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## **The Iran-Israel Conflict: A Struggle for Oil, Missiles, and Power - The Geopolitical Battle Unfolds**

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### **Abstract**

The descriptive study explores Tensions between Iran and Israel have long been an issue in the Middle East, leading to a volatile conflict marked by indirect and direct military confrontations. The main issue at the center of this dispute is Iran's nuclear program, which is viewed by Israel as a potential danger to its survival. The ongoing conflict between Israel and Iran has led to a dangerous cycle of suspicion and military action. In June 2025, tensions reached a boiling point as Israel launched Operation Rising Lion, targeting over 100 military and nuclear sites in Iran. In retaliation, Iran responded with their own attacks, known as Operation True Promise 3, on key locations in Israel. The situation quickly escalated with the United States joining in, conducting airstrikes on three major Iranian nuclear facilities. How has the Iran-Israel conflict evolved over time and what factors have contributed to its current state? The research project explores the pivotal significance of the Strait of Hormuz, the role of US intervention, and possible outcomes of regime change in Iran. By comprehending these factors, one can gain a better understanding of how the political and social landscape of the Middle East may change in the future.

**Key Words:** Conflict, Geopolitical, Iran, Missile, Oil.

### **Introduction**

Prior to the Iranian Revolution of 1979, Iran and Israel had a relatively friendly relationship. The Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, recognized Israel and worked together on intelligence and trade. They also shared concerns about the growing threat of Arab nationalism. However, with the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini and the establishment of a theocratic regime, Iran's stance towards Israel shifted

dramatically to one of staunch opposition. Iran cut ties with Israel, denounced its legitimacy, and aligned itself with the Palestinian cause. In the wake of Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, Iran began providing military and financial backing to militant groups that opposed Israel (Darya & Savill, 2025). It led to the establishment and arming of Hezbollah, a Shiite militia that became Iran's most influential regional proxy. Over the years, Iran expanded its support to include Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, providing them with weapons, funding, and training. Today, Iran's proxy network poses a significant threat to regional stability and security. Their influence spans across Lebanon, Syria, Gaza, and Yemen, allowing them to project power and further their agenda in the Middle East. In Lebanon, Hezbollah acts as a political party and a powerful militia, posing a direct threat to Israel's northern border. Iran has been actively involved in several conflicts across the Middle East, supporting various militant groups to expand its influence and challenge its regional rivals. In Syria, Iranian forces have backed the Assad regime and established logistics corridors to arm Hezbollah. In Gaza, Iran's support enables Hamas and Islamic Jihad to launch attacks on Israel, reinforcing their strategy of indirect confrontation. In Yemen, Iran has formed a strong alliance with the Houthis, using them as a proxy to disrupt maritime security in the Red Sea. This extensive proxy network highlights Iran's determination to expand its influence and destabilize the region. The conflict between Iran and Israel has been ongoing since the 2000s, with Israel's attempts to dismantle Iran's nuclear program leading to a covert war of sabotage, cyberattacks, and targeted killings of nuclear scientists. The tensions escalated in October 2023 with a Hamas-led attack on Israel, sparking the Gaza war and further regional conflict. In June 2025, Israel launched a major air campaign against Iranian targets, prompting swift retaliation with surgical strikes on the land of Israel. The conflict escalated into direct military exchanges between the two nations. The crisis reached a critical turning point when the United States directly entered the conflict, launching targeted airstrikes on Iran's Isfahan, Fordow and Natanz nuclear facilities. A significant shift in the strategic posture of the conflict, aligning with Israel's goal of dismantling Iran's nuclear infrastructure. President Trump declared the operation a "spectacular success" and stated that the US will continue until Iran's nuclear capability is completely dismantled (Rana, 2025). Further Study showed a larger goal to not only delay but potentially weaken the Islamic Republic's strategic resilience. The recent airstrikes in Tehran were met with strong condemnation, being seen as a violation of Iran's sovereignty and an act of war. Despite growing international pressure for diplomatic solutions, Iranian officials rejected them, stating that the attacks were a threat to the very existence of their country. They also asserted that as long as the aggression and attacks continue, there can be no room for dialogue or diplomacy. The aligns with Iran's long-held belief that meaningful diplomacy cannot occur under coercion. As a result, Iran has responded with countermeasures, including the potential closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial route for global oil exports (Ayad,2024).

