

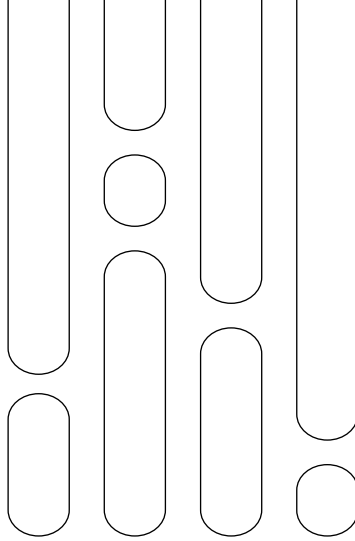
REPORT

**ESCALATION IN
IRAN-ISRAEL
MILITARY
CONFRONTATIONS:
CONSEQUENCES
FOR COUNTRIES'
SOVEREIGNTY AND
SECURITY IN THE
MIDDLE EAST**

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Amid the escalating direct armed confrontations between Iran and Israel since April 2024, there is a looming threat of dragging the volatile Middle East region into a catastrophic regional war. Central to this escalation are the violations by both Iran and Israel of the sovereignty and security of countries situated within the geographical scope between them. These violations manifest through direct aerial penetrations via missiles and drones into the airspace of these countries, which are already grappling with multifaceted security, political, and economic crises.

The escalating Iranian-Israeli armed confrontations pose a significant threat to the security and sovereignty of countries caught between them. Should these confrontations escalate into a full-scale war, the implications for neighboring nations become even more dire. This raises concerns about how to effectively mitigate the dangers and repercussions of airspace violations by both sides against the security and sovereignty of these intermediary countries.

There is a growing risk of these countries becoming battlegrounds for potential conflict between Iran and Israel, particularly as both nations seek to establish new rules of engagement in the Middle East.

Escalating the Armed Conflict and the Risks Posed to the Sovereignty of Regional Countries

The ongoing armed tensions in the Middle East between Iran and Israel, driven by their competition for power, control and influence, have resulted in widespread violations of the sovereignty of several Arab countries, including Iraq, Syria, and Jordan. These violations not only jeopardize the security of these three nations but also pose a threat to regional and international security. By drawing these countries into the realm of potential conflict between Iran and Israel, the altered rules of engagement have disregarded their security and sovereignty. Furthermore, neighboring countries like Lebanon and Yemen, which may serve as potential theaters of operation, are also at risk. They face the looming threat of war and the destruction of their capabilities and future amid escalating tensions between Iran and Israel.

Iran has officially stated that the escalation of the regional armed conflict is not linked to the ongoing war in Gaza or Israel's military actions against the Palestinians. Instead, it is framed as a response to repeated Israeli attacks on Iranian sovereignty. According to Iran, this is solely a matter concerning

its sovereign decisions. Thus, why is the sovereignty and security of Arab nations being violated?

Both Iran and Israel seem to understand that their frequent incursions into Iraqi and Syrian airspace are unlikely to provoke strong reactions due to the significant presence and influence of non-state actors in these regions. Iran acknowledges its close ties with these non-state actors in Iraq and Syria, which it perceives as granting it the right to penetrate the airspace of these Arab countries. Meanwhile, Israel employs the presence of these non-state actors as a pretext for its own aerial intrusions into Iraqi and Syrian airspace, aiming to prevent them from executing Iranian schemes and objectives against Israel.

Several Arab and Gulf nations have consistently alerted the global community to the escalating influence of non-state entities, underscoring the potential threat posed to the unity of sovereign states and the safety of their populations. Throughout the tumultuous conflicts in the Middle East, the imperative for decisive action becomes increasingly apparent. Confronted with non-state actors advancing agendas in opposition to their own nations' interests, the specter of sovereignty breaches and the peril to regional and global peace and security looms ever larger.

Iran's Attack and the Violation of Iraqi and Syrian Sovereignty

Iran launched hundreds of drones and missiles from its own territory, traversing the airspace of Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Palestine en route to Israel. The majority of these Iranian drones were intercepted by Israeli and US fighter jets before reaching their intended targets. Beyond the stated motives of this Iranian offensive, confirmed by Tehran as retaliation for recent Israeli strikes on the Iranian consulate in Syria, public discourse has been dominated by analyses of the gains and losses for both Iran and Israel, as well as the potential for further escalation between the two parties. However, the most significant aspect of this incident lies in Iran's direct involvement and its choice to launch strikes from its own territory, utilizing the airspace of Arab nations as conduits. This deliberate strategy highlights Iran's determination to demonstrate its military prowess to allies, adversaries and competitors alike, pushing the boundaries of brinkmanship in the region. By exploiting Arab territories such as Syria and Iraq as battlegrounds for the Iranian-Israeli conflict and seeking to draw Jordan into the fray, Iran not only challenges the sovereignty of these nations but also poses a grave

threat to the safety and security of their populations by violating their airspace.

Iran's utilization of Iraqi and Syrian airspace to retaliate against Israel, assert its interests and reaffirm its regional prowess before both domestic and international audiences underscore its strategic objectives. Additionally, the involvement of the United States and its Arab allies in intercepting Iranian drones and missiles within Iraqi and Syrian airspace further complicates the situation. These developments highlight the considerable risks faced by Arab nations, with the potential for escalation looming large, particularly in light of Israel's stated intentions to respond to the Iranian attack. This dynamic has not only challenged the pride and regional standing of the Israeli state but also prompted the Tel Aviv government to consider expanding its military operations in permissible areas, including Syria and beyond. Consequently, many Arab countries, notably Iraq and Syria, find themselves thrust into the midst of the Israeli-Iranian conflict, placing their governments in precarious positions vis-à-vis domestic public opinion. Their territories have become battlegrounds for global and regional powers, serving as arenas for settling scores between conflicting parties. This reality further exacerbates tensions and complicates efforts to maintain stability within these nations.

