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Issue Brief

Targeting Defence-Industrial Ecosystem: The War in West Asia and Lessons for India

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March 17, 2026

S*ummary*

In the ongoing war, the Iranian defence infrastructure has been a key target for the US and Israel to ensure that Iran's ability to threaten the US and Israeli interests militarily is diminished to the extent possible by the end of the war. India's defence industries are no doubt being studied and war-gamed as targets by India's adversaries. Multiple steps may be required to safeguard India's defence industrial ecosystem, including, for instance, incorporating Mission Sudarshan Chakra into the design architecture from the project's inception.

On 28 February 2026 at 9:45 am, Tehran time, the US and Israel launched a major joint strike with more than 100 aircraft¹ from land and sea, forming a “single synchronised wave”. In the first 57 hours of the operations, the combined US and Israeli forces hit Iranian senior political and military leadership, command-and-control systems, naval assets, ballistic missile facilities and intelligence infrastructure.² The combined operations commenced with ‘U.S. CYBERCOM [U.S. Cyber Command] and USSPACECOM [U.S. Space Command], layering non-kinetic effects, disrupting and degrading and blinding Iran’s ability to see, communicate, and respond’.³ The combined daylight strike had followed a trigger event conducted by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), enabled by the US intelligence.⁴

The US Central Command (CENTCOM) reported on 6 March that the forces had struck over 3,000 targets in Iran since the campaign began on 28 February, and that the IDF alone had struck 300 targets in the preceding 48 hours.⁵ In the bargain, the forces had extended air dominance into central Iran and degraded the Iranian navy. Despite the ferocity of the operations, there is uncertainty about the US political and military objectives of the war, which have been variously described, including as “shifting and at times contradictory positions articulated”.⁶ Despite the uncertainty surrounding the objectives of the operations, one thing stands out with distinct clarity: the targeting of the Iranian defence industry to ensure that Iran’s ability to threaten the US and Israeli interests militarily is diminished to the extent possible by the end of the war.

This issue brief aims to deliberate on the destruction being caused to the Iranian defence infrastructure, the way targeting fits into the larger political and military objectives of the war, and to draw lessons for India.

Political and Military Objectives of the War

Without going into publicly available intelligence regarding Iranian nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities or the debates and controversies surrounding the subject, an attempt is being made hereunder to list the objectives of the war as

¹ The package of more than 100 aircraft included—fighters, tankers, airborne early warning, electronic attack, bombers and unmanned platforms forming a single synchronized wave.

² Ashley Roque, “[Caine: US Objective is to Keep Iran from Projecting Power Outside Own Borders](#)”, *Breaking Defense*, 2 March 2026.

³ Joseph Trevithick, Thomas Newdick and Howard Altman, “[War With Iran Now In Its Third Day](#)”, *TWZ*, 2 March 2026.

⁴ Ashley Roque, “[Caine: US Objective is to Keep Iran from Projecting Power Outside Own Borders](#)”, no. 2.

⁵ “[Iran Update Evening Special Report, March 7, 2026](#)”, Institute for the Study of War (ISW), 7 March 2026.

⁶ Abid Hussain, “[What is Trump’s Endgame in Iran as the US-Israel War Escalates?](#)”, *Aljazeera*, 9 March 2026.

extracted from the media reports from press briefs and statements made by the government representatives of the US and Israel.

Political Objectives of War

President Donald Trump has framed this war “as the culmination of a 47-year adversarial relationship between the U.S. and Iran, dating back to 1979, arguing that the Islamic Republic has consistently undermined U.S. interests and destabilised the region”.⁷ His reported justification of strikes includes Iran’s alleged nuclear weapons programme and intercontinental ballistic missile capacity being generated from its ongoing space programme.⁸ In the press briefing of the Pentagon of 2 March, the core objectives of Operation Epic Fury were centred on degrading Iranian military capabilities, particularly related to the missile arsenal, and Iran’s ability, by extension, to project power outside of its borders.⁹ Among the other capabilities that enable Iran to project power outside of its borders is a network of non-state actors and militia forces that Iran has created and sustained over the years, including Hamas and Hezbollah. The military capabilities of Hamas and Hezbollah, even though greatly diminished by Israel in the recent Gaza war, can be revived.

