

This Madness Must Stop

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*“Mankind must put an end to war or war will
put an end to mankind”*

- John F Kennedy

Abstract

This article examines the ongoing West Asian conflict and its far-reaching geopolitical, economic, and security implications for the international community, with particular emphasis on India. It argues that the conflict involving the United States, Israel, and Iran has evolved into a protracted confrontation marked by extensive destruction, attacks on civilian infrastructure, threats to nuclear facilities, and growing risks of regional and global escalation. The article analyses the strategic objectives and operational conduct of the principal actors, the implications of Iran's nuclear ambitions, and the critical significance of the Strait of Hormuz as a vital global energy artery. It highlights the adverse impact of the conflict on international energy markets, maritime security, and global stability. The article contends that durable peace can only emerge through diplomacy, restraint, and multilateral engagement. It concludes that India must play a proactive diplomatic role while strengthening its energy security, strategic preparedness, and comprehensive national power.

Introduction

It is a historical truism that despite the hopes of many, no war in human history has ever ended all wars. Ever since the end of World War II in 1945, the planet has not witnessed a conflict

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as intense and devastating as the one raging in the West Asia since 28 Feb 2026—the roots of which are embedded in major historical and religious differences.

The West Asian Conflict

The catastrophic West Asian conflict is showing no signs of abating. It appears, by all standards, to be racing towards an armageddon. Though humongous destruction is happening each day, the warring nations, namely the United States (US) and Israel on one side and Iran on the other, refuse to see reason despite the conflict degenerating to any meaningful terminal objectives worth attaining left for either of them. The contention that even powerful nations can be taken to their ruin by megalomaniac leadership within their country has once again come to light. The painful prolongation of this unnecessary conflict has gravely affected many nations across Asia and Europe through the resulting energy crisis. Where and how this human suffering and widespread energy disruption will end remains uncertain. Many strategic analysts fear that this conflict contains the ingredients for a wider escalation.

World War in the Making

Truth and adherence to human values are the early casualties in any war. Subsequently, strategic and operational lacunae, at times, do emerge, leading to an incorrect reading of the ongoing battle situation. The hesitation of erstwhile allies to plunge themselves into support of their allied nation is also a possibility and could result in inadequate force and other resources being marshalled to take on the common enemy. Another customary shortcoming which is common is the underestimation of the adversary.

All these factors have been more than evident during the ongoing West Asian conflict.

Levels of Destruction and Collateral Damage

Striking at each other's military targets is '*Kosher (acceptable)*' and critical in battle. However, unfortunately, both sides have been targeting civilian infrastructure, including residential complexes, electricity grids, hospitals and schools, bridges, railway stations, and shopping complexes. Regrettably, according to Iran, the US and Israel have attacked the civil nuclear Russian-built plant at

Bushehr four times, leading to possible radiation leaks. The adverse impact of these leaks would be catastrophic, and their impact will be felt even beyond Iran's borders. The International Atomic Energy Agency has already issued a stern warning to the warring nations to desist targeting any nuclear installations. The US has stated that they have destroyed Iran's capability to enrich Uranium to weaponry levels (90 per cent enrichment). However, conflicting reports suggest that Iran has secretly hidden around 400 kgs of weapon-grade Uranium in underground storage facilities. International nuclear experts opine that Iran, despite the US attacks on its Isfahan nuclear facilities, still has the capability of speedily producing 10 to 11 nuclear warheads, which can be used with the ballistic missiles it has in its arsenal. It is, thus, hoped that the US, Israel, and Iran restrain themselves not only from attacking nuclear plants but also the civilian infrastructure and non-military targets, as laid down in the Geneva Convention. A major source of worry for all is the targeting of oil and gas wells and water desalination plants, which, if destroyed, would result in crime against humanity. Iran's targeting of both military and non-military installations in the nations of the pro-US Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has adversely enlarged the areas of confrontation.

Immediately after the US and Israeli bombs attacked the military and non-military targets in Tehran, along with some other sites in Iran, the latter targeted the US bases in Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iraq, and Turkey. Iran's strategy in doing so could be to force the GCC nations to reconsider their security alliances with the US.

Importantly, the selective targeting of Iran's political, military, and intelligence leadership and their elimination, including the death of former Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on 28 Feb 2026, has greatly irked the Iranians. Meanwhile, Israel, despite the ongoing fragile ceasefire announced by the US President for two weeks, continued to bombard Lebanon heavily and caused nearly 3,500 casualties by the time of editing this article. Israel hopes to finish the backbone of the Hezbollah terrorists.

Lebanon During Conflict

According to reliable media reports, nearly 5,000 fatal casualties have been reported on both sides, including Iran and Lebanon, during the entire period of this conflict. This includes the death of

182 schoolgirls in the Iranian city of Minab. The Israeli raid on Beirut in Apr resulted in nearly 250 fatalities, along with massive destruction of residential complexes and shopping centres.