Setting New Rules of Engagement in the Arab Region and Bypassing International Norms

The rules of engagement have emerged as a fundamental aspect of military confrontations in the region since October 7, 2023. Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, conducted by the Hamas movement, stood out due to its distinctive offensive nature and the significant number of Israeli captives involved. Consequently, the Israeli army, through its ongoing warfare spanning over six months, aims to prevent a recurrence of the events of October 7. The involvement of Hezbollah, the Houthis and Iraqi militias in the conflict represents a notable shift in the rules of engagement. Unlike previous confrontations confined to one direct front, such as Gaza or Lebanon, this time other indirect fronts, including Yemen and Iraq, have become involved alongside Hezbollah. This expanded involvement perhaps explains Israel's adjustment of its engagement strategy with Iran, demonstrated by targeting a building affiliated with the Iranian embassy in Damascus. This action prompted Tehran to respond directly rather than relying on proxies, as observed in previous instances.

The preparations leading to the Iranian attack on Israel, spanning from intelligence assessments to the choice of weaponry and subsequent outcomes, suggest a strategic aim: either a return to the familiar rules of engagement between the two parties or the establishment of new protocols, contingent upon Israel's response. However, amidst these developments, a distinct set of rules of engagement is emerging for Arab nations caught in the midst of the Iranian-Israeli rivalry. Notably, while Iraqi and Syrian airspace remained vulnerable to Iranian attacks, Jordan stands out as the sole country that effectively protected its airspace, promptly addressing any airborne threats that breached its borders.

From the observations above, it appears that Iran aims to establish new rules of engagement that enable it to leverage the Arab sphere across land, air and sea in geopolitical competition with Israel and the United States. This strategy allows Iran to maintain a distance from direct threats, while any nation permitting the use of its territory is deemed complicit. In response, Iran's air force becomes entangled in potential Israeli military operations targeting Iran's nuclear program or other participants in the conflict, with threats of retaliation looming. Meanwhile, Iran criticizes Arab countries for invoking international law, which Tehran relied upon in defending its consulate in Damascus.

Growing Concerns About Iran's Ability to Neutralize the US Position Toward Violating Countries' Sovereignty

Recent stances taken by the United States regarding the war on [Gaza](#) underscore the Biden administration's reluctance to see a further escalation of military hostilities in the Middle East. The United States has called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and has issued a warning that its support for Israel's actions in the region hinges on measures taken to safeguard civilian lives. These moves reflect Washington's apprehension about becoming entangled in another conflict and its desire to prioritize other strategic concerns, such as the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. President Biden is particularly mindful of the potential economic and electoral ramifications of any new conflict in the region, especially with the upcoming presidential elections in November. The current landscape of US foreign policy presents challenges for Biden, as his Republican rival, Donald Trump, seeks to capitalize on any perceived failures in managing international affairs, including the conflicts between Russia and Ukraine and between Israel and Hamas, as well as the escalating tensions between Iran and Israel.

The Iranian attack on Israel was preceded by a flurry of Iranian statements and extensive media coverage, eliminating the element of surprise and secrecy typically advantageous in such situations. This lack of surprise could have diminished the opponent's ability to effectively respond and mitigate damage. Moreover, there are indications of prior coordination and arrangements between Tehran and Washington to determine the scope of the Iranian attack, driven by shared interests between the two countries. Just hours before the attack, US President Joe Biden expected Iran to attack Israel "[sooner, rather than later](#)," while CNN reported that the United States had monitored Iran's preparations, including the deployment of up to [100 cruise missiles](#) from Iranian territory aimed at Israel. US military officials also disclosed Iran's purported plans to utilize [over 100 drones](#) and numerous missiles against Israeli military targets. These revelations suggest a high degree of coordination between Iran and the United States, leading US officials to express clear opposition to escalating tensions with Iran. Biden went further, [urging](#) Israel to "think carefully" with response to the Iranian attack. Simultaneously, US military officials confirmed that the United States had informed Israel of its decision not to participate in any potential counterattack against Iran. This suggests that Iran may have succeeded in neutralizing or persuading the United States to reject any Israeli retaliation.

This US stance, seemingly aligned with Iranian objectives, might be aimed at forestalling the escalation of conflict in the Middle East or avoiding entanglement in a new war. However, it overlooks the violations committed by both Iran and Israel against the sovereignty of several Arab nations, notably Syria, Iraq, and Jordan. Such a stance could potentially embolden Iran and Israel to persist in their actions and even disregard the sovereignty of other regional countries in the future. There is a risk that Iran could undertake similar or more potent military actions without US approval or prior coordination, especially if Israel were to retaliate against the attack or launch subsequent strikes against Iran. Such actions would directly violate the sovereignty of the countries situated between Iran and Israel, potentially involving the penetration of their airspace through drone and missile launches or targeting sites within their territories.

Conclusion

The recent escalation between Iran and Israel has underscored the vulnerability of countries where non-state actors have gained significant influence, to the extent that governments in Syria and Iraq appear indifferent to events

unfolding within their borders. As tensions persist between Israel and Iran, with the potential for further escalation, regional nations face heightened risks of sovereignty violations across air, sea and land, along with resulting security threats. In response, Arab countries must implement more robust deterrent measures to safeguard their security and sovereignty. They must assert their independence and refuse to allow any party to impose its will on them, adopting rules of engagement that prioritize their own interests while preserving the security and sovereignty of Arab nations.



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