



# Invisible War and the United States-Iran-Israel Conflict: Oil, Currencies, Energy, and Security

Guerra invisible y el conflicto entre Estados Unidos, Irán e Israel: petróleo, divisas, energía y seguridad

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## Abstract

This work is developed in two complementary parts. The first analyzes the contemporary military conflict between the United States, Israel, and Iran from military, political, economic, and international perception dimensions, highlighting the relevance of air defense, clarity of strategic objectives, political narrative, and the global economic effects of the war. The second part examines the financial and energy dimension of the conflict, including the role of the petrodollar system, Iran's strategies to introduce uncertainty into energy markets, diversification against the dollar, and the internal impacts on the U.S. economy and domestic politics. The analysis shows that modern conflicts are not limited to the battlefield but develop simultaneously in economic, financial, and informational domains. Each section of the work includes data from cited sources and authors, integrating available evidence to support the development of ideas.

Key words: Invisible War, Iran, United States, Israel, Conflict, Military Attrition, Global Vulnerability.

## Resumen

Este trabajo se estructura en dos partes complementarias. La primera analiza el conflicto militar actual entre Estados Unidos, Israel e Irán desde las perspectivas militar, política, económica y de percepción internacional, destacando la importancia de la defensa aérea, la claridad de los objetivos estratégicos, la narrativa política y los efectos económicos globales de la guerra. La segunda parte examina la dimensión financiera y energética del conflicto, incluyendo el papel del sistema del petrodólar, las estrategias de Irán para introducir incertidumbre en los mercados energéticos, la diversificación frente al dólar y los impactos internos en la economía y la política interna de Estados Unidos. El análisis muestra que los conflictos modernos no se limitan al campo de batalla, sino que se desarrollan simultáneamente en los ámbitos económico, financiero e informativo. Cada sección del trabajo incluye datos de las fuentes y autores citados, integrando las pruebas disponibles para respaldar el desarrollo de las ideas.

Palabras clave: Guerra invisible, Irán, Estados Unidos, Israel, conflicto, desgaste militar, vulnerabilidad global.

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## **Part I: The War Between the United States, Israel, and Iran: Strategy, Military Attrition, and Leadership Crisis**

### **1. Modern War and Air Defense Attrition**

21st-century wars rarely develop solely on the battlefield. They unfold simultaneously across multiple dimensions: military, economic, political, and informational. The current conflict between the United States, Israel, and Iran illustrates this reality with particular clarity. What began as a series of military operations aimed at weakening Iran's strategic capabilities has rapidly evolved into a regional confrontation with global implications.

In just a few days, the conflict dynamics have revealed several elements that transcend direct military confrontation. The intensive exchange of missiles and drones has tested the effectiveness and limits of modern air defense systems, showing how even the most advanced technologies can be pressured operationally when facing sustained attacks and saturation strategies. At the same time, military escalation has exposed a series of strategic tensions related to defining political war objectives, the coherence of military command, and governments' ability to sustain convincing narratives before their own societies and the international community.

Adding to these dimensions is a factor that has historically made the Middle East a strategic pivot of the international system: energy. The instability generated by the conflict has revived fears about the security of global energy transport, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most strategic maritime corridors. Any disruption, real or perceived, in the flow of oil and gas through this route has immediate effects on energy markets, international transportation, and ultimately global economic stability.

However, beyond its military and economic dimensions, the war also reveals a deeper crisis related to the political conduct of the

conflict. The clarity of strategic objectives, leadership coherence, and governments' ability to articulate a consistent narrative about the purpose and limits of the war have become factors as decisive as the military operations themselves.

This article examines the conflict from an analytical-critical perspective that combines theoretical foundations of military strategy and geopolitics with observation of recent events. From this approach, it is argued that the current war not only exposes the operational limitations of contemporary military systems but also the structural tensions that arise when the use of force is not accompanied by a clear definition of political objectives, a coherent strategy, and political leadership capable of sustaining the costs—military, economic, and political—that any war inevitably entails.

### **2. Modern War and Air Defense Attrition**

#### **2.1. Theoretical Foundations**

Modern air defense operates under three principles: detection, interception, and destruction of threats before they reach their targets. However, saturation strategy introduces a new challenge: massive simultaneous attacks that consume defensive resources faster than they can be replenished, generating what is called a "strategic attrition economy."

#### **2.2. Practical Application**

One of the most revealing elements of the conflict between Iran, Israel, and the United States has been the sustained pressure that missile and drone attacks have exerted on deployed air defense systems in the region. Although these systems have been considered for decades one of the main technological advantages of Western military powers, the recent dynamics of the conflict have exposed their structural limitations when facing prolonged attacks and saturation strategies.

