From Shock and Awe to Algorithmic Warfare: The Limits of Strategic Effectiveness in the 2026 War on Iran

من الصدمة والترويع إلى الحرب الخوارزمية: حدود الفعالية الاستراتيجية في حرب عام 2026 على إيران

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Abstract:

This article examines the transformation of U.S. military strategy from "Shock and Awe" to AI-driven algorithmic warfare and evaluates its implications in the 2026 war on Iran. It argues that while artificial intelligence significantly enhances tactical and operational performance—through accelerated decision-making, precision targeting, and real-time data integration—it does not eliminate the structural limits of strategy. Drawing on a multi-layered analytical framework integrating strategic, geopolitical, and strategic culture perspectives, the study identifies a persistent gap between tactical success and strategic outcomes.

By distinguishing between verified facts, interpretations, and competing narratives, the analysis demonstrates that the conflict increasingly reflects a pattern of managed strategic uncertainty rather than decisive victory. The article concludes that algorithmic warfare reconfigures, rather than transcends, the classical limits of strategy.

Keywords: A list of up to six keywords should immediately follow the abstract, with the keywords separated by dash, following an alphabetical order .

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Introduction

Contemporary warfare is undergoing a transformation that, I would argue, stretches the explanatory reach of classical strategic thought. Traditionally, military success has been framed in terms of material superiority, territorial control, and the destruction of enemy capabilities, as articulated by Carl von Clausewitz, who defined war as the continuation of politics by other means[1]. Within this framework, battlefield dominance was generally expected—under favorable conditions—to translate into political resolution.

Yet this expectation began to erode toward the end of the twentieth century. The concept of Rapid Dominance, developed by Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade, reframed victory as the rapid collapse of the adversary's will through psychological and operational shock[2]. Operationalized through the doctrine of "Shock and Awe," this approach shifted the emphasis toward speed, precision, and cognitive disruption as key drivers of strategic effectiveness.

In the twenty-first century, this trajectory has accelerated further with the integration of artificial intelligence into military systems. What is now commonly referred to as algorithmic warfare—combining data-driven targeting, real-time intelligence fusion, and increasingly compressed decision cycles—has introduced new forms of operational advantage[3]. Initiatives such as Project Maven, launched by the United States Department of Defense, illustrate the growing reliance on machine learning in intelligence analysis and targeting processes[4].

At first glance, one might be tempted to conclude that technological superiority could finally overcome long-standing strategic constraints. Faster, more precise, and more efficient operations seem to promise a form of control that earlier doctrines could only approximate. Yet, it seems less certain that these advantages translate into decisive strategic outcomes. Recent conflicts suggest a more intricate reality, particularly when resilient state actors, dense regional dynamics, and competing narratives are involved[5].

The 2026 war on Iran offers a particularly revealing case in this regard. While its early phases appear to reflect a high degree of operational efficiency, subsequent developments point to a more ambiguous strategic picture. Persistent deterrence capabilities, contested operational environments, and diverging international responses all indicate that technological superiority alone may not suffice[6].

This article therefore asks the following central research question:

To what extent does algorithmic warfare enhance the ability to achieve strategic objectives in complex contemporary conflicts؟

I argue that, although algorithmic warfare significantly enhances tactical performance, it does not dissolve the deeper structural limits of strategy. Rather, it contributes to the emergence of what may be described as managed strategic uncertainty—a condition in which conflicts are neither decisively resolved nor fully

stabilized, but instead remain continuously shaped by the interaction of military operations, geopolitical constraints, and competing narratives.

To explore this argument, the study adopts a multi-layered analytical framework that combines strategic analysis, international relations theory, and insights from strategic culture. It also draws a careful distinction between verified facts, interpretations, and narratives, in an attempt to better capture the complexity of contemporary warfare dynamics.

