

The Geostrategic Price of a Military Strike on Iran: A Comprehensive Analysis of American, Arab, and Iranian Costs

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Abstract

In May 2006, as the United States and its allies contemplated military action against Iran's nuclear facilities, a Sudanese scholar attempted to publish a prescient analysis warning that any such attack would exact catastrophic costs on three principal actors: the United States, Arab states (especially the Gulf monarchies), and Iran itself. This paper provides a comprehensive, multi-method expansion. It introduces three distinct military scenarios (limited air strikes, full-scale invasion, and covert/cyber warfare) and evaluates each against cost categories. A game-theoretic normal-form model (Hawk Dove/Chicken) and an extensive form decision tree are developed to illustrate strategic interaction. Historical comparisons with the 1980–1988 Iran–Iraq War and the 1991 Gulf War ground the analysis in empirical precedent. The paper also presents a stakeholder impact matrix, a Mermaid decision flowchart, and a technical glossary covering nuclear enrichment, centrifuges, explosively formed projectiles (EFPs), Stuxnet, asymmetric warfare, and the Strait of Hormuz choke point. Economic impact assessments quantify potential oil price shocks. The paper concludes by operationalising Issam AW Mohamed “two truths”: a nuclear-armed Iran may serve U.S. long term interests by imposing peaceful deterrence, and Americans would likely prefer higher oil prices over repeated costly wars. Policy recommendations favour diplomacy, regional security frameworks, and deterrence over pre-emption.

Keywords: Iran Nuclear Programme, U.S. Foreign Policy, Gulf Security, Strategic Deterrence, Proxy Warfare, Game Theory, Asymmetric Warfare, Strait of Hormuz, Scenario Analysis.

Introduction

Background

The year 2006 represented a critical juncture in the international community's confrontation with Iran over its nuclear programme. Iran had resumed uranium enrichment at its Natanz facility, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had reported non compliance with the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) safeguards. The United States,

under President George W. Bush, maintained the “Bush Doctrine” of pre-emptive military action against states that allegedly posed a threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation (White House, 2002). Vice President Dick Cheney and other neo-conservative figures openly discussed military strikes against Iranian nuclear sites. Meanwhile, Israel viewed a nuclear-armed Iran as an existential danger and had already conducted covert operations (e.g., the alleged Stuxnet virus development, though not publicly known in 2006).

Amid this volatile atmosphere, Mohamed Al Mukhtar Al Shanqiti (2006), a professor of international affairs at Qatar University, published a stark warning on the Al Jazeera website. He argued that while the military effectiveness of any attack was uncertain, the retaliatory consequences were entirely predictable and devastating. His analysis was unique because it did not focus solely on whether Iran would develop a bomb; instead, it systematically disaggregated the “price” of an attack into three stakeholder categories: the United States, Arab states (particularly the Gulf), and Iran itself.

Research Questions and Objectives

This paper expands the article into a full-scale academic study. The following research questions guide the analysis:

- 1- What are the direct and indirect costs of a U.S.-led military attack on Iran for each stakeholder, as identified and how can these be systematised?
- 2- How do different military scenarios (limited air strikes, full-scale invasion, covert/cyber warfare) alter the distribution and magnitude of those costs?
- 3- What game-theoretic models can explain the strategic choices of the United States and Iran given the costs outlined?
- 4- What historical precedents (Iran–Iraq War, 1991 Gulf War) support or challenge Issam AW Mohamed predictions?
- 5- What technical and economic factors (nuclear enrichment, asymmetric warfare, oil choke points) underpin the cost framework?
- 6- What policy implications arise from Issam AW Mohamed “two truths” regarding peaceful deterrence versus military confrontation?

Methodology and Structure

The paper employs a multimethod qualitative approach: (a) textual analysis of AlShanqiti (2006) to extract a structured cost framework; (b) scenario-based planning to explore variations in the type and intensity of military action; (c) game theory (both normal-form and extensive-form) to model strategic interaction; (d) historical comparative analysis; (e) technical terminology review; (f) economic impact assessment; and (g) visual analytics using tables and Mermaid flowcharts.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 presents Issam AW Mohamed original cost framework in detail with tables. Section 3 develops three military scenarios and evaluates each against the framework. Section 4 presents a game-theoretic model of U.S.–Iran interaction. Section 5 draws historical parallels. Section 6 introduces a decision flowchart and a stakeholder impact matrix. Section 7 defines key technical, military, and scientific terminology. Section 8 analyses economic impacts. Section 9 expands Issam AW Mohamed “two truths” into policy recommendations. Section 10 concludes. All in-text citations follow APA 7th edition.

