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The more you
sweat in
practice, the less
you bleed in
battle.

Richard Marcinko

Important Issues of the Day

- **India and Russia – Page No. 1, GS 2**
- **Great Nicobar plan – Page No. 1, GS 3**
- **Fear of the foreign – Page No.8 , GS 2**
- **Lessons unlearned – Page No. 8, GS 3**
- **Iran War – Page No. 8, GS 2**
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- **INS Aridhaman – Page No.12 , Prelims**

Russia assures steady oil and LNG supply to India

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Manturov discusses trade, fertilizers, people-to-people ties and connectivity with Modi; Russia cites 'particular attention' paid to cooperation in sectors like oil, gas

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Amid the oil shock and supply chain disruptions triggered by the U.S.-Israel war on Iran, Russia has assured that its energy companies have the capacity to “steadily increase” the supply of oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) to India, and also “continue” to address India’s fertilizer needs.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov, on a two-day visit, called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday and discussed the supply of fertilizers.

“We discussed our mutually beneficial cooperation in trade, fertilizers, connectivity and people-to-people ties,” said Mr. Modi, who “welcomed sus-



Narendra Modi with Russian Deputy PM Denis Manturov, in New Delhi, on Thursday. ANI

tained efforts from both sides” to realise the agreements of the 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit hosted here in December 2025.

The visit is being seen as part of the preparations by the two sides ahead of the upcoming BRICS summit to be hosted by India and the India-Russia annual summit scheduled in Rus-

U.S. jet shot down in Iran; 1 rescued

TEHRAN

A U.S. fighter jet was shot down in Iran on Friday and one crew member was rescued, media reports said. The rescue occurred as the U.S. military was conducting a search operation with the support of Israel. » **PAGE 14**

sia this year. According to the Russian embassy, Mr. Manturov said that Russia has increased supplies of “in-demand mineral fertilizers to India by 40% and is ready to continue meeting India’s needs for this product”.

He also mentioned that a joint project for the production of carbamide (urea) is “under develop-

India-bound oil heads to China?

CHENNAI

Ping Shun, an Iranian crude oil carrier that had been signalling it was heading to India for three days after crossing the Strait of Hormuz, is heading to China as per marine logistics and commodity markets analytics firm Kpler. » **PAGE 13**

ment”. “Particular attention was paid to cooperation in the oil and gas sector. Manturov confirmed that Russian companies have the capacity to steadily increase supplies of oil and liquefied natural gas to the Indian market,” said the embassy readout.

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- **The visit is being seen as part of the preparations by the two sides ahead of the upcoming BRICS summit to be hosted by India and the India-Russia annual summit scheduled in Russia this year.**
- **According to the Russian embassy, Mr. Manturov said that Russia has increased supplies of “in-demand mineral fertilizers to India by 40% and is ready to continue meeting India’s needs for this product”.**
- **Mr. Manturov said Russia will deepen nuclear cooperation with India. Other topics such as industrial cooperation, space and educational projects were discussed in the meetings.**

Mains Question

Energy cooperation has emerged as a key pillar in India–Russia relations, especially after recent global disruptions. Critically analyze its opportunities and challenges.

हाल के वैश्विक व्यवधानों के बाद भारत-रूस संबंधों में ऊर्जा सहयोग एक महत्वपूर्ण स्तंभ के रूप में उभरा है। इसके अवसरों और चुनौतियों का समालोचनात्मक विश्लेषण कीजिए।

Great Nicobar plan triggers fresh concerns among locals

Abhinay Lakshman

NEW DELHI

A draft plan outlining the “relocation” of Nicobarese tribal communities affected by the Union government’s Great Nicobar Island (GNI) mega-infrastructure project “to their ancestral lands” has created confusion and is exacerbating existing apprehensions among locals. They have been, for four years, protesting the clearance for the ₹92,000-crore project after withdrawing their consent in 2022, alleging that their forest rights had not been settled.

