

# President Trump's Iranian gambit

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### Abstract

The analysis examines the joint Israeli-American military intervention against Iran, launched in February 2026. The study follows a clear progression: assessing the strategies of the involved parties, evaluating the geopolitical and geoeconomic impacts, and determining the specific relevance for Romania. The final section discusses two scenarios designed to assist stakeholders in navigating the challenges arising from the current politico-military and economic landscape. The research explores the dissonance between allied objectives—neutralizing nuclear capabilities and achieving regime change—and the tactical reality of Iran's 'mosaic defense,' rooted in asymmetric resilience and attrition. It underscores the limitations of technological superiority when faced with deeply entrenched asymmetric survival strategies. Furthermore, the analysis highlights systemic geoeconomic consequences, focusing on the vulnerability of trade flows through the Strait of Hormuz and their impact on global energy and food security. The positions of third-party actors are also evaluated, identifying Russia as a circumstantial beneficiary and China as a factor of precarious balance. Additionally, the paper explores the implications for Romania, oscillating between hybrid risks and inflationary pressures stemming from domestic austerity policies. Finally, two prospective projections are offered: a tactical de-escalation scenario based on the declaration of a limited military victory and, alternatively, an escalation spiral with the potential to trigger a global recession.

**Keywords:** conflict between Israel-U.S. and Iran, strategies, Strait of Hormuz, Russia, China, United States.

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<sup>1</sup> This publication draws exclusively on open-source materials. The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the institution.

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*“We could call it a tremendous success, or we could go further. (...)*

*And we will go further”*

Donald J. Trump

## INTRODUCTION

In 2018, then-U.S. President Donald Trump decided on the [unilateral withdrawal of his country from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action](#) (JCPOA) – the nuclear agreement with Iran negotiated during the tenure of his predecessor, Barack Obama. The motivation behind this decision was peculiar, to say the least, yet entirely consistent with Trump’s unorthodox political profile: he argued that the JCPOA was an extremely poor arrangement that, in reality, [favored Iran and \*de facto\* undermined the security of the United States and its ally, Israel](#). The signal sent by the decision to abandon diplomatically negotiated arrangements was clear: a military solution was once again being actively considered in relation to Iran as part of the toolkit available for managing the nuclear issue and the ballistic missile threat.

Since then, U.S.-Iranian relations have followed an oscillating trajectory, shifting from intensified pressure through the reimposition of sanctions – coupled with kinetic military measures (e.g., [the elimination of Qasem Soleimani](#)) during Trump’s first term – to the [timid and ineffective](#) attempts to resume diplomatic negotiations under Joe Biden between 2021 and 2024. Upon Donald Trump’s return to the White House, dialogue between the parties remained indirect, ultimately collapsing with Operation Midnight Hammer in the second half of June 2025. What remains certain is that the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA [failed to obstruct Iran’s](#) aspiration to join the "atomic club", quite the contrary.

Announced by [various sources](#) a week in advance, joint Israeli-American military operations against Iran commenced on Saturday, February 28, 2026. The motivations underlying these military actions remain ambiguous, particularly regarding the extent of United States involvement, especially in light of the [conflicting statements](#) issued by Marco Rubio, Pete Hegseth, and Donald Trump in the days immediately following the strikes.

As I have argued elsewhere (Nicolescu, 2025), the [new American strategic vision](#) perceives foreign policy primarily as an instrument of, or an extension of, domestic policy. The exercise of power to fulfill the national interest is not stripped of pretense; the disavowal of the old international order *still requires arguments of legitimacy and legality, both formulated*



*strictly in relation to the domestic political landscape*. Specifically, the exercise of power must be legitimate in the eyes of the American public – framed by the national interest as defined by President Trump's 'America First' project – and it must be legally justified within the American institutional framework. For instance, the U.S. intervention in Venezuela was presented as legitimate by virtue of combating phenomena that directly impact American society, such as drug trafficking and migration. Simultaneously, it was framed as legal on the grounds that Nicolas Maduro was considered a fugitive from U.S. law, where he faced drug trafficking indictments. Furthermore, the decision not to consult Congress was justified by categorizing the operation as a law enforcement action rather than a military intervention, thereby rendering legislative involvement unnecessary<sup>3</sup>.

