



## Operation al-Aqsa Flood and the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran: Opportunities and Challenges

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| Article Info                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | ABSTRACT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| <p><b>Article type:</b><br/>Scientific Research</p> <p><b>Article history:</b><br/>Received:<br/>2025-10-02<br/>Received in revised form:<br/>2025-10-25<br/>Accepted :<br/>2025-11-20<br/>Available online:<br/>2026-07-25</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b><br/>Islamic Republic of Iran,<br/>Foreign Policy, Operation<br/>al-Aqsa Flood, Axis of<br/>Resistance.</p> | <p>The "al-Aqsa Flood" operation, launched by Hamas on October 7, 2023 (15 Mehr 1402 SH), marked a historical turning point that brought about profound and far-reaching developments in the history of the Palestinian resistance, as well as within the Axis of Resistance in West Asia, particularly with respect to the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Consequently, Iran's foreign policy has continually been influenced by complex regional and international developments such as the al-Aqsa Flood.</p> <p><b>The main research question:</b> 'Based on the combined theory of Resistance and Indigenism, what opportunities and challenges has al-Aqsa Flood created for the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran?'</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> The present study assumes that the relationship between al-Aqsa Flood and Iran's foreign policy can be examined through five key concepts derived from this combined theoretical approach: "Independence and national sovereignty; emphasis on cultural and religious identity; resistance to domination and arrogance (hegemonic powers); strengthening regional cooperation; support for the oppressed and human rights."</p> <p><b>Conclusion:</b> The findings indicate that, on the one hand, al-Aqsa Flood created opportunities such as: "Enhancing Iran's deterrence capability and military power; greater coordination between the battlefield and diplomacy; expansion of the discourse of resistance on a global scale; strengthening regional and trans-regional alliances; Israel's growing domestic crisis and international isolation; and the promotion of an active, resistance-oriented foreign policy." On the other hand, it also generated challenges, including: "The fall of Assad's government in Syria and the disruption of Iran's geographical connection with the Axis of Resistance; direct threats and attacks by Israel; regional instability and heightened insecurity; and U.S. efforts to undermine regional and trans-regional agreements." These developments have significantly affected the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.</p> <p><b>Research Method:</b> This paper employs a qualitative analytical method.</p> <p><b>Data Collecting Method:</b> Drawing upon library sources, documentary evidence, and official reports to collect and analyze data.</p> |

**Cite this article:** Javadi Arjmand, M. J; Dehghani, H. (2026) Operation al-Aqsa Flood and the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran: Opportunities and Challenges. *Contemporary Researches on Islamic Revolution*, Volume 9, No 29, June 2026, pp. 79-106.

[https://doi.org/ 10.22059/jcir.2026.403523.1743](https://doi.org/10.22059/jcir.2026.403523.1743)



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Publisher: University of Tehran.

[https://doi.org/ 10.22059/jcir.2026.403523.1743](https://doi.org/10.22059/jcir.2026.403523.1743)

## **Introduction**

The al-Aqsa Flood operation, launched by Hamas on October 7, 2023 (15 Mehr 1402 SH), can be viewed as a natural continuation of the Palestinian people's long history of resistance. The term refers to the military operation carried out by Palestinian resistance groups, particularly Hamas, in response to attacks and aggression by the Israeli regime. It encompasses a range of military, political, and social actions. The Palestinian people have a long history of resistance against occupation and oppression. From the early uprisings of the 1920s and 1930s to the First and Second Intifadas, their resistance has persisted in the face of pressure and aggression by the Israeli regime. al-Aqsa Flood represents the continuation of this historical trajectory and demonstrates the Palestinian people's steadfast determination to defend their homeland. In recent years, increasing social, economic, and military pressures on the Palestinian population have created a growing sense among various resistance groups of the need for a stronger and more coordinated response. al-Aqsa Flood emerged as a natural reaction to these pressures, seeking to foster renewed unity and strengthen the spirit of resistance among Palestinians.

It appears that global and regional developments following the al-Aqsa Flood have contributed to strengthening the Axis of Resistance and increasing international support for the Palestinian people. In this regard, al-Aqsa Flood may also be regarded as an opportunity to draw greater global attention to the Palestinian issue.

From this perspective, the operation represents not merely a military action but also a political and social movement aimed at strengthening the Palestinian national identity and the discourse of resistance. In other words, al-Aqsa Flood reflects solidarity and cooperation among Palestinian resistance groups and with states that support the Axis of Resistance. This solidarity can be regarded as a natural factor underlying the emergence of the operation, since resistance groups have consistently sought to unite against common threats. Therefore, al-Aqsa Flood is not only a military response but also a natural continuation of the Palestinian people's historical resistance. It symbolizes the determination and resolve of the Palestinian nation in confronting the hegemonic order, while also expressing unity and solidarity in the struggle for their rights and homeland.

Indeed, al-Aqsa Flood marked a historic turning point, bringing about profound, far-reaching changes in regional and international dynamics, particularly in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the leader of the Axis of Resistance. Foreign policy reflects a state's objectives and policies in the sphere of international relations with other states, societies, and international organizations.

In formulating its foreign policy, every country acts according to established principles that define the overall orientation of the ruling government and adopts strategies to maximize its national interests. What is important, however, is that states do not formulate their foreign relations entirely independently; rather, a variety of institutions and factors influence foreign policy decision-making. It should be noted that the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, especially regarding recent developments such as al-Aqsa Flood, is a complex and multidimensional subject that extends beyond the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic actors. In addition to examining diplomatic initiatives, this study also considers the underlying principles, objectives, and grand strategies of Iran's foreign policy, the positions of the country's leadership, and other influential factors shaping its external relations.