This draft “Comprehensive Tribal Welfare Plan”, prepared by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration and circulated on March 13 for consultation with line departments and the Tribal Council of Great Nicobar, proposes a ₹42.52-crore outlay over 24 months for the “relocation of Nicobarese tribal com-



The draft was prepared by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration. AFP

munities from tsunami-affected or project-impacted areas”, which involves housing, land development and basic infrastructure.

However, details of where the proposed relocation will take place and who will be relocated have left members of the Tribal Council of Great and Little Nicobar confused, according to Nicobarese community leaders who spoke to *The Hindu*.

They said they were handed a copy of the draft

plan on March 28 and have since been called for two meetings by the district administration in Campbell Bay to sign off on it.

This comes as the Union government told a Calcutta High Court Bench on March 30 that it needed 15 days to “demonstrate that consent has been taken from the tribal people” for its project.

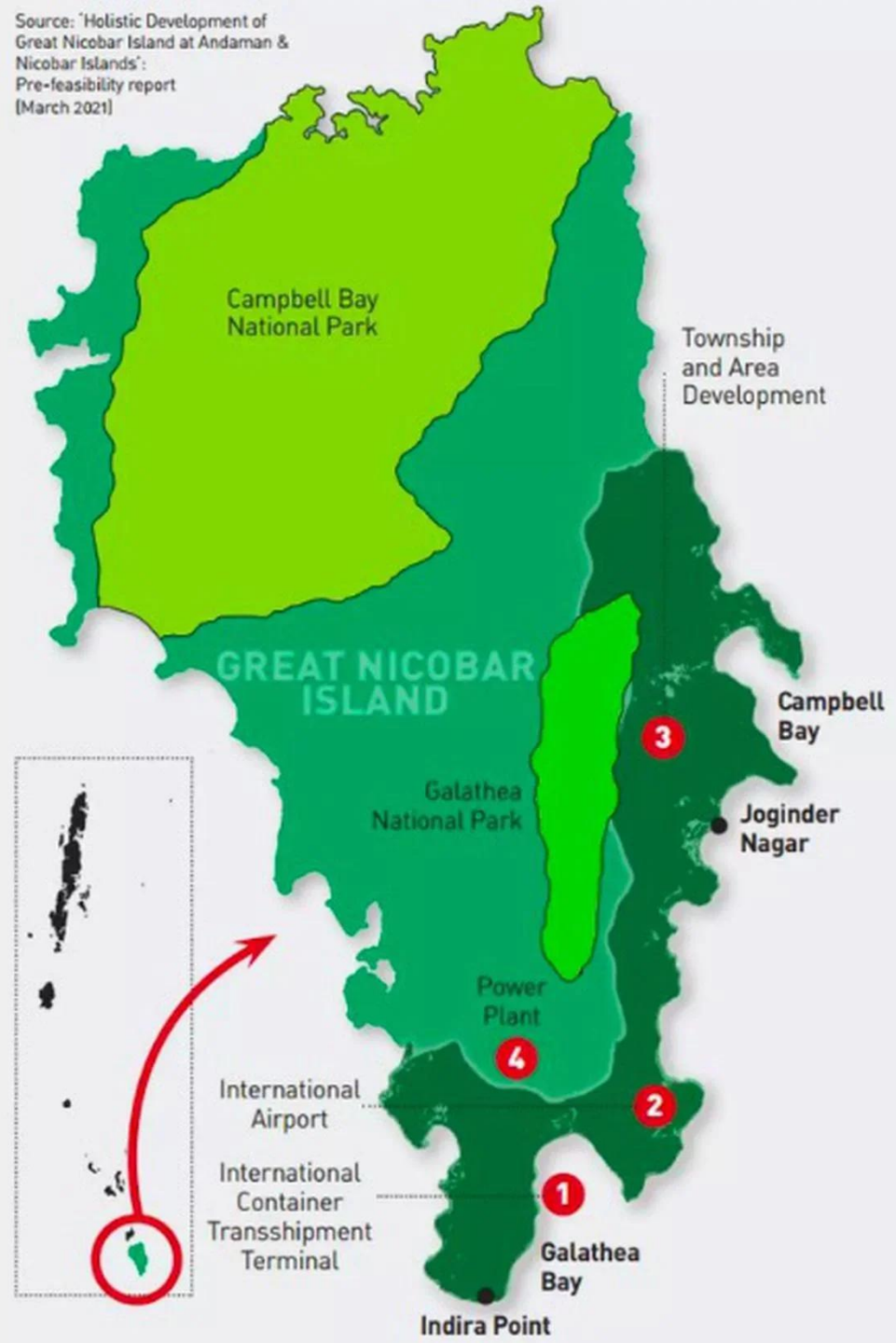
This Bench is hearing a batch of petitions challenging the project’s clearance on the grounds that it violated consent procedures and forest rights of the Nicobarese and Shompen communities.