Fistly: The Transformation from Shock and Awe to Algorithmic Warfare

1- From Kinetic Dominance to Cognitive and Algorithmic Superiority

Classical strategic thought—most prominently associated with Carl von Clausewitz—tends to frame war as an extension of politics conducted through organized force, with particular emphasis on uncertainty and friction as structuring elements of conflict[7]. Within this perspective, military success has traditionally been linked to battlefield dominance and the degradation of enemy capabilities.

However, this understanding began to evolve toward the end of the twentieth century. The doctrine of Rapid Dominance, operationalized through "Shock and Awe," reframed victory not merely as physical destruction, but as the rapid erosion of the adversary's will through combined psychological and operational pressure[8]. In this sense, speed, precision, and cognitive disruption gradually emerged as central components of strategic effectiveness.

In the twenty-first century, this trajectory has accelerated with the integration of artificial intelligence into military systems. What is commonly described as algorithmic warfare relies on a combination of data-driven targeting, real-time intelligence fusion, and increasingly compressed decision-making cycles[9]. Taken together, these developments appear to support what some analysts interpret as a shift from kinetic dominance toward forms of informational and algorithmic superiority[10].

2- The Operational Promise of Algorithmic Warfare

From an operational standpoint, AI-enabled military systems are expected to shorten what is often referred to as the "sensor-to-shooter" cycle, thereby accelerating detection, analysis, and engagement processes. Programs such as Project Maven illustrate this transformation by integrating machine learning into intelligence and surveillance operations[11].

From a theoretical perspective, these capabilities seem to promise a range of advantages, including increased targeting accuracy, reduced operational latency, and improved coordination across multiple domains. Yet, it would be somewhat reductive to assume that such improvements automatically translate into strategic success.

These advantages appear to be reflected—at least partially—in early assessments of the 2026 war on Iran, where several analyses suggest relatively high levels of operational precision and tempo during the initial phases of the conflict[12]

3- The Emergence of a Multi-Dimensional Battlespace

Despite these technological advances, contemporary warfare increasingly unfolds across multiple, deeply interconnected domains—military, informational, economic, and cognitive—making it difficult to isolate purely kinetic dynamics.

The 2026 war on Iran illustrates this multidimensional configuration. Rather than evolving as a purely kinetic confrontation, the conflict seems to reflect a more complex interaction between military operations, geopolitical constraints, and competing strategic narratives[13].

In this context, claims regarding battlefield developments—such as leadership targeting, infrastructure damage, or advanced weapons engagement—are often embedded within broader informational and psychological strategies. As a result, the analytical distinction between verified facts, reported events, and strategic narratives becomes not only useful, but necessary.

4- Tactical Effectiveness versus Strategic Outcomes

A recurring insight in recent strategic analyses is the persistence of a gap between tactical success and broader strategic outcomes. While AI-driven systems may enhance operational performance, they do not necessarily produce decisive political results.

This observation is consistent with a well-established line of argument in strategic studies. Lawrence Freedman emphasizes that military success rarely translates directly into political resolution[14], while Stephen Biddle highlights the limits of technological superiority in complex operational environments[15].

In the case of the 2026 war on Iran, available assessments point to a mixed picture: reports of significant strikes on infrastructure and military assets coexist with indications of continued resilience in state structures and deterrence capabilities[16].

This combination reflects a broader pattern in which operational gains are accompanied by persistent strategic ambiguity.

5- Friction, Resilience, and Strategic Adaptation

Contrary to early assumptions about the transformative potential of artificial intelligence, friction remains a defining feature of contemporary warfare. Technological superiority does not eliminate uncertainty; rather, it seems to reshape the forms through which uncertainty manifests itself.

Reports of contested operational environments, adaptive defensive strategies, and rapid institutional reconfiguration suggest that state actors retain a significant capacity for resilience[17].

In particular, the ability to regenerate leadership structures, maintain institutional continuity, and sustain deterrence appears to play a central role in shaping strategic outcomes.

6- From Decisive War to Managed Strategic Uncertainty

Taken together, these dynamics suggest a gradual shift away from the classical logic of decisive warfare toward what may be described as a condition of managed strategic uncertainty.