Accordingly, the central question of this study is: 'What opportunities and challenges have Operation al-Aqsa Flood created for the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran?' The study hypothesizes that, based on a combined framework of Indigenism and Resistance Theory, al-Aqsa Flood has simultaneously generated both opportunities and challenges for Iran's foreign policy. The findings indicate that, on the one hand, the operation created opportunities such as enhancing Iran's deterrence capability and military strength; fostering greater coordination between diplomacy and military operations in foreign policy; expanding the discourse of resistance internationally and stimulating global demonstrations in support of Palestine and against Israel; strengthening regional and trans-regional alliances, including BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization; promoting joint military exercises among Iran, China, and Russia; contributing to Israel's domestic political crisis and growing international isolation; and reinforcing an active, resistance-oriented foreign policy.

On the other hand, the rapid succession of events following October 7, including the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government in Syria and the disruption of Iran's land connection with the Resistance Front, the continuation of Israeli threats and military attacks, increasing regional instability and insecurity, and Western efforts to undermine regional and trans-regional agreements, have all posed significant challenges and have substantially affected the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Accordingly, this article employs a qualitative descriptive-analytical method, drawing on library resources, documentary evidence, and official reports to collect and analyze the data. Its principal objective is to analyze the implications of Operation al-Aqsa Flood for the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The present study is innovative in two respects. First, it focuses on Iran's foreign policy following the al-Aqsa Flood, treating the operation as a recent event and a turning point in the history of the resistance movement. Second, it analyzes the consequences of this operation using a combined framework of Indigenism and Resistance Theory, grounded in five key analytical indicators.

Given that numerous security initiatives have been proposed for the West Asian region by various actors, some of which are based on accepting the role of external powers and pursuing accommodation with Israel, neglecting the concepts of Indigenism and Resistance, as well as their functions across different domains, could create an opportunity to promote a favorable image of such initiatives and, consequently, undermine the region's future developments. Therefore, adopting an Indigenist and Resistance-based approach in the region, particularly given the presence of foreign powers over the past two centuries, is a strategic necessity and serves as the conceptual framework for this study.

Such an approach can contribute to more effective foreign policy decision-making in the Islamic Republic of Iran by enabling analysts and policymakers to adopt a more comprehensive perspective on regional and international issues and to formulate more effective responses to emerging challenges. Accordingly, the relationship between each of the five analytical indicators, al-Aqsa Flood, and the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is examined separately. This organization ultimately provides a comprehensive assessment of the opportunities and challenges facing Iran's foreign policy in the aftermath of al-Aqsa Flood.

**- al-Aqsa Flood, National Independence and Sovereignty, and the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

This section examines how Operation al-Aqsa Flood has strengthened Iran's sense of national independence and sovereignty. Specifically, it analyzes the emphasis placed on the right to self-defense and support for resistance groups as instruments for safeguarding national independence and sovereignty within Iran's foreign policy.

**- al-Aqsa Flood, Cultural and Religious Identity, and the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

This section explores the operation's impact on reinforcing Iran's cultural and religious identity. It examines how al-Aqsa Flood has enabled the Islamic Republic of

Iran to present itself, at both the regional and international levels, as a defender of Islamic and national identity.

- **al-Aqsa Flood, Resistance to Domination and Hegemony, and the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

This section analyzes the role of Operation al-Aqsa Flood in reinforcing the Islamic Republic of Iran's approach to resisting Western domination, particularly that of the United States. It examines how the operation has strengthened Iran's resolve to maintain its policies toward the major powers.

- **al-Aqsa Flood, Support for the Oppressed and Human Rights, and the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

This section examines the role of Operation al-Aqsa Flood in shaping Iran's discourse of support for oppressed peoples and the promotion of human rights within its foreign policy. It analyzes the operation's impact on Iran's human rights position and how this issue has been used to strengthen Iran's international diplomacy.

- **al-Aqsa Flood, the Strengthening of Regional Cooperation, and the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

This section examines how Operation al-Aqsa Flood has strengthened Iran's cooperation with neighboring countries and resistance groups. It analyzes how such cooperation enables the Islamic Republic of Iran to consolidate its position as a key regional actor and how it may enhance its ability to address common security threats.

## **1. Literature Review**

Numerous studies have examined Operation al-Aqsa Flood and the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Articles such as "Operation al-Aqsa Flood and the Application of the New Resistance Paradigm in the Islamic World" (Alishahi, 2023 AD/1402 SH) and "Examining the Outcomes of the October 7 Operation in the Competition among Hegemons and the Role of Regional Actors in the Middle East" (Golmohammadi et al., 2024 AD/1403 SH) have analyzed the impact of al-Aqsa Flood on the political and security dynamics of the region.

Khani (2021 AD/1400 SH), in an article titled "The Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran and New Developments in the Resistance Front," examines the Resistance Front as an emerging actor in the international system and analyzes the Islamic Republic of Iran's role in its establishment and development. Hakimi et al. (2022 AD/1401 SH) analyzes the discourse of resistance in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran following the Islamic Revolution.

