



# FACT SHEET IRAN

3 March 2026 – 31 March 2026

## OUTLOOK

As part of the combined offensive by American and Israeli forces, which began on 28 February 2026, attacks were targeted at the Iranian state's military and security-related infrastructure. In addition to conventional military installations, the focus was on intelligence headquarters, command and control centres, and key decision-makers within the security apparatus. According to available assessments, more than fifty high-ranking officials have been killed since the start of the war. These included the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, as well as key figures such as the Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Minister of Defence. These killings aim at systematically weakening the leadership and command structure.

The phases of escalation: initial attacks on state and military targets were immediately extended to internal security elements, particularly the security forces' (ist-e bazrasi) posts and checkpoints. Concomitantly, so-called decapitation strikes were intensified, with the intention of destabilising decision-making and coordination processes. To boost escalation even further, the focus shifted to critical infrastructure. Important energy production sites, such as South Pars in the Persian Gulf and Asaluyeh on the Caspian Sea, became targets, which led to significant production losses and negative economic consequences. The conflict has thus developed beyond a primarily military confrontation and is increasingly targeting the country's economy and critical infrastructure.

With regard to casualty figures, Iranian state media report several hundred civilian deaths, whilst civilian casualties resulting from Iranian missile and drone attacks are also being reported on the Israeli and regional sides. Depending on the respective sources, the figures vary, but, on the whole, there are signs of a growing humanitarian crisis on all sides of the conflict.

## DOMESTIC POLITICAL DYNAMICS

Domestically, the Islamic Republic is in a phase of controlled, security-focused consolidation. The appointment of Mojtaba Khamenei as the new Supreme Leader not only signals continuity, but also points to a shift in the balance of power

towards the Revolutionary Guards. Whilst the transition seems to have gone smoothly, there are growing indications that key strategic decisions are increasingly being taken by networks with close links to the security sector. The death of Ali Larijani, a representative of a more pragmatic establishment, weakens potential moderating forces and favours a homogenisation of the political elite. In parallel, the regime increasingly relies on mobilisation and the orchestration of public support through Basij and Hezbollah structures, both to demonstrate domestic stability and to deter potential protests.

The appointment of Mohammad Baqer Zolqadr as Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) further underscores this development. As a long-standing IRGC commander, he represents the nexus between military and political decision-making processes. Combined with the targeted killings of key figures and largely powerless civilian institutions, this reinforces the impression that the IRGC acts as the dominant centre of power. The SNSC increasingly functions as a strategic control centre for the consolidation of military, domestic and foreign policy decisions. Overall, this points to a progressing militarisation of the political order, in which security policy considerations clearly take precedence over civilian processes.

## ETHNIC GROUPS

One of the common misconceptions in the context of the Iran war concerns the role of ethnic groups and their potential attitude towards the state. A nuanced analysis shows that, despite historically entrenched tensions between the state and minorities, key groups – particularly Kurds and Balochis – continue to align themselves clearly with Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Developments in recent weeks suggest that, despite persistent criticism of the Islamic Republic, a significant section of the Sunni Islamist milieu in various regions of Iran consciously dodges becoming part of what is perceived as a US-Israeli strategy against Iran. Particularly in the predominantly Kurdish border regions, the influence of local religious networks – mosques, clerics and religious

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associations – remains high. These networks predominantly position themselves against an escalation of the war. Strategic assumptions that these regions could serve as launching pads for external operations thus underestimate these actors' societal and ideological roots.

A central figure in the Baloch context is Molana Abdolhamid, who, from the beginning of the war, has adopted a nuanced and initially cautious stance. What was striking at first was his silence, particularly following the death of Ali Khamenei, which can be interpreted as deliberate distancing from rapid political instrumentalisation. It was only after several weeks that Abdolhamid spoke out publicly, emphasising a position of neutrality, condemning the war and at the same time pointing to structural causes by stressing that the conflict could have been avoided if the leadership had listened more closely to the population. In his most recent statements, he once again positioned himself as the voice of a broader societal spectrum, noting that the Iranian population is “neither separatist nor belligerent”, but rather “demands justice and freedom”. At the same time, Abdolhamid expressly voiced concern about possible Iranian attacks on Gulf states. This point is of particular significance, as a large number of Iranian Balochis have been living and working in the Gulf states for years. An expansion of military hostilities to this region could therefore not only exacerbate the foreign policy situation, but also have direct social and economic repercussions for the Balochi population within Iran and the Gulf states.

## ANALYSIS

Wars alter political orders in various ways: some lead to regime collapse, others shift power balances in the long term and shape the strategic geography of entire regions for generations to come. However, the current debate as to whether the Iranian regime will collapse or continue, falls short and underestimates the complexity of Iran's political and geopolitical structures. This oversimplification also makes it difficult to answer the central question being asked both within and outside Iran: What will happen the day after? Whilst no clear post-war strategy has yet emerged on the part of the US and Israel, a clearer strategic vision can at least be discerned on the Iranian side. Despite significant losses at the leadership and command levels, the system continues to demonstrate its capability for action and control, both in domestic political communication and in its international presence. In particular, Tehran emphasises that it is holding its own against two militarily superior actors at the same time and continues to exert decisive influence over the Strait of Hormuz – a lever with immediate implications for the global economy. Whether this position can be translated into a long-term strategic advantage remains to be seen. Nevertheless, there are already signs that the war has not only brought about personnel changes in the leadership but is also leading to a realignment of key security and economic policies. The conflict's escalation and geographical expansion will thus bring about lasting changes not only to Iran's domestic political order but also to its future relations with the international order.

## MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

Concerning military matters, in the ongoing conflict Iran continues to rely heavily on its asymmetric capabilities and regional reach. Despite intensive US and Israeli air strikes, Iran remains capable of carrying out ballistic missile and drone attacks against targets in Israel, US military bases and critical infrastructure in the Gulf region. At the same time, however, there has been a significant reduction in the frequency of attacks. This is attributed both to losses in launch systems and to a deliberately more defensive deployment strategy, which is aimed at conserving remaining capabilities. Similarly, the maritime component remains a central pillar of Iranian military strategy. These capabilities enable Tehran selectively to control shipping (traffic) in the Strait of Hormuz and thereby exert considerable strategic pressure on global energy supply. This is complemented by the mobilisation of regional partners, in particular the Houthis in Yemen, thereby extending the military dimension of the conflict to other shipping lanes such as the Bab al-Mandeb.

### Imprint:

Copyright, Production, Publisher: Republic of Austria / MoD, Roßauer Lände 1, 1090 Vienna, Austria

Edited by: National Defence Academy/IFK, Stiftgasse 2a, 1070 Vienna, Austria

Periodical of the National Defence Academy

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Printing: Reproz W, Stiftgasse 2a, 1070 Vienna, Austria



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