



Conflict and Cooperation: Understanding the Israel-America and Iran Geopolitical Triangle

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the evolving geopolitical conflict among Iran, Israel, and the United States, highlighting its transformation from ideological rivalry to active military confrontation in 2025–2026. It examines the structural drivers of hostility, including nuclear ambitions, regional dominance, and strategic mistrust, alongside the failure of diplomatic interventions. The study further evaluates the global economic repercussions, particularly disruptions in energy markets, trade flows, and rising inflationary pressures affecting both developed and developing economies. It also underscores the disproportionate impact on the Global South and the humanitarian consequences, including gendered vulnerabilities. The paper concludes that the conflict exposes deep flaws in the contemporary international security architecture and calls for renewed multilateral engagement and diplomatic frameworks to restore global stability.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Iran-Israel-US Conflict, Nuclear Diplomacy, Global Economy, Energy Security, International Relations, Global South, Humanitarian Crisis

Introduction

The Middle East has been among the many regions in the world with conflicting interests over the decades. But geopolitics between Iran, Israel and the United States is the new frontier in international relations in the 21st century. The ideology, nuclear armaments and control over the surrounding area cold war between these three countries has become a hostility in the year 2025 and 2026 too and has led to the hostilities being turned into an active hostility and combat. The initial overt military conflict happened on February 28, 2026 when the United States and Israel undertook a collective military operation known as Operation Epic Fury against Iran. The first operation of the operation Epic Fury was the assassination of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and has since evolved to become a multi-front war, which is already starting to deliver effects that will eventually reach the world, starting with Beijing, and continuing to Bangkok and Brussels and Bogota. This paper examines the structural factors that play out in the war between Iran, Israel and the United States, the effects of the war on the world politics, trade and economic activity and the foreign policy



failures that allowed the war to be left to spiral out of control. At the end of the article, it is concluded that as much as there exist very real security related justifications of the triangle of Iran, Israel and the United States, the outcomes caused by the triangle are a hindrance to the overall stability of the world, it challenges and undermines the international order of rules and places a disproportionate burden on countries who have had no or limited role in the conflict particularly in the Global South.

History Foundations The Triangle of Triumph based on distrust.

Hostility between the Iran and Israel began in 1979 following the completion of the Islamic Revolution that suddenly transformed the friendliness between the two nations into the hostility, with one party feeling that it is an ideological conflict, and the other one that it is a national security issue caused by the course that the Islamic Republic of Iran has taken. Islamic republic did not recognize Israel as a legit nation and Israel considers the ambition of Iran having primacy in the region and its growing nuclear program as being existential threats. As always the US has categorised the two as enemies of one another, since the hostages crisis between 1979-1981 the US has been the third party between the two nations and thus forming a strategic triangle of its own, which is naturally unstable.

The situation between Iran and Israel escalated into a major one with the discovery of the secret nuclear project in Iran in the year 2000. Even though the two nations have been faced with a temporary push button in the form of the JCPOA, negotiated in 2015, the unilateral exertion of the deal by the US in 2018 under President Donald Trump, canceled any remaining goodwill to the resolution. In reaction to these activities of the US, Iran started intensifying its uranium enrichment program and by early 2026, Iran had amassed about 440 kilograms of uranium purified to 60 percent, which with further enrichment would be sufficient to support about 10 nuclear bombs (Al Jazeera, 2026). Numerous diplomatic negotiation efforts including the latest negotiations mediated by Oman in February 2026 have failed to achieve a lasting agreement, Iran has been prepared to make concessions but the US, in turn, has apparently lacked trust in the intentions of Iran and has responded with the threat of military action rather than additional diplomatic patience (House of Commons Library, 2026).

The 2025-2026 Escalation Proxy to Full-Scale Conflict.



The 2026 war was not to be, it was initiated by the trauma of October 7, 2023 that caused an entire Israeli military campaign to annihilate what was termed as Iranian Axis of Resistance consisting of Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza, and other aligned rebels in Syria and Iraq. By 2025, as a result, the network of proxy forces serving it had been greatly reduced, which Iran had relied upon both to provide it with a buffer zone and as a deterrent. In retaliation, in April and then again in October 2024, Iran launched missiles directly at Israel. This was the first time that Iran had used such tactics in the entirety of the conflict, and was a clear sign that Iran was not going to use proxy forces anymore, but would directly confront Israel.