Niakouei and Mousavi Kordmiri (2024 AD/1403 SH), in their article "Explaining the Divergent Outcomes of the Power Struggle in Syria after the Arab Spring: From Civil War to the Fall of Bashar al-Assad's Government," examine the causes of Syria's civil war and the collapse of the Assad government. Their analysis highlights such contributing factors as social fragmentation, the support of certain groups for the government, the gradual erosion of Assad's legitimacy, corruption, economic crises, and the weakening of the Syrian military.

The article "The Pursuit of Dignity as Foreign Policy: A Framework for Analyzing Iran's Foreign Policy and the Axis of Resistance" by Arab Ameri et al. (2023 AD/1402 SH) examines the role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in regional political and military developments, particularly in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq.

Bandari et al. (2024 AD/1403 SH), in "Designing a Systemic Model of Security Deterrence in the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran Based on Operation True Promise," develop a framework for security deterrence in Iran's foreign policy. Their study is based on Operation True Promise and focuses on responses to threats posed by Israel and other regional security challenges.

Nakshband et al. (2024 AD/1403 SH), in their research article "The Political and Security Consequences of Operation al-Aqsa Flood in West Asia," investigate the operation's profound impact on the political and security environment of the West Asian region.

Pourhassan (2023 AD/1402 SH), in the article "The Consequences of Operation al-Aqsa Flood for the Abraham Accords," argues that al-Aqsa Flood not only halted the process of normalization between several Arab states and Israel but also, by intensifying public hostility toward Israel and exposing its objectives more widely, significantly undermined prospects for a "Warm Peace" between Arab countries and Israel.

Compared with the existing literature, the novelty of the present study lies in its analytical approach. Whereas previous studies have primarily focused on Operation al-

Aqsa Flood itself or its regional consequences, this article employs a combined theoretical framework of Indigenism and Resistance Theory to examine the opportunities and challenges that the operation has created for the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

It is hoped that the findings of this research will contribute to a deeper understanding and a more comprehensive analysis of post-al-Aqsa Flood developments and their implications for the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

The present study adopts a combined framework of Indigenism and Resistance Theory. This approach enables the researcher to provide a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of developments following Operation al-Aqsa Flood and their implications for the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Specifically, it examines the evolution of resistance groups and Iran's policies in response to key events such as the al-Aqsa Flood and analyzes the reciprocal interaction between domestic and external developments.

The Islamic Indigenist model emphasizes the Islamic and cultural identity of both the resistance groups and the Islamic Republic of Iran, regarding Islamic values and principles as the foundation of their policies and strategies. Resistance Theory, in turn, facilitates analysis of the strategies adopted by resistance groups and the Islamic Republic of Iran to confront external threats and domestic challenges, as well as the implications of these strategies for Iran's foreign policy. By integrating these two approaches, the study offers a multidimensional analysis of post-al-Aqsa Flood developments and their impact on Iran's foreign policy. Indigenism, as an expression of the ideology of resistance, seeks to reaffirm indigenous and Islamic cultural values in response to the challenges of modernity (Javadi Arjmand et al., 2019 AD/1398 SH: 366).

This approach focuses on phenomena such as thought, ideology, ideas, culture, values, emotions, and ethnicity, all of which exert profound influences on human behavior. Consequently, unlike the natural sciences, the phenomena studied in the humanities are not entirely objective; rather, they are intrinsically linked to values, subjective perceptions, and cultural paradigms. One of the central concerns of the Indigenist approach is its emphasis on the local context, since many imported theories and concepts are presented as though their findings can be universally applied to

developing countries, particularly Islamic societies. However, the phenomena and findings of the humanities within Western civilization differ substantially from those of Eastern civilizations and Islamic countries.

For example, the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 AD/1357 SH took many scholars and theorists by surprise, as they had been unable to predict it. The revolution astonished a significant number of Western intellectuals. Its victory is regarded as one of the most significant phenomena of the twentieth century and as one of the most important socio-political movements in modern history. It challenged existing definitions and theories of revolution and created the need for new conceptualizations and theories of revolutionary change (Foran, 1993: 11).

The Resistance approach, as a central principle of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, has consistently been understood through the three principles of dignity, wisdom, and expediency of the Islamic system, underpinned by intelligent resistance and the rejection of all forms of domination. Resistance Theory is presented as an indigenous and emancipatory theory that constitutes a paradigm for confronting all forms of hegemony and is based on the revolutionary narrative derived from what it describes as the authentic teachings of Islam. Such resistance is viewed as an active and dynamic form of resistance inspired by the Islamic Revolution and rooted in the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (Qaderi Kangavari, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 7).

Islamic resistance ideology provides the foundation for transforming the existing order by seeking to reconstruct a lost identity, a process that, according to this perspective, can only be achieved through resistance (Mottaqi, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 225).

Following the Islamic Revolution, various movements and organizations emerged as components of the Axis of Resistance to confront the influence of the United States and Israel in West Asia. Drawing upon its five defining principles, the Islamic Republic of Iran adopted a new foreign policy approach based on resistance-oriented Indigenousism, which has since become a central feature of its regional strategy.