### **The Strategic Importance of the Strait of Hormuz:**

One of the most crucial narrow passages for maritime trade is the Strait of Hormuz, situated between Oman and Iran. The waterway linkages the Arabian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea, providing sufficient depth and width to accommodate the largest oil tankers. Its strategic significance is highlighted by the substantial amount of oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) that travels through it. In 2024, around 20 million barrels per day (b/d) of crude oil passed through the strait, making up about 20 percent of the global demand for petroleum liquids. In the first quarter of 2025, these volumes remained largely unchanged, emphasizing the strait's ongoing role in global energy distribution. Even though there are ongoing political conflicts in the area, the strait remains open for maritime traffic. However, the market is easily affected by perceived risks. It was evident in June 2025 when Brent

crude oil prices rose from US\$69 to US\$74 per barrel in just 24 hours due to heightened tensions in the region, showing the strait's importance as an indicator of energy market stability. The Strait of Hormuz holds great importance due to the limited viable alternatives for transporting oil exports from the Arabian Gulf. Although Saudi Arabia and (UAE) have developed bypass infrastructures, like Saudi Aramco's East-West Pipeline leading to the Red Sea and the UAE's Fujairah pipeline to the Gulf of Oman, these routes are nearing their operational limits. In fact, in 2024, a staggering 84 percent of the crude oil and condensate, as well as 83 percent of LNG, that passed through the strait were destined for Asian markets. It highlights the strategic importance of maintaining open sea lanes through the strait for countries like China, India, Japan, and South Korea, which collectively accounted for 69 percent of Hormuz oil flows. In the end the Strait of Hormuz continues to be a crucial conduit for global energy commerce and a significant geopolitical hotspot. Any disruption, whether actual or imagined, has the potential to affect international markets and heighten tensions among world powers (Barden, Candace, 2024).

### **How would the global oil markets respond if Iran shut down the Strait of Hormuz?**

While Iran does not have the legal power to close the strait, they may use tactics such as interfering with ships, deploying drones or missiles, or placing mines in the waters (Hurley, Emily & Tom, 2025). These actions are reminiscent of the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, which have already caused shipping vessels to take alternative routes around Africa, resulting in higher expenses and longer travel times. Throughout history, Iran has not completely shut down the Strait of Hormuz, but has employed tactics such as seizing ships and causing disruptions in order to exert political influence, particularly during times of sanctions or regional tensions. In past instances, Iranian forces have taken control of vessels connected to countries such as Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Greece, often using questionable legal justifications. A complete blockade of the strait would not only provoke military retaliation, especially from the United States Fifth Fleet and other naval alliances, but would also have negative effects on Iran's own economy, as the country heavily relies on the strait for exporting oil to its top buyer, China, which is also a crucial diplomatically. The Gulf states of Saudi Arabia and the UAE have limited pipeline capacity to bypass the Strait of Hormuz, while Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain remain entirely dependent on it (Chehayeb, 2023). It makes these countries especially vulnerable to any disruption of oil flow through the strait. As most oil passing through the strait is bound for Asian markets, any disruption would have a remarkable impact on the economies of the region. Negotiations between Iran & Israel for a ceasefire deal will undoubtedly involve strategic bargaining, particularly surrounding the Strait of Hormuz (Minhas, et al., 2024). As a crucial energy chokepoint, the strait is responsible for a significant portion of global oil and gas exports. Iran's control over this waterway gives it significant political leverage, especially as it faces economic sanctions and military pressure. By utilizing its control over the strait, Iran can potentially influence Western and regional actors to accept more advantageous ceasefire conditions, lift sanctions, or improve diplomatic relations. While using this tactic may provide short-term advantages, it also has the potential to damage important partnerships, such as with China, who rely heavily on Gulf energy. It may also lead to military conflicts with the United States and its allies, who see freedom of navigation as a crucial issue. As a result, leveraging the Strait of Hormuz in ceasefire negotiations comes with significant strategic and economic risks for Iran and the global community as a whole (Lee, 2025).