Rather than producing clear outcomes of victory or defeat, contemporary conflicts increasingly exhibit patterns of prolonged engagement, fluctuating escalation, contested narratives, and constrained strategic results[18].

In this sense, it seems less convincing to interpret algorithmic warfare as a definitive break with past strategic limits. Instead, it appears to reconfigure these limits in ways that render uncertainty more structured—yet no less central to the logic of conflict.

Secondly: Strategic Assessment of the 2026 War on Iran: Between Operational Dominance and Structural Constraints

1- Operational Effectiveness and the Limits of Strategic Conversion

The 2026 war on Iran appears to reveal a persistent tension between operational effectiveness and broader strategic outcomes. The conflict, which began on 28 February 2026, was initially marked by high-intensity strikes, rapid targeting cycles, and what have been described as leadership decapitation operations. According to Reuters, the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, constituted a major political and symbolic shock during the early phase of the war[26].

Yet, this development did not produce immediate regime collapse. Existing analytical work—particularly from RAND—suggests that leadership decapitation under crisis conditions may trigger institutional adaptation and elite consolidation rather than systemic breakdown, especially in politically resilient systems[27].

This divergence illustrates a broader strategic limitation: even when enhanced by advanced technologies, tactical superiority does not necessarily translate into political resolution.

2- The Return of Friction and Operational Constraints

Despite initial assumptions of technological dominance, the conflict quickly reintroduced forms of operational friction. On 3 April 2026, Reuters reported that a U.S. F-15E fighter jet had been shot down over Iranian territory, indicating that the battlespace remained actively contested[28].

At the same time, Iranian officials claimed that missile and drone launch systems were being replenished at a rapid pace during the conflict, although such claims could not be independently verified[29]. From an analytical standpoint, it seems more appropriate to interpret these developments not as evidence of full recovery, but rather as indicators of adaptive resilience and deterrence continuity.

This interpretation is broadly consistent with CSIS assessments, which suggest that Iran's strategy relied less on calibrated restraint and more on expanding escalation in order to impose costs on its adversaries[30].

3- The Strategy–Tactics Gap and the Problem of Non-Conversion

A central analytical challenge in this conflict lies in what may be described as a persistent strategy–tactics gap. While U.S. and Israeli forces demonstrated the capacity to strike critical infrastructure and leadership targets, no decisive political transformation had been achieved by mid-April 2026.

RAND analyses indicate that escalation strategies may fail when they generate counter-escalation without altering the underlying political balance[31]. In this sense, it seems reasonable to argue that the conflict gradually evolved into a condition of strategic ambiguity, where operational gains coexist with political uncertainty and incomplete outcomes.

4- The Strait of Hormuz as a Strategic Test

The Strait of Hormuz emerged as a key arena in which the limits of coercive strategy became particularly visible. Following stalled negotiations, the United States imposed maritime restrictions on Iranian access, while Iran responded by restricting navigation through the Strait[29].

Given that roughly one-fifth of global oil flows transit through this corridor, the escalation produced immediate systemic consequences. CSIS analyses suggest that the resulting disruption constituted one of the most significant shocks to global energy markets in recent years[32].

Rather than restoring strategic control, maritime coercion appears to have amplified instability, contributing to economic volatility and prolonged uncertainty.

5- Alliance Constraints and the Limits of Coalition Strategy

Strategic effectiveness was further constrained by limited alliance cohesion. On 13 April 2026, Reuters reported that key NATO allies—including the United Kingdom and France—declined to participate in U.S. maritime coercive measures against Iran[33].

This divergence reduced the scalability of U.S. strategy and weakened its broader political signaling. It also reinforces a well-established insight in strategic studies: coercive effectiveness depends not only on military capability, but also on the credibility of collective alignment.

6- Indirect Actors and the Wider Strategic Environment

The conflict also unfolded within a broader strategic environment shaped by indirect actors. Xi Jinping publicly opposed escalation in the Strait of Hormuz and called for restraint, framing the conflict as a threat to global economic stability[34].