The Iranian case, however, is undoubtedly more complex; at the time of writing, neither of the two domestic political arguments – legitimacy and legality, respectively – has been fully clarified. The Trump administration has maintained that the President is acting in full compliance with the law under [the 1973 War Powers Act](#), deliberately [avoiding the term 'war'](#) in relation to the operations in the Gulf to maintain the veneer of legality conferred by the WPA, thus bypassing the need for Congressional approval. Bolstered by the support of Republicans in Congress, the legal crisis appears to be temporarily suspended for the time being.

On the other hand, the legitimization of military action, as previously mentioned, remains contradictory depending on which administration official is consulted. The prevailing position seems to be that [Iran would have attacked American bases](#) in the event of a new conflict with Israel, thereby [compelling the U.S. to act preemptively](#). This situation creates [genuine political difficulties](#) for Donald Trump at home and necessitates vital clarifications, particularly if the Department of Defense requires supplemental funding to successfully continue operations in the Gulf.

Furthermore, the ambiguities surrounding the decision-making and the act of war will likely lead to Congressional hearings for the key actors involved, potentially exacerbating existing political turbulence. An unforeseen prolongation of the war – into October, November, or December – could provide the opposition with highly effective political ammunition *to win the midterm elections*. From this perspective, the current administration finds itself caught

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<sup>3</sup> In terms of legitimation, Trump also floated the false argument that Congressional leaks to the press risked compromising the entire operation to capture Maduro.

between Scylla and Charybdis, pressured to resolve the conflict within a timeframe that remains acceptable in relation to its impact on the elections<sup>4</sup>.

The war arrives at a juncture where the international political and economic landscape is marked by profound uncertainties stemming from American actions – ranging from the economic warfare initiated in the spring of 2025 to the unilateral reconfiguration of the international order. This is a volatile international environment, characterized by low levels of stability and predictability, where the initiation of a major conflict can trigger collateral effects that are both far more extensive and significantly harder to foresee.

Given that this text is being written as events unfold, most information available in the public domain ([OSINT](#)) is, in one form or another, incomplete, being a byproduct of the 'fog of war' or the concurrent information warfare. Therefore, my objective in this paper is not necessarily to provide a 'snap analysis,' but rather to isolate those elements that can bring clarity to a confusing situation and to identify trends that assist in forming a coherent perspective on the developments in the Persian Gulf.

To this end, my analysis will follow several distinct steps: an examination of the parties' strategies, the geopolitical and geoeconomic impacts, and the specific relevance for Romania. The final section will outline two scenarios intended to help stakeholders more effectively navigate the challenges posed by the current political-military and economic context.

## THE PARTIES' STRATEGIES – A BRIEF OVERVIEW

### The American-Israeli strategy – Peace through disarmament and alignment

This new campaign appears to be driven by two primary types of objectives: military and political.

**The military objectives** aim not only at the elimination of nuclear capabilities but also the massive reduction of the Iranian military-industrial complex, in order to neutralize (at least in the short and medium term) the threat posed by Tehran at a regional level. From this perspective, the February 28 attack is the culmination of a long campaign conducted by Israel to combat Iran's non-state proxies in the vicinity – such as [Hezbollah](#), the [Houthis](#), [Hamas](#), or

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<sup>4</sup> This is provided the Trump administration does not risk-taking measures aimed at postponing or suspending the elections, citing various reasons, whether domestic or foreign.

[pro-Iranian militias in southern Iraq](#) (see also Smith & Knights, 2025) – as well as to weaken the Iranian military and security apparatus through [the 12-day war of 2025](#) (see also Farnia, 2025). In this regard, American involvement is clearly complementary to Israel's and is most likely prompted by pressure from Jerusalem, despite President Trump's [statements to the contrary](#).

The United States appears to have achieved [most of its initial military objectives](#) relatively quickly. Nevertheless, Iran continues to retaliate by attacking targets in the Gulf as well as in Israel, forcing the U.S. to expand its bombing campaign against Tehran's military infrastructure in the hope of completely eliminating the threat it represents. However, a broader perspective yields less optimistic conclusions.