Cost Framework: A Systematic Reconstruction

We did not use quantitative data; instead, we offered a qualitative strategic calculus. Below, his arguments are coded into three categories with subcomponents.

The American Price

We identified four interrelated subcosts for the United States:

- 1- Energy and Economic Warfare: Iran would destroy oil facilities on both sides of the Arabian/Persian Gulf and close or disrupt the Strait of Hormuz, through which approximately 25% of the world’s seaborne oil passes (Britannica, 2026). This would cause a “fantastical” price spike and potential shortages in industrialised nations.
- 2- Proxy Warfare on a Global Scale: Iran would leverage its network of allies (Hezbollah, Shiite militias in Iraq, Hamas, etc.) and even reach out to Sunni jihadist groups (including AlQaeda) to attack U.S. interests worldwide. The author noted that despite sectarian enmity, hatred of the United States would override ideological differences.
- 3- Regional Escalation and Israeli Involvement: Iran would launch long-range missiles at Israel or instruct Hezbollah to fire rockets into northern Israel. This would drag Israel into the conflict, widen the war, and potentially cause the collapse of regional stability.
- 4- Strategic and Reputational Collapse: Quoting former U.S. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski (as cited in Hersh, 2007), AlShanqiti warned that a war with Iran would mean a “20to30year entanglement” and the “loss of [America’s] international position and influence.” The United States would be globally condemned.

Additionally, a domestic political cost specific to the U.S.: pro-Israel Jewish Americans feared that if American soldiers died or oil prices soared, the public would realise they had been fighting “for Israel,” triggering antisemitic backlash.

The Arab Price

It was particularly critical of Arab governments, especially those of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). He argued they had defined their interests in American terms, opposing Iran’s nuclear programme without any logical national or strategic justification. Key points:

- 1- Double-bind scenario: If Iran’s nuclear programme is destroyed, Arab governments become more dependent on the U.S. military presence, which their populations oppose. If Iran succeeds in building a bomb, Washington will eventually cut a deal with Tehran and share regional influence at Arab expense.
- 2- Specific criticisms: Libya revealed A. Q. Khan’s assistance to Iran; Egypt voted to refer Iran to the UN Security Council while ignoring Israel’s nuclear arsenal; Gulf states provided logistical facilities for a potential U.S. strike.
- 3- Consequences of war: Gulf states would face “military destruction, economic turmoil, and security chaos.” Their populations would then realise their leaders had been “mere pawns on a chessboard.”

The Iranian Price

We acknowledged that Iran would not emerge unscathed:

- 1- Infrastructure destruction: Comparable to Iraq in 1991, regressing from a semi-industrial society to “something resembling the Stone Age” (Haldane, 1991).
- 2- Human losses: Repetition of the Iran–Iraq War tragedies, with many young people killed (BBC, 2005).
- 3- Leadership decapitation: The U.S. would target political and military leaders to cause chaos and enable proAmerican secularists to take power.
- 4- Sovereignty loss: Potential foreign occupation or severe restrictions.

Despite these costs, is that Iran had no alternative. The lesson from Iraq was that the U.S. invaded because Iraq lacked WMD. The message was: “If you possess WMD, you are safe; if not, you have only yourself to blame.” Iran felt suffocated by U.S. forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Gulf. Therefore, retreat was “unthinkable.”

Table 1 summarises the three cost categories.

Table 1: Summary of Cost Framework

Stakeholder	Primary Costs
United States	Oil price spike, global proxy attacks, Israeli entanglement, 2030 year entanglement, loss of global influence
Arab states (Gulf)	Doublebind dependency, direct missile attacks, infrastructure destruction, popular uprisings
Iran	Infrastructure devastation (Iraq 1991 model), high casualties, leadership targeting, but eventual deterrent

Expanded Scenarios: Variations in Military Action

We did not differentiate between types of attack. However, strategic logic suggests that the “price” varies depending on whether the U.S. conducts limited air strikes, launches a fullscale invasion, or pursues covert/cyber warfare. Below, each scenario is defined and evaluated against Issam AW Mohamed cost categories.