Accordingly, these five indicators are interrelated and collectively shape Iran's overarching policies toward regional and international developments:



### **1) Preservation of National Independence and Sovereignty**

Resistance, as an approach, emphasizes the preservation of national independence and sovereignty. Likewise, Indigenism stresses the importance of addressing the country's domestic needs and realities. From this perspective, Operation al-Aqsa Flood acted as a catalyst for the Islamic Republic of Iran, reinforcing its sense of independence and sovereignty in the face of external threats. By supporting resistance groups and emphasizing the right to self-defense, the Islamic Republic of Iran seeks to preserve its national identity and independence, as reflected in Article 152 of its Constitution. In other words, one of the principal factors contributing to unity among the resistance forces has been the perceived efforts of the hegemonic international order, led by the United States, to fragment states and undermine their sovereignty. Since the Islamic Revolution, the Islamic Republic of Iran has sought to raise awareness among nations, particularly within the Islamic world, regarding what it characterizes as such regional strategies (Center for Islamic Revolution Documents, 18 November 2022).

### **2) Cultural and Religious Identity**

Cultural and religious identity occupies a central place in Iran's foreign policy. As a symbol of Islamic resistance, Operation al-Aqsa Flood is viewed as reinforcing Iran's religious and national identity while strengthening its self-image as a principal supporter of Muslims and oppressed peoples. This religious identity has shaped not only Iran's domestic policies but also its foreign diplomacy, leading the country to respond to regional and international challenges in accordance with its Islamic principles and cultural values.

### **3) Resistance to Domination and Hegemony**

The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran toward Western domination particularly that of the United States is grounded in the principles of resistance (see Article 152 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran). As a symbol of resistance against occupation and domination, Operation al-Aqsa Flood has provided the Islamic Republic with an opportunity to more effectively challenge what it regards as hegemonic policies. This approach is reflected not only in official statements and policy positions but also in Iran's diplomatic activities and regional cooperation.

#### **4) Support for the Oppressed and Human Rights**

Support for oppressed peoples and the promotion of human rights constitute one of the principal pillars of Iran's foreign policy. Operation al-Aqsa Flood is presented as a concrete example of oppression and injustice, enabling Iran to portray itself internationally as a defender of human rights and an advocate for oppressed peoples. This approach reinforces Iran's human rights discourse in foreign policy and, from the study's perspective, strengthens its position in responding to international criticism. The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, through its resistance-oriented approach, also declares support for the rights of all people; particularly Muslims and the world's oppressed people, as one of the fundamental principles of its foreign policy (see Article 154 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran).

#### **5) Strengthening Regional Cooperation**

Indigenism and Resistance function not only as distinct approaches but also as complementary principles for strengthening regional cooperation. Operation al-Aqsa Flood has provided the Islamic Republic of Iran with an opportunity to deepen its relations with neighboring countries and resistance groups. Such cooperation is viewed as a strategy to address common security threats and enhance regional stability, while also enabling the Islamic Republic of Iran to consolidate its role as a key factor in regional affairs.

Accordingly, the principles enshrined in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as they relate to Operation al-Aqsa Flood, demonstrate the profound and multifaceted influence these principles exert on Iran's foreign policy. They serve as fundamental foundations for shaping the country's diplomatic and strategic approaches. As a symbol of resistance, Operation al-Aqsa Flood has provided the Islamic Republic with an opportunity to reinforce its positions against what it views as global hegemonic domination while projecting its Islamic and national identity on the international stage. At the same time, the operation has contributed to strengthening a sense of solidarity among Islamic countries and support for the rights of oppressed peoples, which, according to the authors, has enhanced Iran's international standing and credibility.

### **3. Opportunities for the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran Following al-Aqsa Flood**

#### **3.1. Enhancement of Iran's Deterrence Capability and Military Power**

Deterrence refers to a particular type of political relationship between interacting actors in which one party seeks to influence the behavior of another in order to prevent undesirable actions, primarily through the threat of punishment or the denial of expected benefits. In this context, throughout its existence, the Islamic Republic of Iran has consistently faced the challenge of preventing undesirable actions by its rivals or adversaries. This issue has constituted one of the principal concerns of Iran's foreign policy (Qasemi, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 98).

Since 2024 AD/1403 SH, Iran's defense industry has taken significant steps to strengthen its defensive capabilities, with the objective of enhancing national security and increasing its deterrence capacity. This period is regarded by the authors as a key phase in the development of the Islamic Republic's defense capabilities, characterized by the adoption of advanced technologies, the expansion of domestic defense industries, and greater international cooperation, which together resulted in notable achievements.

Following Operation al-Aqsa Flood and in response to perceived threats from Israel, Iran undertook a series of measures aimed at further strengthening its military and defensive deterrence capabilities. These included: "Conducting large-scale military exercises; unveiling advanced missile and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) systems; commissioning the Shahid Bagheri drone carrier, reportedly capable of carrying 60 UAVs and 30 missile-launching vessels; and holding amphibious assault and beach-landing exercises by the Ground Forces in the waters of the Persian Gulf and the northern Arabian Sea during 2024 AD/1403 SH (Al-Alam, 24 February 2025).

According to the authors, Iran's military and security capabilities, including its advanced missile program, security forces, and self-sufficiency in defense production, reflect a defense policy based on the twin strategies of resistance and deterrence, which are central to the foreign policy priorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Iran's missile and drone strike against Israel, conducted under the name Operation True Promise, was launched in response to Israel's attack on the Iranian consulate in Damascus on 1 April 2024 (13 Farvardin 1403 SH). According to the text, Iran carried out 331 strikes, consisting of 185 drones, 36 cruise missiles, and 110 surface-to-surface missiles directed toward Israel.

The article quotes Major General Salami, then Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), as stating: "Despite Israel's very extensive air defense systems, when we launched our missiles, 581 missiles struck the ground."

