

# MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

*Reflections for Singapore*



# 1. BACKGROUND



# US AND ISRAEL ATTACK IRAN

- On 28 Feb 2026, the United States (US) and Israel initiated a coordinated military campaign against Iran, with extensive air and missile strikes against key targets.



# IRAN'S RESPONSE

## *Retaliatory Attacks*

- In response, Iran launched **missile and drone attacks** against **US and Israel military bases** across the Gulf states.

## *Disruption to Strait of Hormuz*

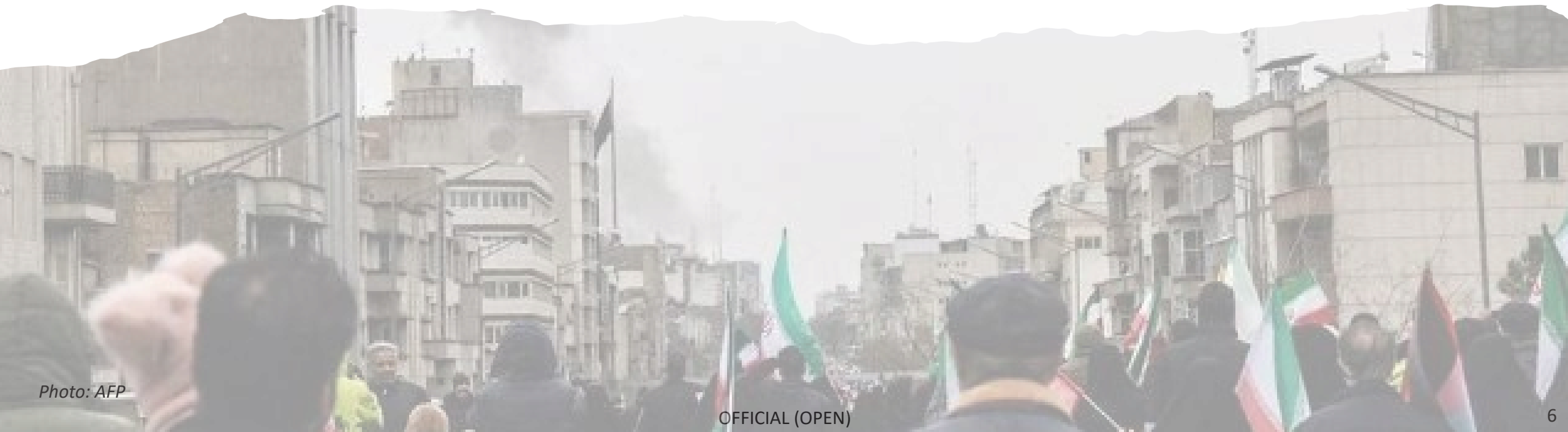
- Iran sits above the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic waterway that is the world's busiest oil shipping channel and a vital route for exports and other commodities from the Gulf.
- Iran has targeted tankers serving the US and its allies in the region through a range of tactics, including signal jamming, drone strikes, naval mines, and missile attacks.
- **Maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has significantly decreased** since the strikes.
- This chokehold has sent **global oil prices soaring**, with the **bottleneck disrupting energy supplies, spiking shipping costs, and creating severe global economic shocks.**



## 2. SINGAPORE'S POSITION

# SINGAPORE IS DEEPLY CONCERNED BY THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT AND ESCALATING TENSIONS IN THE REGION.

- We watch with heavy hearts as civilians bear the devastating cost of the conflict, including the loss of lives, homes, and safety.
- Our thoughts and prayers are with innocent civilians, especially children, the elderly, and families living in fear amid the violence.



# WE CALL FOR DE-ESCALATION & RETURN TO DIPLOMACY.

- **Singapore regrets the failure of negotiations** that has resulted in strikes by the US and Israel on Iran, and the escalation to a regional conflict following Iran's widespread retaliatory attacks, including those against non-combatant countries.
- **Singapore urges all parties to:**
  - **Return to negotiations to achieve a peaceful resolution** as soon as possible, in accordance with international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter.
  - **Prioritise the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure.**



His Highness  
Sheikh Tamim Bin  
Hamad Al Thani  
Qatar Emir

*Photos: PM Lawrence Wong's Instagram*



His Highness  
Sheikh Mohamed Bin  
Zayed Al Nahyan  
UAE President

# OUR PRIORITY IS THE SAFETY & SECURITY OF SINGAPOREANS IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

Officers from various government agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence, worked tirelessly to bring Singaporeans and their dependents home from the Middle East – from chartering commercial flights to deploying the Republic of Singapore Air Force's (RSAF) A330 Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT).

