing principles. This is not a negation of law or collective wisdom, but rather the creation of agile and authoritative mechanisms for critical decision-making. Concepts such as a war cabinet or the temporary merger of aligned ministries, historically observed in other nations during wartime, are strategies for shortening the decision-action cycle and optimizing the allocation of resources toward strategic priorities. This cease-fire period presents the best opportunity to design, test, and institutionalize these emergency structures, so that the nation is not caught off guard by managerial and structural surprises in a time of crisis. Of course, centralization and expanded executive powers can present their own challenges. It is imperative that these special mechanisms are legally framed,

temporary, and subject to oversight to prevent them from becoming permanent procedures that weaken institutions of accountability. This is a pivotal, structure-altering moment that offers a unique opportunity for structural reforms and for moving beyond past ineffective or inefficient procedures. This reconfiguration must be aimed at increasing efficiency while simultaneously preserving and strengthening the legitimacy of the system. It is a delicate balance between necessity and accountability that requires profound wisdom and foresight.

#### Internal resilience: pillar of deterrence

Another crucial point is that internal resilience is the primary currency of international deterrence. An adversary confronting a nation with a cohesive internal front, a resilient economy, and an effective governance system will calculate a far higher cost for any military or subversive action. Conversely, a country plagued by social rifts, economic vulnerabilities, and managerial inefficiencies appears to be a more accessible target. From this perspective, every measure taken to fortify internal cohesion and enhance national resilience directly contributes to bolstering our nation's deterrence on the international stage. Active diplomacy during a cease-fire will be most effective when it is backed by a powerful and stable domestic foundation.

In the author's view, a successful navigation of this turbulent

era hinges on achieving and moving toward a systemic understanding of national power. National power is no longer the simple algebraic sum of military, economic, cultural, and social capabilities, but the product of the complex, synergistic interplay of these components within an integrated system. A weakness in one domain weakens the entire system, while a strength in another can reinforce other sectors. Governance in an era of cease-fire is the art of managing this complex constellation — an art that requires a macro-level, interdisciplinary, and forward-looking perspective.

Our nation now stands at a strategic crossroads: The first path is to continue governing with a peacetime logic and reactive crisis management, the inevitable result of which is the gradual erosion of national resilience. The alternative path is to accept the reality of the interwar period and proactively re-engineer the system of governance for strategic preparedness. By consciously choosing the latter, our nation's decision-making apparatus can transform this transitional period into an opportunity for rethinking the foundations of governance and turning threat into a catalyst for renewal and internal strengthening. Success in this endeavor will not only guarantee our nation's survival against the storms ahead but will also cement its status as a formidable and decisive actor in the architecture of the new regional order.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (3rd-L) walks away with members of his cabinet after a meeting in Tehran, Iran, on October 9, 2024.

● ISNA



Society may appear pluralistic and even fractured in normal conditions, but under the sudden pressure and shock of an external threat, it rapidly solidifies and becomes cohesive. This situational solidarity is a precious strategic asset, but relying on it without understanding its nature can lead to strategic miscalculation. This state of affairs is less a product of a permanent integration of all groups and more the result of the ascendancy of a dominant national-revolutionary discourse and the marginalization or temporary muting of other discourses, a phenomenon described by the spiral of silence theory.



Tehran Symphony Orchestra holds an open-air performance at the Azadi Square of Tehran on June 25, 2025, a day after Israel proposed a cease-fire to the war of aggression it started earlier.

● AMIRHOSSEIN SHAHGHOLOI/  
IRIB NEWS