At a meeting on April 1, the Tribal Council submitted a letter pointing out that some aspects of the draft were unclear and requested a Hindi translation of it. They said they would need at least a month to review the translated document.

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Source: 'Holistic Development of Great Nicobar Island at Andaman & Nicobar Islands': Pre-feasibility report (March 2021)



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- **They have been, for four years, protesting the clearance for the ₹92,000-crore project after withdrawing their consent in 2022, alleging that their forest rights had not been settled.**
- **Nicobarese and Shompen communities**
- **Union government told a Calcutta High Court Bench on March 30 that it needed 15 days to “demonstrate that consent has been taken from the tribal people” for its project.**

- **It involves development at Galathea Bay, Pemmaya Bay, and Nanjappa Bay. The island is approximately equidistant from Colombo (Sri Lanka), Port Klang (Malaysia), and Singapore, placing India at the centre of regional sea trade.**
- **International Container Transshipment Terminal (ICTT): Aimed at enabling Great Nicobar to become a major player in the regional and global maritime economy by participating in cargo transshipment.**
- **Greenfield International Airport: To enhance civilian connectivity, tourism, and provide dual-use defence capability.**
- **Greenfield Township: To support the projected population and economic activities.**
- **Gas and Solar-Based Power Plant: To meet the energy requirements of the new infrastructure.**

- **Tribal Safeguards:** Development requires mandatory consultation with tribal welfare bodies (Andaman Adim Janjati VikasSamiti (AAJVS), Ministry of Tribal Affairs), as per the Jarawa (2004) and Shompen (2015) Policies.
- **Consultation with the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)** under Article 338A(9) confirms tribal interests will be protected.
- **Environmental Safeguards:** The project includes 8 wildlife corridors for safe animal movement. Compensatory afforestation for felled trees is planned in Haryana, as the islands already have over 75% forest cover.
- **Great Nicobar Island:** It is the largest island in the Nicobar group, predominantly covered with tropical rainforest. It hosts Indira Point, the southernmost point of India, located just 90 nautical miles from Sumatra, Indonesia.

- **Ecological Significance:** The island is home to two national parks namely Campbell Bay National Park and Galathea Bay National Park. It also contains the Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve, which was included in the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme in 2013.
- **Demographic Profile:** The island has small populations of indigenous tribal communities, including the Shompen and Nicobarese, along with a few thousand non-tribal settlers. Other indigenous tribes historically associated with the region include the Onge and Andamanese.
- The project threatens leatherback sea turtles in the Galathea Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, which was designated in 1997 for their conservation but was denotified in 2021 for the port.
- The Supreme Court-appointed Shekhar Singh Commission (2002) recommended a total ban on tree felling in tribal reserves and national parks, along with afforestation before felling—a rule currently not being followed.

Election petitions must be decided on basis of material on record: SC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has observed in an order that election petitions challenging poll results must be decided by courts on the material on record.

A Bench headed by Justice Vikram Nath recently said it was impermissible to stall proceedings until fresh evidence, if any, was unearthed.

The order was based on an appeal challenging a February 2025 Punjab and Haryana High Court order.

The case concerned elections to the post of sarpanch of gram panchayat Khalila Majra at Panipat held in November 2022.

The appellant and the winning candidate both secured 302 votes and the

latter was declared winner on a draw of lots.