### **Nuclear Rivalry and proxy warfare:**

The Iran-Israel conflict's unique dynamic stems from Israel is currently the only country in the Middle East with nuclear capabilities. To maintain this advantage, Israel seeks to thwart Iran's nuclear ambitions and limit its regional dominancy. This has led to an imbalance, with Israel wielding significant power and Iran feeling compelled to bolster its military capabilities to counter balance (Atlantic Council, June 23, 2025). Iran's strategy includes: Enhancing military capacity Developing nuclear capabilities and strengthening its conventional forces. Establishing strategic depth Building alliances and presence in Lebanon (Hezbollah), supporting Palestinians, and military involvement in Syria. Asymmetric warfare Utilising proxy forces to challenge Israel without direct confrontation. Iran's actions are driven by the desire to achieve a balance of power in the region, given Israel's nuclear monopoly (Reuters, June 24, 2025).

### **The Impact of Regional Alignments and Its Consequences:**

The consequences of Iran's military actions are poised to affect its relations with neighbouring countries, particularly Syria and Jordan. The government of Syria, which has been weakened by prolonged civil strife and is heavily reliant on Iranian assistance, finds itself in a precarious position. It is compelled to accommodate Iranian strategic priorities while simultaneously striving to avoid exacerbating its vulnerability to further Israeli strikes. This intricate scenario may necessitate Syria's reevaluation of its alliance with Iran, particularly in light of the dangers associated with becoming a theatre for Iran-Israel conflicts. In a parallel context, Jordan's role as a frontline buffer in support of Israel may afford it the opportunity to leverage its stance in bilateral matters, including negotiations concerning Gaza, thereby potentially reshaping its diplomatic relations with Israel.

### **Iran's Rising image in the Islamic countries:**

Iran's assertive military actions amid the Gaza conflict are likely to boost its standing among Islamic communities, positioning it as a strong advocate for Palestinian rights against perceived Israeli aggression. As Saudi Arabia prioritizes domestic reforms and Western relations, and Jordan maintains security ties with Israel, Iran seizes the opportunity to champion the Palestinian cause. By taking a strong stance, Iran aims to enhance its soft power and challenge Saudi Arabia's influence. Its assertive posture may attract support from those prioritizing Palestinian rights, potentially reshaping regional power dynamics and alliances. Iran's actions could reposition it as a leading voice on this critical issue. (Mahmoudian, 2024).

### **The Future of Gulf Investments: Consequences of the Iran-Israel Stand-off:**

Safaa El-Kogali, the World Bank's country director for the Gulf region, predicts that foreign direct investment (FDI) in the Gulf region will decrease in the latter half of 2025 due to increased tensions between Iran and Israel. The recent US military strikes on Iranian nuclear sites on June 22nd have added to the regional uncertainty, leading investors to take a more cautious approach. While FDI levels vary across the GCC, the UAE saw a significant increase of 48% in 2024, attracting \$45.5 billion. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar experienced declines, with Oman being the only exception due to their sound fiscal management and diversification efforts. According to El-Kogali, it is challenging to accurately measure the complete economic impact of the conflict in the region. However, he cautioned against the potential consequences on various industries due to increasing costs of commodities and shipping, as well as inflation. The travel and tourism sector, a major contributor to the GDP, may also suffer as tourists avoid unstable areas. While there may be potential benefits for Gulf countries if oil prices continue to rise, El-Kogali stressed the importance of diversifying the economy for sustained resilience. Countries like the UAE, which have a strong focus on non-oil sectors, are in a better position to withstand external shocks. The World Bank is urging Gulf

nations to invest their oil revenues into sectors with high potential for job creation in order to support long-term economic growth. Despite the region's track record of effectively responding to crises through fiscal policies, El-Kogali cautioned that a more focused and effective approach to investment is needed in order to successfully navigate ongoing risks.