RAND research suggests that contemporary conflicts are increasingly embedded in multi-domain competition, where actors pursue strategic advantage not only through direct military engagement, but also via economic leverage, technological competition, and information operations[35]

This broader configuration complicates the pursuit of decisive outcomes, as external actors influence the strategic balance without direct participation in hostilities.

7- Legal Legitimacy and the Question of International Norms

The war raised significant concerns regarding legal legitimacy, particularly in relation to strikes on nuclear-related infrastructure. The International Atomic Energy Agency warned that attacks on nuclear facilities pose serious risks and should not occur under any circumstances[36].

These concerns illustrate the tension between military objectives and international legal norms, further complicating the strategic environment in which the conflict unfolded.

8- Domestic Political Constraints and Strategic Sustainability

Domestic political dynamics also appear to have shaped the trajectory of the war. Reports of large-scale protests in the United States during March 2026 suggest growing public concern regarding both the costs and the objectives of the conflict[37].

From a strategic perspective, such developments are significant: prolonged military engagement without clear outcomes may erode political support and constrain decision-making capacity at the national level.

9- Strategic Outcome: Managed Strategic Uncertainty

Taken together, the available evidence does not point toward decisive strategic closure. Rather, it suggests the emergence of a condition that may be described as managed strategic uncertainty.

While operational dominance appears to have characterized the early phases of the conflict, structural constraints—including alliance fragmentation, economic disruption, legal contestation, and adversary resilience—have limited the conversion of military success into stable political outcomes.

In this sense, the 2026 war on Iran illustrates not the disappearance of strategic limits under conditions of technological superiority, but their reconfiguration within a complex and multi-dimensional conflict environment.

Thirdly: Indirect Actors, Global Reconfiguration, and Strategic Exhaustion

1- Beyond the Battlefield: The Role of Indirect Actors

The 2026 war on Iran is difficult to interpret if reduced solely to the actions of its primary belligerents. It seems increasingly evident that contemporary conflicts are shaped by a wider network of indirect actors whose influence extends across escalation dynamics, strategic outcomes, and systemic consequences. RAND research suggests that modern warfare unfolds within a multi-domain competitive environment, where military action intersects with economic, informational, and technological pressures[38].

In this expanded context, indirect actors do not simply react to conflict; they contribute to reshaping its trajectory by influencing costs, alliances, and the framing of strategic narratives.

2- China and Strategic Non-Alignment

China’s position during the conflict appears to illustrate a form of strategic non-alignment that combines restraint with indirect influence. Reuters reporting indicates that Beijing opposed escalation in the Strait of Hormuz and called for de-escalation, framing maritime disruption as a threat to global economic stability[39].

This posture reflects a broader strategic logic: avoiding direct military involvement while preserving flexibility and benefiting—at least indirectly—from shifts in the balance among competing powers. From a systemic perspective, such

positioning allows China to protect economic interests, maintain diplomatic maneuverability, and reinforce its role as a potential mediator.

3- Russia and the Logic of Strategic Attrition

Although not directly engaged in the conflict, Russia's position can be interpreted within a broader logic of strategic attrition. RAND analyses of contemporary great power competition suggest that prolonged conflicts involving major adversaries may generate indirect advantages by depleting military resources, diverting strategic attention, and increasing economic strain on competitors[40].

Within this perspective, the war on Iran contributes to a wider environment in which major powers may exploit instability without necessarily engaging in direct confrontation.

4- Regional Actors and Horizontal Escalation

Regional actors have also played a significant role in extending the scope of the conflict beyond its initial theater. CSIS analysis indicates that Iran's strategy relied, to a considerable extent, on forms of horizontal escalation—distributing pressure across multiple fronts in order to complicate adversary responses and increase the overall cost of engagement[41].

