



Geopolitical Analysis Of The Iran-Israel Conflict And Its Implications For Iranian Air Transport

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Abstract: This research examines the geopolitical analysis of the Iranian-Israeli conflict and its direct and indirect repercussions on the Iranian air transport sector, one of the sectors most affected by regional tensions and international sanctions.

The research is based on the premise that the ongoing escalation in this conflict is not limited to military or political dimensions, but extends to civilian infrastructure, particularly air transport, which is affected by regional security, economic pressures, and cyber-attacks.

The historical and strategic context of the hostile relations between the two sides is analyzed, drawing on Arab and international sources, to highlight how the tools of this conflict have evolved, from Iranian support for resistance movements to mutual threats via cyberspace.

The study also examined the impact of Western sanctions on Iranian airlines, including restrictions on access to spare parts and modern aircraft, and their effect on the safety of the air fleet.

It documented changes in air routes, particularly after high-profile incidents such as the downing of a Ukrainian airliner in 2020, which led to a reassessment of Iranian airspace by major international airlines. The cyber dimensions of the conflict were also analyzed, as cyberattacks targeted Iranian airports and air navigation systems.

The study concluded that Iranian air transport is facing a multidimensional crisis resulting from this regional conflict, and that overcoming this crisis requires technical and diplomatic solutions and alternative international partnerships. The study concluded with recommendations, most notably the need to neutralize the aviation sector from political conflicts, develop a defensive cyber infrastructure, and enhance

cooperation with international aviation organizations.

Keywords: Analysis, Conflict, Iranian-Israeli, Air Transport.

INTRODUCTION: Section One:

Theoretical Framework of the Research

Introduction

Iranian-Israeli relations have witnessed a sharp escalation in tensions since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. The conflict between the two sides has become characterized by an indirect nature based on conflicting strategic interests and mutual security threats.

The core of the dispute revolves around Iran's political system and its efforts to enhance its regional influence, versus Israel's insistence on curbing Iranian ambitions, particularly about developing its nuclear program and strengthening alliances with non-state actors such as Hezbollah and Hamas.

This conflict has escalated in recent years, from an indirect level to semi-public confrontations. The most notable of these was the attack launched by Iran in April 2024 against Israel using more than 300 drones and ballistic missiles, known as "Operation True Promise." Israel responded with direct military coordination with the United States.

In June 2025, Israel launched Operation Rising Lion, a large-scale air campaign targeting nuclear and military facilities deep inside Iran. Iran responded with Operation True Promise 3, a missile and air strike targeting Israeli territory, resulting in deaths, injuries, and significant damage to infrastructure. Civilian air traffic between the two sides was also almost completely disrupted as a result of this escalation, with Iran temporarily closing its airspace in several areas. At the same time, Israel declared a comprehensive air embargo on civilian and military flights.

This reflects the extent of the impact this conflict has had on the aviation sector, not only bilaterally, but also on regional and international air navigation in general, in light of Israeli proposals to impose a no-fly zone over Iranian airspace.

Hence, the importance of this research, which seeks to understand the nature of the relationship between political-military escalation and its repercussions on Iranian air traffic, in light of military and technological interventions, particularly cyber, which have become strategic tools in this conflict.

First: Research Problem

To what extent does the escalating conflict between Iran and Israel affect Iranian airspace, both

domestically and in its international air relations?

Second: Research Hypothesis:

The more intense the conflict between Iran and Israel, the more severe the negative repercussions will be on the Iranian air transport sector, including its infrastructure, airspace, airlines, and international routes.

Third: Research Objectives:

1. Study the repercussions of the Iranian-Israeli conflict on Iranian civil and commercial aviation.
2. Evaluate the impact of military targeting and cyber attacks on Iranian air navigation.
3. Analyzing sovereign decisions related to closing Iranian airspace during periods of tension.

Fourth: The Importance of the Research

The importance of this research stems from two interconnected dimensions:

1. Political Importance: The research addresses the relationship between Iranian national security and Israeli interventions, and their impact on the country's stability.
2. Geographical and Geopolitical Importance: It highlights the importance of Iran's airspace within the international aviation network and the impact of the conflict on regional and global air connectivity, which could lead to increased air isolation.

Fifth: Research Methodology

This research relies on the geopolitical approach to understand the dimensions of the conflict from the perspective of geopolitical influences, in conjunction with a spatial analysis of air traffic and the diversion of air routes resulting from tension. It also draws on an analysis of international documents, statements, and declarations from global and local civil aviation organizations, and an analysis of the content of announced military and cyber attacks to understand the actual impact on Iranian airspace.

