STUDY NOTES · BASIC CONCEPT

Know the reasons behind rivalry between Iran and Israel and why the Strait of Hormuz is Important for India?

International Relations

11 Oct 2026

A. Why Is There Rivalry Between Iran and Israel?

The Iran–Israel rivalry involves competing regional influence, security concerns, military capabilities and disagreements over Israel's existence and regional policies.

Key dimensions include:

- Iran's support for regional armed groups opposed to Israel.
- Israel's concerns about Iran's military capabilities and nuclear programme.
- Conflicts involving Hamas, Hezbollah and other regional actors.
- The role of the United States as a major security partner of Israel.

This rivalry can turn local confrontations into broader regional crises.

B. What Is a Proxy Conflict?

A proxy conflict occurs when external powers support local actors in a conflict to advance their strategic interests, rather than relying exclusively on direct confrontation with each other.

Support can include funding, weapons, training, intelligence or political backing.

Example: Iran's support for Hezbollah is an important dimension of its regional strategy, while Israel considers Hezbollah a major security threat.

Proxy relationships do not mean that local actors lack their own interests or decision-making autonomy.

C. What Is the International Criminal Court (ICC)?

The International Criminal Court is a permanent international court established by the Rome Statute to prosecute individuals for specified international crimes.

Its jurisdiction covers four principal categories:

1. Genocide.
2. Crimes against humanity.
3. War crimes.
4. The crime of aggression, subject to specific jurisdictional conditions.

The ICC is distinct from the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which primarily settles legal disputes between states and issues advisory opinions.

Important current-affairs distinction: The ICC issued arrest warrants for Benjamin Netanyahu and former Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant in connection with alleged crimes in Gaza. An arrest warrant is not a conviction; criminal responsibility must be determined through the applicable judicial process.

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D. What Is International Humanitarian Law?

International humanitarian law (IHL) regulates the conduct of parties during armed conflict and seeks to limit human suffering.

Important principles include:

- Distinction: Parties must distinguish between civilians and combatants, and between civilian objects and military objectives.
- Proportionality: Expected incidental civilian harm must not be excessive in relation to the anticipated concrete and direct military advantage.
- Precautions: Parties must take feasible precautions to avoid or minimise civilian harm.
- Humane treatment: Persons protected under IHL must be treated humanely.

These principles apply independently of political accusations or the identity of the parties involved.

E. Why Is the Strait of Hormuz Important for India?

Strait of Hormuz Crisis: Why Trump May Struggle to Restore Global Shipping Route - Oneindia News

The Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the wider Arabian Sea. It is one of the world's most important maritime routes for oil and gas transportation.

Its disruption can:

1. Increase global crude oil prices.
2. Raise India's import bill and inflationary pressures.
3. Increase shipping and insurance costs.
4. Disrupt energy supplies and supply chains.
5. India's dependence on imported energy makes stability in the Persian Gulf and surrounding waters strategically important.

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F. What Is India's Strategic Interest in West Asia?

1. India's interests extend beyond relations with any single country.
2. Energy security: Reliable supplies of crude oil and natural gas.
3. Trade: Stable shipping routes and access to regional markets.
4. Diaspora: Safety and welfare of Indian nationals working in the region.
5. Connectivity: Trade and transport corridors linking India with West Asia and Europe.
6. Diplomacy: Maintaining constructive relations with Israel, Iran, the Gulf states and the United States.
7. India's approach must balance these interests while supporting regional de-escalation and international law.

Relevance for UPSC

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- GS Paper II: India and its neighbourhood, bilateral relations, international institutions and global conflicts.

- GS Paper II: United Nations, ICC, ICJ and international law.
- GS Paper III: Energy security, crude oil prices and external-sector vulnerability.
- Essay: Multipolarity, diplomacy, peace and the limits of military power.

Key takeaway: The conflict demonstrates how regional rivalries can affect global energy security, international law and great-power relations. For UPSC, distinguish political allegations from established legal findings and analyse the issue through security, humanitarian and economic perspectives.

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