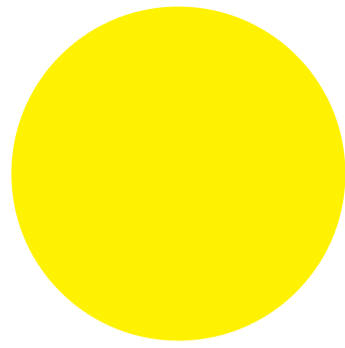


Israel ratchets up Lebanon assault as Hezbollah rejects 'farce' truce



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Leader: Enemy shifting to hybrid warfare after battlefield defeat

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Collapse of hegemony: How six years of conflict redrew Middle East map

By Mohammad Reza Sadeghi
Researcher at Center for Middle East Strategic Studies

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

In the early hours of March 13, 2026, the Persian Gulf witnessed a scene that would have been deemed inconceivable just years prior. The thick plumes of smoke rising from the US Navy's Fifth Fleet headquarters in Manama were more than just the aftermath of a missile strike; they signaled the formal conclusion of an era where Washington considered itself the region's undisputed hegemon. The 44th wave of "Operation True Promise 4," which targeted the heart of US logistics in Bahrain, stands as the culmination of a six-year strategic metamorphosis—a journey that began with the 2020 assassination of General Qassem Soleimani and ended with a total reconfiguration of the balance of power.

From 'shock' of 2020 to 'reality' of 2026

When the Trump administration ordered the drone strike at Baghdad Airport in January 2020, Washington's calculus was rooted in a traditional "show of force" intended to paralyze the resistance network and restore American deterrence. However, six years later, analysts suggest that rather than instilling fear, the move served as the primary engine for a fundamental shift in Tehran's military doctrine. Instead of retreating, Iran transitioned from "calibrated response" to a doctrine of "escalatory deterrence". Under this new paradigm, any tactical provocation by an adversary triggers an exponential and non-linear retaliation designed to drive the costs of conflict beyond the enemy's threshold of control.

2025; crucible for strategic resilience

The current geopolitical landscape cannot be understood without the context of the twelve-day war in June 2025. During that conflict, Israel, with significant US assistance, launched an unprecedented campaign to dismantle Iran's nuclear and military infrastructure. While the strikes inflicted heavy damage on sites like Natanz and Fordow and resulted in the loss of several senior Iranian commanders, the result for the Western-Israeli coalition was an "incomplete victory". Iran's retaliation—launching over 550 ballistic missiles and 1,000 drones—demonstrated that even under extreme systemic pressure, Tehran could paralyze the strategic depth of its rivals. This war proved that the era of "hit-and-run" operations against Iran was over. In the post-war aftermath, Tehran rapidly filled its defensive gaps with advanced Eastern-bloc technology, setting the stage for the definitive confrontation of 2026.

Neutralizing 'steel ring'

By March 2026, the operational reality on the ground turned bleak for Washington. The US Fifth Fleet, for decades the symbol of Western maritime dominance, was effectively rendered non-operational during Wave 44 of Operation True Promise. Reports confirmed that precision-guided "Khorramshahr" and "Kheibar Shekan" missiles struck command-and-control centers and fuel depots in Manama, sending a shockwave through global markets. Simultaneously, the downing of several advanced F-18 fighters and a KC-135 refueling aircraft over the region challenged the notion of absolute US air superiority. Regional allies of the US are now facing a stark new reality: the very bases intended to guarantee their security have become high-priority, reachable targets.

Economic earthquake: end of petrodollar?

The conflict has expanded far beyond the trenches, striking at the core of the global energy economy. As security in the Strait of Hormuz faltered and vital ports were targeted, crude oil prices surged. Beyond the price at the pump, the "Petrodollar" system—a cornerstone of US financial hegemony—is facing an existential threat. Major energy buyers are increasingly pivoting toward bilateral national currencies and gold to hedge against the risks of Washington's militarized diplomacy.

New order emerging

In 2026, the Middle East is no longer a region where a single phone call from the White House can dictate the course of history. The assassination of General Soleimani, intended as the "end of resistance," instead became the starting point for the collapse of American prestige in West Asia. From the Fifth Fleet headquarters in Bahrain to the bases in Al-Asad and Erbil, the "indispensable power" of the past has been revealed as a vulnerable and targetable actor. Tehran's message is unmistakable: any attempt to shift the balance through force will be met with a response that expands the theater of war to the enemy's most vital interests. The Middle East is moving past the era of unilateralism, giving way to a new order defined by the will of regional nations and the reality of indigenous escalatory deterrence.

Iran: Security key to sustainable development, economic progress



Iran's Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni speaks during a meeting of ministers of internal affairs and public security of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on June 5, 2026. IRNA

International Desk

Iran's Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni said that security is the foundation for any form of sustainable development and economic progress, adding that without stability and security, investment would be meaningless. Speaking at the fifth meeting of ministers of internal affairs and public security of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Bishkek on Friday, Momeni called the current situation and relations governing the international system fragile, fluid, and unstable.

In a world facing increasing security challenges, he said, no country could stand alone against these challenges. The Iranian minister highlighted the importance and position of discourse centered on multilateralism and a multipolar order in the SCO's long-term strategy. The organization had become one of the main pillars shaping geopolitical and geo-economic developments, as well as peace, stability, and prosperity on a regional and global scale in the 21st century, he noted. Momeni reiterated that security was the prerequisite and foundation for any form of sustainable development and economic

progress, adding that without stability and security, investment would have no meaning. The approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran was based on ensuring regional security by the countries of the region themselves, in accordance with the universal principles of international law and the United Nations Charter, and with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, he added. Unilateral sanctions and double standards did not create security but rather led to further instability and distrust, the official noted.



Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan agree to boost trade on SCO sidelines

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Torpedo attack on Iran's unarmed Dena frigate Did US commit a war crime?

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Iranian short film wins top prize at Birmingham Kurdish festival

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