Sixth: Concepts included in the research:

The basic concepts of each research help shape the theoretical and cognitive framework for analyzing the phenomenon under study. The most prominent of these concepts addressed in the research are:

1. Geopolitical conflict:

Regional and international competition in which geography is used as a means to achieve influence and hegemony, encompassing military, economic, and symbolic dimensions between the parties to the conflict (Cohen, 2003).

2. Air transport:

The movement of people and goods through airspace by civil and military airlines. This sector is directly affected by political and security conditions (IATA, 2022).

Chapter Two

The Geopolitical Dimensions of the Iranian-Israeli Conflict

The Iranian-Israeli conflict is one of the most complex and intertwined conflicts in the Middle East. It is not limited to military or ideological dimensions alone, but rather extends to encompass a broad geopolitical struggle for influence and regional hegemony. Tehran has adopted an anti-Israeli discourse and considered support for the Palestinian cause part of its political doctrine. At the same time, Israel has sought to contain this influence through security and political alliances with Arab states and the West (Al-Shihabi, 2020, p. 214).

This conflict has deepened in recent decades through competition for spheres of influence and the exchange of indirect attacks across arenas such as Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, within the framework of what is known as the "war between wars." This is what Al-Messiri referred to in his analysis of the nature of the Zionist state and the dynamics of regional conflict (Al-Messiri, 2006, p. 489).

Therefore, the military escalation witnessed in the region in April 2024 gave this conflict geopolitical dimensions that affect security. Regionally and internationally, particularly regarding the security of air corridors, it was considered that this escalation reflects strategic shifts in the regional balance of power and directly affects freedom of navigation and the safety of civil aviation (Al-Ahram Center, 2024, p. 6).

The geopolitical dimensions of the Iranian-Israeli conflict can be studied as follows:

First: The struggle for regional influence

The Iranian-Israeli conflict represents one of the most prominent geopolitical conflicts in the Middle East, transcending its military nature to encompass a strategic competition over shaping the regional order. Israel seeks to establish itself as a dominant power in the region by containing Iranian influence, while Tehran is working to strengthen its "axis of resistance" project, which includes its allies in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen (Mansour, 2023, p. 44).

The Middle East Institute has indicated that Israel's success in dealing a decisive blow to Iran would restructure the balance of power in the region in its favor, potentially opening the way for large-scale international interventions (Middle East Institute, 2024, p. 13).

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Third: The Historical Dimensions of the Conflict

The roots of Iranian-Israeli tension go back to the Islamic Revolution in 1979, when Tehran severed relations with Tel Aviv, declared its support for the Palestinian resistance, and considered Israel the "Little Satan" (Ehteshami & Zweiri, 2007, p. 91).

Relations between the two countries were relatively good, with Iran supplying Israel with approximately 40% of its oil needs. However, following the establishment of the Islamic Republic, hostility became part of the Iranian political doctrine, particularly with Tehran's support for movements like Hezbollah and Hamas (Takeyh, 2010, p. 66).

Fourth: Ideology and the Regional Role

The conflict between the two sides is embodied in its ideological dimension. While Iran seeks to spread its Shiite political model, Israel defends its Zionist project as a Jewish state. This disparity led to direct and indirect clashes between the two sides in multiple arenas, most notably Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq (Alfoneh, 2019, p. 28). Iran also exploited the external conflict to mobilize internally and confront political and economic challenges, while Israel relied on American and Western support to enhance its capabilities to deter Tehran (Barzegar, 2022, p. 12).

Fifth: Transformations in the International Environment

The Abraham Accords, signed by Israel with Arab countries in 2020, contributed to changing the structure of regional alliances, further isolating Iran (Friedman, 2021, p. 51). Tehran also strengthened its relations with Russia, which viewed the Iranian nuclear program as ostensibly a peaceful project and continued its military support for Tehran, particularly in building the Bushehr reactor and arming it with advanced defense systems such as the S-300 missiles (Katz, 2020,

p. 73). Sixth: The Strait of Hormuz and Airspace as Pressure Tools

The Strait of Hormuz is a vital point in energy security, as more than 20% of global oil trade passes through it. Any disruption to navigation through it due to the conflict between Iran and Israel could create a global energy crisis (OPEC Annual Report, 2023, p. 29). In April 2024, air traffic was disrupted due to the mutual bombing, resulting in the closure or suspension of air traffic in the affected airspace.

Several countries (Iran, Israel, Jordan, Iraq, and Syria), and most airlines have stopped operating flights through disputed airspace (FlightGlobal, 2024, p. 5).

