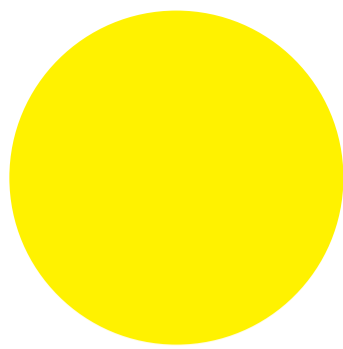


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Iran Daily

Vol. 8075 • Monday, March 16, 2026 • Esfand 25, 1404 • Ramadan 26, 1447 • 100,000 rials • 4 pages

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Bringing war to Iran means bringing crisis back to Washington

By Masoud Dashti Derakhshan
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OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Two weeks into the full-scale confrontation with Iran, expectations of a swift and controlled military campaign have given way to a far more complicated reality. What was initially presented as a limited operation has evolved into a broader strategic crisis, producing consequences that extend well beyond the battlefield and into the heart of global politics and economics. Rather than weakening Tehran, the conflict appears to have reinforced domestic cohesion. At the same time, the political costs for the governments behind the escalation are rising. Civilian casualties and the human toll of the conflict have increasingly become a moral and diplomatic burden, fueling outrage both inside Iran and across the wider region. The economic consequences have been equally severe. Disruptions to supply chains, rising transportation costs, and growing pressure on critical commodity markets have sent shockwaves through the international system, exposing the vulnerability of the world economy and raised new questions about the West's ability to manage crises of its own making.

Iran has also demonstrated an ability to convert battlefield developments into diplomatic leverage. The use of captured combatants and other forms of strategic pressure underscores Tehran's broader message: military confrontation does not guarantee political control. On the contrary, wars that are launched to weaken an adversary can quickly entangle those who initiate them. In that sense, taking war to Iran has also meant exporting instability back to Washington and its allies.

Strait of Hormuz as strategic leverage
A central element of Tehran's

response has been its emphasis on the Strait of Hormuz. Iranian leaders have framed this waterway not simply as a geographic passage, but as a decisive instrument of deterrence, diplomacy, and national defense.

Recent statements from Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei have signaled that Iran is prepared to use its geographic and economic position as leverage if damages are not addressed and responsibility for the aggression is not acknowledged. In this view, any seizure or neutralization of hostile assets would be presented not as escalation for its own sake, but as a proportionate response rooted in deterrence and sovereignty. For Tehran, the Strait of Hormuz is no longer just a shipping corridor; it is an economic pressure point capable of reshaping regional and global calculations.

Retaliation felt beyond region

Iran's retaliatory actions have been marked less by indiscriminate escalation than by targeted signaling. Operations linked to the Strait of Hormuz have showcased both operational capability and calibrated intent. Iranian forces moved to restrict the transit of oil tankers that did not comply with Tehran's security framework, effectively introducing a form of conditional passage through one of the world's most critical energy corridors. The effects were immediate. Within days, Brent crude prices rose sharply, while West Texas Intermediate also posted significant gains, triggering concern across global financial markets. The wider consequences quickly became evident. China's reported suspension of fuel exports reflected just how deeply the conflict had begun to affect the infrastructure of international trade.

In this context, Iran appears to have shifted the contest from conventional military power to strategic endurance.

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A tanker vessel is damaged following unidentified attacks targeting two foreign tankers near Basra, Iraq, on March 12, 2026, while another ship sails in the distance amid ongoing US-Israeli aggression on Iran. REUTERS



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