Israel launched the Twelve Day War against Iranian nuclear facilities at Natanz, Fordow and Isfahan and Iranian missile production facilities on June 24, 2025. A ceasefire negotiated by the United States brought the war to its end when Israel had managed to reverse the nuclear development program of Iran by up to two years. The ceasefire itself was however but a temporary halt and not a solution. The Iranian rial was stabilized and fell down. The inflation was high at more than 40 percent. Demonstrations across Iran broke out in December of 2025. President Trump actually started contemplating military intervention in Iran when the Regime later killed thousands of civilians in January of 2026. The changing balance between Washington and Tel Aviv had led to Iran being perceived as a powerless country and one that is divided internally by both nations as a chance to strike (as per the Encyclopedia Britannica, 2026).

Both the United States and the Israeli militaries seized such a chance on February 28, 2026. In the initial twelve hours of Operation Epic Fury, the U.S. and Israeli armies carried out close to 900 attacks on various Iranian targets and killed Khamenei in addition to destroying Iranian air defense systems, missile functions as well as command/control facilities. Iran reacted to such attacks with an unprecedented missile and drone bombing of U.S. military installations in the Gulf and the simultaneous invasion of all six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (ACLED, 2026). The United States ended up spending approximately 3.7 billion unexpectedly during the initial twelve days of the war (Al Jazeera, 2026).

The World Economy aftershock Trade, Energy, and Growth.

The Iran, Israel and the United States should be carefully analyzed based on their activities and effects on their global economy and the energy behind these actions as they affect one another. Iran,



which is just one clear example, has said it plans its response to the war with Israel as including a strategy, by which it interdicts all of its trade including energy by attacking all of its energy infrastructure (most notably the Strait of Hormuz, through which at the time approximately 20% of the global energy and 20% of LNG in the world had passed each year until 2025 (World Economic Forum 2026). Because the capacity of any commercial shipping to traverse the Strait of Hormuz has been reduced, the cost of Brent crude oil is now about 120 per barrel (up about 15 percent since the first day this fighting began) and will likely rise to 150 per barrel in the next 5-6 months as long as the fighting persists as it has been analyzed by Capital Economics (Al Jazeera 2026).

Europe is also specifically exposed in the current situation due to Iranian attacks on Qatar that the country had to halt LNG production in its 77 million ton facility at Ras Laffan and in the first half of the 2026 cold winter because European countries had been storing gas at only approximately 30 percent of its normal level during the winter months, before the conflict. The IMF has determined that a 10 percent increase in the price of energy will be equivalent to an additional 0.5 percent of the global inflation (IMF quoted in CFR 2026).

Asia turns out to be the area that was affected negatively by the war the most. About 80 percent of the shipments of Qatar LNG are shipped to Asian nations (China, India, Japan and South Korea) using the Strait of Hormuz. Due to the high reliance of India on the Middle East oil, the rate of inflation has gone up and the rupee still continues to fall. The governments of several South and Southeast Asian countries have shut down schools, implemented four-day working weeks and temporary rationing of fuel based on the anticipated price level of oil (Time,2026). According to the Asian Development Bank, interruption of air and shipping will immediately affect overall cost of production in the world at large at a significant rate and may possibly reduce the growth rate of most of the Southeast Asian economies by half based on the duration that the conflict will take place.

The war is taking place at a period of growing vulnerability in the world because of the newly developed global tariff framework (10-15% global import tariff framework implemented in 2025) and the Middle East conflict loop might initiate dual stagflationary supply shocks across the globe because of higher energy prices and reduced commerce. The economies of the Global South are already in fiscal difficulties caused by COVID-19 and have other difficulties of possible debt crises



in case the Central Banks of the developed countries raise the interest rates to fight inflation thus restricting the funds that can be offered to the developing economies (Brookings,2026).

The Cost of Missed Opportunities and the Failure of Diplomacy.

