

Great uncertainty and risks for Ukraine

The recent escalation in the Middle East has created greater uncertainty and risk for Ukraine at a critical stage in its defence against Russia's increasing aggression. Twelve days of war between Israel and Iran have sucked international media and government attention away from Kyiv's struggle.

An ongoing, broader, regional conflict would divert international focus, assistance, and political will away from Ukraine for quite some time, weakening its position on the battlefield and at the negotiating table, and emboldening Russia to conduct fiercer attacks and increase diplomatic pressure. The US recently redirected [20,000 Ukraine-bound anti-drone missiles](#) to its own forces to the Middle East, even though they are urgently needed in Ukraine amid intensifying attacks on civilians.

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On the plus side, Israel's bombing may undermine the role of Iran as a key ally for Russia by possibly disrupting or reducing its ability to export military equipment to Moscow. Tehran has supplied [thousands of Shahed-type drones](#) since the start of the full-scale invasion and provided support to produce these drones inside Russia.

The Israel-Iran conflict caused sharp volatility in oil prices. Given the uncertainty in energy markets, the EU and G7 allies are unlikely to impose new energy sanctions on Russia, as they have already [stepped back](#) from lowering the oil price cap. Russia has sought to exploit the situation diplomatically by leveraging its ties with Iran and good relations with Israel to position itself as a mediator. This could hinder joint international efforts to increase pressure against Russia, increasing the Kremlin's confidence in its ability to continue its war of attrition and giving it greater leverage in any future negotiations.

Moscow has also tried to use the Middle East conflict to justify and normalise its aggression against Ukraine by blurring the line between aggressor and victim, undermining international legal norms and prospects for justice and accountability for Ukraine.

As US President Donald Trump's focus on Ukraine continues to decline, it becomes more difficult to keep him engaged in the negotiation process. This leads to fewer political safeguards against Russian aggression and risks Ukraine becoming a bargaining chip in broader geopolitical negotiations.

The most favourable option for Ukraine and its partners would be a swift de-escalation of the Israel-Iran conflict. For the time being, it is unclear whether the ceasefire announced by the US will hold. Coordinated international efforts and EU leadership remain essential to prevent global focus and capacity from shifting away from countering Russian aggression and supporting Ukraine's pursuit of security, sovereignty, justice, and peace.