
BEYOND THE BATTLEFIELD: EXPLORING THE RISING FLAMES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND ITS GLOBAL RIPPLE EFFECTS

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary conflict involving the United States, Israel, and Iran reflects the rapidly shifting geopolitical realities of the Middle East and their extensive consequences, globally. The military strikes in the beginning launched by Israel and supported by the US against Iran went beyond conventional warfare into economic, strategic, cyber, and humanitarian dimensions. This write-up examines the roots of the conflict in relation to Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities, regional proxy networks, and prolonged tensions with Western powers. It further analyses the political transition in Iran following the death of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the rise of Mojtaba Khamenei, raising concerns regarding future political stability.

The study also highlights the retaliatory escalation by Iran, causing global disruptions through the Strait of Hormuz and attacks on Gulf regions. Particular emphasis is given to the global ripple effect of the conflict, including disruptions in oil, instability in international trade and transportation, cyber warfare threats, and overall adverse impacts on global economies, especially India. It also stresses upon the humanitarian consequences of such geopolitical rivalries and concludes that sustainable global peace requires strategic cooperation and prioritization of human interests over narrow political gains.

Keywords: *Middle East Geopolitics, US-Israel-Iran Conflict, Strait of Hormuz, Cyber Warfare; Humanitarian Crisis, Global Trade Disruptions, Economic crisis.*

I. INTRODUCTION: THE BEGINNING OF THE TRIPARTITE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE U.S.A.-ISRAEL AND IRAN

On February 28, Israel launched a series of attacks on Iran, backed by the US. The strikes targeted multiple strategic locations, including Tehran, the capital of Iran, resulting in the death of the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 86. The military operation, named Operation Epic Fury¹, by the U.S. Department of Defense, jolted the economies of the Middle East as well as the whole world. The operation is claimed to be pre-emptive attack², planned for over several months rather than a sudden aggression. It followed the earlier Israel-Iran 12-day conflict³ began on 13 June 2025 with a ceasefire on 24 June. This indicates the persisting tensions amidst temporary diplomatic solutions.

A central contentious issue involving the attacks is the development of nuclear programs by Iran, despite being a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (1968). The United States and Israel raised concerns for a long period against this development and the use of ballistic missiles. Negotiations were also sought with the mediation of Oman, where Tehran agreed to halt the uranium enrichment process to the lowest level possible⁴ for making nuclear weapons. This was agreed to be done in exchange for the removal of sanctions imposed on it. However, Tehran refused to negotiate ballistic missiles, threatening Western interests of regional stability. Consequently, the cause is not isolated to nuclear weapons alone, but has different objectives. These were to limit Iran's missile capabilities, eliminate the security threat and save Iranians from cruelties through regime change with the ultimate aim of peace throughout the middle-east⁵.

II. THE KHAMENEI ERA

¹Phil Stewart, Parisa Hafezi and Menna AlaaElDin, "Israel and US Launch Strikes on Iran," Reuters, Feb. 28, 2026.

²Reuters, "Israel Says it Launched Pre-Emptive Attack Against Iran," Reuters, Feb. 28, 2026.

³The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (ed.), "12-Day War," *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.).

⁴Al Jazeera Staff, "US, Israel Bomb Iran: A Timeline of Talks and Threats Leading up to Attacks," Al Jazeera, Feb. 28, 2026.

⁵Kay Johnson, Christine Chen, Christina Anagnostopoulos, Estelle Shirbon, Kylie MacLellan, Natasa Bansagi, Zoe Law, Howard Goller, Vanessa Balintec and Lucy Craymer, "Iran Live: Slain Khamenei's Son is Iran's New Supreme Leader," Reuters, Mar. 9, 2026.

Since the 1979 inception of the Islamic Republic in Iran, under theocratic government, its late founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, served as a clerical ruler. He was succeeded by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who took up the position of the Supreme Leader of Iran. He significantly reshaped the network of proxy forces and regional allies, becoming an adversary to Western interests. At the same time, the economy suffered after the imposition of sanctions by the US and the UN, contributing to the fall of the currency and public protests. This further resulted in massacres, arrests and a blackout by the government, crushing the dissent. In the aftermath of his death from the Israeli strikes, his son Mojtaba Khamenei assumed the position of a successor and Supreme Leader of Iran. This raised questions about Iran's future political and strategic trajectories.

