

Roundtable: The US-Israel_Iran Conflict: Scenarios, Risks, and Regional Implications

The conflict between Iran, United States, and Israel in 2026 represents one of the most serious security crises in modern history, the direct escalation occurred at the turn of February and March 2026. The immediate trigger was a series of coordinated American-Israeli strikes against Iranian military targets, justified as an effort to prevent further development of Iran's missile and nuclear capabilities. The attacks targeted infrastructure belonging to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), ballistic missile depots, and facilities connected to nuclear research. Iran responded by describing the operation as an act of aggression and launched a large-scale retaliatory campaign against Israeli and American targets across the region.

Iran carried out ballistic missiles, drones, and attacks carried out through the region. Israel continued conducting airstrikes against Iranian positions and Tehran-backed infrastructure, while the United States strengthened its military presence in the Persian Gulf and launched operations aimed at protecting maritime trade routes. A crucial aspect of the conflict was the Strait of Hormuz, the strategic waterway between Iran and Oman through which approximately one-fifth of global oil trade passes. Iran repeatedly threatened to close the strait and attempted to pressure the United States and its allies through attacks on tankers and commercial vessels.

As a consequence many shipping companies reduced operations in the area or began using longer and significantly more expensive alternative routes. Several tankers were damaged in drone and missile attacks, while others suspended operations in the Persian Gulf entirely. The oil crisis heavily affected many countries around the world. Supply disruptions and market uncertainty caused a sharp increase in energy prices.

During the spring of 2026, the price of Brent crude oil repeatedly exceeded 100 dollars per barrel, while fears emerged that prices could rise even further in the event of a complete blockade of the strait. Rising oil prices subsequently contributed to higher fuel costs, transportation expenses, and consumer prices worldwide.

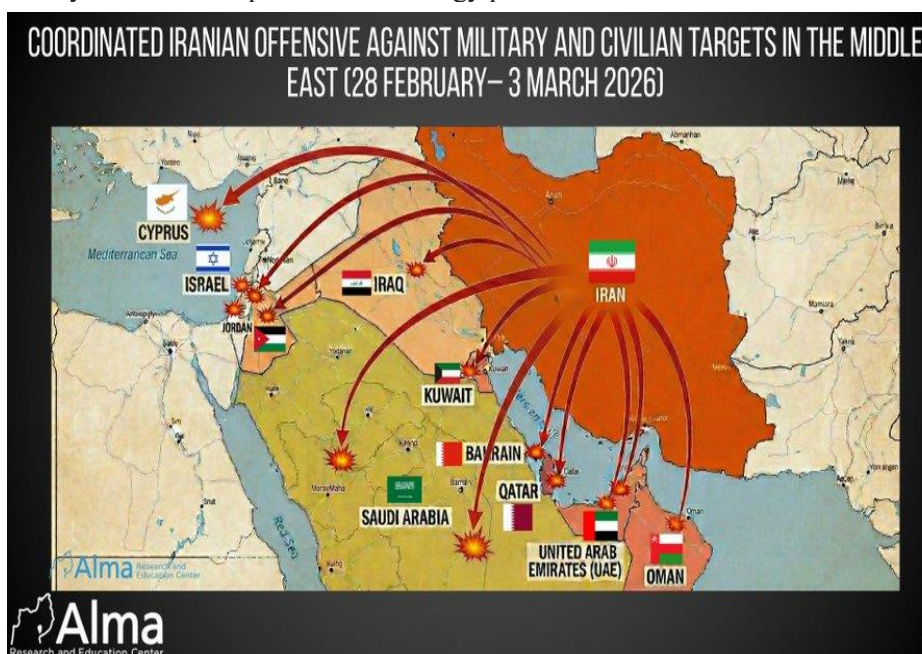


Fig 1: Iranian offensive against military and civilian targets in the middle east, Source: Alma



Fig 2: Israeli army's attack in southern Lebanon during 13-24 March, Source: Anadolu Agency

Negotiations between the United States and Iran are currently in an active but cautious phase. Both sides are discussing a temporary framework agreement aimed at reducing tensions and opening the door for broader talks about Iran's nuclear program. While President Donald Trump has recently expressed optimism about reaching a deal, Iranian officials remain more cautious and describe the current U.S. proposals as insufficient. At the same time, military tensions in the region continue, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz and through ongoing Israeli operations linked to Iran. In addition, 7th of May Trump paused his plan to reopen the Strait of Hormuz after Saudi Arabia blocked the U.S. military from using its bases and airspace for the operation. The restriction cut off critical access needed for aircraft, refueling, and protection missions, forcing the White House to halt "Project Freedom" (Donald Trump's initiative to ensure safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz) shortly after it began.

The conflict also had a major impact on civilian aviation. Numerous international airlines suspended flights to the Middle East due to security risks associated with missile attacks and instability in regional airspace. Aircraft were forced to use alternative routes outside the conflict zone, leading to longer flight times and increased operational costs.

Another consequence of the conflict was the destabilization of the broader Middle East region. Fighting between Israel and Hezbollah intensified again in southern Lebanon, while pro-Iranian militias in Iraq and Syria launched attacks against American military bases. The conflict also heightened tensions among global powers.

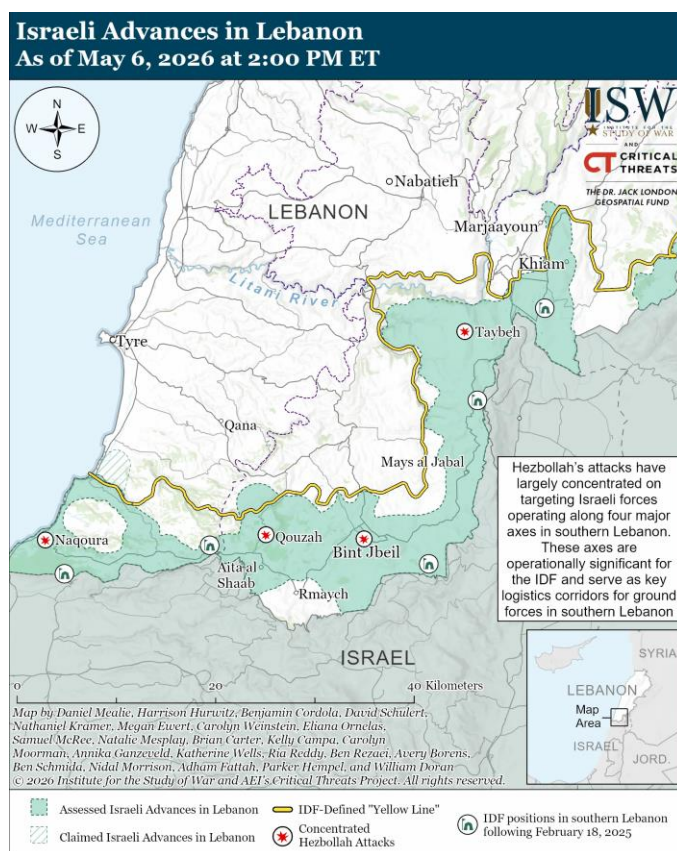


Fig 3: Israeli advances in Lebanon
Source: ISW