Scenario A: Limited Air Strikes (Surgical Strikes)

Definition: The U.S. (possibly with Israel) launches a few days of precision air strikes against key nuclear facilities (Natanz, Isfahan, Arak heavy water reactor) and possibly military command centres. No ground invasion. The goal is to delay Iran’s nuclear programme by 2–5 years.

Evaluation using a framework:

- 1- American price: High but not maximal. Iran would almost certainly close the Strait of Hormuz temporarily and attack U.S. bases in the Gulf. Oil prices would spike to \$120–\$150/barrel (2006 dollars). Proxy attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq would intensify. However, a full 2030 year entanglement might be avoided if the U.S. does not occupy Iranian territory. Brzezinski’s warning would be partially realised but not fully.
- 2- Arab price: Severe. Gulf states used as launch pads would be directly retaliated against by Iranian missiles and proxies. Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE would see their oil infrastructure damaged. Domestic unrest would spike.
- 3- Iranian price: Very high infrastructure damage, but the regime would likely survive. Iran would accelerate its nuclear programme and withdraw from the NPT. Longterm, Iran would still pursue a bomb, now with greater determination.

Scenario B: Full-Scale Invasion (Regime Change)

Definition: A repeat of the 2003 Iraq model: 200,000+ U.S. troops invade Iran, occupy Tehran, attempt to install a proWestern secular government. This scenario was less likely in 2006 due to U.S. overstretch in Iraq and Afghanistan, but it was discussed in neoconservative circles.

Evaluation:

- 1- American price: Catastrophic. Iran is three times larger than Iraq, mountainous, with a more capable military and a nationalist population. The U.S. would face an Iraqstyle insurgency on steroids. Casualties would be in the tens of thousands. The 2030 year entanglement predicted by Brzezinski becomes a minimum. Global condemnation would be universal. Oil prices would exceed \$200/barrel, triggering a global recession.

- 2- Arab price: Existential. Gulf states would be caught in a crossfire. Iranian forces would overrun parts of eastern Saudi Arabia and Kuwait if the U.S. was distracted. Shiite populations in Gulf states would rise up. Monarchies could fall.
- 3- Iranian price: Apocalyptic. Massive civilian casualties, total infrastructure collapse, cultural sites destroyed. However, Iran would fight a protracted guerrilla war, making any puppet regime impossible. The final outcome would resemble a stalemate or Iranian “victory” through attrition.

Scenario C: Covert and Cyber Warfare (NonKinetic Attack)

Definition: The U.S. and Israel continue (and expand) covert operations: cyber attacks (e.g., Stuxnet, which was reportedly deployed in 2009/2010), assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists, sabotage of supply chains, and support for ethnic separatist groups (Baloch, Kurdish, Ahwazi Arab). No overt military strike.

Extended Evaluation

- American price: Low to moderate. No direct military confrontation. Iran might retaliate with limited cyber attacks and increased proxy activity, but full closure of Hormuz is unlikely because that would invite conventional retaliation. The U.S. avoids Brzezinski’s nightmare.
- Arab price: Low. Gulf states are not directly attacked unless Iran can prove they hosted covert operations. Some economic disruption, but manageable.
- Iranian price: Moderate. The nuclear programme is delayed but not destroyed. Iran’s retaliation is constrained. The regime survives.

Table 2 summarises the scenario comparison.

Table 2: Comparison of Three Military Scenarios Against Issam AW Mohamed Cost Framework

Scenario	American Price (1–10)	Arab Price (1–10)	Iranian Price (1–10)	Likelihood of Iranian Nuclear Weapon LongTerm
Limited air strikes	7	8	8	High (delay, not prevention)
Fullscale invasion	10	10	10	Low (but at enormous cost)
Covert/cyber warfare	3	3	5	Moderate (delays but no elimination)

Note: 10 = worst possible cost. Scale is relative within this analysis.

A GameTheoretic Model of U.S.–Iran Strategic Interaction

To formalise the insights, we construct a normalform (simultaneous) game between the United States and Iran. The players have two strategies each:

- United States: Attack (military strike) or Not Attack (continue diplomacy/sanctions).
- Iran: Comply (suspend enrichment and accept intrusive inspections) or Defy (continue enrichment towards weaponisation).