*The RSAF's MRTT arriving at Changl Airport T2 on 11 Mar 2026, after the repatriation flight from Riyadh.*

*Photo: PIONEER Facebook*



### **3. IMPACT ON SINGAPORE**

- I. Singapore must be prepared in an increasingly volatile and uncertain world.**
- II. We are well-positioned to navigate challenges.**
- III. The SAF remains vigilant and stands ready for Singapore and Singaporeans.**
- IV. We must be prepared and look out for one another in the uncertain times ahead.**

# I. SINGAPORE MUST BE PREPARED IN AN INCREASINGLY VOLATILE AND UNCERTAIN WORLD

- The Middle East conflict and failure of negotiations reflect the **broader breakdown of the rules-based world order**. The risk of war and conflict has risen.
- The global economic system is also under threat. The disruption of global supply chains, energy markets, and shipping routes has **far-reaching impact on multiple areas**, including travel, aviation, logistics, and the wider business environment.
- As a highly open and trade-dependent economy, **Singapore is particularly vulnerable to such external shocks**.
- Amid rising global tensions and conflicts, **we must be prepared for a world where such disruptions become increasingly frequent**.



# I. SINGAPORE MUST BE PREPARED IN AN INCREASINGLY VOLATILE AND UNCERTAIN WORLD

- As global power dynamics shift, Singapore may face more pressures. However, our **national interests remain non-negotiable**:
  - Protecting our **independence** and **access to essential supplies**
  - **Standing up for international law**
  - Maintaining our role as a **trusted, reliable hub**
- In this uncertain world, upholding principles and being consistent becomes even more critical. Singapore must **remain guided by our values and national interests** while **working with like-minded partners** where we can have common cause.
  - In response to a parliamentary question on whether Singapore would engage Iran or consider paying a toll for its vessels to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, Foreign Affairs Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said that **Singapore would not do so as it would undermine fundamental principles of international law.**

Photo: MFA website

**Our core national interest is to safeguard Singapore's independence, survival and relevance.**

We must advocate for a **rules-based order** and respect for **international law**. It is the only way small states survive.

We must **build ties** with as many partners as possible, and **stay engaged** with the international community.

We must be a **credible and honest** partner, but one that is firm in the face of pressure.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY 2024

## II. WE ARE WELL-POSITIONED TO NAVIGATE CHALLENGES

- Singapore's **energy supply remains secure** despite rising oil and gas prices caused by the Middle East conflict. We have multiple lines of defence to safeguard energy supply, including:
  - **Diversification** across global sources and fuel types
  - Fuel **stockpiles**
  - Turbines and power plants that can **run on both gas and diesel**
  - **Exploration of alternatives** such as solar power and potential low-carbon solutions
- The government also has **measures to support households and businesses.**
- The government will continue to work closely with the industry to ensure continued and reliable electricity supply for households and businesses. However, in the event that this conflict is prolonged or there is further serious damage to energy production capacity, we cannot rule out the possibility of fuel shortages here. **Everyone has a part to play in energy conservation.**

Oil prices surge as Kharg attack raises stakes in Middle East conflict

SG businesses brace for higher energy costs, supply chain woes: US-Israel-Iran conflict

Singapore GasCo to buy more LNG cargoes if needed, says EMA, as global energy concerns rise

*An oil refinery in Singapore.  
Photo: budak, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0*

## II. WE ARE WELL-POSITIONED TO NAVIGATE CHALLENGES

- A **whole-of-government coordinated response** mounted Singapore's largest repatriation effort since COVID-19.
- The **swift deployment** of the RSAF's MRTT brought Singaporeans and their dependants home from Saudi Arabia. This demonstrates the **SAF's operational readiness and robust capabilities** consistently built up over the years.
- We also rendered assistance to foreign nationals, underscoring **reciprocity and enduring ties with our international partners.**



Many thanks for sharing your experience with us. I teared reading it. I feel proud to be a singaporean. Kudos to the RSAF servicemen and leaders who have made the right call.