HC verdict set aside

Following a round of litigation before the lower court and the election tribunal, the High Court pronounced a verdict remanding the dispute to the lower court for recording and getting the expert evidence. The Supreme Court set aside the High Court verdict.

“The appeal ought to have been decided on the basis of the material available before it and there could not have been such sweeping directions to call for witnesses and expert evidence when neither of the parties had raised any such issue before the tribunal,” the Supreme Court observed.

- **The Election Commission's role ends with the declaration of results, after that, an election petition is the only legal remedy available to a voter or a candidate who believes there has been malpractice in an election.**
- **Such a person can challenge the result through an election petition submitted to the High Court of the state in which the constituency is located.**
- **Such a petition has to be filed within 45 days from the date of the poll results; nothing is entertained by courts after that.**
- **Although the Representative of the People Act (RP Act) of 1951 suggests that the High Court should try to conclude the trial within six months, it usually drags on for much longer, even years.**

Grounds on which Election Petition be Filed (Section 100 of the RP Act):

- On the day of the election, the winning candidate was not qualified to contest.**
- The winning candidate, his poll agent or any other person with the consent of the winning candidate has indulged in a corrupt practice.**
- Improper acceptance of the nomination of the winning candidate or improper rejection of a nomination.**
- Malpractice in the counting process, which includes improper reception, refusal or rejection of any vote, or the reception of any vote which is void.**
- Non-compliance with the provisions of the Constitution or the RP Act or any rules or orders made under the RP Act.**

If Verdict is in favour of the Petitioner (Section 84 of the RP Act):

- **The petitioner may ask that the results of all or the winning candidates may be declared void.**
- **In addition to that, the petitioner may also ask the court to declare her (in case the petition is filed by a candidate) or any other candidate as the winner or duly elected.**
- **So the verdict on an election petition, if found in favour of the petitioner, may result in a fresh election or the court announcing a new winner.**

History of Election Results Declared Void:

- **The most famous being the Allahabad High Court verdict of 1975 which set aside Indira Gandhi's election from Rae Bareilly constituency, four years earlier, on grounds of corrupt practice.**

INS Aridhaman, nuclear-powered submarine, enters India's naval fleet

Sumit Bhattacharjee

VISAKHAPATNAM

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh presided over a brief ceremony to formally commission the country's third nuclear submarine, *INS Aridhaman* (S4), which is the third in the Arihant-class of SSBNs (Submersible Ship Ballistic Nuclear), on Friday at Visakhapatnam.

The vessel, being part of the strategic weapons programme, falls under the domain of the Strategic Forces and is part of the country's nuclear triad. As per sources in the Navy, the commissioning was not made public and was carried out quietly, but Mr. Singh dropped enough hints to acknowledge the commissioning of the vessel.

While the event was



The nuclear submarine *INS Aridhaman* ahead of its commissioning ceremony in Visakhapatnam. PTI

kept under wraps, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh posted a cryptic message on X, describing the submarine as: "It's not words but power, 'Aridhaman!'"

Sources in the Navy said that the commissioning of *INS Aridhaman* was on the cards, as the submarine had already undergone extensive sea trials, and it

coincided with Mr. Singh's visit to Visakhapatnam for the commissioning of the stealth guided-missile frigate *INS Taragiri*.

The closely guarded SSBN project, initially launched as the Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV) project, is being executed by the Ship Building Centre (SBC) in Visakha-

patnam. The first vessel was launched in July 2009 and was quietly commissioned in 2016. The second indigenously built SSBN, *INS Arighaat*, was commissioned in August 2024.

While *Arihant* and *Arighaat* are smaller vessels of about 6,000 tonnes, *Aridhaman* (S4) and S4* are bigger vessels of about 7,000 tonnes. The S4* (which may be named *Arisudan*) is currently undergoing sea trials.

Compared to its predecessors, *Aridhaman* and its successor S4* will have more firepower.

India is already one of the nations, along with the U.S., Russia, China, and France, to possess a nuclear triad capability, which means it has the ability to launch nuclear-tipped missiles from air, land, and sea.