Rather than remaining geographically contained, the conflict appears to have evolved into a network of interconnected pressure points, where maritime security concerns, regional bases, and proxy dynamics interact within a broader strategic configuration.

5- Energy Markets and Systemic Vulnerability

One of the most immediate and far-reaching consequences of the war has been its impact on global energy markets. The Strait of Hormuz—through which roughly one-fifth of global oil supply transits—emerged as a central point of disruption. Reuters reporting highlights repeated instability in maritime flows, contributing to volatility in energy prices and pressure on global supply chains[42].

From a strategic standpoint, such disruptions function as a force multiplier, extending the effects of military conflict well beyond the battlefield and into economic systems, political stability, and international trade networks.

6- Information Warfare and Competing Narratives

The conflict has also unfolded within a dense informational environment shaped by competing narratives. RAND research on malign information operations suggests that contemporary conflicts increasingly involve deliberate attempts to influence perception, shape public opinion, and contest legitimacy[43].

In the case of the 2026 war, multiple and often contradictory narratives appear to coexist—some emphasizing strategic dominance, others highlighting resilience, and still others framing the conflict as unjust or destabilizing.

These narratives are not merely peripheral; they constitute an integral dimension of the strategic environment, influencing both domestic and international responses.

7- Legal Contestation and Normative Fragmentation

Indirect actors have also contributed to the legal and normative contestation surrounding the war. The International Atomic Energy Agency has warned that attacks on nuclear-related infrastructure pose serious risks and should not occur under any circumstances[44].

Such concerns point to a broader pattern of normative fragmentation, where legal interpretations diverge, legitimacy becomes contested, and strategic actions are evaluated through competing frameworks.

8- Strategic Exhaustion and the Diffusion of Power

Taken together, these dynamics suggest a gradual process of strategic exhaustion. The conflict appears to have imposed costs not only on its direct participants, but also across the wider international system.

This diffusion of pressure is reflected in prolonged instability, rising economic costs, and increasing complexity in alliance configurations. Rather than consolidating the position of a single dominant actor, the conflict seems to contribute to a redistribution of constraints and opportunities across multiple actors.

9- Toward a Reconfigured Global Order

The cumulative effect of indirect actor involvement points toward a more fragmented and competitive global order. In this sense, the war on Iran may be interpreted not as an isolated event, but as part of a broader process of systemic reconfiguration.

The erosion of traditional alliance cohesion, the rise of flexible or non-aligned strategic positioning, and the growing importance of economic and informational instruments all suggest that contemporary conflict increasingly operates beyond the limits of purely military logic.

Fourthly: Regional Implications of the 2026 War on Iran: MENA Dynamics and the Algerian Case

1- Regional Shock Transmission and Systemic Exposure

The 2026 war on Iran appears to have generated immediate spillover effects across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), revealing the region's structural exposure to geopolitical shocks. The World Bank has repeatedly emphasized the sensitivity of MENA economies to external disruptions, particularly through energy markets, trade flows, and fiscal balances[45].

In this sense, the conflict may be interpreted not only as a localized military confrontation, but also as a transmission mechanism through which strategic escalation is translated into broader regional instability.

2- Energy Markets and Divergent Effects within MENA

The most immediate regional impact of the conflict has been observed in energy markets. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), disruptions affecting the Strait of Hormuz—through which roughly one-fifth of global oil supply transits—tend to generate rapid price volatility with global repercussions[46].

Yet, these effects are uneven across MENA. While oil-exporting states may experience short-term fiscal gains, oil-importing countries are more likely to face

increased budgetary pressure and inflationary risks. IMF assessments suggest that such price shocks often widen macroeconomic imbalances in importing economies, while offering only temporary relief—and potential long-term volatility—for exporters[47].

3- Security Spillovers and Regional Fragmentation

Beyond economic effects, the conflict appears to have intensified regional security concerns. Analyses by UNDP and other regional security frameworks indicate that escalation involving Iran tends to amplify proxy tensions, increase maritime insecurity, and reinforce the militarization of strategic corridors[48].