III. THE 'RETALIATION'

The US-Israel joint attacks triggered Iranian retaliation by launching missile attacks in Israel as well as several other Gulf States. This included the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia. The most significant development was the alleged closure of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran, a strategic maritime passage that accounts for approximately 20% of global oil supplies. The approach seems to disrupt oil prices and trade markets across the globe. Simultaneously, Hezbollah in Lebanon launched retaliatory rocket attacks in Northern Israel, triggering large-scale strikes in Beirut by Israel. The widening geographical scope of the conflict reflects the complexities of Middle Eastern geopolitics.

IV. IMPLICATIONS: TRADE, AIR, SECURITY

Iran is among the largest oil producers within the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, accounting for approximately four percent of the global oil supply. The conflict heavily disrupted energy supplies and shipping routes. Attacks were made in major oil producing areas, including Abu Dhabi, oil tankers of the UK and US in the Gulf region. Along with this, a power plant of Qatar Energy, an oil and gas company with the largest world production of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), was also attacked. The company also stopped the production of LNG and other related products as a result of attacks. As a result, oil production has been halted in some areas of Kurdistan in Iraq and other major gas fields in Israel. The Strait of Hormuz, accounting for about a fifth of the global oil supplies, was also hit by Iran.

All these developments caused instabilities in global energy markets, gravely hitting countries dependent on Gulf routes. India, the third-largest global oil importer with half of its LNG shipments transiting through the Strait of Hormuz, was impacted by three percent⁶ decline in Indian markets.

The conflict also affected global transportation, where major international airports in the UAE, Kuwait and Qatar were damaged due to the Iranian airstrikes. Aerospace in Abu Dhabi, Doha and Dubai were closed. Meanwhile, Jebel Ali Port in Dubai, accounting for thirty-six percent of Dubai's GDP⁷, paused their operations temporarily as a precautionary measure. These interventions caused severe disruptions in travelling for people as well as cargo.

Cyber security threats further complicated the situation. Cyber attacks erupted in Iran and Lebanon after hackers targeted various apps for malware activities, highlighting the increasing role of cyber warfare in modern conflicts.

V. FLUCTUATING INTERESTS AND HUMANITARIAN COST

Beyond these disruptions, the conflict has caused severe humanitarian consequences. Amidst the conflict, more than tens of thousands of civilians across different countries, including Israel, Palestine, Iran, the UAE, Lebanon, and Kuwait, have been affected. This violence led to critical concerns for a severe humanitarian crisis. The cost of war, as seen in previous conflicts too, is borne by ordinary citizens instead of the top decision-makers. The pattern remains constant, from World War I, World War II, the Israel-Palestine conflict, the Pakistan-Afghanistan conflict, to the present US-Israel and Iran conflict. These geopolitical rivalries have always caused mass human suffering.

This conflict not only signals the atrocities and avarice, but also the emergence of the horrors of the 20th century, which destroyed half of the world's resources. These transient uncertainties fear developing and underdeveloped countries the most, including India. For India, the necessity to strengthen national resilience and enhance capability looms large in the recent global developments. Though raising capabilities may not be confined to defense technologies, overall capabilities are demanded by the modern world demands. This entails human capital, channelizing human resources as assets for the nation, and investments in defensive artificial

⁶Vineet Sachdev and Florence Tan, "Iran Conflict and Global Markets," Reuters, Mar. 2026.

⁷Maha El Dahan and Andrew Mills, "Several Loud Blasts Heard Over Dubai, Doha on Second Day, Witnesses Say," Reuters, Mar. 1, 2026.

intelligence systems against the growing cyber security threats. This demonstrates that modern world challenges extend far beyond conventional warfare.

VI. CONCLUSION: THE ESSENCE

The escalations in the US-Israel and Iran conflict highlight the unpredictable nature of geopolitical instabilities in the Middle East. In the present world, full of inconsistencies, diplomatic play remains essential, but not sufficient without strategic vision and cooperation. The ultimate fundamental truth of geopolitical engagements reflects that narrow political interests often overshadow large-scale human interests. In the world of globalization, peace can be secured not only on military interventions, but also by prioritizing human security interests over casually-called “casualties.”