



By: *Emre Alkin*

Who will pay the cost of a ground war?



If US troops were to be deployed on the ground in Iran, we would have to shift our analytical framework entirely.

At that point, the issue would no longer be about a few missile strikes, a handful of air sorties, or short-lived political signalling.

It would evolve into a multi-layered crisis that tests energy flows, global inflation, domestic political stability in major powers, and the economic resilience of regional countries.

According to Associated Press reporters, Washington's deployment of additional **Marines and paratroopers** to the region would likely trigger a strong response from Iran.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's remark that "objectives can be achieved without ground troops" is telling – it suggests that even Washington understands how costly such a scenario would be.

In fact, these details imply that any decision for a ground operation may not be shaped solely in the White House but rather through coordination between Trump and Netanyahu.

“Quick victory” rarely aligns with military reality

Experts suggest that the first line of combat in such a war would likely be southwestern Iran. The Khuzestan region is not only accessible due to its proximity to Iraq, but also critical because it hosts the backbone of Iran's oil and industrial infrastructure.

From there, the front would extend towards the Bushehr coastline and the Strait of Hormuz – an area that is not only militarily significant but also economically decisive.

However, the real issue is not where the war would begin, but how long it would last.

Analysts at Oxford Economics indicate that even in its current form, the **conflict** could sustain a high-intensity phase lasting from one

to three weeks and at most up to two months – a relatively optimistic ceiling even for an air-sea conflict.

A ground war, however, changes everything. RAND experts widely agree that expecting a **quick resolution in Iran** is unrealistic due to the country's geography, regime resilience, and regional influence.

A ground war in Iran would not simply be another military engagement for Washington – it would become a multiplier of global military strain

Put plainly, Iran is not Iraq, nor is it Afghanistan – it combines the challenges of both with the added complexity of energy geopolitics. The phrase “quick victory” may appeal to politicians, but it rarely aligns with military reality.

Even at its current stage, the **financial cost** is already alarming. According to CSIS experts, the US spent approximately \$11.3 billion in the first six days of the conflict, rising to \$16.5 billion by day twelve.

Importantly, these figures reflect air operations, missile exchanges, and base defence – not a full-scale ground invasion.

The same analysis warns that while ammunition stockpiles are not yet depleted, the war is already creating strategic risks for other theatres such as the Western Pacific and Ukraine.

In other words, a ground war in Iran would not simply be another military engagement for Washington – it would become a multiplier of global military strain.

Not hundreds of millions but billions daily

From this, we can draw a rough but instructive conclusion: if the conflict transitions into a

ground phase, the US would be dealing not with hundreds of millions but with billions of dollars in daily costs.

Past experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan teach us that the initial bill appears in Pentagon accounts, but the true cost emerges years later in budget deficits and public debt.

Therefore, projecting a total cost approaching one to two trillion dollars for a prolonged war in Iran is not exaggerated – it is, in fact, a conservative estimate grounded in historical precedent.

Iran's cost, however, would go beyond fiscal deficits. In such a war, Iran would not simply lose money – it would lose capacity.

A ground war scenario could ultimately mark the political end of Netanyahu

Many experts emphasise that damage to energy infrastructure would have economic consequences lasting months, if not years. Even under the best conditions, reconstruction would be slow.

Economists consistently stress that a conflict with Iran offers no economic upside – not for the US, not for Israel, and certainly not for Iran. As the war drags on, Iran's governing capacity will gradually erode.

The cost for Israel may be less visible but more persistent. While Israel can sustain a war economy in the short term, a prolonged conflict presents a different challenge.

Extended mobilisation, reserve deployment, rising air defence costs, higher insurance premiums, declining investment appetite, and losses in tourism would create a negative multiplier effect in a high-tech economy.

As the war prolongs, public support for the government is expected to weaken, and economic strain could amplify social unrest. A ground war scenario could ultimately mark the political end of **Netanyahu**.

No longer just an energy shock

From a global economic perspective, the core issue is clearly the Strait of Hormuz. According to AP reports, **Brent oil prices** have already risen from around \$70 before the war to above \$100.

Disruptions in Hormuz are now being described by the International Energy Agency as “the largest supply disruption in the history of global oil markets.”

Experts are increasingly discussing the risk of a 1973-style global stagflation scenario. The critical point is this: rising oil prices do not only affect energy – they cascade into fertilisers, logistics, agriculture, chemicals, aviation, and ultimately consumer prices.

The second wave of impact appears to be forming in food and industrial supply chains. With approximately 40% of global fertiliser exports linked to Hormuz, urea prices have reportedly surged by 50%, with ammonia prices also climbing.

Meanwhile, the attack on Qatar's Ras Laffan facility threatens to create long-term damage to global **LNG supply**. This is why economists' warnings about “higher inflation and lower growth” are so critical – this is no longer just an energy shock but a systemic cost surge.

Global investors do not differentiate in detail on geopolitical maps – they see a region on fire and act accordingly

The consequences for regional countries will not be uniform. Gulf states may initially benefit from higher oil prices, but those gains would erode quickly due to infrastructure risks, rising insurance costs, airspace disruptions, and port security concerns.

Some developing countries have already moved into energy rationing, implementing measures ranging from limiting air conditioning in public buildings to controlling

LPG distribution.

This clearly shows that the crisis is no longer confined to strategic or military levels – it is now being felt at the household level.

Countries like Türkiye, even if not directly involved, would still face significant pressure through higher energy costs, declining tourism revenues, increased external financing costs, and rising risk premiums.

Global investors do not differentiate in detail on geopolitical maps – they see a region on fire and act accordingly.

The global price of prolonged conflict in Iran

Domestic political turbulence should not be underestimated either. In the US, initial national unity may hold, but as gasoline prices approach \$4, employment slows, and budget deficits widen, voters will shift their focus from rhetoric to their wallets.

Recession probability in the US is already estimated at around 40% for the coming year.



States may start wars with military capability, but they sustain them with economic resilience - Emre Alkin

In Iran, external pressure may initially consolidate support around the regime, but prolonged economic hardship will gradually erode that cohesion.

In Israel, security concerns may boost government support in the short term, but over time the key question will emerge: “Did we win, or did we simply prolong the war?”

As noted earlier, political consequences – including leadership changes and potential legal proceedings – would likely follow.

At this point, the question is no longer “Will the US enter Iran?” The real question is: once it does, who will pay the cost of getting out?

The experts whose analyses inform this piece may not agree on every detail, but they converge on one fundamental point: a ground war in Iran will not remain short, cheap, or limited.

States may start wars with military capability, but they sustain them with economic resilience.

If a ground war begins in Iran, the battlefield will not be confined to Khuzestan, Hormuz, or the road to Tehran. It will simultaneously emerge in Washington’s budget, Tel Aviv’s investment climate, Tehran’s refineries, Europe’s inflation data, and Asia’s energy bills.

There will be no winners in such a war.

The bill will be paid by everyone.