The logic of this strategy is relatively simple but deeply effective. While interceptors used by air defense systems are usually highly

sophisticated—and therefore costly—attack drones and many missiles can be produced at a fraction of that cost. This asymmetry generates what some military analysts call the “attrition economy”: a model in which the attacker does not need to completely destroy the defensive system but rather forces it to consume resources faster than they can be replenished.

In the current conflict context, this dynamic has manifested in repeated attacks combining ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones. The goal of these operations is not only to hit specific targets but also to force air defense systems to operate continuously, increasing interceptor consumption and pressuring detection, radar, and command systems.

This phenomenon is not entirely new in military history but acquires a different dimension in the contemporary technological environment. The most advanced air defense systems—such as the Iron Dome, Patriot system, and Arrow system—were designed to face specific threats within certain operational parameters. When these parameters are exceeded by the intensity or frequency of attacks, even the most sophisticated systems can be subjected to progressive attrition.

To this operational pressure is added a second equally relevant factor: the industrial capacity to quickly replenish defensive systems used in combat. In a prolonged war, the effectiveness of air defense depends not only on the technological quality of deployed systems but also on the speed at which interceptors and critical components can be produced and replaced. In this sense, contemporary warfare once again reveals a classic principle of strategy: industrial and logistical capacity remains a decisive factor in sustaining any military effort.

The current conflict seems to confirm this trend. As attacks continue and air defense systems are forced to operate continuously, the problem no longer solely concerns the capacity to intercept individual threats. It becomes a question of strategic endurance, where the central question shifts from

whether a system can intercept a missile to whether it can continue doing so sustainably over weeks or months of combat.

This reality introduces a significant strategic paradox: in contemporary war, technological superiority does not necessarily guarantee a decisive advantage if the adversary manages to transform the conflict into a competition of attrition.

### **2.3. The Absence of Clear Strategic Objectives**

One of the best-known principles of modern strategic theory was formulated by Carl von Clausewitz, who noted that “war is the continuation of politics by other means.” This frequently cited assertion in military studies contains a fundamental implication: the effective conduct of war depends on the existence of clear political objectives that guide military strategy.

When those objectives are not clearly defined, or when they constantly change during the conflict, strategy tends to become incoherent. Military operations may continue but lose a strategic framework that allows assessing effectiveness or determining when war goals have been achieved.

In the current conflict between Iran, Israel, and the United States, one of the most debated elements among strategic analysts has been precisely the lack of clarity regarding the final political objectives of the confrontation. Throughout the early stages of the conflict, various statements from political and military authorities have suggested goals ranging from deterrence and containment to significant degradation of Iran’s strategic capabilities.

The strategic problem that arises in this context is evident. Each of these objectives implies very different levels of military commitment, political costs, and risks of regional escalation. Deterrence, for example, may be sought through limited operations intended to signal strength. In contrast, deep degradation of strategic capabilities—such as missile programs or military infrastructure—

may require prolonged campaigns and a much higher level of confrontation.

Ambiguity in objectives not only affects strategic planning but also has direct consequences for military morale, public perception, and international credibility of political leadership. When war objectives are not clearly communicated, it becomes difficult for the public to understand what constitutes success or failure in the conflict. Likewise, allies may face challenges in evaluating to what extent they should commit their own resources in support of the operation.

Historically, numerous conflicts have demonstrated that the lack of strategic clarity can become one of the factors that unnecessarily prolong wars. Without a precise definition of political objectives, military operations tend to become tactical responses to immediate events rather than part of a coherent strategy aimed at a specific political outcome.

In the current conflict, this dynamic appears reflected in the tension between political rhetoric and operational reality on the ground. While military operations continue with intensity, international debate reveals growing uncertainty about the point at which the actors involved would consider the war objectives achieved.

This strategic uncertainty introduces an additional element of risk. When war objectives remain ambiguous, the conflict can gradually transform into a reactive escalation dynamic, in which each military action generates new responses without a clear political framework delimiting the confrontation's boundaries.

From this perspective, the central issue ceases to be only the military capacity of the actors involved. It becomes the capacity of political leadership to precisely define the ends of the war and align military means with those objectives. Without coherence between politics and strategy, even the most successful military operations can produce strategically uncertain results.

### **3. Global Economic Impact of War: Energy, Trade, and Global Vulnerability**

Throughout contemporary history, the Middle East has held a central place in international geopolitics due to its role in the global energy system. The current conflict between Iran, Israel, and the United States again highlights the extent to which the stability of this region continues to be a determining factor for the world economy.