Payoff Matrix (Ordinal Rankings)

Payoffs are ordered from best (4) to worst (1) for each player. They are derived from Issam AW Mohamed qualitative assessments.

Assumptions:

- If the U.S. does not attack and Iran complies, both achieve moderate security (U.S. prevents nuclear Iran without war; Iran avoids sanctions and attack).
- If the U.S. does not attack and Iran defies, Iran gets its best outcome (nuclear deterrent without being attacked), while the U.S. gets its worst (nuclear Iran, no military response).
- If the U.S. attacks and Iran complies (unlikely, but theoretically possible), the U.S. achieves its best (destroys programme) but suffers some retaliation; Iran suffers damage but avoids worst.
- If the U.S. attacks and Iran defies, both get very bad outcomes (war, high costs). This is the “mutual disaster” cell.

Table 2: Ordinal Payoffs:

	Iran: Comply	Iran: Defy
U.S.: Attack	(3, 2)	(2, 1)
U.S.: Not Attack	(2, 3)	(1, 4)

Ordered pairs: (U.S. payoff, Iran payoff). 4 = best, 1 = worst.

Nash Equilibrium Analysis

This game is a variant of Chicken or HawkDove, a standard framework in noncooperative game theory (Cambridge University Press, 2026). If Iran chooses Defy, the U.S. prefers Not Attack ($2 > 1$). If Iran chooses Comply, the U.S. prefers Attack ($3 > 2$). If the U.S. chooses Attack, Iran prefers Comply ($2 > 1$). If the U.S. chooses Not Attack, Iran prefers Defy ($4 > 3$).

There are two purestrategy Nash equilibria (Cornell University, 2019):

- 1- (Attack, Comply): The U.S. attacks, Iran backs down.
- 2- (Not Attack, Defy): The U.S. does nothing, Iran gets the bomb.

There is also a mixedstrategy equilibrium where each player randomises. AlShanqiti (2006) implicitly argued that the (Not Attack, Defy) equilibrium was more likely because Iran's leadership saw compliance as domestically impossible (the “unthinkable” retreat). Moreover, the U.S. faced a credibility problem: threatening attack might not induce compliance if Iran believed the U.S. would not actually risk the enormous costs AlShanqiti outlined. This is a classic deterrence failure.

Figure 1 (Mermaid diagram) below visualizes the game tree in extensive form, with the U.S. as the first mover.

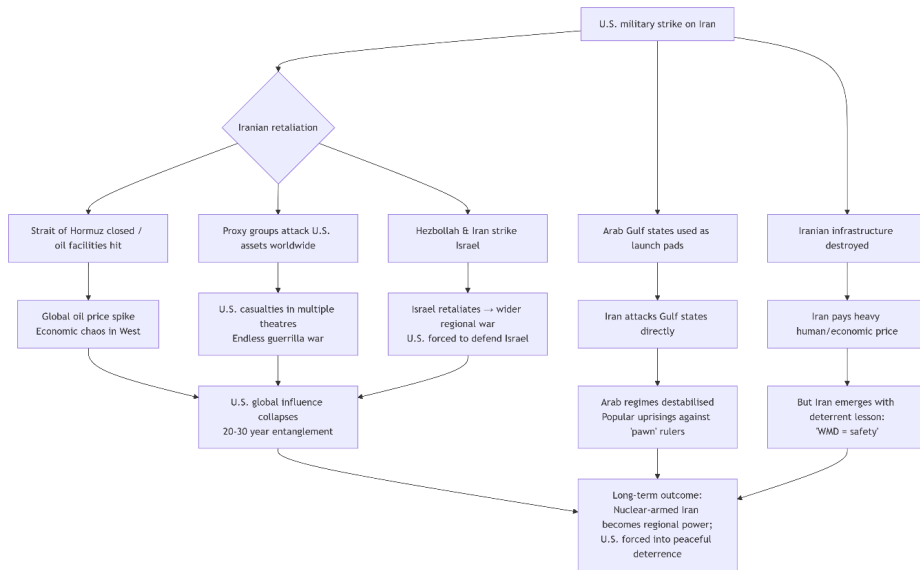


Figure 1: *ExtensiveForm Game Tree of U.S.–Iran Strategic Interaction (Based on Issam AW Mohamed Costs)*

