



Ilan Evyatar and Yonah Jeremy Bob, *Target Tehran* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2023).

Reviewed by Umaima Ali

The four essential elements of Mossad's strategy are: leadership assassinations, intelligence operations, cyber warfare, and physical attacks. *Target Tehran* provides an account of how this Mossad strategy has evolved. Ilan Evyatar and Yonah Jeremy Bob, veteran Israeli journalists with reliable sources in Israel's security establishment, have authored the book. This detailed study explores how Mossad shifted from intelligence gathering to operational warfare. Yet, after years of cyberattacks, assassinations, and covert missions, Israel maintained that Iran's nuclear programme was still advancing, a claim that renders the efficacy of those efforts open to question.

Due to mounting Israeli insecurity over Iran's nuclear ambitions, Mossad chief David Barnea and Prime Minister Naftali Bennett adopted a Cold War-style strategy of 'death by a thousand cuts,' intensifying covert operations that included cyberattacks, drone strikes, and intelligence-led sabotage. Ironically, even as Iran agreed to curb its military nuclear enrichment efforts under the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), continuing only its civilian programme under international monitoring, Israel's sense of threat deepened. Rather than being reassured by the agreement, Israeli leadership became more alarmed, leading to concerted efforts to pressure the United States (US) into withdrawing from the JCPOA. This climate of heightened insecurity culminated under Mossad Chief Yossi Cohen and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in one of the most audacious intelligence operations in recent history: the extraction of Iran's secret nuclear archive from a warehouse in Tehran.

The authors detail Mossad's intelligence operation carried out in 2018 to steal Iran's nuclear documents. Mossad agents entered Tehran and stole physical archives from a heavily guarded facility by using advanced techniques, including cyber-warfare and blowtorches, to open safes containing the sensitive material. For nearly six-plus hours, Mossad agents worked inside the facility, loaded the data onto trucks and smuggled it out of Tehran without being detected. This was a true espionage heist not a mere thumb drive extraction, but a daring operation that stunned even seasoned intelligence observers. The success of the mission reinforced the global perception that Iran was covertly enriching uranium for military purposes. Capitalising on the momentum and narrative shift, the Israeli leadership effectively influenced then-

President Donald Trump to withdraw the US from the JCPOA, unravelling a key diplomatic agreement.

But Mossad's influence extends beyond its operations within Iran. The book also outlines a broader regional strategy, which includes using neighbouring countries to gain access to intelligence. The Abraham Accords mark a significant shift in Middle Eastern alliances and represent the most substantial challenge to Iran's regional aspirations to date. Here, the authors also explore Mossad's global strategy, which includes deep collaboration with Western intelligence agencies such as the CIA.

In the end, the authors present a hypothetical scenario of a full-scale Israeli military strike on Iran's nuclear infrastructure. It is a carefully planned, multi-wave attack that includes stealth jets, bunker-busting bombs, cyberwarfare, and drone swarms. According to the authors, 'the destruction of dozens of Iranian nuclear sites, the casualties, the revenge attacks—for now, all of this is an imagined scenario'; however, the twelve-day June 2025 Iran-Israel war has brought this scenario closer to reality. Although the actual events did not fully align with what the authors presented, particularly Netanyahu's anticipated declaration, 'This morning, we removed an existential threat to the state of Israel,' the conflict largely echoed the hypothetical strategy outlined in the book.

The authors conclude that Israel is unwavering in its resolve, with Mossad promising that Iran will never acquire nuclear weapons. This last pledge sums up the basic contention of the book: Israel's most valuable weapons in an unsolved existential battle continue to be clandestine intelligence activities.

Target Tehran combines geopolitical analysis with journalistic reporting. The authors situate clandestine activities within the broader context of larger geopolitical goals, presenting them in vivid, dramatic detail. The book's chronological arrangement guarantees narrative clarity, but the data of operations conducted cannot be verified. Moreover, the authors primarily ignore the moral challenges of sabotage and targeted assassinations and only highlight the existential stakes Israel sees in the Iran conflict for an audience concerned with realpolitik and national security. It would also be naïve to assume that the book and its narrative are an independent work and have no involvement of the Israeli establishment. Mossad's promise that Iran will never get a nuclear weapon is a policy statement rather than mere rhetoric. The book serves as a reminder that intelligence services, not armies or diplomats, are often the first and last lines of defence in today's complex geopolitical landscape.

Umaima Ali's research interests include techno-politics, with a focus on the aerospace industry. Her current work explores the impact of privatisation on geopolitics and warfare. She holds an MPhil degree in Defence and Strategic Studies from the Quaid-i-Azam University, Pakistan. Email: <umaimaali128@gmail.com>.