The fact that [Iran can still mass-produce](#) increasingly cheap and dangerous weapons— as is the case with the low-cost Shahed drones – allows Tehran and its allies to use inferior technology to threaten strategic chokepoints that, at least until now, have been defended with extremely costly technologies (e.g., the Strait of Hormuz, the Bab-el-Mandeb exit in the Red Sea, U.S. military bases in the region, etc.). This implies the existence of an [asymmetric \(geo\)strategic advantage for Iran](#) and its non-state allies over the order represented by the regional presence of more advanced technologies embodied by Western fleets, particularly those of the U.S. From a military standpoint, a total crushing of the adversary is required – an outcome that, factually, can only be achieved at unacceptable costs given the technological disparity. This makes a long-term war financially unsustainable for the United States, while transitioning to the mass production of cheap defensive and offensive systems would [require a relatively long time](#) and involve specific logistical chains and dependencies that cannot be resolved overnight. The fact that the United States is not providing military escorts (despite promises) for vessels passing through the Strait of Hormuz, while simultaneously appealing to the international community [to intervene in the region](#), is a clear illustration of this predicament.

Nevertheless, one cannot rule out a scenario in which the U.S. and Israel rapidly adopt technological innovations from various allies (e.g., Ukraine) to counter the regional threat posed by cheap Iranian weaponry. Such a tactic, however, would be predominantly defensive, potentially transforming the war into a conflict of positions (static warfare), lacking a clear strategy regarding the desired end-state of the military actions.



**From a political standpoint**, the primary objective is the elimination of the ideological threat represented by Iran, chiefly *through regime change in Tehran*. In practice, the intention was to replicate the Venezuelan operation, expecting similar results. The physical elimination of the Iranian leadership, coupled with the annihilation of military and police capabilities, was predicated on one of two scenarios: 1. a faction willing to accept alignment with the U.S. gaining power, or 2. empowering the population to revolt and overthrow the fundamentalist regime. Both scenarios have proven incorrect. Added to these is the failed attempt [to draw the Kurdish minority in Iraq into the war](#), with the aim of replacing an American ground assault with regional actors interested in toppling the Tehran regime, or even generating a civil war within Iran's borders by encouraging existing ethno-linguistic and cultural separatism (e.g., the Kurdish and/or Balochi minorities).

Following the elimination of the Supreme Leader and a large portion of Iran's state leadership, a new leadership was chosen in Tehran, dominated by the figure of the former Ayatollah's son, [Mojtaba Khamenei](#). This is an extremely significant signal from Iran regarding its (un)willingness to follow the 'Venezuelan model' in its relationship with the United States: the new Iranian religious leader is a conservative figure, undoubtedly highly motivated to maintain the country's previous course and its profound anti-American stance, given that he lost his family (father, wife, son, and sister) in the attacks. In this sense, Khamenei's appointment illustrates the American failure to dismantle or destabilize the Tehran regime. At the same time, the figure of Khamenei Jr. as the new religious leader of Iran could be extremely problematic for the regime. Khamenei appears to have been pushed into his current position by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which, through this political move, attacks one of the fundamental ideological pillars of the Islamic Revolution – the [anti-hereditary](#) and anti-monarchical principle – thereby undeniably asserting its primacy in the Iranian political space relative to other power centers (the President, Parliament, etc.).

The acceptance of this decision by Iranian citizens is either an indicator of support for the Tehran regime among the population or a testament to the IRGC's capacity for control and repression over Iranian society following the 'decapitation' of the regime by American-Israeli attacks. This explains why, although both Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu initially made unsuccessful [appeals to the Iranian people to revolt](#) against the fundamentalist regime in Tehran, both eventually abandoned the effort without further comment on the matter.

In this context, the possibility of a conflict resolution resulting from the achievement of political objectives is extremely improbable. This state of affairs is confirmed by President Trump's advancement of peace conditions that demand Iran's [unconditional surrender](#). This is an unrealistic proposal, to say the least, especially since the Israeli-American coalition attacks have failed to destabilize the Tehran regime, likely prompting Tehran's reaction in putting forward similarly unrealistic peace terms (see below). At the same time, this situation is further exacerbated by the fact that, despite the operational excellence demonstrated by the U.S. military, there are well-founded suspicions regarding the [strategic coherence](#) of American decision-makers, directly impacting any potential conflict exit for the parties involved.