INS ARIDHAMAN S4

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- **In a significant boost to India's maritime security and the 'Aatmanirbharta' initiative, the guided-missile stealth frigate INS Taragiri was commissioned into the Indian Navy at the Eastern Naval Command base in Visakhapatnam on Friday.**
- **The ceremony, attended by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, and Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi, marked the induction of a vessel that represents a generational leap in naval engineering.**
- **Powered by a combined diesel or gas propulsion engine and equipped with supersonic surface-to-surface missiles and advanced anti-submarine suites, the frigate is now a cornerstone of the Eastern Fleet.**

Fear of the foreign

The FCRA amendments are unfair
in principle and procedure

The Centre wants to restrict foreign contributions to individuals and organisations in India, but intends to do so in a selective and opaque manner. A fresh set of amendments to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, or FCRA, now temporarily stalled due to protests, is an attempt by the Centre to empower itself to arbitrarily take control of assets owned by recipients of foreign contributions. Introduced in the Lok Sabha on March 25, 2026, the Bill to amend the FCRA proposes a comprehensive statutory framework for a new “designated authority” to seize, manage, and dispose of assets of organisations that lose their FCRA licence. Cloaked in the rhetoric of national security and foreign interventions, the move smacks of bad faith, or even worse, a devious scheme to snatch assets built through legal means. Once an FCRA registration ceases to exist, the designated authority can take control of assets built using foreign funds – schools, hospitals, places of worship – and use them. This process is proposed to be automatic and instantaneous upon the discontinuation of the FCRA status, requiring no judicial determination or adjudicatory process. In effect, the Centre that grants FCRA permission can decide to withdraw that permission, and benefit from its own decision. This is unfair in both principle and procedure, and Christian groups that run numerous health and educational institutions are particu-

cedure, and Christian groups that run numerous health and educational institutions are particularly concerned, given that they may have received contributions from abroad

The Bill has been postponed for now, but the government has no plans to abandon it. The FCRA was first enacted in 1976, and reenacted in 2010 during the UPA regime and amended in 2020 under Narendra Modi – progressively tightening the receipt and use of foreign funds. It is notable that state policy seeks foreign money in a range of domains – from infrastructure to technology, and entertainment to real estate. Regulatory regimes can be credible only when they are transparent and even-handed. That is not the case with the FCRA restrictions. Rajya Sabha MP John Brittas said his parliamentary questions regarding FCRA cancellations, non-renewals, and related data had been disallowed since 2024. That leaves one with the reasonable assumption that the government allows only some to receive foreign funds. That built-in favouritism apart, the design of the proposed legislation violates the principles of natural justice. The assets built legally with foreign funds before an organisation loses its FCRA clearance cannot justly be subject to seizure under any subsequent regulatory action. The Centre must rethink its approach on this issue and ensure that any regulations on foreign funds it introduces are fair, transparent, and steer clear of what exists on the ground.

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- **The FCRA was first enacted in 1976, and reenacted in 2010 during the UPA regime and amended in 2020 under Narendra Modi — progressively tightening the receipt and use of foreign funds.**

- **2010 Amendment:**
- **Enacted to consolidate the law to regulate the acceptance and utilization of foreign contribution by certain individuals or associations and to prohibit acceptance and utilization of foreign contribution for any activities detrimental to the national interest.**

- **2020 Amendment:**
- **Prohibiting the transfer of foreign contribution to any other person or organization.**
- **Reducing the limit of usage of foreign contribution for administrative expenses from 50% to 20%.**

- **FCRA registration is valid for five years, and NGOs are required to apply for renewal within six months of the registration's expiry.**

- **The government has the authority to cancel an NGO's FCRA registration for various reasons, including violations of the Act or a lack of reasonable activity in their chosen field for two consecutive years.**
- **Once canceled, an NGO is ineligible for re-registration for three years.**

