



Inside the Attack on Iran

In February and March 2026, Israel and the United States carried out coordinated military strikes against Iran, prompting a significant response from Tehran and marking a dramatic escalation in the conflict. This historic moment will likely shape the Middle East for years to come.

Use this educator's guide to unpack this episode of Unpacking Israeli History with Dr. Noam Weissman and special guest, geopolitical Middle East expert and former Israeli intelligence official [Avi Melamed](#).

Educators can use the podcast in two ways:

1. As background to better understand the moment themselves before facilitating student discussions.
2. Alongside the accompanying educator guide, using the linked clips and prompts to help students process and discuss this major development.

[Link to video](#)

[Link to podcast](#)

Introduction

Before diving into the content it is important to check in with students and see how they are processing this event. Ask your students:

- What emotions are you experiencing right now?
- What was your initial reaction to hearing about Israel's preemptive strike on Iran?
- What are some questions you have?
- What are you concerned about?

Clips and Prompts

1. **What we know and what we don't know** [[2:07-4:00](#)] Play the excerpt above to give your students a quick recap of what we know and what questions still remain about the current conflict with Iran.
 - a. While listening, have students create three columns:
 - i. Known – What facts are confirmed?
 - ii. Unknown – What is still unclear or being debated?
 - iii. Next – What might happen next based on what we're hearing?
 - b. After listening, pair students up and have them compare lists.
2. **History of the Iranian Revolution** [[4:32-9:42](#)]
 - How does learning about the religious roots of Iran and the Sunni-Shia conflict help us understand the causes behind the Iranian Revolution?
 - Do you agree that the "revolution" should be called a "coup?" Why or why not?
 - What was Iran like before the 1979 Iranian Revolution? What factors helped fuel the revolution?
 - In what ways did the revolution fundamentally change Iran's relationship with the West, and with Israel?
 - How does understanding this history complicate a simplistic view of Iran as "always" an enemy of Israel or the U.S.?
 - Why do you think historical memory is so powerful in shaping modern political identity?

3. **The Sunni and Shia Angle of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict** [[11:17-17:30](#)]

- What is the core difference between Sunni and Shia Islam?
- How has this religious divide shaped power struggles across the Middle East?
- In what ways does the Sunni-Shia conflict affect Israel? How does Iran's Shia identity influence its alliances and its hostility toward Israel?
- Why is it important to understand regional dynamics beyond just the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

4. **Identities in the Middle East** [[17:31- 22:34](#)]

- What are the two key characteristics of extremist Islamic groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, etc?
- How does this religious identity differ from the modern concepts of nationality? What effect does this have on the relationship between these groups and the Arab states?
- Which identity do you think is more powerful in driving a conflict: religion or nationality? Why?

5. **Why should the US get involved?** [[34:15 -38:59](#)]

- What reasons does Avi give for the US should care about Iran and get involved in this war?
- Do you agree with Avi's claim that geographic distance is no longer relevant?
- What responsibilities, if any, does the U.S. have to intervene in conflicts far from its borders? What do you think?
- What do you make of Avi's claim that AI is the world's largest and newest empire?

6. **Which is the real Iranian story?** [[38:59-42:28](#)]

- What are the two contrasting images of Iran presented in this segment?
- Why do authoritarian regimes often project images of unity and mourning?
- What evidence is there that large parts of Iranian society may not support the regime?
- How can both images be true at the same time?

Further learning

- [Israel-Iran War Collection](#)
- [How did we get here? The roots of the Iran-Israel conflict](#)
- [Is Iran the greatest threat to peace in the Middle East?](#)