### **The Iranian strategy – Economic strangulation and the war of attrition**

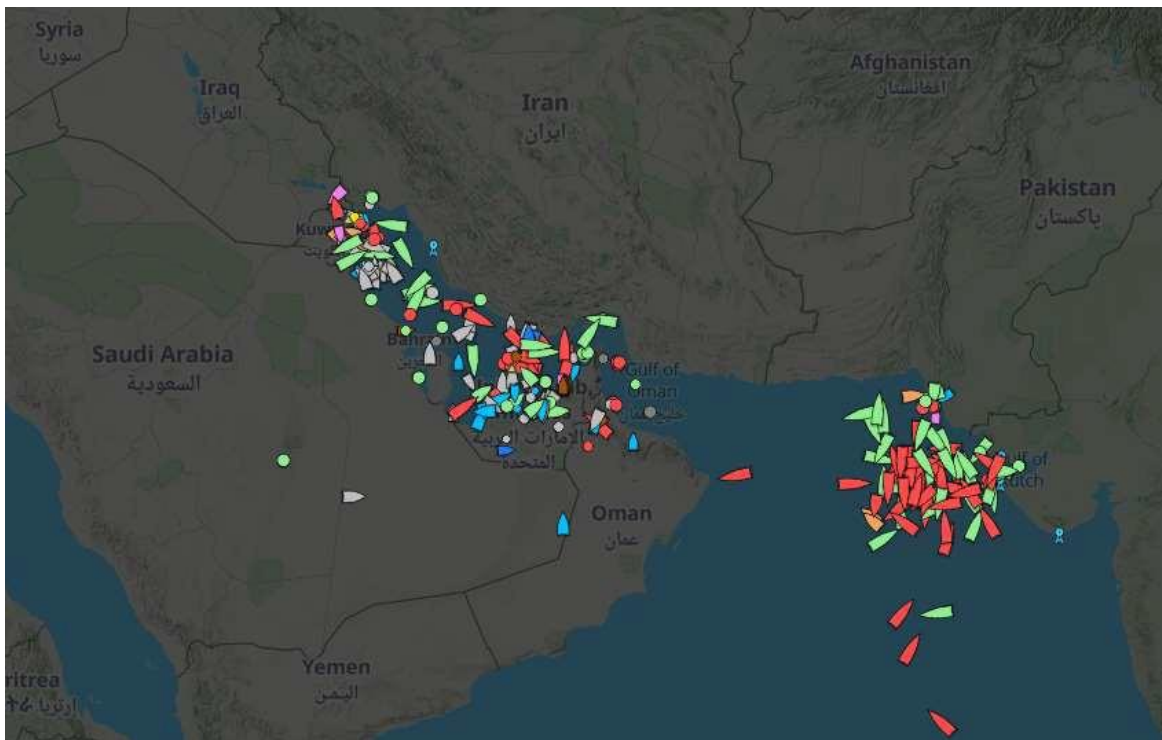
Even though its political-military elite was decimated in the opening hours of the conflict, Iran appears to maintain a surprisingly coherent strategic approach: exhausting the adversary through resilience, expanding the conflict, and inflicting unacceptable costs (particularly economic) not only on its adversaries but also on regional states. In other words, *Iran's strategy is not to win an asymmetric war militarily, but to survive long enough for global economic pressure to translate into the political sphere and compel an American withdrawal.*

This is, in fact, the adaptation and application of Iranian military doctrine centered on defense and asymmetric warfare, with Tehran's military actions revolving around the four strategic objectives upon which it is built: regime protection, territorial defense, deterrence through demonstrations of force, and deterrence through retaliation (threat in response to threat) (see McInnis, 2017, 4). In addition to the above, following an analysis of U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, Iran introduced a particular vision in 2005 – ['mosaic defense'](#) – which aims to increase military flexibility in the face of an external attack by enhancing the decision-making autonomy of regional commanders. The primary benefit of this doctrine – as observed in the days following the decapitation of the Tehran regime – is the increased resilience of the military by preserving the capacity for a military response even when the top tier of the command hierarchy is incapacitated.