The worst part of this conflict is that it could have been prevented: in February 2026, Oman foreign minister meditated indirect U.S.Iran negotiations, and they were going well, or so it appeared, when they collapsed. Iran had shown readiness to curtail its nuclear ambition, but it seemed that president Trump was not persuaded by the deal and instead turned it down. According to scholars at the Brookings Institution, reasonable minds might differ with regards to whether the diplomatic solutions have been exhausted, but they did observe that there was indeed movement in the direction of a resolution through the Oman-mediated process. (Brookings, 2026.) Other states responded to the war by disintegrating. In instances, Russia denounced the attacks as destabilising however, it did not want material involvement. The United Kingdom criticized Iranian retaliation yet it did not engage militarily. The U.S. was allowed to use Diego Garcia and RAF Fairford to conduct defensive operations somewhat in the United Kingdom. France and Germany came up with a combined statement asking the diplomacy to be revived and Spain refused to allow U.S. air bases. This made President Trump issue threats of trade sanctions on Spain, an action that highlighted most of the transatlantic tensions that this conflict has spawned . Turkey vocalized against military action yet it mentioned that an Israeli-led regional post-conflict order will not serve the Turkish strategic interest (Brookings, 2026).

Lastly, structural injustices have been established in the international system due to this conflict. The World Economic Forum says that the U.S has imposed unequal demands on the same nations on which it trades and where it seeks to be strategic partners, (WEF, 2026). Iranian missiles are hitting many Gulf states that had spent years to develop economically autonomous states and develop normalised relations with Israel. This is a violation of the security arrangement that they had agreed on. Moreover, Saudi Arabia, which had been said to have lobbied the Trump administration on the campaign, has admitted that long term wars would have the drastic effect on the global economic stability.

Human and Gender Aspects of the Crisis.



We usually fail to take a keen interest in the effect of war on women, children and the civilians as they are the most affected. The Lebanese displacement of hundreds of thousands, the killing of more than 2,000 solely in the first weeks of fighting in Iran, Lebanon, and Israel, and the food and fuel deficiencies that may turn into severe humanitarian crises in other Gulf states heavily reliant on the imported food supply have been caused by the 2026 conflict. Gulf Cooperation Council countries are importing between 80-90 percent of their food by sea, Iranian attack of port infrastructure has put forward the risk of introducing new gaps into the already vulnerable supply chain, which increases food insecurity of millions of Gulf nationals that depend on food imports (Time, 2026).

There is a gendered aspect of the internal crisis in Iran. Most of the leaders who planned the Woman, Life, Freedom protests in the Iranian country in 2022 were the same individuals who organized the 2025-2026 protests. Following the repression of the protests through uncontrollable violence by government staff, many Iranians (tens of thousands, many of them being young women who demanded a political freedom) were killed in January, 2026. These murders of these young men and women are an illustration of how the international community has failed to respond sufficiently to the oppressive state apparatus and it has developed a rationale to the military intervention in February 2026. This military intervention that was expected to liberate Iranian women has caused military bombardments, mass displacement, and economic destruction in the country to the average Iranians.

Conclusion

The Iranian, Israeli, and the U.S. geopolitical triangle is in crisis, and there is a need to reexamine the scenario. Although the military action against Iran has been effective to destroy its nuclear program, assassinate its top leaders and maim its response capabilities to attackers, the military action fails to give any visible strategic benefits. The incapacity to overthrow the Iranian regime or initiate a popular revolt due to the assassination of its ruler has practically produced an open-ended war scenario among three great powers that has no obvious way out diplomatically. The energy prices and the trade disruption in the world caused by the military campaigns against Iran have caused high costs of energy, the possibility of recessions, a threat to food supply, and destruction of diplomatic links of different states, all these factors show the interdependency of security, economic



stability, diplomatic relations, and human rights. The oil and trade shock affects the most economically vulnerable nations first, even before any other state .

Finally, the case of these three nations reveals that the post-World War II model of the international security system that relies on the joint effort, treaties and diplomacy is being stretched to the brink of failure, or even to its breaking point. Hence the rebuilding of that structure by renewed multilateral nuclear agreements, ceasefire agreements or, a regional security dialogue that involves all stakeholders is not just important. It has to happen to enable the global economic recovery, provide a stable state in the political system of most countries and assist in protecting innocent civilians whose lives were ruined by the actions taken without their contribution.

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