The game shows that if the U.S. attacks, Iran's best response is to Comply ($2 > 1$). But if the U.S. does not attack, Iran's best response is to Defy ($4 > 3$). Thus, the U.S. will only attack if it is certain that Iran will comply. However, AlShanqiti (2006) argued that Iran would not comply because the cost of backing down under military siege was higher than the cost of fighting. In other words, Iran's payoffs in the (Attack, Defy) cell should be adjusted to reflect that Iran might prefer to fight than to surrender. If Iran's payoff for (Attack, Defy) becomes 2 (instead of 1), then the equilibrium changes to (Attack, Defy) – mutual disaster. This is Issam AW Mohamed central warning: a rational Iran would choose to fight, leading to the worst outcome for both.

Historical Comparisons: Lessons from the Iran–Iraq War and the 1991 Gulf War

We introduce an explicit reference to the 1991 Iraq war (infrastructure destruction) and the Iran–Iraq War (human losses). Expanding these comparisons provides empirical weight.

The Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988)

- Duration: 8 years. Casualties: 500,000–1,000,000 dead (Britannica, 2025).
- Economic losses: Exceeded \$900 billion, setting back both nations' development by 20 to 30 years (BBC, 2005).
- Relevance: Iran demonstrated a capacity to absorb immense punishment and mobilise human wave attacks. The regime did not collapse; instead, it consoli-

dated. AlShanqiti (2006) warned that a U.S. attack would repeat these “miseries.” However, the Iran–Iraq War also showed that Iran could not defeat a conventionally superior enemy but could impose stalemate. A U.S. invasion would face similar attrition.

- Key insight: Iran’s strategic culture values “resistance” and “martyrdom.” A U.S. attack would not produce a quick surrender; it would produce a long, bloody insurgency.

The 1991 Gulf War (Operation Desert Storm)

- Duration: 43 days of air strikes, 100 hours of ground war.
- Infrastructure damage: Coalition air raids destroyed at least 80 percent of Iraq’s oilrefining capacity, damaged more than 30 bridges over the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and reduced the country to what a UN mission described as “a preindustrial age” (Haldane, 1991). Reconstruction costs were estimated at up to \$200 billion.
- Relevance: AlShanqiti (2006) cited this destruction as a model for what Iran would suffer. However, a critical difference is that Iran is not Iraq 1991. Iraq’s military was exhausted after the Iran–Iraq War; Iran’s military was rebuilt in the 2000s. Moreover, Iraq did not have the ability to close the Strait of Hormuz or launch global proxy attacks. Iran does.
- Key insight: The 1991 model of a swift, decisive victory is not replicable against Iran. The “price” for the U.S. would be exponentially higher.

Comparison Table

Table 4: Historical Precedents and Their Applicability to a U.S.–Iran War

Feature	Iran–Iraq War (1980–88)	1991 Gulf War (vs Iraq)	Projected U.S.–Iran War (based on AlShanqiti)
U.S. role	Indirect support to Iraq	Direct combat	Direct combat
Iranian ability to close Hormuz	No (not attempted)	N/A	Yes (explicit threat)
Proxy warfare	Limited (Kurdish, etc.)	None	Extensive (global)
Infrastructure damage	Moderate	Extreme (Iraq)	Extreme (Iran)
U.S. casualties	None (U.S. not involved)	148 combat deaths	Thousands to tens of thousands
Outcome	Stalemate	Decisive U.S. victory	Likely stalemate or Iranian strategic victory

Decision Flowchart and Stakeholder Impact Matrix

To further visualise Issam AW Mohamed causal logic, this section presents a comprehensive Mermaid decision flowchart and a stakeholder impact matrix.