These dynamics contribute to a pattern that may be described as regional fragmentation, where states adopt increasingly divergent strategic postures—some deepening alignment with external powers, others pursuing hedging strategies aimed at minimizing exposure.

4- Strategic Autonomy and the Reconfiguration of Regional Alignments

The war also seems to have accelerated a broader trend toward strategic diversification among MENA states. Analyses from EUISS and the International Crisis Group suggest that several regional actors are increasingly reluctant to rely exclusively on traditional security partnerships[49].

This evolution reflects both declining confidence in established security guarantees and the growing importance of multi-vector foreign policy strategies, where flexibility and diversification are prioritized over rigid alignment.

5- Algeria: Energy Opportunity and Structural Constraints

Within this regional configuration, Algeria occupies a distinctive position. As a major hydrocarbon exporter, it appears structurally well-placed to benefit—at least in the short term—from rising energy prices associated with geopolitical instability.

World Bank and IMF data indicate that increases in oil and gas prices can improve Algeria's fiscal balance, strengthen foreign reserves, and enhance export revenues[50].

However, these gains should be approached with caution, as they remain contingent and potentially fragile.

6- The Limits of Rent-Based Gains

Despite the prospect of short-term revenue increases, structural constraints persist. IMF analyses emphasize that hydrocarbon-dependent economies remain highly vulnerable to price volatility and external shocks[51].

In Algeria's case, this suggests that increased revenues do not automatically translate into sustainable development. On the contrary, without effective diversification strategies, such gains may reinforce existing structural dependencies.

7- Security and Strategic Positioning

From a security perspective, Algeria has historically pursued a doctrine combining non-intervention with strategic vigilance. In the current context, regional instability—particularly across the Sahel and Mediterranean corridors—appears to

heighten the importance of border security, intelligence capabilities, and diplomatic balancing.

Data from SIPRI indicate that periods of regional tension often correlate with increased defense spending and strategic repositioning among MENA states, including Algeria[52].

8- Diplomatic Capital and Strategic Opportunity

At the diplomatic level, Algeria may derive indirect advantages from its relatively balanced foreign policy posture. This positioning allows it to engage with multiple actors, maintain credibility in mediation contexts, and avoid entanglement in highly polarized alignments.

In this respect, Algeria's approach appears broadly consistent with wider regional trends toward strategic autonomy and flexible alignment.

9- Regional Implications: Toward Asymmetric Outcomes

Taken together, the regional impact of the war can be characterized by a high degree of asymmetry. While some actors experience economic gains, others face structural strain, and the overall system is marked by increased uncertainty.

For Algeria in particular, the conflict represents a dual dynamic: an opportunity in terms of energy revenues, but also a constraint shaped by long-term structural vulnerabilities and regional instability

10- Endgame Scenarios and Strategic Trajectories

The ceasefire dynamics observed in April 2026—characterized by a fragile cessation of hostilities, intermittent reopening and closure of the Strait of Hormuz, and ongoing yet inconclusive negotiations—suggest that the conflict is entering an indeterminate phase rather than approaching definitive resolution.

In this context, it seems reasonable to outline three possible trajectories. The first is a negotiated containment scenario, in which limited agreements—potentially focused on the nuclear file—succeed in stabilizing escalation without resolving underlying strategic tensions. The second is a prolonged strategic attrition scenario, where intermittent violations, maritime disruptions, and proxy pressures sustain a low-intensity but persistent conflict environment. The third is a re-escalation scenario, driven by miscalculation, contradictory signaling, or the breakdown of negotiations, particularly in light of reported inconsistencies in diplomatic messaging.

These scenarios suggest that the end of the conflict is less likely to take the form of decisive closure than of managed instability. In doing so, they reinforce the broader argument of this study regarding the limits of strategic conversion in complex contemporary conflict environments.

