

IRAN-ISRAEL CONFLICT: INTERNATIONAL RELATION

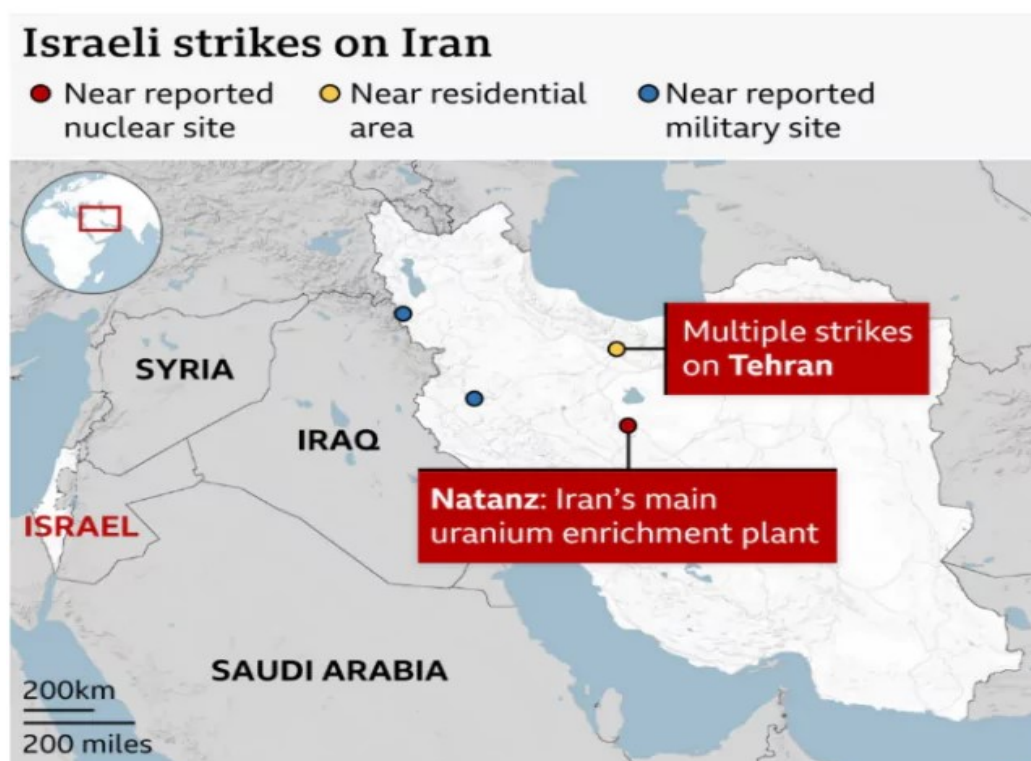
NEWS: Israel strikes Iran: Old conflict, new front

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

Israel launched 'Operation Rising Lion' to strike Iran's nuclear sites after an IAEA censure, escalating tensions into open conflict. This has serious geopolitical, energy, and strategic implications for India, especially concerning Chabahar Port, INSTC, and energy security.

1. Operation Rising Lion and Its Objectives

- Israel launched "Operation Rising Lion" in June 2025, aimed at crippling Iran's nuclear capabilities.
- The operation targeted key Iranian nuclear facilities (like Natanz), IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) bases, and nuclear scientists.
- Notable casualties included Hossein Salami (IRGC chief) and two top nuclear scientists.
- The attack was seen as a preemptive strike to prevent Iran from achieving nuclear weapon capability, following the IAEA's censure of Iran.



2. Iran's Retaliatory Response – Operation True Promise 3

- Iran launched missile and drone strikes in retaliation, branding it “Operation True Promise 3”.
- The response highlighted Iran's readiness to engage militarily, but no major Israeli casualties were reported.
- The operation underscored Iran's policy of asymmetric retaliation through proxy and missile warfare.

3. Iran's Nuclear Program and Non-Compliance

- The IAEA revealed Iran was enriching uranium to 60%, nearing the 90% weapons-grade threshold.
- Iran was found to have undeclared nuclear material at Lavisan-Shian, Varamin, and Turquzabad, pointing to a past clandestine weapons program.
- This non-compliance triggered a censure resolution by the IAEA's Board on June 12, 2025 — the first in two decades — paving the way for Israel's justification for attack.

4. Israel–Iran Relations: A Historical Timeline

- Pre-1979: Iran and Israel had covert strategic cooperation, especially under the Shah, through intelligence sharing and oil deals.
- Post-1979: The Islamic Revolution transformed Iran into a theocratic regime antagonistic to Israel, labeling it the "Little Satan."
- 1980s: Despite hostility, Israel aided Iran during the Iran–Iraq War via the Iran-Contra affair, showing pragmatism.
- 1990s–2020s: The relationship shifted into a shadow war — involving cyberattacks (Stuxnet), covert assassinations of scientists, and proxy battles.
- 2020s: Escalation into open conflict, culminating in Operation Rising Lion.