Regime change in Iran is another political objective which President Trump and other officials of the US administration have publicly articulated. Trump has urged Iranians “to seize the opportunity and take over their government”.¹⁰ President Trump has also linked the issue of nuclear non-proliferation with regime change. In his comments following the initiation of strikes on 28 February, he made it clear that a key objective of the strikes is counter-proliferation through regime change.¹¹

Unlike the US, which views the ongoing war as a result of Iran’s adversarial actions over the last 47 years, Israel sees the war as an opportunity to reset West Asia following the events of 7 October 2023. Israel wants to defeat and destroy any military forces capable of challenging it, including Iran.¹² Israel shares all the political objectives articulated by the US, but there are issues of divergence between the US and Israeli interests. The US has extensive political, diplomatic, and economic relationships with the countries in the region. If the war is protracted, it may begin to harm US interests in the region and affect the global economy. President Trump

⁷ Sanam Vakil et al., [“US and Israel Attack Iran, Urging Regime Change. Tehran Launches Counterstrikes: Early Analysis from Chatham House Experts”](#), Chatham House, 1 March 2026.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Joseph Trevithick, Thomas Newdick and Howard Altman, [“War With Iran Now In Its Third Day”](#), no. 3.

¹⁰ Emanuel Fabian and Jacob Magid, [“US and Israel Launch Major Joint Assault on Iran; Trump Indicates Goal is to Topple Regime”](#), *The Times of Israel*, 28 February 2026.

¹¹ Darya Dolzikova and Matthew Savill, [“US and Israeli Strikes on Iran: Military and Nuclear Proliferation Analyses”](#), RUSI, 28 February 2026.

¹² Abid Hussai, [“What is Trump’s Endgame in Iran as the US-Israel War Escalates?”](#), *Aljazeera*, 9 March 2026.

is also constrained by the fact that he may not like to deploy ‘boots on the ground’, aligning with his policy of shunning ‘forever wars’. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, on the other hand, may view this war as an opportunity to tide over his domestic political challenges.¹³ It would be in his interest to prolong the war, thereby retaining the support of Israeli citizens who have reposed their faith in his wartime leadership.¹⁴

Military Objectives of War

Political objectives define the overarching goals of a war, while military objectives are specific, achievable tasks designed to support them. In his press brief of 2 March, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Dan Caine told reporters that the US military’s objectives are to protect and defend the US, and together with the regional partners, “prevent Iran from acquiring the ability to project power outside of its borders and be ready for follow-on actions as appropriate”.¹⁵ Chief Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell has listed the military objectives—destroy Iran’s nuclear missile capability, eliminate its navy, stop its terrorist proxies from destabilising the world, and stop the regime from deploying roadside bombs.¹⁶ In support of the military objectives, the combined US and Israeli force has targeted “nuclear facilities, ballistic missile infrastructure and radar installations, alongside specific strikes on leadership compounds and elements of Iran’s military command structure”.¹⁷ The target list of US CENTCOM includes—“Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) command-and-control facilities, air defence capabilities, missile and drone launch sites, and military airfields”.¹⁸

Combined Forces’ Campaign Plan and Targeting of the Defence Industry

The US–IDF operations against Iran, launched on 28 February, commenced as a pre-emptive multi-phase air campaign to achieve political and military objectives stated elsewhere in this brief. The campaign plan rests on two pillars, with resource allocation following a dynamic approach contingent on the progress of operations

¹³ Ori Goldberg, [“US and Israeli Interests May Soon Diverge on Iran”](#), *Aljazeera*, 2 March 2026.