United States' Strategy in the West Asia Conflict

US President Donald Trump, holding the most powerful office in the world, continues with his frequently changing strategic policy decisions in the conduct of this conflict. He has now become a subject of derision among several nations. Even within the US, as many as 59 per cent of Americans are critical of his handling of this conflict, according to recent surveys. There were changes in the Trump's administration, including his Counter Terrorism Chief, Secretary of the Navy, and even his Army Chief, besides a few other General officers, owing to differences after the West Asia conflict. Unconfirmed media reports emanating from the US indicate that some of the senior Armed Forces officers have opposed Trump's likely intention of launching 'Boots on the Ground', namely a ground assault against Iran. By all standards, most strategic analysts across the world opine that such an act would lead to many hundreds of 'Body Bags' of US troops if a ground invasion takes place. As it is well known, nearly 60 per cent of Iranian territory is mountainous in nature and, thus, ground offensives may result in casualties for the attacking troops.

Current Operational Situation

Despite the US and Israel employing advanced weaponry and platforms such as the F-15E, F-35, and A-10 aircraft; Black Hawk and Chinook helicopters; Tomahawk cruise missiles; Patriot air defence systems; airborne warning and control system aircraft; Blue Sparrow missiles; Arrow missile defence system; and terminal high altitude area defense systems along with the presence of the US Navy aircraft carriers and MQ-9 Reaper drones, the Iranians have not capitulated. They continue to resist determinedly, inflicting damage on Israeli military and civilian assets, as well as on the US military bases in the GCC region. This conflict has seen a humongous range and quantity of ballistic missiles and drones being employed by all warring nations. The era of stand-off kinetic engagements has decisively arrived with significant force and impact. Military experts and defence analysts opine that this conflict has changed many established rules of kinetic engagements perfected over the last few decades.

President Trump's ever-changing ultimatums to Iran to cease operations by multiple deadlines had fallen on deaf ears. He had promised multiple times that the US and Israel would unleash hell on Iran.

Undeterred, Tehran has also promised them the same fate. Concurrently, unnecessary and major devastation continues in the region on both sides of the war, with major impact on civilians and economic installation. Trump's on-and-off ceasefire declarations, which have changed multiple times, have been criticised by his North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies and American defence analysts, including a few senior military officers and former officials from his administration.

Iran's Nuclear Ambitions

One of the principal reasons cited by both Israel and the US has been the concern regarding Iran's push for pursuing its nuclear programme, which is perceived as an existential threat, especially by Tel Aviv. Though Iran has denied claims of enriching Uranium to weapon-grade capability, there could be some truth in Israel's analysis. However, on 27 Feb, during the US and Israel talks with Iran in Geneva, under mediation by Omani Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi, it was stated that the ongoing talks were going well and Iran had promised the suspension of its nuclear weapons programme. The launch of Operation Epic Fury by the US-Israel combine, during ongoing negotiations, was widely perceived as a breach of trust and inconsistency with established international norms.

According to media reports following the first round of talks between the involved nations in Islamabad on 11 Apr, Iran has indicated a willingness to consider limiting aspects of its nuclear programme for a defined period, reportedly around five years. However, the US continues to insist that Iran should fully abandon its uranium enrichment. This issue remains a central point of contention and may require further negotiation, as suggested by several countries.

However, the question of whether Iran should be permitted to continue uranium enrichment remains a major source of contention among the US, Israel, and Iran during the current confrontation. Some strategic analysts also suggest that at some stage, Iran

may clandestinely commence its nuclear programme as it has learnt the lesson from Ukraine, which voluntarily gave up its nuclear programme and, thus, lost its deterrent value against Russia.

The Strait of Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz is a narrow waterway (21 nautical miles at its narrowest) flowing between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, with Iran on its north coast and a protectorate of Oman on its south coast. A small portion of the peninsula is under the jurisdiction of the UAE. Ultimately, the Gulf of Oman leads to the Arabian Sea and onwards to the oceans, sustaining the global sea lanes for world trade. Thus, the Strait of Hormuz is the central strategic waterway in this region. Nearly 20 per cent of the world's oil passes through this waterway, besides another 20 per cent of the world's liquefied natural gas is also being shipped through it. Till 27 Feb, the Strait was open for trade and passage of ships, to and fro, without any hindrance whatsoever.

The Strait of Hormuz crisis, which has significantly impacted global energy supply chains, is widely attributed to escalating tensions involving Iran. These developments have prompted the US to enhance its naval presence and undertake countermeasures aimed at ensuring freedom of navigation through this critical chokepoint. There have been reports of limited engagements and incidents involving Iranian vessels and US naval forces in the vicinity of commercial shipping. Consequently, maritime traffic has faced disruptions, with numerous oil consignments destined for various countries experiencing delays in transit through the Strait. The blockading of this waterway is now also one of the major causes of the breakdown of negotiations between the US and Iran.