One of the most sensitive elements in this context is the security of maritime routes through which a substantial portion of the oil and natural gas that fuel international markets transits. In particular, the Strait of Hormuz constitutes one of the most critical strategic points of the global energy system. Approximately one-fifth of the world's traded oil passes through this narrow maritime corridor connecting the Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean.

This concentration of energy flow in a relatively small geographic space makes the strait a point of structural vulnerability for the international economy. Any disruption—real or potential—in tanker transit has immediate effects on energy markets, generating increases in oil and gas prices that quickly extend to other economic sectors.

In the context of the current conflict, the possibility of restrictions on maritime transit in this area has revived fears historically associated with regional crises. Energy markets tend to react not only to concrete events but also to the perception of geopolitical risk. In this sense, even the threat of supply disruptions can generate significant energy price volatility.

The consequences of these fluctuations extend far beyond the energy sector. Increases in oil prices directly impact maritime, land, and air transport costs, raising global logistics chain expenses. In a highly interconnected economic system, this translates into higher prices for food, industrial goods, and services, affecting both

developed economies and developing countries.

Another sector particularly sensitive to these dynamics is fertilizers. The production of many fertilizers depends on energy inputs—especially natural gas—so any disruption in energy markets can affect agricultural production costs. Thus, a regional geopolitical crisis can indirectly affect food security in different parts of the world.

This interconnection between military conflict and global economic stability reveals a fundamental characteristic of contemporary wars: their effects rarely remain confined to strictly military domains. In a deeply integrated international system, geopolitical tensions can trigger chain reactions affecting markets, logistics systems, and economic policies across multiple regions.

In this context, the current conflict must be analyzed not only from the perspective of military operations or actors' strategies but also as a phenomenon with structural implications for the functioning of the international economic system, where the stability of strategic maritime routes, market confidence, and perception of geopolitical risk become central variables.

From this perspective, war is fought not only on the battlefield. It also projects onto energy markets, trade routes, and economic decisions of governments and companies worldwide.

### **3.1. Political Leadership and War Narrative**

Contemporary war is not fought solely with missiles and drones; it is also fought in the arena of public perception and international narrative. In the current conflict between Iran, Israel, and the United States, the coherence and credibility of political leadership have become factors as decisive as military capability.

From the strategic theory perspective, effective political leadership must fulfill three essential functions: define war objectives, articulate a consistent narrative explaining

those objectives, and maintain the confidence of allies, populations, and adversaries. When these functions weaken, perception gaps arise that can be exploited by the enemy and international media, generating negative effects on morale, credibility, and conflict sustainability.

### **3.2. United States**

In the case of the United States, a notable divergence of messages among different political authorities has been observed. Contradictory statements from the President, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense have created a fragmented narrative that hinders understanding of the war's objectives and limits. This inconsistency affects not only external perception of U.S. capacity but also has internal repercussions: civilians and military personnel face uncertainty about the conflict's purpose and duration.

### **3.3. Israel**

Israel, for its part, has adopted a communication strategy based on extreme information control. Limiting foreign correspondent access and censoring critical events, such as the alert status of air defense systems and leaders' movements, generates an internal perception of security but restricts the international community's ability to accurately evaluate the situation on the ground. This can produce an external narrative of vulnerability or lack of transparency, although internally it strengthens discipline and confidence in military leadership.

### **3.4. Iran**

Iran, in contrast, has employed selective openness in its communication. Iranian leaders grant interviews to international media, allow foreign correspondent coverage, and issue daily reports on attacks and objectives reached. This strategy projects control, capability, and resilience, creating the perception that Iran leads the war initiative, even though operational reality may be more complex.

#### **4. Scientific Foundations of Perception and Strategic Narrative**

From a scientific standpoint, these strategies are explained by perception psychology and strategic communication. Agenda-setting and framing theory indicate that the information selected, the way it is presented, and its frequency determine how internal and external audiences interpret events. Psychological warfare studies show that perceptions of control, efficiency, or vulnerability can affect both enemy morale and that of allies and civilians, even influencing economic and political decisions.

A recent example illustrating the relevance of political narrative occurred when the U.S. President requested a ceasefire with Iran. Beyond its military significance, this act sent signals about the strategic timing of the conflict, reflecting political limitations, economic costs, and internal pressure on the administration. Public perception of weakness, urgency, or loss of initiative becomes an element that can influence future decisions and negotiations.