The article further argues that Iran's response conveyed to Israel and its allies that the Islamic Republic possesses both the determination and the capability to defend itself. It also claims that satellite imagery from Operation True Promise indicated substantial damage to Israeli military and air force installations, including Tel Nof Airbase and the Nevatim and Ramon air bases (Eghtesad Online, 15 September 2025). The Islamic Republic of Iran also carried out Operation True Promise III, launching more than twenty waves of attacks against strategic, military, and infrastructure targets in the occupied Palestinian territories. According to Douglas Macgregor, a senior fellow at The American Conservative and a former senior adviser to the U.S. Secretary of Defense during the Trump administration: "From the very beginning of this war, my greatest concern was that the Israelis were on a suicidal path. Nine million against ninety-two million. And contrary to the common perception, those ninety-two million are not uneducated peasants. Who are we trying to fool? This is a new world; it is not forty-six years ago. We have to accept that we are not alone on this planet. Even if we are a superpower, there are other countries with talented populations capable of producing real military power."

Furthermore, the United States' entry into the Twelve-Day War and its aerial strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities under the operation known as "Midnight Hammer" did not, according to the authors, lead to the passivity or retreat of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Instead, Iran responded through an operation entitled "Glad Tidings of Victory," in which it launched missile strikes against Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, one of the United States' most important military installations in the region.

Although President Trump claimed that Iran had coordinated the attack on Al Udeid with the United States and that all incoming missiles had been intercepted, a narrative subsequently echoed by numerous international and anti-Iranian media outlets, the publication of satellite imagery later led to acknowledgments that Al Udeid Air Base had sustained damage estimated at approximately US\$15 million (BBC, 12 July 2025).

### **3.2. Coordination between Diplomacy and the Battlefield**

One of the most significant priorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran in recent years, particularly following Operation al-Aqsa Flood, has been the effort to coordinate military operations (the battlefield) with diplomacy. The late Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs, regarded the unity of the various fronts and movements of the Axis of Resistance as the key to victory on the battlefield. He argued that the integration of the diplomatic, resistance, and political fronts had enabled the resistance movement to achieve significant successes (Mehr News Agency, 3 July 2024).

This coordination can be observed in the intensive meetings between military officials of the Axis of Resistance and diplomatic representatives, as well as in the repeated visits of senior Iranian foreign policy officials to neighboring countries. In addition, the media have played an increasingly important role in foreign policy decision-making. In other words, media have transformed foreign policy into a technology-driven practice in the twenty-first century; as a social force, they have not only influenced foreign policy but have also fundamentally reshaped diplomatic behavior (Zolfaghari, 2023 AD/1402 SH: 17).

In this regard, Sayyid Abbas Araghchi, Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated during the closing ceremony of the conference "al-Aqsa Flood and Gaza: Realities and Narratives": "Alongside the battlefield and diplomacy, there is a third pillar, and that is the media. The media play a crucial role in constructing the narrative of both the battlefield and diplomacy, and ultimately in shaping the narrative of victory and defeat. We may succeed in the military and diplomatic arenas, but if we fail in the media and narrative arena, our achievements will not be properly conveyed. Alongside the military battle taking place in Gaza, there was also a diplomatic battle. In that arena, the enemies of the resistance did not achieve major successes, while the resistance movement performed effectively in the media sphere." (Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting News Agency, 4 February 2025)

Accordingly, during this period, the Islamic Republic of Iran has sought to advance the objectives of the Axis of Resistance by closely coordinating military operations with its foreign policy, while simultaneously seeking to maximize the protection of its national interests and what it defines as the interests of the Islamic community.

### **3.3. Expansion of the Discourse of Resistance at the Global Level and Worldwide Demonstrations Against Israel in Support of Palestine**

Following operation al-Aqsa flood and the developments that ensued, public awareness, particularly among young people in Western countries, regarding the Palestinian resistance and the actions of the Israeli government has, according to the authors, increased significantly. In this context, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, in his letter to the youth of the United States and Europe, stated that "Today they stand on the right side of history."

The authors argue that this heightened awareness has been reflected in public demonstrations held across many countries in support of the Palestinian people and in condemnation of Israel's actions. These demonstrations, which featured Palestinian flags and, in some cases, the burning of Israeli flags, were intended to express opposition to Israel's military campaign in Gaza and to U.S. support for Israel. The article also notes that workers in several countries participated in strikes and work stoppages as part of these protests (Keyhan Newspaper, 7 April 2025).

According to the authors, Operation al-Aqsa Flood and the subsequent actions of Israel created conditions in which global public opinion increasingly questioned the values and legitimacy of Western civilization. They contend that the inability of what they describe as the U.S.-led Western order to respond effectively to these criticisms has accelerated the decline of Western civilization. From this perspective, advocates of freedom and oppressed peoples around the world now have an opportunity to contribute to the emergence of a new civilization whose defining characteristics would include respect for human dignity and the meaningful participation of millions of ordinary people.

### **3.4. Regional and Transregional Alliances**

Developments in recent years have, more than ever before, highlighted what the authors describe as a shift away from a U.S.-centered unipolar international order. China, Russia, and Iran, countries that have consistently opposed such an order while advocating multilateralism in international affairs, now face circumstances that have put this vision to a significant test.

The performance of organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS in responding to contemporary international issues, as well as their capacity to act effectively in relation to the U.S.- and Western-led international order,

provides an important measure of the extent to which multilateralism and a transition beyond a U.S.-centered order can be realized.