Lessons unlearned

Steps to manage crowds must be taught to organisers, police personnel

Another stampede and another probe. India seems to have learned little about crowd management despite a series of stampedes in recent months. At the Sheetla Mata temple in Bihar's Nalanda district on Tuesday, nine persons died, eight of them women, and a dozen were injured. On the occasion of the last Monday of the month of Chaitra, more than 10,000 people came to the temple, which typically sees only a few hundred devotees. Police say they had no forewarning of a large gathering, though many view their absence as a consequence of the bandobust requirements for the Nalanda University convocation, which was attended by the President of India that day. Priests had allegedly taken money for the special darshan and allowed the bribe givers through the exit, which became clogged. The entrance was practically blocked as people tried to get in. One death from a likely fall was enough to trigger panic. What happened was clearly avoidable, as are all stampedes that routinely occur in India. For instance, too many people trying to enter a packed stadium is a well-studied disaster scenario and lessons have been learned from it in many countries. However, the RCB victory celebration in Bengaluru, in June 2025, led to an avoidable buildup of the crowd in the city, which was then led into the already full stadium.

Crowd science and crowd management are well-defined subjects in academia in the developed world. While crowd science deals largely with planned gatherings, there is a whole body of literature on unplanned, spontaneous gatherings, which are often marked by emotionally charged crowds, such as celebrity sightings and religious events. The latter is typical in India and is driven by digital communities. Crowd management combines quantitative techniques with qualitative methods and theories. For instance, the science stipulates that if there are more than five people per square metre, movement will be constrained, requiring intervention. Qualitative methods, for example, include ruses such as installing mirrors to make people see themselves, reinforcing individual identity, which can be lost and lead to irrational, panic-stricken behaviour. Contrary to popular impression, expressive crowds gathering for religious reasons are open to leadership and guidance. In India, the police learn crowd control on the field and through experience shared by veterans, who discuss using mobile loudspeakers to calm crowds and maintain order through clear instructions. Crowd control and management must become subjects of serious academic study so that measures to prevent accidents are commonly known and implemented across India.

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- **Police say they had no forewarning of a large gathering, though many view their absence as a consequence of the bandobust requirements for the Nalanda University convocation, which was attended by the President of India that day.**
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Iran may be losing the battles, but it might still win the war

President Donald Trump's address to the nation on the war with Iran on April 1 was brief and offered little that was new. There was anticipation that he might announce either a major escalation – such as a ground war – or declare victory and a ceasefire. Neither happened. Instead, he justified the U.S. strikes as aimed at eliminating Iran's ability to acquire nuclear weapons and project power beyond its borders. He also stated that regime change was not his goal. He claimed that Iran's capabilities were mostly destroyed and that he would target Iran's industrial and power infrastructure. Along with regime change he has now abandoned the freeing of the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran remains resilient

Contrary to Mr. Trump's claims, it is clear that Iran is neither on the verge of collapse nor prepared to concede. On the contrary, Tehran has demonstrated that it retains multiple instruments of retaliation, and the capacity to escalate horizontally – striking back against U.S. bases and its regional adversaries while blocking 25% of the global supply of oil and gas.

From the outset, this writer has argued, in the global media, that the U.S. and Israel will most certainly secure tactical victories. They will be able to degrade Iran's military capabilities and its industrial capacity, and even kill many Iranians, but they would struggle to achieve their broader strategic objectives. These goals – particularly regime change – are unattainable without a large-scale ground invasion that could cause huge American casualties.

Several respected voices reinforce this assessment. Sir Alex Younger, former head of MI6, Ross Harrison of the Middle East Institute, and former Central Intelligence Agency Director John Brennan have all warned that while the U.S. may achieve tactical successes, there is no clear pathway to strategic victory.

Four key factors help explain why Tehran is outperforming expectations in this conflict.



Muqtedar Khan

Professor of International Relations at the University of Delaware, a Senior Non-Resident Fellow at the Middle East Policy Council, and the host of the YouTube channel, 'Khanversations', on global affairs

The U.S. and Israel appear to be struggling strategically as Iran demonstrates resilience and retaliatory capacity

The first is regime resilience and strategic consolidation. The Iranian regime has demonstrated a level of resilience that was significantly underestimated by Israeli and American planners. It has been reported that Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had persuaded Mr. Trump that the regime was very weak and that a massive decapitating attack would trigger a popular uprising and topple it within weeks. Yet, the Iranian regime is surviving, and its most powerful element, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which functions as both the sword and the shield of the Islamic Republic, has consolidated its hold over Iran's political and military apparatus. By hiding military assets and delegating operational authority down the chain of command, Iran has survived the decapitation strategy. Moreover, by assassinating leaders such as Ali Larjani, Israel has sidelined moderates and empowered hardliners such as Mojtaba Khamenei.