### **Potential Conflict Scenarios and Their Impact on Stakeholders:**

#### **(Scenarios for Shifting Power and Regime Change)**

Even though a ceasefire is currently in place, the root causes of the Iran-Israel conflict, namely Iran's pursuit of nuclear capabilities and Israel's commitment to preventing them, remain unresolved. This suggests that the conflict is likely to persist or take on new forms in the future. If Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei were to be assassinated, it would have significant implications for Iran's political landscape, both domestically and in the Middle East. The aftermath would likely be characterized by political instability and a fragile government, further exacerbating Iran's existing legitimacy crisis and creating uncertainty around the regime's succession plan (BBC, June 23, 2025). This could potentially lead to widespread civil unrest as competing factions within the political and religious elite, especially hardliners, vie for power and influence in a chaotic and contested succession process. If the ongoing tensions between the US and Iran persist, it is possible that the IRGC could experience conflicts within its own ranks. It could create further uncertainty and instability within the country. Additionally, the global markets, particularly in the energy sector, may experience volatility as they anticipate potential disruptions to oil and gas flows from the region. After a major event, there are two potential outcomes. The first is if the regime remains united and plans a transfer of power, possibly appointing someone like Mojtaba Khamenei, the son of the Supreme Leader, as a hardliner. This would likely lead to increased authoritarianism and domestic control, as well as a more aggressive foreign policy through the use of Iran's proxy forces. While the fundamental structure of the government would not change, the regime would place even more emphasis on security and use force to maintain order within the country and deter external threats. Alternatively, if the current regime in Iran were to fall, it could lead to a prolonged period of internal chaos. Without a clear and legitimate successor, the power vacuum could potentially create a situation similar to the instability seen in Iraq after 2003. This could result in various factions, including those within the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, competing for control. The breakdown could have ripple effects in the region, potentially leading to military conflicts, unpredictable actions, and the possibility of systemic changes in Iran's political structure. Such a scenario would create a highly volatile and unstable environment, with significant consequences for regional security, global energy markets, and political and geographical factors that shape the Middle East's landscape. Regardless of continuity or collapse, the assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader would mark the end of an era and the beginning of a tumultuous and uncertain period in the history of the region (Uberti & Costas, 2025).

#### **Possible Diplomatic and military strategies:**

A ceasefire was announced on June 23rd, 2025, brokered by the United States, in an attempt to pause the ongoing conflict between Iran and Israel. The plan, revealed by President Trump on his Truth Social platform, involved a phased approach starting with a 12-hour halt by Iran, followed by a 12-hour halt by Israel. This would then be followed by a formal end to the hostilities. The agreement allowed both sides to conclude ongoing military missions and required them to remain peaceful and respectful during the designated windows. While Israel declared that it had achieved

its goals, Iran only complied conditionally and warned that their restraint depended on Israel's actions. It has resulted in an uneasy state of restraint, relying on mutual deterrence and external oversight (Seddon & Gabriela, 2025). In addition, on June 23rd, Iran launched 14 ballistic missiles towards the U.S. Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, but only one was able to reach its target due to successful interception. The attack, which was apparently announced beforehand, was mainly symbolic and served to demonstrate Iran's power and influence in the region without escalating tensions. At the same time, Iranian authorities reiterated their threats to close the Strait of Hormuz, causing a brief disruption in the oil market and showcasing their ability to use strategic economic points as leverage. In order to maintain the fragile peace, it will be necessary for mediation efforts to continue and for a strong military presence to be maintained. The United States has played a crucial role in enforcing the ceasefire by utilising its diplomatic influence and military capabilities. Qatar has also played a significant role in facilitating communication between Iran, the U.S., and Israel and ensuring compliance is maintained. The U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet and the Al Udeid Air Base, both stationed in Bahrain, serve as important deterrents, and have even been repositioned in response to heightened tensions (Roomi, 2023). As a result, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and their affiliated proxy groups in Lebanon, Syria, Gaza, and Iraq have refrained from launching large-scale operations following the recent assassinations carried out by Israel. Yemen's Houthi rebels, backed by Iran, persist in launching missile and drone attacks on Israel and international shipping in the Red Sea. The Israeli Defense Forces remain on high alert, prepared to act if the ceasefire falters. A delicate balance is maintained through a combination of cautious military posturing, regional mediation efforts, and diplomatic pressure. The fragile equilibrium relies on avoiding missteps that could collapse the ceasefire and escalate hostilities beyond control. The situation remains volatile, with ongoing tensions and the potential for renewed conflict (Saleh & Kalin, 2025).

### **Implications:**

While there has not been a major war between Iran and Israel, the actions of Iran have greatly influenced Israel's strategic thinking. As a result, Israel has implemented its MABAM doctrine and updated its airpower tactics. According to Israeli press sources, their strike tactics in Syria have been modified in 2022 to counter the increased threat from Iranian air defences. It includes using larger formations to strike multiple targets simultaneously, which not only reduces the window of risk but also allows for better mutual support and warning against air defences. It also helps with verifying targets and assessing the success of bombing missions. Although the changes in doctrine and tactics have been successful so far, Israeli political leaders must now consider the broader trend towards a more contested environment (Dryden, 2023). The possibility of Israeli Air Force casualties in Syria may weaken the political will to continue MABAM strikes. While Israel can enhance its capabilities to suppress enemy air defences, this is only a partial solution. The more difficult decision for Israeli leaders is whether the gradual loss of freedom of manoeuvre for the IAF requires escalation to restore Israeli air dominance. If Israel chooses not to fly over Syria, they must understand the consequences for their deterrence. If Iran can limit the IAF's freedom of manoeuvre in the Levant, it is reasonable to assume they could also prevent Israeli airstrikes in Iran (Farnaz, Ronen & Eric, 2022).