In light of the instability caused by Israeli military actions, growing insecurity, and the spread of political and security crises worldwide, the authors argue that the role and significance of regional and trans-regional organizations have become more prominent than ever, as these institutions can offer alternatives to Western-led approaches.

One of the Islamic Republic of Iran's most significant foreign policy initiatives following Operation al-Aqsa Flood, according to the article, has been its accession to the trans-regional organizations BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The authors also identify the "3+3" Regional Cooperation Platform for the South Caucasus, comprising Iran, Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, as an important mechanism for promoting cooperation and addressing shared challenges.

Furthermore, the restoration of diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia, together with Iran's active participation in the joint summit of the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) amid the post-al-Aqsa Flood developments, is presented as an important step toward strengthening unity and cohesion among Islamic countries.

Accordingly, the authors argue that, through its indigenous, resistance-oriented foreign policy and cooperation with emerging Eastern powers such as Russia and China, as well as with Islamic countries and the Axis of Resistance, the Islamic Republic of Iran is well-positioned to utilize regional and trans-regional alliances to counter U.S. unilateralism and mitigate the effects of economic sanctions and external pressure.

### **3.5. Israel's International Isolation and Domestic Crisis**

According to the authors, Operation al-Aqsa Flood not only produced military and political consequences throughout the region but also had profound effects on public opinion and social attitudes within Israel. The conflict heightened Israelis' sense of vulnerability and undermined public confidence in the country's political and military leadership.

The article argues that the Israeli leadership now faces serious challenges at both the domestic and international levels, including a growing sense of insecurity among

Israelis regarding life in the occupied territories. The authors further suggest that these developments may contribute to increased outward migration from Israel in the future.

According to the authors, Israel's current challenge extends beyond its ability to achieve victory on the battlefield, where, they argue, it already faces fundamental difficulties. Citing a report by the Israeli media outlet Makor Rishon, the article claims that, following Operation True Promise II, Iran demonstrated its capability to launch direct attacks against Israel. According to the report, Iranian missiles successfully struck strategic Israeli installations, and some of the missiles possessed capabilities that Israel's air defense systems were unable to intercept (Keyhan Newspaper, 8 June 2025).

The article argues that this report has intensified concerns within Israel regarding Iran's ability to conduct direct attacks against sensitive strategic targets. It further contends that the acknowledged inability of Israeli air defense systems to intercept certain Iranian missiles reveals significant vulnerabilities in Israel's defensive capabilities.

The authors also maintain that Israel has become one of the most internationally isolated states in terms of both governmental and popular opinion. They note that since the outbreak of the wars in Gaza and Lebanon, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu repeatedly stated that "Israel is fighting on seven fronts," referring to the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and Iran. According to the authors, however, Israel has failed to achieve victory on any of these seven fronts and has, in addition, opened an eighth front encompassing global public opinion (Mashregh News, 14 September 2025).

Accordingly, the article concludes that the international environment following Operation al-Aqsa Flood has shifted in favor of the Palestinian cause and that Israel is moving toward increasing international isolation.

### **3.6. An Active Resistance-Oriented Foreign Policy**

The policy of "Active deterrence and the strategy of resistance" constitutes one of the key principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran's defense strategy, particularly in the context of tensions and confrontation with Israel. According to the authors, following the conflicts that emerged after Operation al-Aqsa Flood, the Axis of Resistance, and especially Iran, reached a turning point in demonstrating its military and diplomatic capabilities.



The authors argue that these developments not only strengthened Iran's position in confronting external threats but also altered neighboring states' perceptions of Iran's defense strategy. An examination of this policy, they contend, demonstrates how Iran has relied on deterrence, prudent diplomacy, and heightened domestic unity, particularly following the Twelve-Day War, to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity while simultaneously fostering new alliances and strengthening relations with countries in the region.

In this view, by combining active diplomacy with efforts to enhance its economic, political, and cultural influence, Iran, as the leading advocate of the discourse of resistance, has the potential to emerge as a regional hegemonic power.

The deterrence logic underlying the Operation True Promise campaigns, together with what the authors describe as the foreign ministry's "Smart Diplomacy," including intensive diplomatic visits and consultations with other countries, worked in close synergy to convey a clear message to neighboring states and the wider region: "Iran's military capabilities are defensive and deterrent in nature. According to the authors, Iran does not seek to expand the conflict but remains firmly committed to defending its national sovereignty and territorial integrity." They argue that these events demonstrated to the international community that, after being subjected to military threats by Israel, the Islamic Republic of Iran responded decisively within a framework of deterrence.

The condemnation of the Zionist attacks on Iran by Arab countries, particularly Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and Turkey's acknowledgment that Iran has the right to respond to Israeli aggression on its territory represent an important indication of growing regional acceptance of the defensive nature of Iran's military capabilities. This development significantly facilitates the advancement of Iran's neighborhood policy (Center for International and Political Studies, 10 November 2024).

#### **4. Challenges of the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran Following al-Aqsa Flood**

##### **4.1. The Fall of Syria and the Disruption of Iran's Land Connection to the Axis of Resistance**

Before Operation al-Aqsa Flood, despite the existence of Axis of Resistance members, policies aligned with Arab states and Israel created difficulties for the Islamic Republic of Iran in supporting this axis. For instance, measures such as disrupting

Hezbollah's supply lines and labeling the movement as a terrorist organization by major international powers such as the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as punitive actions against missile programs, were largely the result of Israeli-Arab lobbying efforts (Landau, Noa, 2020: 15).