The second is horizontal escalation and economic leverage. Iran has demonstrated the ability to expand the conflict horizontally. Tehran's response to the attack has been to regionalise the war by targeting U.S.-aligned Arab states. Key civilian energy infrastructure has been damaged, tourism has suffered, and their sense of safety has been shaken. By choking the traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, Iran has constrained the global supply of oil and gas, triggering inflationary pressures across the global economy. If these conditions continue to prevail, several Asian economies that depend on the Gulf for energy will face severe economic hardship.

The third is strategic miscalculation in Washington. The growing confusion about the purpose and conduct of the war in Washington is also why Iran is enjoying the upper hand. By privileging Mr. Netanyahu's exhortations over the net assessments of America's own intelligence agencies, Mr. Trump overestimated the effectiveness of air power and underestimated Iran's capacity to endure sustained pressure. It is

becoming apparent that pre-war Israeli intelligence was wrong. A recently reported tense phone call between U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance and Mr. Netanyahu underscores this point, revealing internal U.S. frustration and a growing recognition within the Trump administration that it was manipulated by Israel into this war.

The fourth is allied reluctance and regional blowback. The U.S. is increasingly isolated, with both its allies and regional partners refusing to join its war effort. America's North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies have largely treated this as solely Washington's war. Meanwhile, the U.S.'s partners in the Gulf are deeply uneasy. Having allowed American forces to operate from their territory, they now find themselves exposed to Iranian retaliation. Iran's ability to exert pressure through threats to energy flows and regional stability has given Tehran significant leverage and strategic confidence. Regional states are also signalling declining confidence in the U.S. and exploring alternative pathways such as the Islamabad quadrilateral dialogue (Pakistan, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and Egypt) to end war.

Tactical losses, strategic advantage

The superior military power of the U.S. and Israel will continue to deliver tactical victories and inflict damage on Iran and its people. However, Iran continues to resist and retaliate. The longer the conflict endures, the more economic strain, global instability, and declining domestic support will weigh on Washington. Iran is simultaneously regaining economic breathing space through oil exports and earning strategic respect across parts of the Global South. If negotiations actually happen, Tehran is likely to enter them with greater confidence and leverage.

If the Iranian regime survives, even a battered and weakened Iran would declare victory – because Mr. Trump's stated goal was unconditional surrender and regime change, and that appears increasingly unlikely.

- **The U.S. and Israel appear to be struggling strategically as Iran demonstrates resilience and retaliatory capacity**
- **Contrary to Mr. Trump's claims, it is clear that Iran is neither on the verge of collapse nor prepared to concede.**
- **On the contrary, Tehran has demonstrated that it retains multiple instruments of retaliation, and the capacity to escalate horizontally — striking back against U.S. bases and its regional adversaries while blocking 25% of the global supply of oil and gas.**

Four key factors help explain why Tehran is outperforming expectations in this conflict.

- **The first is regime resilience and strategic consolidation.**

- **The second is horizontal escalation and economic leverage. Iran has demonstrated the ability to expand the conflict horizontally. Tehran's response to the attack has been to regionalise the war by targeting U.S.-aligned Arab states.**
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- **Technology is a useful servant but a dangerous master.**
- **प्रौद्योगिकी एक उपयोगी सेवक है, लेकिन एक खतरनाक स्वामी भी बन सकती है।**
- **Wisdom lies in knowing what to ignore.**
- **बुद्धिमत्ता इस बात में है कि क्या अनदेखा करना है।**
- **Comfort is the biggest obstacle to growth.**
- **सुविधा ही विकास की सबसे बड़ी बाधा है।**