### **Conflict Forecast: Iran, Israel, and the Future of War:**

Although Iran and Israel possess asymmetric military capabilities, both nations can execute limited strikes on each other's sovereign territories; however, they lack the capacity to conduct prolonged conventional military operations. Domestic political dynamics, international alliances, resource limitations, and logistical challenges will

serve as impediments to escalation for both parties. Nonetheless, these constraints will not hinder either side from perceiving conventional strikes against sovereign territories and assets as part of the evolving framework of their ongoing conflict. Both parties have motivations to sustain a sub-threshold conflict; however, this situation may evolve. If Israel decides, as appears probable, to substantially diminish Hizbullah's capabilities, it will present a conundrum for Tehran: it cannot afford to weaken its alliance with Hizbullah nor can it respond in a manner that might provoke Israel into a potentially disastrous escalation. Should Iran opt for escalation without securing significant support from another major state actor, its capacity to engage in a full-scale war against Israel will remain limited by its military capabilities and strategic objectives (McKenzie, 2024).

### **Key Recommendations to Avoid the forthcoming conflict:**

The recent strikes by Iran demonstrate a major change in their military strategy, indicating that they are willing to act more boldly and recklessly than previously thought. It demonstrates their growing belief in the strength of their military and their willingness to participate in confrontations that could escalate tensions in the area. As a result, it is necessary for regional and international parties to reassess their diplomatic and military approaches in order to effectively handle Unpredictable actions. In order to prevent potential conflicts between Iran and Israel, it is recommended to pursue direct or indirect negotiations to address critical issues such as Iran's nuclear program and regional security concerns. Additionally, implementing confidence-building measures such as establishing communication channels or reducing military activities can help improve relations. Regional discussions involving all parties, including Iran and Israel, should also be encouraged to address shared security concerns. Incentives for economic cooperation can also be explored as a way to reduce tensions. International organizations or mediators can play a role in facilitating dialogue and providing support. In addition, economic sanctions could be used to pressure both countries to seek a peaceful resolution. Furthermore, it is imperative that the international community, including the United Nations and other organizations, increases their involvement in the region to prevent any further escalation of violence. Maintaining open dialogue and communication channels between the two countries is crucial, and addressing the underlying reasons for the conflict should be a priority. Additionally, efforts towards disarmament and reducing militarization in the region should be encouraged and supported by the international community.

### **Conclusion**

The ongoing conflict between Iran and Israel has evolved from focusing solely on Iran's nuclear program to encompassing a wider range of issues such as military strategies, ideological differences, regional security concerns, and global economic interests. This multifaceted crisis has resulted in proxy battles, direct military involvement, and heightened tensions in key areas like the Strait of Hormuz. As a critical passage for global energy supplies, any disruption or closure of this vital waterway has significant implications for markets and maritime security, particularly for economies in Asia that heavily rely on energy imports. The participation of influential nations, specifically the United States, has posed as an additional obstacle in resolving the ongoing conflict. Although a current ceasefire has been agreed upon, it is only a temporary solution as underlying tension and conflicting interests continue to exist. The fate of the region relies on the success of diplomatic efforts and strategic restraint in overcoming extremist agendas and reactive militarism. The internal turmoil and international isolation of Iran, as well as the security concerns of Israel, leave the possibility of further escalation as a major concern.

The crisis serves as a reminder for Gulf states and the international community to prioritize investments in regional stability, diversify energy sources, and prepare for a more unpredictable global landscape. The ceasefire's longevity will rely on ongoing diplomacy, mutual deterrence, and controlling proxy actors, as the consequences of failure are high. However, deep-rooted mistrust between Iran and Israel and instability in the region make it challenging to anticipate the outcome of this fragile pause or the future of this volatile conflict.

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