Conclusion

The 2026 war on Iran provides a compelling case for reassessing the relationship between technological innovation and strategic effectiveness in contemporary warfare. While the conflict confirms the growing importance of algorithmic and

precision-enabled capabilities, it also highlights—perhaps more decisively—the persistence of structural limits that continue to shape strategic outcomes.

Key Findings

First, the analysis suggests that advances in algorithmic warfare enhance operational performance without eliminating the deeper constraints of strategy. Early decapitation strikes and high-tempo targeting cycles did not produce decisive political outcomes, reinforcing the persistence of the strategy–tactics gap[53].

Second, the conflict appears to confirm the enduring role of friction and adversary resilience, even under conditions of technological asymmetry. Evidence of contested airspace and sustained missile and drone activity indicates that adaptive state actors retain the capacity to resist and reconfigure under pressure[54].

Third, the findings underscore the limits of coercive leverage in the absence of strong coalition cohesion. Partial alignment within NATO and reluctance among key allies constrained the scalability and legitimacy of U.S. measures, thereby weakening compellence effects[55].

Fourth, developments in the Strait of Hormuz illustrate how maritime coercion may amplify systemic risk without ensuring strategic control. Disruptions affecting a corridor through which roughly one-fifth of global oil flows transit resulted in price volatility and supply uncertainty rather than stable deterrence outcomes[56]

Fifth, the analysis highlights the growing influence of indirect actors in shaping conflict trajectories. China's de-escalatory positioning, alongside broader dynamics of great-power competition, suggests that contemporary conflicts are increasingly embedded in multi-domain environments where non-belligerent actors exert significant influence through economic, diplomatic, and informational instruments[57].

Sixth, the war illustrates the centrality of competing strategic narratives. Perception management, legitimacy claims, and information operations function as force multipliers that shape both domestic and international responses[58].

Seventh, at the regional level, the conflict produced markedly asymmetric effects across MENA, generating short-term gains for hydrocarbon exporters while increasing vulnerability for import-dependent economies[59].

Finally, in the Algerian case, the findings point to a dual dynamic: short-term fiscal gains linked to rising energy prices, combined with persistent structural constraints associated with hydrocarbon dependence and regional instability[60].

Strategic and Policy Implications

At the strategic and international level, the findings suggest the need to recalibrate the role of technology in strategic thinking. It seems increasingly clear that technological superiority alone cannot substitute for political coherence, alliance management, and cultural understanding. Decision-makers would therefore benefit from integrating these dimensions more systematically into operational planning.

In parallel, strengthening coalition cohesion emerges as a critical requirement. Coercive strategies appear significantly more effective when embedded within credible multilateral frameworks capable of enhancing both legitimacy and strategic signaling.

The analysis also points to the importance of institutionalizing mechanisms for escalation management. Given the systemic risks associated with maritime disruption and regional spillovers, clearer diplomatic channels and crisis-management frameworks may prove essential in preventing localized conflicts from expanding into broader instability.

At the regional level, particularly within MENA, enhancing resilience becomes a central priority. This includes strengthening maritime security cooperation in critical corridors such as the Strait of Hormuz, while also reducing structural exposure to energy market volatility through diversification and adaptive economic policies.

In the Algerian context, the findings suggest that current conditions offer both opportunity and constraint. While rising energy revenues may provide short-term fiscal relief, their strategic value will depend on the extent to which they are effectively redirected toward diversification, productive investment, and long-term economic transformation.

At the same time, maintaining a balanced foreign policy posture and reinforcing mediation capacities may enhance Algeria's diplomatic capital within an increasingly fragmented regional environment.

Synthesis and Concluding Reflection

Taken together, the 2026 war on Iran does not signal the triumph of technologically driven warfare. Rather, it illustrates a reconfiguration of strategic limits under conditions of complexity, interdependence, and systemic competition.

In this evolving context, it seems less plausible to expect decisive and conclusive victories. Instead, future conflicts are likely to be defined by the capacity of actors to navigate—and manage—prolonged, multidimensional environments characterized by uncertainty, diffusion of power, and the growing influence of indirect actors.

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