¹⁴ Israelis prefer Netanyahu over other PM candidates, but don't trust his intentions. See [“Less Than a Third of Israelis Say Country Won the War Against Hamas in Gaza, Poll Finds”](#), *The Times of Israel*, 30 January 2026.

¹⁵ As stated by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Dan Caine in his press brief. See Ashley Roque, [“Caine: US Objective is to Keep Iran from Projecting Power Outside Own Borders”](#), no. 2.

¹⁶ Dustin Volz, Alexander Ward and Lara Seligma, [“Trump’s Case for War With Iran Faces Growing Scrutiny”](#), *The Washington Post*, 2 March 2026.

¹⁷ Sanam Vakil et al., [“US and Israel Attack Iran, Urging Regime Change. Tehran Launches Counterstrikes: Early Analysis from Chatham House Experts”](#), no. 7.

¹⁸ Hafsa Khaliland and David Gritten, [“What We Know So Far: Supreme Leader Khamenei Killed, as Iran Launches Retaliatory Strikes”](#), *BBC*, 1 March 2026.

and Iranian response. The first pillar ensures suppression of Iranian air defences, decapitating its command and control, and limiting its ability to retaliate with ballistic missiles, drones and naval assets. The forces have also targeted Iran’s nuclear facilities, besides militias and non-state actors created and supported by Iran. The second pillar ensures long-term weakening of Iran’s military capability by targeting Iranian defence industrial assets, especially missile and drone production facilities.

The campaign plan has five prongs to achieve the stated objectives:¹⁹

Suppression of Iranian Air Defences

The suppression of Iranian air defence is essential from the perspective of combined forces to achieve air-superiority over the designated areas—Western Iran, over Tehran, and subsequently expanding to Eastern Iran. It involves dismantling Iranian air defence systems and missile launchers.

Degrading Iranian Retaliatory Capability

It is important from the standpoint of Western powers that Iranian retaliatory capability is degraded and destroyed. The combined forces have been targeting Iran’s ballistic missile launchers and missile bases, which likely include missile stockpiles, from the first day of its air campaign. The forces have also been targeting Iranian naval assets to prevent them from disrupting international shipping and attacking US and Israeli naval assets.

Disrupting Iranian Command-and-Control

The combined forces have conducted decapitation strikes against Iran’s political and military leadership since the commencement of the campaign. The forces are targeting leadership's past, present and future to disrupt the command and control and achieve the larger aim of regime change. In this regard, multiple senior Iranian officials have been neutralised, including Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

Targeting of Iran’s Internal Security Apparatus

As part of a campaign to bring about regime change, the US and Israel have been targeting Law Enforcement Command (LEC) headquarters, Basij Organisation, responsible for civil defence and social control, and the Fatehin Battalions, responsible for the crackdown on Iranian protests.

Targeting Iran’s Defence Industrial Base

Weakening Iran’s defence industry advances US and Israeli strategic goals by undermining Iran’s ability to sustain power projection and fuels conditions that contribute to regime fragility. Destruction of Iran's defence industry directly supports

¹⁹ For details, see “[Iran Update Evening Special Report, February 28, 2026](#)”, ISW, 28 February 2026.

the US and Israel’s political and military objectives by crippling Iran’s long-term ability to project power while fostering conditions which destabilise the regime.

Alignment with Political Objectives

Weakening the country’s industrial backbone directly undermines the IRGC’s combat readiness and erodes regime legitimacy and economic resilience, thereby increasing pressure for regime change.

Alignment with Military Objectives

The combined force prioritised Iran’s defence industrial complex to impede its ability to sustain a protracted war by disrupting the production and innovation pipeline. Targeting these sites prevents Iran from replenishing expended missiles, rockets and ammunition and forces it to rely on a finite stockpile. The targeting of defence industries also diminishes Iran’s retaliatory capacity to hurt the US and Israeli forces, infrastructure, and other interests. US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth noted during a Pentagon briefing on 10 March that “Iran had fired its lowest number of missiles since the war began over the last 24 hours”.²⁰ The decrease in missile firings is indicative of the success of the air campaign and of a decline in Iran’s industrial production capacity. It is also likely that Iran may be conserving its limited stockpile for a protracted war. Still, the degradation of its defence industries will have a long-term negative impact on Iran’s fighting capability.

