

## **Silent skies, shattered borders: Transboundary missiles, airspace sovereignty, and Sri Lanka's legal readiness in a changing strategic landscape**

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The rise of transboundary missile strikes, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) have significantly challenged traditional notions of airspace sovereignty. Recent events, such as Iran's missile launches targeting Israel via third-party airspaces, highlight tensions between established international legal frameworks, rooted in the Chicago Convention of 1944, and contemporary security threats. This paper employs a doctrinal legal research methodology to critically examine the intersection of public international air law, state sovereignty, and emerging aerial technologies. Focusing on Sri Lanka, a strategically located island in the Indian Ocean experiencing growing geopolitical interest from regional powers like China and India, this study assesses the adequacy of its legal and institutional frameworks in addressing potential violations of its airspace. The analysis reveals that current civil aviation laws, primarily designed for commercial aviation, lack provisions to monitor, deter, or respond effectively to hostile overflights and missile intrusions. By evaluating principles such as territorial sovereignty, non-intervention, and the duty of due regard, the research identifies critical gaps in Sri Lanka's legal readiness for aerial threats. The paper proposes legal and policy reforms to strengthen Sri Lanka's legal readiness, including integrated radar surveillance, early warning systems, and a defence-oriented framework for airspace governance. By placing Sri Lanka at the centre of the analysis, the study highlights the vulnerabilities of small but strategically important states when confronted with transboundary missile threats. It argues that improving legal readiness is essential to adapt national frameworks to the realities of modern aerial security. In this way, the research contributes to the broader discourse on the role of public international air law in managing emerging geopolitical and technological challenges within national airspace.

**Keywords:** *Airspace sovereignty, Legal readiness, Public International Air Law, Sri Lanka, Transboundary missiles*