Section Three

Iranian Air Transport in the Shadow of the Iran-Israel Conflict

Iranian air transport is one of the most prominent strategic sectors affected by the Iran-Israel conflict, due to its direct connection to national security and the national economy. Since the escalation of regional tensions, this sector has become vulnerable to military operations and cyber attacks, in addition to severe economic sanctions that limit its ability to maintain and modernize. The crisis has been exacerbated by restrictions on Iran's access to spare parts and modern technologies, resulting in the obsolescence of its air fleet and a decline in service efficiency.

Security threats in airspace have also led to disruptions in regional navigation and the suspension of some flights. Iranian air transport has thus become an example of the geopolitical repercussions imposed by the conflict on vital infrastructure. This reality necessitates an examination of the geographical, security, and economic dimensions associated with this complex problem.

First: An Overview of the Iranian Air Transport Sector

Iran Air, the national airline, was founded in 1962. Its main airport is located in the capital, Tehran, under the name Imam Khomeini International Airport. The sector played a prominent role in connecting Iran to the outside world via 55 airports in 28 countries (Jafar, 2020, p. 44).

This period witnessed a relative boom in air travel until international sanctions began to be imposed on Iran, significantly impacting operational processes.

In 2025, Israel launched a large-scale attack on Iranian nuclear and military sites, including senior leaders and sensitive programs. This prompted Iran to launch hundreds of ballistic missiles, which were intercepted with the support of the United States and other countries (N.N.C. Agency, 2025).

Iran partially closed its airspace after being subjected to air attacks in June 2025, especially in the west and center of the country, leading to the suspension of flights in those areas, while Tehran Airport and some airports such as Chabahar and Zahedan remained open (Al-Amiri, 2025, p. 77).

Second: The Impact of Western Sanctions on Iranian Aviation

Western sanctions have led to a real crisis in the Iranian aviation sector, manifested in:

1. Sanctions prohibit the supply of official spare parts, forcing airlines to rely on used parts or the black market, which has led to a rise in accident rates. An official report estimated that nearly half of the civilian fleet is out of service due to a lack of maintenance (BBC Arabic, 2023).

2. Reliance on aircraft such as the Fokker 100 and Boeing MD-80, which pose a challenge to aviation safety due to their high operating costs and difficulty in maintaining them.

3. Several European countries have banned flights by companies such as Mahan Air and Iran Air, reducing Iran's access to global markets and leading to a decline in passenger numbers (Reuters, 2024).

4. Impact of fuel quality, despite Iran's domestic fuel production, which negatively impacts aircraft efficiency and safety (Al-Jazeera, 2024, p. 45).

5. High risk of accidents, which leads to an accumulation of technical problems and a lack of proper maintenance. Tragic accidents have occurred, including the helicopter crash of President Ebrahim Raisi in 2024, which resulted in significant casualties (Tasnim News Agency, 2024).

Physical attacks on the ground and in the air include armed operations that have downed several drones. Israel has also attempted to establish secret drone bases in strategic Iranian areas (New York Times, 2025).

Fourth: Israeli threats to Iranian airspace:

On June 13, 2025, Israel launched extensive airstrikes using advanced F-35 fighter jets, targeting the Natanz nuclear reactor and Revolutionary Guard bases, destroying vital infrastructure and killing commanders and scientists (Times of Israel, 2025).

The Mossad established a secret drone base near Tehran to carry out precision strikes against guided missile launchers, in addition to disrupting Iranian air defenses through covert commando operations (Haaretz, 2025).

These attacks have led to the suspension of civilian and military air traffic in neighboring countries, such as Iraq and Syria, for fear of further military escalation (BBC

News, 2025).

Chapter Four:

Future Scenarios of the Conflict and Their Impact on Air Navigation

With the ongoing tension between Iran and Israel and the escalation of direct and indirect confrontations, the need to anticipate potential future scenarios of the conflict and their implications for the security and safety of air navigation in the region becomes clear. Iran's strategic location as a vital air corridor increases the sensitivity of any security developments, especially in light of threats to strike nuclear facilities or Iranian responses through its regional proxies.

The future spectrum ranges from continued escalation to a full-scale regional war, or a move toward relative calm through international mediation. Each of these scenarios carries direct repercussions for Iranian airspace, in terms of its closure, the imposition of international restrictions, or the diversion of air routes. Therefore, this chapter examines the most significant future possibilities and their geopolitical and economic implications for the Iranian civil aviation sector. These scenarios can be studied as follows:

First: The Scenario of Comprehensive Military Escalation

The scenario of comprehensive military escalation indicates that the conflict between Iran and Israel will slide into a large-scale regional confrontation, involving mutual attacks and continued escalation, potentially leading to the outbreak of a multi-front war involving several countries in the Middle East. According to Al-Atoum (2021, p. 203), the escalating tension in the Gulf is preparing the ground for a comprehensive explosion that could impact trade and aviation throughout the region. 1. Comprehensive escalation in the region: Iran may enter into a direct conflict with Israel, extending to fronts such as Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, with the potential to target the Strait of Hormuz, threatening international energy and navigation security (Hamid, 2020, p. 175).