The Iranian strategy appears to entail a *defensive war of attrition*, designed either to necessitate U.S. ground involvement or to prompt an American disengagement after a certain

period, resulting from exhaustion and/or pressure exerted by other international actors. A second component of Tehran's strategy seems to be the *expansion of the conflict* by involving its non-state allies and attacking third-party states, thereby increasing regional instability and placing additional pressure on Washington.

Beyond the use of its military arsenal, Tehran also benefits from its geographical positioning, which can be transformed into a weapon that may prove extremely effective in the event of a prolonged war. Primarily, this involves control over the Strait of Hormuz, through which Iran can exert direct pressure not only on its adversaries but also on the global economy. Even in the current context, where the Iranian Navy has been decimated by American strikes, Iran can still effectively threaten traffic in the strait thanks to its geography and [asymmetric tactics](#). These tactics rely on swarms of small vessels supported by missiles, drones, and naval mines; the goal is not necessarily to sink commercial vessels, but to make transit so hazardous and unpredictable that traffic effectively halts. The Iranian threat has proven successful – transits through Hormuz have decreased dramatically, largely due to the fact that [major insurance companies have refused to cover ships and shipments](#) following Tehran's announcement of the strait's closure.



**Figure 1.** The Strait of Hormuz, three weeks after the attack on Iran (Source: shipxplorer.com)

The American reaction was not long in coming; initially, President Trump declared that the [U.S. would provide state-backed insurance to carriers](#) and that the [U.S. Navy would ensure the security of commercial vessels](#) passing through Hormuz. However, these plans failed to materialize, and traffic remained minimal. In this situation, the American president resorted to threats, publishing a [statement on his social media](#) network drafted in extremely harsh terms:

If Iran does anything that stops the flow of oil in the Strait of Hormuz, it will be hit by the United States of America TWENTY TIMES HARDER than it has been hit so far. Additionally, we will eliminate easy-to-destroy targets that will make it virtually impossible for Iran to ever be rebuilt as a nation – Death, Fire, and Fury will pour upon them – But I hope, and I pray, it doesn't happen! This is a gift from the United States of America to China and to all those nations that heavily use the Strait of Hormuz. I hope it is a gesture that will be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your attention to this matter! (Trump, 2026).

Iran responded by beginning to [mine the commercial corridor](#) and [attacking transport vessels](#), a move that drew no significant American reaction – the U.S. Navy did not attempt to escort ships through the strait, contenting itself with sinking a small number of small mine-laying vessels from a distance. The consequence is therefore clear: Iranian control over the Strait of Hormuz is not – at least for the moment – successfully contested by the U.S. This situation cannot change unless the United States: 1. decides on a ground invasion of the region to assert control over the strait; 2. seeks a diplomatic exit (extremely difficult to obtain under current conditions, as I will show below); 3. unilaterally abandons hostilities (unlikely); or 4. manages relatively quickly (most likely with the help of Ukrainian experts) to develop a cheap and effective system to counter the Iranian threat.

At a strategic level, therefore, it is crucial to note that Tehran utilizes its control over the Strait of Hormuz on two distinct tiers:

1. **To exert pressure on the global economy**, in the hope of reaching a tipping point where constraints induced by supply chain disruptions become so acute that the U.S. is forced to step back to avoid severe economic consequences, both globally and domestically (and this within the context of an election year).
2. **To coerce U.S. allies in the Gulf** (not only by strangling exports but also imports, especially food and medicine) into pressuring Washington through various means to accept Tehran's (most likely unacceptable) [peace conditions](#): recognition of Iran's



legitimate rights, the payment of reparations, firm international guarantees against future U.S. and Israeli aggression, or even a total U.S. withdrawal from the region. In effect, Iran's objective in this case is to fracture the relationship between the GCC countries and the United States, which could have serious consequences for Washington, particularly in the economic sphere, but not exclusively.