The rapid developments following the Al-Aqsa Flood led to serious tensions and escalations between Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran, with cycles of retaliation continuing between the two sides. A major turning point occurred on 17 December 2024, with the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's government in Syria, one of the key members of the Axis of Resistance and the geographical land bridge connecting Iran to Hezbollah and Hamas.

Following Assad's fall, Syria experienced significant military, security, and social transformations. Various regions of the country witnessed numerous security and military incidents. Large-scale Israeli attacks on southern Syria within a short timeframe reflected the ongoing instability and security challenges in Syria after the collapse of the Assad government. The continuation of this trend could increase the likelihood of intensified conflict and further regional instability.

At the same time, military actions against groups aligned with the interests of the Axis of Resistance have consistently been part of a broader strategy to weaken this axis. By undermining Iran's regional allies, as the leading power of the Axis of Resistance, Iran reduces its regional influence and operational capacity.

Although the fall of Bashar al-Assad may appear to pose a significant challenge to the Axis of Resistance, it does not necessarily imply its defeat or collapse. The networked and discursive structure of the Axis of Resistance has enabled it to function on the basis of ideological and strategic solidarity rather than dependence on any single individual or government. Therefore, Assad's fall should not be interpreted as a severe blow to Iran's regional policies or as the end of the Axis of Resistance in the region.

#### **4.2. Instability and a Sense of Insecurity in the Region**

Events following Operation al-Aqsa Flood clearly revealed the depth of Israel's vulnerability to actors of the Axis of Resistance. In other words, the Zionist regime is highly vulnerable due to its geographical constraints, namely, its narrow width and limited strategic depth. For this reason, expanding these dimensions and creating strategic depth have been considered among the main objectives of the "New Middle East" project.

On the other hand, achieving this goal requires weakening existing powerful states and causing the fragmentation of current countries. The collapse of states, in turn, necessitates weakening unifying ideologies and replacing them with new intellectual frameworks that do not conflict with Western capitalism and liberalism. Discourses such as Islamic identity, which are based on transnational ideologies, are seen as threats to Western interests and the Israeli regime. For this reason, resistance movements and Islamist currents have been heavily targeted by Western campaigns.

Accordingly, within the framework of Indigenism and Resistance Theory, the increasing aggressive actions of Israel against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of regional Islamic countries, including Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Yemen, Iran, Qatar, and others, following Operation al-Aqsa Flood, and in line with the so-called "Greater Israel" plan and the fragmentation of states and weakening of the Axis of Resistance, can be interpreted as contributing to a situation that ultimately produces insecurity and instability in West Asian countries. Naturally, such conditions adversely affect economic, trade, and energy exchanges in the region, posing a serious challenge not only to Iran's foreign policy but also to all regional states. Consequently, the security developments resulting from these aggressions affect not only regional stability and security but also international and economic relations among states, pushing the region toward greater instability and polarization in the future.

#### **4.3. Western Efforts to Neutralize Regional and Trans-regional Agreements**

Iran's membership in trans-regional alliances such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS represents a major challenge to Western hegemony, particularly that of the United States, and offers significant advantages. These memberships not only strengthen Iran's international role but also help counter its political and economic isolation under unilateral U.S. and Western pressure. For this reason, the United States employs a range of tools, including pressure, threats, and economic and military sanctions, to limit Iran's ability to form and strengthen alliances. These sanctions have particularly targeted the energy and banking sectors, aiming to deprive Iran of the financial resources needed to support its partnerships.

The United States also seeks to weaken Iran's regional influence by supporting opposition groups and fomenting internal tensions in neighboring countries, including backing opposition factions in Syria and Iraq, in order to advance its own national interests. These confrontations represent one of the major challenges in the foreign

policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran and may have profound effects on future regional developments.

Furthermore, U.S. efforts to pressure key members such as Brazil, India, and South Africa, as well as potential entrants such as Turkey, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia, pose another challenge to these blocs (IRNA, 21 August 2023).

#### **4.4. Direct Threats and Military Aggression by Israel Against Islamic Countries, Especially Iran**

Another key challenge is the Israeli regime's aerial penetration capabilities through covert technologies, which significantly reduce Iran's operational freedom in the region (Norlen, Tova, 2021: 6). A major turning point in the escalation of tensions between Iran and Israel was the Israeli airstrike on Iran's consulate in Syria, which subsequently led to further escalation through Operations True Promise I, II, and III.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's decisive response to Israeli aggression is regarded as a turning point in regional military doctrine and deterrence strategy. As prominent offensive realist theorist John Mearsheimer states: "If Israel thinks that by tearing apart every country in the region it will eventually achieve security that is an illusion. That will not happen, and in the end, Israel will inflict enormous damage on itself. Iran is the best example. Israelis, and of course Donald Trump, alongside the warmongers in the United States, claimed that we delivered a crushing blow to Iran. In my view, Iran's nuclear program is still alive. Israel did not solve the problem; in fact, it made it worse. The point is that even without nuclear weapons, Iran has many advantages." (Tabnak, 15 July 2025)

Nevertheless, one of the most significant challenges for the Islamic Republic of Iran following recent Israeli attacks is the emergence of a perception among Israeli and American officials that direct strikes on Iranian territory are feasible. This perception could lead to fundamental changes in Iran's military and security strategies and introduce new threats to national security.

For this reason, the Islamic Republic is compelled to continuously update its security and defense calculations and further strengthen its deterrence capabilities. Moreover, such a perception may escalate regional tensions and expand the scope of conflict to other countries in the region, including Qatar, Turkey, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia.