In summary, modern war requires political leadership to be as competent in managing perception as in conducting military operations. The ability to articulate clear objectives, maintain message coherence, and project control in the international narrative is as critical as defensive system effectiveness or military production capacity. In this conflict, divergence in these communication strategies shapes not only the perception of who “leads the initiative” but also the conditions under which the next phases of the confrontation will unfold.

#### **5. Part I Conclusion: Perception Warfare as a Determinant in Modern War**

Analysis of the United States-Israel-Iran conflict suggests that contemporary war cannot be understood solely in terms of military capability or technological superiority. Even the most advanced systems reveal structural limits when facing sustained attrition strategies. This phenomenon shows

that military power has inherent operational and logistical constraints. This attrition conditions operational effectiveness and redefines how planners calculate risks and allocate resources against an adversary capable of turning the conflict into a prolonged endurance competition.

The absence of clear strategic objectives by some actors has intensified war complexity, affecting operational coherence, troop morale, and international perception. This dynamic underscores the interdependence between strategy, economy, and leadership: tactical decisions disconnected from precise political objectives generate immediate economic costs and repercussions on government credibility, affecting the ability to sustain conflict and maintain strategic alliances. The vulnerability of strategic corridors such as the Strait of Hormuz demonstrates that military security and global economic stability are intrinsically linked, and that war management requires careful integration of both factors.

Narrative management and international perception emerge as critical components of modern war. Communication coherence and the ability to project control affect both adversary morale and the confidence of allies and strategic partners. Divergent messages among political leaders, selective censorship, or controlled information openness become strategic tools that can amplify or mitigate military power effects. Thus, war is not confined to the physical domain: it develops simultaneously in the cognitive sphere, where adversary perception can influence tactical and strategic decisions.

Finally, the implications of this conflict for the international system are profound. The interaction between military limits, economic pressure, political leadership, and strategic perception determines not only the current conflict’s conduct but also sets precedents regarding the credibility of state commitments, the permanence of foreign forces in strategic regions, and the stability of global markets. Recognizing the adversary’s

strength as central in strategic planning reinforces the need to integrate politics, economy, and perception in designing future military operations and international policy decisions.

In summary, the war between the United States, Israel, and Iran underscores that military power has clear limits, strategy must be articulated with defined political and economic objectives, and leadership and perception management are as decisive as armed force. Ignoring any of these dimensions compromises operational results and can produce lasting effects on international credibility, regional stability, and the perception of who truly controls the war initiative.

## **Part II: Energy, Security, and the Silent Contest for Global Financial Architecture**

### **6. Introduction**

The ongoing conflict between the United States, Israel, and Iran transcends the battlefield, transforming into a strategic confrontation over energy, currencies, and global financial dominance. Recent attacks in the Gulf and disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz—a critical passage for nearly 20% of global oil—have generated market volatility and highlighted the intersection of energy security and economic stability.

The possibility that Tehran may allow tanker transit on the condition that transactions occur in yuan rather than U.S. dollars reflects a potential challenge to the petrodollar system, showing the financial dimension of what could be called a “parallel war” (CNN, 2026). Beyond military maneuvers, control over energy infrastructure, monetary flows, and strategic routes becomes a geopolitical influence tool.

Prolonged energy shocks threaten not only international markets but also the economies and domestic political stability of energy-dependent countries, particularly the United States. At the same time, emerging economies

and groups such as the BRICS push for dollar diversification, anticipating a gradual shift in the global financial order.

As previously stated, this invisible war demonstrates that modern conflicts are fought simultaneously in military, economic, and financial domains. Its outcome could redefine global influence and the architecture of international trade and finance for decades.

Global energy systems, the dollar’s role in international oil trade, and control over strategic routes such as the Strait of Hormuz become central elements of a confrontation that transcends the military. Oil, currencies, and precious metals are not simply economic variables; they are instruments of power within a broader strategic competition.

### **7. The Petrodollar System: Energy, Currency, and Security**

Since the 1970s, the dollar’s international predominance has been closely linked to global oil trade (Hamilton, 2009). Following the abandonment of the gold standard in 1971, the United States consolidated strategic agreements with major Gulf producers, particularly Saudi Arabia.

This arrangement, commonly known as the petrodollar system, rested on three interrelated pillars:

- Oil began to be traded predominantly in dollars.
- Financial surpluses of exporting countries were reinvested in assets denominated in that currency, especially U.S. Treasury bonds.
- The United States offered security guarantees and military protection for the stability of Gulf producing regimes and the continuity of the region’s energy routes.