Secondly, and at least as importantly, Iran also benefits from the advantage of its national geography. The country is essentially a mountainous fortress that is extremely difficult to conquer, the most recent example being the 1980 Iraqi invasion, which failed to penetrate the mountain regions. The conflict transformed from a war of maneuver into a war of positions (static warfare), a situation that ultimately led to Saddam Hussein's withdrawal eight years later, following one of the longest wars of the 20th century (see Murray and Woods, 2014). A U.S. attempt at a ground assault on Iran would represent a highly risky venture, potentially reminiscent of the British Empire's failed Gallipoli campaign in World War I (see Gariepy, 2014) or a reiteration of the 1980 Iraqi invasion scenario. For instance, the physical occupation of the Strait of Hormuz by U.S. troops would not result in *de facto* control or increased security for commercial vessels; instead, it would likely place a new set of targets on the map for Iranian drones and missiles – targets that would mean more dead American soldiers and more neutralized U.S. military equipment, thereby validating Tehran's envisioned strategy of attrition.

However, the temptation may be great, given that a ground operation would be an undertaking involving high risks which – in the event of success – would yield comparable gains. Yet, on the other hand, the very degree of extreme risk involved in a ground operation provides Iran with a vital asset in the 'economy of the conflict,' placing it in a position to control the war's final outcome and to impose conditions by virtue of the fact that its national territory remains entirely under the control of the Tehran government. From this perspective, the United States appears to be caught in an '*escalation trap*' (see Neumann and Smith, 2007, 76-93; see also Duyvesteyn, 2021; Pfaff, 2024), ***which condemns it to ground intervention in one form or another to force a positive outcome.***



## GEOPOLITICAL AND GEOECONOMIC IMPACT

### China

An Iranian defeat followed by an alignment with Washington would [undermine the global geopolitical architecture constructed by Beijing](#) over the last two decades, in which Iran has played and continues to play an essential role. Simultaneously, China appears to be directly affected economically, as [approximately 50% of the Chinese economy's oil requirements](#) originate from the Gulf. Into this equation, one must also introduce the less-discussed conflict [between Pakistan and Afghanistan](#), which began a few days before the U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran; this has resulted in Tehran's isolation both terrestrially and – at least initially – maritimately in its relationship with China. Nevertheless, in the short and medium term, China will be the least affected by the Gulf crisis, given the [massive oil reserves](#) (approximately 1.2 billion barrels) it has accumulated, as well as the fact that Iranian oil destined for China [continues to pass through Hormuz](#) largely unaffected.

A potential prolongation of the war, coupled with the U.S.'s inability to open the Strait of Hormuz, could stimulate other actors to undertake military actions (e.g., [China in Taiwan](#)), attempting to capitalize on the chaotic situation generated by the war in the Gulf and the concentration of American military capabilities in the region.

### The war in Ukraine and Russia

Russia is the primary global beneficiary of the war – the rise in oil prices is significantly above the estimates upon which Russia's national budget is built ([\\$59/barrel](#)). Another unexpected boost came directly from... the United States, which [suspended for one month the ban on India](#) purchasing Russian oil and gas to counter the negative effects on supply chains hitting the Indian economy directly. Shortly thereafter, the Washington administration began to [lift some of the sanctions](#) directed against Russia. Practically, the war offers an unexpected lifeline to an economy exhausted after four years of campaigning in Ukraine and the pressures generated by sanctions. From this perspective, a prolonged war in the Gulf is in Moscow's immediate interest, a fact that explains [Russia's involvement on Iran's side in the sphere of military intelligence](#) – revealing the locations of American troops, vessels, and aircraft,



[advising the Iranian military](#) on the tactical use of drones, or even [sending such military equipment to Iran](#).

The wars in Ukraine and Iran have a cumulative effect regarding the [limitation of east-west air transport](#): at the time of writing, given the various no-fly zones, Europe's connection with the Asia-Pacific region has been reduced to an extremely narrow corridor passing over the Caucasus. To this state of affairs, one must add [the rise in aviation fuel prices](#), both factors having a potential negative impact on the industry market.

### **The Strait of Hormuz**

The closure of traffic through the Strait of Hormuz must not be examined solely from the perspective of the GCC countries' oil and natural gas exports and their impact on the global economy, but also through the lens of **import flows**. These flows include items essential for the survival of the region's societies, such as food imports. Regional food security is directly threatened by the disruption of supply chains, as countries in the region [import no less than 80% of their required food](#), the vast majority of which is transported by sea. A similar situation applies to other essential goods, such as medicines.