The combined force conducted nearly 900 strikes in the first 12 hours of the campaign, according to a US official speaking to *Fox News*. What is, however, striking is the division of responsibilities between the two forces. The US forces focused on Iran’s missile launchers and missile programme, while Israeli strikes targeted senior Iranian officials and the missile programme.²¹ Targeting of Iran’s missile programme by both the US and Israel is indicative of the seriousness attached to the destruction of the Iranian defence industry.

The table below compiles information on the strikes on Iran’s defence-industrial complex in the first week of the war. The information has been extracted from the daily update being published by The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and the Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute.

Ser No	Date	Targets
1.	28 February	(a) IDF issued an evacuation order for an industrial park near Esfahan City. (b) Kimia Part Sivan Company, a drone production arm of the IRGC Quds Force. Kimia Part Sivan Company

²⁰ [“Iran Update Morning Special Report, March 10, 2026”](#), ISW, 12 March 2026.

²¹ [“Iran Update Evening Special Report, February 28, 2026”](#), no. 19.

		<p>has reportedly worked with the Shahed Aviation Industries Research Centre to produce engine and navigation components for Iranian drones.</p> <p>(c) Unspecified defence industrial site in Shiraz, Fars Province.</p> <p>(d) Khairabad Industrial Town near Arak, Markazi Province. The industrial town houses multiple metal manufacturing companies.</p> <p>(e) Sahand University of Technology in Tabriz, East Azerbaijan Province.</p>
2.	1 March	No information.
	2 March	<p>(a) Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industrial Company in Shahin Shahr, Esfahan Province, which manufactures Ababil- and Shahed-series drones.</p> <p>(b) Malek Ashtar University Aerospace Complex in Tehran, responsible for designing aircraft for the IRGC.</p> <p>(c) Shahid Rajaei University, which previously housed the Iranian Organisation of Defensive Innovation and Research (SPND) headquarters.</p> <p>(d) Defence Industries Organisation (DIO). The DIO is a subsidiary of the Iranian Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics (MODAFL) and is heavily involved in Iran’s missile and nuclear programmes.</p>
3.	3 March	<p>(a) IDF issued an evacuation order for the Hakimiyeh Industrial Zone in northwestern Tehran and the Esteghlal Industrial Zone in western Tehran. The evacuation zone includes the University of Applied Science and a Farda Motors facility.</p> <p>(b) Esfahan Optics Industry in Esfahan. It is a subsidiary of Iran Electronic Industries, which operates under the Defence and Armed Forces Logistics Ministry and participates in the development of Shahed-129 drones for Iran’s Shahed Aviation Industries Research Centre.</p> <p>(c) IRGC-affiliated helicopter manufacturing facility in Karaj, Alborz Province.</p> <p>(d) Underground manufacturing facility for advanced munitions, including drones and missiles, at the Parchin Military Complex southeast of Tehran.</p> <p>(e) Several facilities in Tehran that manufacture components for ballistic missiles.</p> <p>(f) Chemical plant that produces missile components west of Tehran in Garmdareh, Alborz Province.</p>