This financial circuit structurally strengthened global dollar demand. Energy-importing countries needed to maintain significant reserves of this currency to purchase oil, while oil revenues returned to the U.S. financial

system through investments in its capital markets.

For decades, this balance helped consolidate the dollar's centrality within the international financial system. Furthermore, the system's credibility depended not only on economic factors but also on the United States' ability to guarantee the security of the Gulf region. Military presence, alliances with key states, and strategic deterrence were integral to ensuring uninterrupted oil flow, which in turn reinforced the dollar's global dominance.

### **8. Iran's Financial Strategy and Dollar Diversification**

Iran has long sought to reduce its dependence on the U.S. dollar, both as a defensive economic measure against sanctions and as a proactive financial strategy to gain leverage in global energy markets. Recent announcements regarding potential acceptance of yuan for oil sales illustrate this approach. By creating alternative settlement channels, Iran introduces uncertainty into energy markets and challenges the unipolarity of the petrodollar system.

This strategy has several interconnected objectives:

1. **Economic Resilience** – Reducing exposure to dollar-denominated transactions limits vulnerability to sanctions and financial isolation.
2. **Market Influence** – By promoting alternative currencies for oil trade, Iran signals that global energy markets can function outside of U.S.-centric financial systems.
3. **Geopolitical Signaling** – Using currency as a strategic tool allows Tehran to project influence and create bargaining leverage, particularly in negotiations involving energy transit and regional security.

### **9. Global Implications of Energy and Currency Shifts**

The introduction of non-dollar settlement in oil trade could trigger broader financial consequences:

- **Dollar Depreciation Pressure:** If significant oil transactions migrate to other currencies, global demand for dollars could weaken, potentially reducing U.S. purchasing power.
- **Market Volatility:** Energy markets may experience price spikes and instability due to uncertainty about transaction norms, impacting not only oil but related commodities such as natural gas and fertilizers.
- **Shift in Investment Patterns:** Gulf states and emerging markets may diversify their foreign reserves away from U.S. Treasury securities, influencing global capital flows and financial market stability.

### **10. U.S. Domestic Impacts and Political Considerations**

The U.S. economy and political system are also affected by this multidimensional conflict. Rising energy prices directly impact domestic markets, contributing to inflation and creating political pressure on leadership. Public perception of the war, especially when combined with domestic economic strain, can influence electoral outcomes and constrain strategic decision-making.

Moreover, military expenditures to secure energy corridors and sustain presence in conflict zones increase fiscal burdens. This amplifies debates within the U.S. about interventionism versus economic priorities, revealing how intertwined security and financial strategy are in modern conflicts.

### **11. Strategic Recommendations for Policy and Leadership**

**1. Integrated Military-Economic Planning:** Military operations must be coordinated with economic strategy, ensuring that energy markets and currency dynamics are factored into operational decisions.

**2. Diplomatic Engagement:** Strengthen alliances with energy-importing nations and Gulf producers to mitigate shifts toward non-

dollar transactions and reassure markets of supply stability.

**3. Domestic Communication:** Clearly articulate objectives and strategies to both domestic and international audiences, reducing uncertainty and maintaining credibility.

**4. Contingency Planning:** Develop alternative scenarios for energy transport, including insurance against disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, logistical rerouting, and strategic reserves management.

**5. Financial Diversification Monitoring:** Track global trends in currency diversification to anticipate shifts that could affect U.S. economic influence.

## **12. Part II Conclusion: The Invisible War Beyond the Battlefield**

The U.S.-Iran-Israel conflict demonstrates that contemporary wars extend far beyond direct military confrontation. The interplay between military attrition, strategic clarity, energy security, and currency dominance defines modern conflict as a multidimensional struggle.

Iran's use of alternative currencies, combined with regional military pressures, illustrates a deliberate strategy to challenge both the U.S.'s economic leverage and global influence. At the same time, the U.S. faces the dual challenge of maintaining operational military effectiveness and safeguarding the stability of the dollar-centric financial system.

This invisible war underscores a fundamental reality: modern conflicts are fought simultaneously on multiple fronts—military, economic, financial, and informational. Success depends not only on technological and tactical superiority but also on clear strategic objectives, effective communication, and the ability to anticipate and adapt to complex interactions in global markets.

In conclusion, any analysis of contemporary conflict must incorporate these interconnected dimensions. Ignoring the financial, energy, and perception components

risks underestimating adversary capabilities and the full spectrum of potential consequences. The future of U.S. influence, regional stability, and the global financial order hinges on the ability to integrate military, economic, and political strategies in a coherent and forward-looking manner.

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