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Asymmetric War: Algorithms vs. Global Energy Shock

The wars of today represent a confrontation between artificial intelligence and legacy weaponry, in some cases from significantly earlier eras. Iran's battle against US-Israeli aggression illustrates all aspects of such wars. Indeed, AI-driven operations utilizing state-of-the-art weapons systems enable decisive superiority over legacy military hardware: a symbolic example of such a victory is the destruction by the US-Israeli coalition of the last remaining F-14 fourth-generation fighters, which were discontinued back in 2006 but remained in service in Iran until now.

Given the disparity in military and technological might between the coalition and Iran, the Islamic Republic was clearly destined for defeat. The Trump-Netanyahu alliance, in addition to advanced US Navy Carrier Strike Groups (CSGs) and powerful allied air forces, possesses absolute technological superiority in space intelligence (satellites with resolution down to 10 cm), electronic warfare (capability to jam navigation and suppress radar systems across dozens of kilometers) and network coordination (Link-16 and JADC2 systems that integrate all sensors into a single, unified network). Broad real-time datasets are transmitted to command centers for aggregation and AI-powered simulation, accelerating decision-making from days and hours to minutes and seconds.

With the current disparity in technological access, one might assume that the coalition’s success is predetermined. All of this suggested that the loss of Iran’s navy and air force, combined with the decapitation of the country’s military and political leadership, would lead Tehran to a swift and unconditional surrender. American strategists, guided by AI calculations, were

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counting on exactly this outcome. After all, that’s exactly how it works in computer games—which, by the way, pro-Trump channels love to use to illustrate their 'victories' over Iran. However, reality proved to be a bit more complex.

Could AI have predicted that an adversary might employ asymmetric countermeasures—actions that are, in a sense, even 'illogical' within a digital frame of reference? It couldn’t, not at its current development phase (however, it cannot be ruled out that it would be able to do this in future). Could military analysts have developed such scenarios? They could have, however, the Trump administration placed their hopes on machine algorithms, as faith in American technological leadership in developing new military technologies, including AI, is incredibly high among the President’s team and his Secretary of War, Pete Hegseth.

In this situation, the CNN report, citing senior U.S. administration officials, that Trump's inner circle did not expect Tehran to block the Strait of Hormuz, seems quite logical. Washington was confident that such a gesture would harm Iran more than the U.S. Furthermore, it was not expected that the Iranians would "take out" American oil infrastructure in the Middle East or the export terminals of alternative hydrocarbon routes in the Gulf states. The systematic destruction of the UAE’s oil export terminal in the Port of Fujairah, located outside the Strait of Hormuz, by cheap Iranian drones is a perfectly logical move by Iranian strategists in a war that seems 'illogical' to American AI and its proponents.

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In their strategy of asymmetric warfare, Iranian leadership has relied on triggering a global energy shock and logistical disruptions, potentially leading to widespread economic and food crises, which, in turn, are capable of triggering political resistance to the actions of the American administration both on the part of Asian countries, which are maximally dependent on supplies of hydrocarbons and fertilizers from the Middle East, and within the collective West, which is also experiencing a shortage of energy resources.

At the same time, Iran does not intend to give up on other fronts of the confrontation. Despite the overall superiority of the AI-driven US military machine, Iran continues to secure local victories by countering intelligent systems with kinetic impact measures. In early March 2026, the targets of the attacks included not only U.S. military bases and the oil infrastructure of neighboring countries but also Amazon Web Services (AWS) data centers in the region. Drone strikes on server farms in the UAE and Bahrain have collapsed banking apps across the Gulf, exposing the AI era’s ultimate vulnerability: a flying missile “doesn’t give a damn” about encryption levels. The Fars News Agency, which is linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), stated at the time that the strikes specifically targeted Amazon and Microsoft facilities, which dominate the global cloud services market. Physical destruction and power disconnection were accompanied by the activation of fire suppression systems, which finished off the equipment by flooding the remaining servers with water. One could assume that for Iran, this was merely a 'test of the waters.' There is still plenty of infrastructure in the region controlled by American high-tech corporations.

There has been a tectonic shift in the understanding of digital security: while hackers and viruses were once considered the primary threats to “machines”, kinetic warfare—the physical destruction of servers—has now come to the forefront. Furthermore, reports have begun appearing in the press that the IRGC submarine forces have gained access to telecommunication cables on the seabed of the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea. It seems this type of warfare by Iran was also not accounted for by the US military.

It is premature to determine the ultimate winner of this war. Nevertheless, Iran has clearly won the first round. It put its opponent in an awkward position, causing confusion and a loss of initiative. Iran exposed the US-Israeli coalition's inability to offer new solutions for their goals, which, it should be noted, were never clearly defined in the first place, leaving them to fend off a growing roar of discontent from former allies. The blitzkrieg failed, and there were no options for a months-long war in the American military plans at all.

The war in the Middle East, unleashed by the US-Israeli coalition, has presented Russia with unexpected opportunities. There

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is widespread discussion regarding the easing of US sanctions on Russian hydrocarbons, the reduction of price discounts, and certain instances where Urals crude has been trading at a premium over Brent. All this stems from a reduction in physical oil and gas volumes on the global market. However, the closure of the Strait of Hormuz has also restricted the supply of other significant resources – fertilizers and helium, which is crucial for high-tech production.

Russia is the world's largest exporter of mineral fertilizers and the third largest supplier of helium. Our country is capable of partially replacing the lost trade flows from the Persian Gulf states. This will not only provide additional revenue for the national budget but also mitigate the threat of a global food crisis that could arise from fertilizer shortages and disruptions to the sowing season. According to an analysis by the UN World Food Programme, if the war between the US, Israel, and Iran continues, an additional 45 million people worldwide will face starvation.

Developments in the Middle East also present an opportunity for Russian (along with Chinese) tech companies to displace American business in the region. In a sense, Iran is clearing the field here for new players. Thus, Moscow-based IT companies need to be ready for potential opportunities to expand their sales markets.

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