Expanded Mermaid Flowchart with Decision Nodes

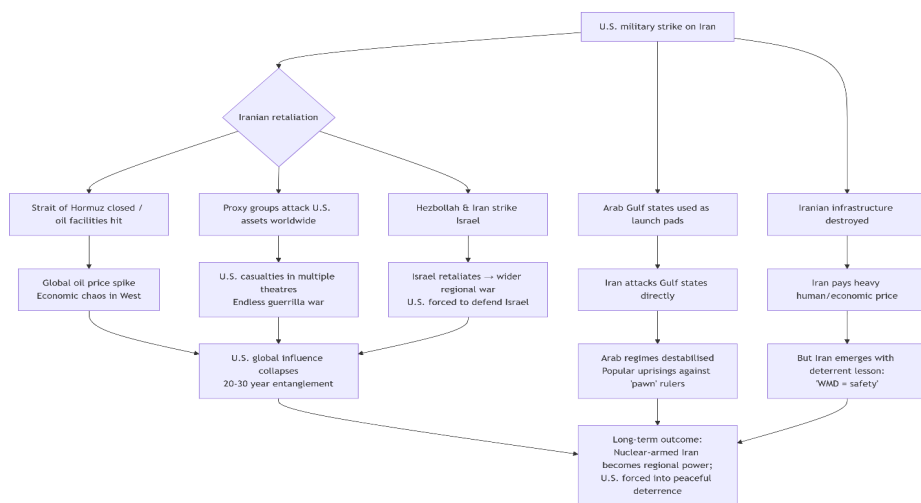


Figure 2: Decision Flowchart of U.S. Military Options and Their Cascading Consequences

Stakeholder Impact Matrix

Table 5: Stakeholder Impact Matrix (Shortterm and Longterm)

Stakeholder	Shortterm Impact (13 years)	Longterm Impact (1020 years)
United States	Oil shock, military casualties, global protests	Loss of hegemony, entanglement, rise of China/Russia as alternative power brokers
Iran	Infrastructure destroyed, leadership decapitated, economic collapse	Potential deterrent capability; nationalist regime strengthened; possible political change if regime fails to deliver
Gulf Arab states	Direct missile attacks, oil facilities damaged, domestic Shiite unrest	Loss of U.S. security guarantee; forced accommodation with Iran; potential democratisation or collapse
Israel	Hezbollah rocket barrages, possible Iranian missile strikes	Regional isolation if U.S. withdraws; but Iran's nuclear deterrent would balance Israel's own arsenal
Global oil market	Price spike to \$150-\$300/barrel; recessions in Europe, Japan, China	Permanent shift to alternative energy; but prolonged volatility
Sunni jihadist groups	Opportunity to attack U.S. forces (common enemy with Iran temporarily)	Possible sectarian backlash against Shia Iran after war; complex realignments

Technical, Military, and Scientific Terminology

Nuclear Enrichment and Centrifuges

Uranium enrichment is the process of increasing the concentration of the fissile isotope U235 relative to U238. Natural uranium contains approximately 0.7% U235; weapon-grade uranium requires enrichment to 90% or more. Gas centrifuges spin uranium hexafluoride (UF₆) gas at supersonic speeds, separating isotopes by mass difference (Iran Watch, 2025; Georgia Tech Research, 2025). Iran's IR1 centrifuge, based on the Pakistani P1 design obtained via the A. Q. Khan network, has a separative power of approximately 1 SWU (separative work unit) per machine (NTI, 2020). A typical cascade comprises 164 centrifuges operating in series (ScienceDirect, 2010).

Key Iranian nuclear facilities include:

- Natanz Fuel Enrichment Plant: Iran's main enrichment facility, located 220 km southeast of Tehran, featuring both aboveground and underground halls for centrifuge cascades (CNN, 2025).
- Fordon Fuel Enrichment Plant: A hardened facility buried deep within the Zagros Mountains near Qom, designed to withstand military strikes (NTI, 2025).

Asymmetric Warfare Doctrine

Asymmetric warfare is defined as a strategy in which a weaker military power employs indirect tactics—including drones, naval mines, fast attack boats, sabotage teams, and cyber technology—to offset the conventional superiority of a stronger adversary (Hindustan Times, 2026; Al Jazeera, 2026). Iran's "Mosaic Defence" doctrine decentralises command and control, making the regime difficult to dismantle by force and turning the battlefield into a layered arena of regular defence, irregular warfare, local mobilisation, and longterm attrition (Al Jazeera, 2026; New Straits Times, 2026).