President Trump has publicly asserted that the Strait of Hormuz must remain open to ensure the continued flow of global energy supplies. However, Iran has not agreed to these demands, and the divergence in positions risks further escalation of hostilities in the region. Both the US and Iran have hardened their positions, with President Trump now ordering his Navy to shoot down Iranian gunboats laying mines in the Strait of Hormuz. Meanwhile, Tehran has refused to alter its position, maintaining that it will not engage further until the US lifts the blockade in its entirety.

President Trump, as it is well known, has a pattern of inconsistent public statements and shifting policy positions, reflecting a tendency towards fluctuating strategic signalling. Meanwhile, Israel has been intensively attacking Beirut and other areas in Lebanon, striking at Hezbollah targets. Israel's operations in Lebanon have resulted in significant collateral damage, with the Lebanese population bearing considerable costs, largely due to the presence and activities of the anti-Israel militant group Hezbollah within the country.

Impact of Conflict on India

As this unwarranted conflict meanders along without any end in sight, its impact will gravely impact many nations in the region, those who are dependent on their energy supplies from the Gulf nations and Iran. India, too, imports over 87 per cent of its energy requirements, of which 50 per cent of crude and 90 per cent of liquefied petroleum gas comes through the Strait of Hormuz. Thus, India also has a vital stake in peace and normalcy returning to the Gulf area. However, the fact remains that this conflict has ensured the death of the global maritime commons, and Iran is threatening to extract hefty fees from ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz. The US, too, has also expressed strong concerns regarding the transit of ships through this choked waterway. It is also cognisant of the operational limitations being faced by its Navy to operate successfully in the narrow waterway. Apart from a few back-channel talks by the Indian government and some telephonic conversations by the country's leadership, much more needs to be done to influence the warring parties to bring an end to the widespread mayhem and suffering, including within their own nations. India now must take the lead and co-opt the United Nations (UN), Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) grouping (of which India is the current head), the European Union, Australia, Japan, North Korea, and the GCC apart from the warring nations, and importantly Russia, to work out a balanced and fair plan to resolve this issue. Anyway, a new international order is likely in the offing, embellished with multipolarity after the ongoing geopolitical churn. India will do well to become an example of neutrality with a balanced attitude towards all global problems, not only as an example for the Global South but even for advanced nations of the West.

If the US is eager to resolve the currently worsening situation, which appears to take this world to the brink of World War III, it must not endeavour to humiliate Iran at the same time when it offers a ceasefire. The previous ceasefire between the US, Israel, and Iran have proved to be fragile, particularly in light of the ongoing violations and the absence of a clearly defined and mutually accepted framework. However, Israel must refrain from bombing innocent civilians in Lebanon as it is inhuman by all standards. Equally, Iran and the US must desist from targeting civil infrastructure like apartment buildings, water desalination plants, oil refineries, and others. Iran, too, must realise that the possession of nuclear weapons will not guarantee its well-being in the future. It must also avoid supporting terrorist outfits in the region. Iran has adequate strengths springing from its civilisational heritage and oil wealth, which should be utilised to the optimum whilst shunning support to terror outfits of any dispensation.

Apart from strengthening the sinews of its comprehensive national power to effectively confront emerging security challenges, India must diversify its sources of energy procurement. In addition, it should accelerate the development of, and increase its reliance on, alternative sources of energy.

Conclusion

As history demonstrates, wars rarely resolve geopolitical, ideological, religious, or economic disputes; rather, they often sow the seeds for future conflicts. The world must wake up before it is too late. No matter whatever be the outcome of the current negotiations between Iran and the US and Israel, India must also provide its suggestions independently to strive for peace. As Chair of BRICS this year, India should leverage the platform to actively advance efforts toward de-escalation and stability in West Asia, despite the persistence of complex and contentious disputes. As recent developments—such as the West Asian conflict following the Gaza and Russia–Ukraine crises—demonstrate, wars and similar high-intensity conflicts can emerge with little or no warning. Thus, India too must ensure its security preparedness and adaptability to newer strategic challenges emerging in the conventional, nuclear, cyber and other hi-tech driven operations in multi-domain warfare. Importantly, the nuances of asymmetric warfare must be thoroughly analysed and its application in the Indian environment should be adapted in detail.

The world will be well advised to remember that the only way to win a war is to prevent it, and wars have a nasty habit of prolonging themselves with huge costs and no clear winners ever. The current ongoing West Asian conflict is indeed a perfect example of why such conflicts must be avoided at all costs. The failure of the first round of talks between the US and Iran in Islamabad does not portend well for global well-being. India must, therefore, make diplomatic efforts to encourage restraint among the warring parties to prevent a wider escalation that could risk a nuclear confrontation with unprecedented consequences.

The author is a subject-matter expert in the domain and has articulated the article based on original insights and professional experience; accordingly, no endnotes have been included.