		<p>(g) IRGC-affiliated facility that processes ammonium perchlorate raw materials for solid-fuel missiles in Shahr-e Jadid-e Parand, southwest of Tehran.</p> <p>(h) Combined force struck the Shiraz Electronics Industries (SEI) Zone in Fars Province at least 13 times till 6 March. SEI produces military electronics for radars, avionics and missile guidance components.</p>
4.	4 March	<p>(a) Two buildings at the Khojir Missile Production Complex in Hajarabad, Tehran Province. The Khojir complex is a research, development and manufacturing facility for solid- and liquid-fuel missiles.</p> <p>(b) Novin Sazan Industrial Group, Ghazanfar Roknabadi Industries, Baharestan Industrial Town, and Hakimiyah Industrial Zone.</p> <p>(c) IRGC Ground Forces Research and Self-Sufficiency Jihad Organisation, responsible for the research and development of ballistic missiles.</p> <p>(d) Combined force struck the Parchin Military Complex east of Tehran for the second time.</p> <p>(e) Raja Shimi Industries plant in Tehran Province, likely involved in propellant production for missiles.</p>
5.	5 March	<p>(a) IDF issued an evacuation warning for the Abbas Abad Industrial Zone and Shenzar Industrial Zone in Pakdasht, Tehran Province. The industrial zone houses Asre Sanat Eshragh Company, which has procured aluminium alloy products used by Iran Electronics Industries (IEI) and the Iran Aviation Industries Organisation (IAIO), involved in Iranian military and missile programmes.</p> <p>(b) Destruction of two to three solid propellant production facilities at Parchin Military Complex.</p> <p>(c) Shahroud Missile Facility in Semnan Province used for the development, test and launch of solid-propellant missiles. The facility is also used for mixing and casting missile engines and warheads, as well as for a launch area.</p>
6.	6 March	<p>(a) Shokouhiyeh Industrial Zone in Qom, which hosts companies linked to Iran’s defence industrial base, including drone production networks.</p> <p>(b) Esteghlal Industrial Zone in Tehran, which also hosts companies like Azmoon Pajohan Hesgar LLC.</p> <p>(c) Ammunition production facility and an ammunition depot in Tehran and Fars provinces</p>

The combined force of the US and Israel has targeted Iran’s university, research and development centres, manufacturing units and testing facilities. In short, the US and Israel are destroying Iran’s defence industrial ecosystem. Iran’s defence-industrial complex has been hit from the first day of the war. However, in the initial days, the focus of operations was to suppress Iranian air defence, decapitate its command and control, and limit its ability to retaliate with ballistic missiles and drones. Having achieved air dominance over Tehran and western Iran and thereafter gradually expanding towards the eastern part of the country, the combined forces intensified their targeting of Iranian defence-industrial assets, especially missile production facilities. This aspect was underscored in the press briefings on 5 March by US CENTCOM Commander Admiral Brad Cooper and the Secretary of Defence, Pete Hegseth, for US forces. It was echoed by Israeli Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir, who announced Israel is transitioning to the “next stage” of the campaign, targeting other unspecified Iranian military capabilities and the Iranian “regime’s foundations”,²² implying Iran’s defence industries.

Lessons for India

India’s defence industries are largely concentrated in Bangalore, Hyderabad, Nasik, and the two upcoming defence industrial corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, as well as at coastal ports. These industries, along with research laboratories, testing facilities, and similar entities, will, in all probability, be designated as priority targets by the adversary in any future wars. The ongoing war has exposed the vulnerability of the defence industrial ecosystem and the need to provide necessary protection to ensure a resilient supply chain during wars and conflicts.

Defence companies and other ancillaries will understandably prioritise economic, industrial, and perhaps even political considerations while selecting the location and planning the layout of the complexes. However, these must be overlaid with security considerations to ensure the necessary safety of infrastructure, protection of the workforce, and an environment that enables uninterrupted operation of production lines during times of war. This would require the attention of the government at the highest level. A nodal agency may be created within the Ministry of Defence, responsible for planning and drafting laws and guidelines, and for executing industry policies. Some of the issues that require deliberation in this regard are as follows:

Air Defence

On 15 August 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced Mission Sudarshan Chakra, India’s ‘Shield and Sword’, to be achieved by 2035. The project aims to

²² [“Iran Update Evening Special Report, March 5, 2026”](#), ISW, 6 March 2026.