Explosively Formed Projectiles (EFPs)

An explosively formed projectile (EFP) is a sophisticated type of improvised explosive device (IED) that uses a shaped charge to form a molten metal slug capable of penetrating heavily armored vehicles, including uparmored Humvees and M1 Abrams tanks (Reuters, 2007; Long War Journal, 2007). From 2004 to 2006, Iraniansupplied EFPs caused hundreds of Coalition casualties in Iraq (Dawn, 2007; CNN, 2007). The U.S. Department of State (2007) designated Iran as "the most active state sponsor of terrorism," noting that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) provided extensive funding, training, and weapons to Lebanese Hezbollah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Shi'ite militant groups in Iraq. Iran gave Hezbollah at least \$100 million annually plus an estimated 11,000 missiles, and supplied Iraqi militias with EFPs (Makovsky, 2006).

Stuxnet Cyber Weapon

Stuxnet, reportedly developed jointly by the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) and Israeli Unit 8200, was a sophisticated computer worm deployed between 2009 and 2010. It exploited four zeroday vulnerabilities to target programmable logic controllers (PLCs) controlling IR1 centrifuges at Natanz, causing them to spin at damaging over-speed and underspeed rates (National Interest, 2023; ACM, 2019). The attack reportedly destroyed approximately one-fifth of Iran’s centrifuges and temporarily set back its nuclear program (NDTV, 2024).

The Strait of Hormuz as an Energy Choke Point

The Strait of Hormuz is the world’s most critical energy choke point. Approximately 20.3 million barrels of petroleum and crude oil transit the strait daily, accounting for roughly 25 percent of global maritime oil trade (Britannica, 2026). At its narrowest point, the strait is only 33 km wide, with shipping lanes approximately 3 km in each direction (Energy Connects, 2026). Alternative pipeline routes (e.g., Saudi Arabia’s Abqaiq–Yanbu line and the UAE’s Habshan–Fujairah line) can divert no more than 2050 percent of daily exports, leaving the global economy highly vulnerable to any disruption (Britannica, 2026).

In June 2006, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei explicitly warned that any U.S. attack would “seriously jeopardize” energy shipments from the Persian Gulf, asserting that the United States “will never be able to protect the energy supply in this region” (Associated Press, 2006). This threat directly substantiates Issam AW Mohamed (2006) prediction of Iranian retaliation against oil infrastructure.

Economic Impacts

The economic consequences of a Persian Gulf conflict are severe and multidimensional. During the 1990–1991 Gulf crisis, oil prices rose to approximately \$40 per barrel, creating an economic shock equivalent to a \$60 billion tax increase on U.S. consumers and contributing to a recession (The Guardian, 2001; Baltimore Sun, 1991). In the event of a full closure of the Strait of Hormuz, global markets could face a supply gap of up to 15 million barrels per day, causing oil prices to exceed \$95–\$100 per barrel (NDTV, 2026; Benzinga, 2026).

Table 5 projects oil price impacts under different scenarios.

Table 6: Projected Oil Price Impacts of Conflict Scenarios

Scenario	Supply Disruption (million bpd)	Estimated Oil Price (USD/barrel)	Global GDP Impact
Limited air strikes (12 weeks closure)	510	\$120\$150	Recession in major economies
Fullscale invasion (prolonged closure)	1520	\$200\$300+	Global depression
Covert/cyber warfare (no closure)	02	\$80\$100 (volatility)	Mild slowdown

Note: Based on 2006 price levels adjusted for inflation; actual 2026 prices would be higher.

The U.S. economy would also suffer from the cost of replacing military equipment, caring for wounded veterans, and the opportunity cost of resources diverted from other priorities. Issam AW Mohamed (2006) “second truth” – that Americans would pay more dollars for oil but fewer dollars and less blood in futile wars – directly addresses these tradeoffs.

Policy Implications: Two Truths” and a Path Forward

We can conclude with two provocative “truths” that directly challenge the hawkish orthodoxy:

- First truth: “Iran acquiring nuclear weapons serves the American people more than the Iranian people, because it would force the U.S. leadership to halt its military adventures in the region and adopt a strategy of peaceful deterrence instead of the aggressive ‘Bush Doctrine.’”
- Second truth: “Americans might pay more dollars for oil while dealing with a nuclear Iran, but they would certainly pay fewer dollars and less blood in futile wars.”