5d Like Reply

107

View 1 reply

The crucial time when u expect the support and someone actually showed up. Mindef MFA RSAF ..Singapore 🇸🇬 did for us in Doha. I can't believe how smooth the how process was and we need not worry about anything. I'm single and am independent but I saw how the families and elderly were well taken care of. I feel so proud as a Singaporean 🥰

5d Like Reply

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# Letter from an appreciative Singaporean

Article: ST Forum

Letter of the day

## What ‘Welcome home’ meant to S’porean on RSAF evacuation flight

“Welcome home.” These two words were spoken by a Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) serviceman as my family boarded an evacuation aircraft in Riyadh that would take us safely back to Singapore.

We had not even taken off yet, but passengers looked around quietly, some smiling. Others wiped away tears.

When the aircraft lifted off,

applause broke out. Then someone began singing Majulah Singapura, and others joined in.

The moment made me realise that home is not simply a place on a map but a shared identity, and the reassurance that when circumstances turn uncertain, your country will come for you.

My family and I had been living in Doha, where I worked. Just days earlier, we were sheltering at our home there during the missile attacks across the Gulf region.

Living through those moments

was deeply unsettling.

Commercial flight options were uncertain due to airspace closures. But eventually, the Singapore Embassy contacted us and advised Singaporeans in the area to prepare to leave.

Standing at the foot of that RSAF aircraft in Riyadh was a moment I will never forget.

Our soldiers had flown thousands of kilometres into an uncertain region to take Singaporeans home. They greeted each passenger calmly, served



Mr Nisar Keshvani with his wife and children before boarding the RSAF evacuation flight from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. PHOTO: COURTESY OF NISAR KESHVANI

meals and checked on families throughout the journey. It is a side of military service that is rarely visible to the public.

My wife captured the moment best. When the servicemen greeted passengers, she said: “When they said ‘Welcome home’,

you already felt like you were home.” She admitted she still felt a brief moment of fear knowing the aircraft would be flying through uncertain airspace. “But when the pilot said it was an honour to take us home,” she said, “that was the moment I felt safe.”

We are deeply grateful to the Singapore Government, Ambassadors S. Premjith (Riyadh) and Pong Kok Tian (Doha), and the embassy teams who remained composed, met us personally and ensured we were cared for during a difficult journey home.

For Singaporeans who have grown up in stability, it is easy to assume peace is permanent. But even a brief experience in a conflict zone reminds us how fragile peace can be. Peace exists because generations before us built strong institutions, careful diplomacy and a national ethos of responsibility. Singapore’s tradition of national service and preparedness reflects this understanding – that safeguarding our people requires foresight, discipline and the willingness to serve when duty calls.

The words “Welcome home” that night were more than a greeting. They were a reminder that Singapore’s greatest strength lies not only in its prosperity or global connections, but also in its commitment to look after its people wherever they may be.

**Nisar Keshvani**

# III. THE SAF REMAINS VIGILANT AND STANDS READY FOR SINGAPORE AND SINGAPOREANS

- The Middle East conflict and global events are stark reminders that **peace is not a given**, and defending our sovereignty and way of life falls on a **strong and capable SAF**.
- **Every SAF personnel must continue to be vigilant and ready to respond to the call of duty when called upon.**
- As modern warfare evolves across multiple domains (including the cyber and information domains), the SAF will continue to **adapt to a changing security environment** and **modernise its capabilities** to tackle emerging threats.



# IV. WE MUST BE PREPARED AND LOOK OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER IN THE UNCERTAIN TIMES AHEAD



- The **global environment is getting more volatile and unpredictable**. We are seeing more crises – wars, geopolitical tensions, and economic shocks.
- These events can escalate quickly, so **Singapore must stay alert, flexible, united, and ready to adjust** as new realities emerge.
- In times like these, the information space can be exploited to spread disinformation and sow division along socio-economic, racial, and religious lines or seed distrust in national institutions. We must **remain discerning when consuming information online**.
- As Singapore braces for the economic fallout during this prolonged period of instability, **let us be a “We First” society**.

*Illustration: CNA/Nurjannah Suhaimi*



# REFLECTION

**1**

While other countries may face difficulty repatriating their citizens, what does it say about Singapore – our standing, friendships, and networks – that we could fly our aircraft into conflict zones and bring Singaporeans home?

**2**

In these challenging times, how can we continue to play our part as Singaporeans to stay prepared for crises and disruptions?

**3**

How do we maintain social harmony and mutual respect within our community, even as we hold different views on external events that may spark strong emotions?

# THANK YOU

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