## **Conclusion**

Operation al-Aqsa Flood, as a historical turning point, has produced profound and wide-ranging transformations in the history of the Palestinian resistance and the Axis of Resistance in West Asia, particularly in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Accordingly, Iran's foreign policy has consistently been shaped by complex regional and international developments, including the al-Aqsa Flood. In other words, the post-al-Aqsa Flood environment has simultaneously created both opportunities and challenges for Iran's foreign policy. The most important opportunities are as follows:

1. Enhancement of Iran's deterrence capability and military power: Following Operation al-Aqsa Flood, Iran continued to strengthen its military and security capabilities. Recent military developments indicate a shift in regional power balances and an increase in Iran's deterrence capacity against external threats, particularly from the Israeli regime. By utilizing advanced technologies, strengthening its defense industries, and conducting military exercises, Iran has significantly enhanced its power.
2. Coordination between diplomacy and the battlefield: In recent years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has sought to establish close coordination between its diplomatic efforts and military operations. This strategy, by emphasizing unity within the resistance front and diplomacy, has strengthened the Islamic Republic of Iran's power in the face of threats. This approach has not only managed to portray military achievements on the international stage but has also helped construct a strong narrative of resistance against oppression and occupation.
3. Expansion of the Discourse of Resistance at the Global Level: Operation al-Aqsa Flood and the crimes committed by the Israeli regime in Gaza have contributed to the expansion of the discourse of resistance globally. This discourse has gained attention not only in Palestine but also in Islamic countries and even within Western societies. Large-scale demonstrations and international expressions of support for the Palestinian people, particularly by prominent figures and social activists, reflect a shift in public attitudes toward the Palestinian issue and Israel's actions.
4. Regional and Trans-regional Alliances: Through the formation of regional and trans-regional alliances, particularly with countries such as China and Russia, the Islamic Republic of Iran has strengthened its position against the system of domination. These developments, especially Iran's accession to international organizations such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization,

demonstrate Iran's efforts to reinforce multilateral diplomacy and counter Western unilateralism.

5. Israel's International Isolation and Domestic Crisis: Operation al-Aqsa Flood led to increased international isolation of the Israeli regime. Israel's actions in Gaza not only resulted in widespread condemnation from various countries but also exposed serious weaknesses in its security system. This situation has contributed to a decline in the regime's credibility and growing domestic dissatisfaction.
6. Adoption of an Active, Resistance-Oriented Foreign Policy: An active foreign policy based on resistance against the system of domination has functioned as a key strategy in defending Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Particularly after the Twelve-Day War, Iran has strengthened its position against external threats by demonstrating both military and diplomatic power. By applying the logic of deterrence and resistance diplomacy, Iran has also influenced neighboring countries' perceptions of its defense strategy.

Despite these developments, the Islamic Republic of Iran has faced several challenges in its foreign policy after Operation al-Aqsa Flood:

1. The fall of Syria and the disruption of Iran's land connection to the Axis of Resistance: The collapse of the Assad government in Syria, as a key member of the Axis of Resistance, created serious challenges for Iran and severed its geographic link to this axis. Continued developments in Syria, combined with the emergence of armed groups and Israeli airstrikes against Hezbollah and Hamas positions, could further complicate the geographical cohesion of the Axis of Resistance.
2. Instability and a sense of insecurity in the region: Following the al-Aqsa Flood, insecurity and instability increased in Islamic countries, particularly near Iran's borders. Given Israeli aggression, this situation could lead to heightened regional tensions and conflict, threatening Iran's national security and increasing military and economic costs for regional states.
3. U.S. efforts to neutralize regional and trans-regional agreements: The United States uses various tools, including pressure, threats, and economic and military sanctions, to limit Iran's ability to form and strengthen regional and trans-regional alliances. These sanctions particularly target the energy and banking sectors, aiming to deprive Iran of financial resources needed to support its alliances.
4. Direct threats and attacks by Israel and the United States: Direct attacks by the Israeli regime and the United States on Iranian military and security facilities,

particularly the Twelve-Day War, constitute one of the major challenges for the Islamic Republic. These threats may weaken Iran's national security and escalate regional tensions. Moreover, one of the most significant challenges is the emergence of the belief among Israeli and American officials that direct strikes on Iranian territory are feasible.

Overall, the multiple challenges facing the Islamic Republic of Iran after Operation al-Aqsa Flood reflect the complexity and diversity of threats in the regional security environment. These challenges require a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to address both internal and external threats. Iran must respond effectively through active diplomacy, strengthened regional relations, and enhanced deterrence capabilities in order to safeguard its national interests.

Nevertheless, despite the disruption of Iran's land connection to the Axis of Resistance, a gradual, subtle transformation has emerged in the deeper layers of the Islamic world and in regional dynamics. The discourse of resistance is shifting from a centralized form to a decentralized one. In other words, while the discourse of resistance remains firmly intact, its structure and organization are evolving from a center-based system to a more distributed one, and it continues to expand not only regionally but also globally.

### **Ethical Considerations**

According to the authors, there is no conflict of interest in this article.

The authors have adhered to ethical principles in conducting and publishing this scientific research, and that this has been confirmed by all of them.

The data of the present study are available upon request from the authors.

The authors would also like to express their gratitude to the respected reviewers for their valuable structural and scientific comments on the manuscript and for their careful review and insightful feedback.

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