The bombardment of regional energy infrastructure—extending beyond military bases and airports to tourist resorts and embassies – confirms that **Iran is, in a sense, attempting to wage war against the entire global economy**. Striking the oil and natural gas production and storage capacities of the GCC countries and Israel threatens medium-term effects not only in the energy sector but also in [other economic sectors](#), such as aluminum production, fertilizers (urea and phosphates), and the petrochemical industries. [Israel's attacks on Iran's own oil production infrastructure](#) further exacerbate the situation, providing Tehran with justification for retaliation and escalation.

Another sector profoundly affected by the suspension of commercial traffic through Hormuz is the fertilizer industry; the prolongation of this crisis is generating [serious concerns regarding global food security](#). This is compounded by the fact that Russia (the world's largest fertilizer exporter) [cannot meet global demand](#), both due to the effects of sanctions and as a result of strikes carried out by the Ukrainian army against the relevant Russian industrial facilities.



Simultaneously, it must be noted that a long-term suspension of oil and gas exports **directly impacts the budgets of GCC states**, as their revenues are primarily generated by the petroleum industry. The heightened insecurity resulting from Iranian attacks on Gulf states also undermines another vital budgetary component: [tourism revenue](#). In this context, the four major Gulf economies (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Qatar) may consider [divesting their foreign investments](#) to address internal budgetary deficits. The consequence of this state of affairs (particularly in the event of a prolonged conflict) is the direct pressure exerted by the U.S.'s Gulf allies on the White House to seek diplomatic avenues to end the war—especially given that Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar had [promised hundreds of billions of dollars in investments](#) into the American economy that could now be rescinded.

## Global impact

Even if the war were to conclude relatively quickly, the return to normalcy will experience a *lag of several weeks or even months*. The restoration of supply chains – given that the production of oil and natural gas (among other commodities) has slowed or been suspended, and that storage and refining capacities in the Gulf have been severely compromised by the conflict – will be a complex process. This will prolong the crisis for months beyond the formal cessation of hostilities.

**The immediate economic impact** consists of [global price hikes](#) for petroleum products driven by the artificial scarcity resulting from disrupted global logistical chains. These conditions will encourage [speculative shocks across various market segments](#), creating a cumulative effect that will amplify existing uncertainties. In **the scenario of a prolonged war**, this situation could trigger a cascade effect leading to a recession and, more gravely, a systemic global economic crisis.

## The impact on Romania

Romania has chosen to allow the U.S. to [utilize military bases within our country](#) for operations involved in the war against Iran. This decision has generated, among other things, fears regarding a [potential Iranian ballistic missile attack](#) on Romania. Such apprehension is completely unjustified, as a basic understanding of political and military geography clarifies

the matter in the plainest terms: for such an action, Iranian missiles would have to traverse the airspace of Turkey, a NATO ally of Romania. [As in other instances](#), Turkish air defenses would intercept the missiles, thereby neutralizing the threat to our state. However, should Iran decide to include Romania on its list of legitimate targets, the most likely actions undertaken against our country would be cyber-attacks or the incitement of terrorist acts.

The war in Iran comes at an extremely delicate juncture for Romania. In 2025, the Romanian state embarked on a [series of austerity measures](#) aimed at reducing the budget deficit. Adopting the neoliberal model – regarded as [outdated](#) and [dysfunctional](#) since the 2008 crisis – and relying on austerity policies to resolve the deficit crisis is an extremely risky gamble given the international uncertainties present after January 2025. In the scenario of a prolonged war in Iran and a resulting global recession, this strategy could generate unforeseen costs (particularly socio-economic ones), social tensions, and so forth, which could rapidly translate into political instability. From this perspective, Romanian decision-makers must consider a negative scenario in which the global effects of the war (specifically involving inflationary pressures added to those already produced by domestic austerity measures) could generate internal social and economic problems which, in turn, would be politically instrumentalized to destabilize Romania.