5. Israel's Strategic Justification for the Attack

- Israel adheres to the Begin Doctrine — preemptive strikes on enemy nuclear programs (e.g., Osirak 1981, Syria 2007).
- Citing Iran's enrichment surge and IAEA violations, Israel argued that diplomacy had failed and it needed to act.
- Domestic factors also played a role: PM Netanyahu used the operation to consolidate political support amid corruption allegations.

6. Iran's Proxy Network and Retaliatory Threat

- Iran backs Hezbollah (Lebanon), Hamas (Palestine), and Houthis (Yemen), all hostile to Israel.

- A regional escalation is feared, with Iran potentially activating these proxies to strike Israeli and Western interests.
- Iran also has cyber and drone warfare capabilities to attack critical infrastructure.

7. Role of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

- IAEA is the global nuclear watchdog, monitoring nuclear facilities and ensuring compliance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
- It confirmed Iran's violation of its safeguards and played a key role in diplomatic attempts before the conflict.
- Its credibility is at stake if states bypass it through unilateral military actions.

8. Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and Iran

- NPT is designed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.
- Iran is a signatory, but non-compliance threatens its status and could lead to its withdrawal, triggering a nuclear arms race.

- Israel, India, and Pakistan are not NPT signatories but possess nuclear weapons.



9. Risks of Nuclear Fallout

- Strikes on nuclear facilities like Natanz and Fordow risked radioactive leaks, which could cause widespread disaster.
- There's precedent: the Stuxnet virus showed the vulnerability of Iran's nuclear systems to sabotage.
- If Iran exits the NPT, there will be no international inspections, making its nuclear status opaque.

10. Regional and Global Geopolitical Implications

- **Instability in West Asia:** Iran's response may involve attacks across Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and the Gulf, escalating tensions.
- **Global Oil Crisis:** Iran could block the Strait of Hormuz — a chokepoint for 20% of global oil — disrupting supply and increasing global inflation.

- **US–Iran–Israel Dynamics:** Despite initial hesitations, US support for Israel post-attack increases chances of deeper military involvement.
- **China’s Mediator Role at Risk:** China’s 2023 Iran–Saudi détente deal is undermined; it faces pressure as a top oil importer from Iran.

11. India’s Complex Diplomatic Position

- **With Israel:**
 - Major defence partner: Heron drones, Barak-8 missiles, surveillance systems.
 - Strategic tech collaboration in AI, agriculture, and homeland security.
 - India–Israel–UAE axis growing under Indo-Abrahamic framework.
- **With Iran:**
 - Chabahar Port: Critical for India’s trade bypassing Pakistan and accessing Central Asia.
 - INSTC: Iran is central to this corridor linking India to Russia and Europe via road-rail-sea routes.
 - Energy partner (pre-sanctions): Iran offered discounted oil and rupee-based trade.
 - Cultural and diplomatic bridge in Islamic West Asia.



12. Implications and Strategic Risks for India

- **Balancing Act:** Open support to either Israel or Iran risks alienating the other and could affect India's West Asia diplomacy.
- **Impact on Chabahar and INSTC:** Tensions may stall infrastructure and trade corridor ambitions.
- **Energy Price Volatility:** Any disruption in oil flow through Hormuz will hit India's economy hard — potentially raising its oil import bill by \$15 billion.
- **Diaspora Risks:** ~9 million Indians in the Gulf may be at risk during conflict, requiring contingency evacuation plans.
- **Defence Dependence:** Indo-Israel defence projects could be disrupted due to prolonged war or sanctions spillovers.

13. Way Forward for India

- **Neutral Diplomacy:** India must avoid taking sides and focus on de-escalation, promoting multi-alignment.
- **Leverage Multilateral Platforms:** Use BRICS, SCO, and I2U2 to push for peaceful resolution.
- **Operationalize Chabahar & INSTC:** Speed up use of Chabahar to retain influence in Iran despite conflict.
- **Diversify Energy Basket:** Seek US waivers for limited Iran oil imports, while sourcing from new partners (e.g., Brazil, Guyana).
- **Localize Defence:** Accelerate self-reliance in defence to hedge against supply shocks.
- **Evacuation Protocols:** Maintain readiness to evacuate citizens and secure trade routes.

Conclusion

India faces a tough diplomatic challenge in navigating the Israel–Iran conflict. While maintaining ties with both sides, it must safeguard its strategic interests — Chabahar, energy security, diaspora safety, and defence partnerships — without compromising on neutrality and long-term regional stability.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/israel-strikes-iran-old-conflict-new-front-10065568/>