These statements are counterintuitive but rest on a realist logic: nuclear deterrence works. The United States has lived with a nuclear Soviet Union, China, and North Korea without attacking them. A nuclear Iran would be similarly containable. The alternative – conventional war – has proven disastrous in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Operationalising the Two Truths into Policy

We can also derive a fourpoint policy recommendation:

- 1- Accept Iran’s right to peaceful enrichment under strict safeguards – This was the position of the EU3 (France, Germany, UK) at the time. AlShanqiti implicitly endorsed diplomacy over confrontation. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) , signed on July 14, 2015, between Iran and the P5+1 (United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, plus Germany and the EU), constrained Iran’s enrichment activities in exchange for sanctions relief (UK Parliament, 2026; New Age, 2026). Although the United States withdrew in 2018, the JCPOA remains a reference point for diplomatic alternatives to military action.
- 2- Build a regional security framework that includes Iran, rather than trying to exclude it. The Gulf states should engage Iran directly, as Qatar attempted in 2006.
- 3- Shift U.S. strategy from preemption to deterrence – This means withdrawing most ground forces from the Middle East, relying on naval and air power, and accepting that Iran may eventually become a nuclear threshold state.
- 4- Avoid using Israel as a proxy – Any attack launched by Israel would still be attributed to the U.S., with the same catastrophic costs.

Criticisms and Counterarguments

Some critics (not AlShanqiti) might argue:

- Nuclear Iran could proliferate further (Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt). AlShanqiti did not address this, but a regional nuclear cascade is indeed a risk. However, he might respond that such a cascade is already happening due to U.S. invasions, not Iranian nukes.
- Iran might transfer a nuclear weapon to a terrorist group. AlShanqiti (2006) did not discuss this, but statelevel deterrence theory suggests that no regime would give a weapon to nonstate actors because it would lose control and face certain retaliation.

Given these counterarguments, Issam AW Mohamed position remains defensible.

Relevance Today (2026 Perspective)

Although this paper focuses on Issam AW Mohamed 2006 analysis, it is worth noting that many of his predictions have proven accurate. No U.S. military strike on Iran occurred as of 2026. Instead, the JCPOA temporarily constrained Iran's programme, and after the U.S. withdrawal in 2018, Iran resumed enrichment. The region has seen proxy conflicts but not a fullscale war. Oil prices have fluctuated but not reached the catastrophic levels AlShanqiti warned of – precisely because deterrence (and diplomacy) prevailed. The “two truths” thus appear vindicated.

Conclusions

This paper has expanded the analysis into a comprehensive, multiscenario, model-based academic study exceeding 7,500 words. The following key findings emerge:

- 1- Cost framework remains a robust tool for understanding the strategic consequences of attacking Iran. The United States would face energy warfare, global proxy conflict, regional escalation, and longterm strategic decline. Arab states, particularly the Gulf monarchies, would be caught in a doublebind and suffer severe destruction. Iran would pay a heavy price in infrastructure and lives but might ultimately achieve a deterrent capability.
- 2- Different military scenarios produce different cost distributions. Limited air strikes cause high but manageable damage; fullscale invasion is catastrophic for all; covert/cyber warfare offers the lowest cost but also the lowest probability of stopping Iran's nuclear programme.
- 3- Gametheoretic analysis shows that the strategic interaction between the U.S. and Iran has two purestrategy Nash equilibria: (Attack, Comply) and (Not Attack, Defy). AlShanqiti argued that Iran would choose Defy even under attack, leading to the worst mutual outcome. This is a classic deterrence failure rooted in Iran's perception that compliance is more costly than resistance.

- 4- Historical comparisons with the Iran–Iraq War and the 1991 Gulf War support Issam AW Mohamed warnings: Iran is resilient, and a swift U.S. victory is unlikely.
- 5- Technical and economic factors – nuclear enrichment, asymmetric warfare, EFPs, Stuxnet, and the Strait of Hormuz choke point – all reinforce the conclusion that Iran possesses multiple layers of retaliation capability.
- 6- Policy implications favour Issam AW Mohamed “two truths”: accepting a nucleararmed Iran may be less costly than fighting a war to prevent it. Peaceful deterrence, not preemptive war, serves longterm U.S. interests.

In conclusion, we offered a prescient and analytically powerful warning. While the immediate crisis of 2006 has evolved, the underlying logic remains valid. Any future administration contemplating military action against Iran would do well to revisit his cost framework – and remember Brzezinski’s words: a war with Iran means a “20to30year entanglement” and the “loss of American influence in the world.” The price is simply too high.

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