## SCENARIOS

**TACO (Trump Always Chickens Out) – A relatively short-term war, lasting between four and six weeks.**

"We could call it a tremendous success, or we could go further (...) And we will go further!" Donald Trump stated during a [press conference on March 10](#), referring to the conflict with Iran. The following day, the American president began speaking of a victory already achieved – during a campaign rally in Hebron, Kentucky, Trump proclaimed victory, while nonetheless specifying that "[we don't want to leave too early, we have to finish the job](#)" in Iran. This scenario presupposes a reassessment of campaign objectives and the claiming of success regarding military goals, while abandoning (or remaining silent on) the political ones, which remain unfulfilled. In this case, President Trump would publicly declare victory based on the achievement of military objectives – incapacitating Iran's ability to project force beyond its



borders, the long-term decommissioning of the Iranian military-industrial complex, the elimination of the ballistic missile threat, and the termination of Iranian access to atomic weapons.

A decision in this direction by the American president could de facto result from [the war's unforeseen global effects](#), particularly economic ones, their domestic impact, and their translation into the political arena, with a potentially significant impact on the November 2026 elections. A special case could be represented by a Congressional vote on the continuation of the war. At least until the time of writing this analysis, such a vote [has not proven successful](#), but in the future, it is not ruled out that a combination of executive will to conclude the military operation could coalesce enough support in both chambers to orchestrate an abrupt U.S. exit from the conflict<sup>5</sup>.

However, Donald Trump's intentions could be contradicted in practice by an Iranian refusal to cease hostilities. To succeed, the manner in which the Washington administration manages back-channel diplomatic contacts is crucial – convincing an extremely skeptical Tehran, radicalized by the war, to lay down its arms or conclude the conflict in a manner acceptable to the American side. Otherwise, a unilateral proclamation of victory by President Trump, followed by a U.S. withdrawal from the Gulf, would most likely be countered by a victory proclamation from Tehran, ipso facto contradicting Washington's narrative.

On the other hand, the assumption of military success by the U.S. could lead to a different scenario, in which Iran is completely isolated and sanctioned (or even subjected to a blockade), with its airspace controlled in the long term by the United States. In this case, Iranian military capabilities would be dramatically reduced, effectively eliminating the threat they pose. Airspace control would ensure the maintenance of this status quo and could serve as a guarantor for a return to normalcy in the region. However, this scenario cannot become a reality unless the U.S. succeeds in countering and dismantling Iran's drone production industry, as well as its capacity to import such military equipment from third parties (such as Russia).

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<sup>5</sup> Especially if Republican representatives who receive significant funding from AIPAC are given the green light in this regard, alongside Democrats.



## **The Domino Principle – A prolonged war, with the possibility of a U.S. ground intervention**

In this scenario, the United States and Israel fail to achieve not only their political objectives but also their military ones, and the war continues well beyond the six weeks initially estimated by the Trump administration. In this version, the U.S. is caught in an "escalation trap" that could lead to ground operations in Iran to force a positive outcome of the conflict. This is by far the worst-case scenario, with global ramifications and effects that are difficult to anticipate.

At the regional level of the Persian Gulf, this would involve an escalation of attacks by both sides targeting non-military infrastructure, such as production, refining, and transport facilities, petrochemical industries, etc. As discussed above, the global impact could be unprecedented and long-lasting, triggering a rapid rise in inflation, subsequently reflected in declining economic growth, recession, and, just as importantly, social tensions generating local instability (in this regard, [the early example of South Korea](#) can provide a good initial illustration). Thus, the danger of a vicious cycle of inflation and social tensions becomes a distinct possibility. Simultaneously, the U.S.'s inability to independently manage the effects of the war it initiated (e.g., traffic through the Strait of Hormuz) will lead to [additional pressure from Washington on its allies](#) (particularly Western ones) to join the American military effort in the Gulf.

In the United States, the inflationary impact of the war is [already being felt](#), compounded by [pre-existing problems](#) – generated in particular by the effects of "Liberation Day" in the spring of 2025 – which seem to suggest that the American economy is [heading toward a recession](#). The effects of a prolonged war could be extremely severe, especially as concerns regarding [private debt](#) or the "[AI bubble](#)" become increasingly palpable. From this perspective, *the greatest danger is the emergence of panic in any given market segment, followed by rapid, widespread contagion*. The existing uncertainties and volatility, exacerbated by the situation in the Persian Gulf, foster speculative moments that generate panic, increasing the risk of a crisis that could rapidly become global.



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# IDR

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