provide ballistic missile defence, air defence, and aerial offensive capabilities which can counter advanced, complex, large-scale, and mixed aerial threats using a unified strategy.²³ The protection of India’s defence industrial ecosystem must be incorporated into the design architecture of Mission Sudarshan Chakra from the project's inception. Active defence of these nodes will be the single-most important factor in protecting defence industries. Active defence would involve a networked, layered system integrating sensors, interceptors and command nodes to detect, track and neutralise serial threats such as drones, missiles and aircraft before impact. In addition to standoff strike operations, operations such as the SPIDER’S WEB and RISING LION have exposed the vulnerabilities of static targets to unmanned systems launched from the proximity of the targets by special forces and non-state actors. The industries would also need to take pre-emptive actions to prevent sabotage by their employees, who adversaries may have subverted.

Defence Industry

Some of the issues the defence industry may consider when siting and building manufacturing and ancillary hubs are outlined below. The recommendations are generic, and industry would be well advised to hire professional consultancy firms with a proven track record of understanding military security issues that overlap with industrial engineering and management. Industry would have to balance military security issues with business practices to plan layout, workflows and infrastructure. The ongoing war has highlighted that industrial engineering, which addresses facility layout, material flow and efficiency, and industrial management, which oversees construction, resource allocation and the scalability of manufacturing hubs, cannot be planned in isolation. Military security will form an essential factor in the siting of defence industries.

Dispersal and Hardening of Industrial Complexes

The recent wars have reinforced the need to disperse and harden production hubs. There is a need for a nodal agency within the Ministry of Defence to issue guidelines on the dispersal and hardening of production facilities across nodes. Industries manufacturing similar products would need to be located at different nodes. Within each node, the manufacturing units must be sufficiently dispersed so that they are not destroyed in a single strike. Manufacturing units handling flammable materials will need additional precautions and security measures.

Manufacturing units can be hardened using passive structural reinforcements to shield production lines, raw materials, finished products and workers, thereby

²³ Sukhbir Kaur Minhas, “[Mission Sudarshan Chakra and the India-Israel Special Strategic Partnership](#)”, Issue Brief, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), 6 March 2026.

ensuring uninterrupted wartime supplies. Companies can consider graded reinforcement, with the most critical areas protected by steel-reinforced concrete domes capable of resisting 500-kg bombs or more. Blast walls around perimeters and drone nets over vents and roofs are some other measures which may be considered. Camouflaging with nets, fake roofs and dummy buildings can complicate targeting for the adversary. Underground bunkers may be considered for the workforce. A skilled workforce is the most critical asset of any industry and is nearly irreplaceable in times of war. Some sensitive and critical commodities might even require bunkers equipped with nuclear, biological and chemical filtration systems.

In addition, there will be a need to rebuild damaged structures during wars, for which modular prefabricated sections with power generation and other necessary facilities must be provided ab initio. Companies that rely on an import-dependent critical supply chain must consider stocking reserves in protected shelters with automated conveyor tunnels and linking sites into their production line designs. The finished products would need to be moved from these locations as soon as possible. The government must plan a multimodal transport system in these defence corridors, and hubs with rail links, airstrips and helipads, to enable rapid distribution of goods.

India's defence industries are no doubt being studied and war-gamed as targets by India's adversaries. Field Marshal Asim Munir has indicated this in a speech at a formal dinner in Tampa, Florida, when he threatened to target Reliance Industries Limited's refinery at Jamnagar in Gujarat in the event of any future military conflict with India, thereby indicating, for the first time, the intent to hit India's economic assets.²⁴ The measures listed above may be considered lavish, extravagant and even wasteful by companies because their performance is judged by balance sheets. But then, defence industries are not ordinary industries. A nation's security is tied to the security of its defence industries.

²⁴ [**“Pakistan Army Chief Asim Munir Threatens to Target RIL's Jamnagar Refinery”**](#), *The Times of India*, 13 August 2025.

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