2. A series of attacks and responses: This would likely begin with Iranian strikes or strikes through its proxies, such as the Houthis, followed by a violent Israeli response, opening up broad fronts and affecting civil and military aviation (Al-Dhamin, 2022, p. 114).

3. Closing the Strait of Hormuz: As a strategic option for Iran, naval mines may be planted, paralyzing the movement of commercial ships and aircraft over the Gulf (Al-Ali, 2019, p. 91).

1. A multi-front war: This includes targeting American bases and Gulf ports, prompting the United States to intervene militarily, escalating the conflict and its

impact on airspace (Al-Hashemi, 2023, p. 60).

2. Internal repercussions in Iran: Escalation could destabilize the Iranian political system and increase protests, exacerbating security instability and affecting the safety of air navigation in Iranian airspace (Al-Anzi, 2020, p. 82).

3. A hypothetical scenario: This begins with the launching of missiles from Iraq toward Israel, followed by attacks on targets in the Gulf, leading to a regional war that disrupts international airspace (Orient Institute, 2024, p. 37).

Second: The proxy war scenario

This scenario assumes an indirect conflict, in which regional powers are used as tools for escalation between Iran and Israel without engaging in confrontation. Iran relies on proxies such as Hezbollah and the Houthis, while Israel responds with preemptive strikes.

1. Use of proxies: Iran relies on its armed proxies in Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq to carry out operations against Israeli interests, leading to airstrikes that impact aviation safety in those regions (Al-Taie, 2021, p. 198).

2. Limited Israeli responses: These include assassinations and airstrikes against Iranian sites, disrupting air traffic over conflict zones (Ali, 2022, p. 103).

3. The potential for conflict escalation: Any loss of control over proxies could lead to open war, exposing regional airspace to significant risks (Murad, 2023, p. 76).

4. Cyber operations: The increasing use of cyberattacks as part of the confrontation, which could impact global air navigation systems (Al-Saadi, 2023, p. 90).

Third: The mutual threats scenario:

This scenario includes several expected developments:

1. All-out war: Beginning with an Israeli strike on Iranian nuclear facilities, Iran responds with missiles and drones, leading to To paralyze civil aviation over active fronts (Al-Yasiri, 2024, p. 119).

2. A war of attrition: Continued intermittent strikes disrupt commercial and military air routes (Qandil, 2022, p. 141).

3. Limited confrontation and temporary calm: This may lead to a de-escalation with the support of international parties to avoid regional collapse (Abdullah, 2023, p. 63).

4. Involvement of international parties: such as the United States, which would expand the conflict and expose international navigation to direct risks (Jaber, 2021, p. 71).

5. Unconventional threats: such as the establishment of cells inside Israel, or the launching of terrorist attacks that affect the security of airports and aircraft (Al-Moussawi, 2020, p. 92).

6. Political and security repercussions: Continued tension could lead to the collapse of regional systems, exacerbating air security crises in the Middle East (Kazemi, 2022, p. 88).

CONCLUSIONS

1. The Iranian-Israeli conflict is not understood solely within its military framework, but rather as an ideological and strategic struggle to reshape the regional order.

2. The geopolitical impacts of the conflict include air navigation and energy, reflecting the fragility of the region's security and economic structures.

3. International alliances played a pivotal role in strengthening the positions of both sides, whether through Russian support for Iran or Western support for Israel.

4. The war between Iran and Israel affected air navigation in the region in general and Iran's regional states in particular.

5. The Iranian air transport sector suffers from aging aircraft, which could cause humanitarian disasters in the future.

6. There are significant economic impacts on both Iran and Israel due to the closure of airports and the disruption of the economic life of their neighboring countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish regional mechanisms to contain tensions between Iran and Israel to limit the escalation that threatens regional and international security and global economic corridors.

2. Activate the role of international organizations, such as the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency, to limit nuclear escalation and enhance oversight of sensitive programs. 3. Reopen indirect communication channels between the stakeholders to mitigate the effects of the war on air navigation and vital energy corridors.

4. Develop a national policy for maintaining the Iranian air fleet, relying on domestic technology.

5. Activate regional agreements and treaties with neutral countries to secure Iranian airspace in particular and the region in general.

6. Invest in small and medium-sized aircraft manufactured locally or through partnerships with East Asian countries and China.

7. Improve the cybersecurity of Iranian airports and airlines to ensure their safety and sustainability.

8. Prepare emergency plans for air navigation during crises.

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