

THE EURASIAN FRACTURE

The February 2026 Operation and Türkiye's Geoeconomic Threshold

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Certain dates in the international system leave their mark not only on calendar pages but in the structural memory of power balances. The coordinated air operation carried out by the United States and Israel against Iran in February 2026 stands as such a threshold moment. The operation not only disrupted the balance of power in the Middle East; it also tested the real capacity of the Russia–Iran–China alignment that has become increasingly visible over the past decade.

For a long time, this trilateral configuration was interpreted as an alternative axis of solidarity against the Western sanctions' regime. Energy trade arrangements, attempts to conduct transactions in local currencies, and diplomatic coordination across multilateral platforms formed the visible surface of this rapprochement. Yet when open conflict began, the distance between rhetoric and institutional capacity became evident. Russia's limited military maneuverability due to the war in Ukraine, combined with China's reluctance to engage directly in a confrontation that could jeopardize its global trade integration, effectively left Iran isolated. This outcome exposed the limited capacity of the Eurasian axis to generate collective security.

The February 2026 Operation is therefore not merely a military intervention; it is a test that reveals the structural limits of the Eurasian order narrative.

Iran's Weakening and the Strain on the Chain

Iran represents the geographic and strategic hinge of the trilateral structure. Its access to the Persian Gulf, its potential leverage over the Strait of Hormuz, its land corridors extending from Central Asia to the Mediterranean, and its role within Russia's southern projection of influence place it in a central position within the system. For China, Iran constitutes a critical link in both energy security and the West Asian segment of the Belt and Road Initiative.

With the outbreak of war, however, the pressure on Iran's military and economic capacities created tension at the midpoint of the chain. Russia's unwillingness to provide explicit security guarantees and China's preference for diplomatic balancing language demonstrated the limited degree of strategic integration within the trilateral structure. This situation suggests that the concept of a coherent "bloc" may have been analytically overstated. The Eurasian triangle does not function as a NATO-like binding security system; rather, it operates as a flexible, interest-based coordination arena.

The war's impact on energy markets has made this strain more visible. Heightened risk perceptions around the Strait of Hormuz have generated oil price volatility and rising shipping costs. For Russia, which is heavily dependent on energy revenues, short-term price increases may generate income, but medium-term demand contraction and insurance risks undermine sustainability. For China, supply security costs are rising. This geoeconomic pressure tests the resilience of the Eurasian chain.

The Shanghai Illusion and the Problem of Institutional Depth

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization¹, established in 2001, initially took shape around border security and counterterrorism concerns and gradually evolved into an economic and diplomatic platform. However, the organization has never developed a binding military intervention capacity. There is no collective defense clause among its members, and decision-making operates on a slow, consensus-based mechanism. Implicit leadership competition between China and Russia, along with divergent strategic priorities among member states, limits institutional depth.

The February 2026 Operation exposed these structural constraints. While Iran's full membership carried symbolic importance, the absence of a collective security response during crisis demonstrated the organization's limited capacity to produce an alternative security architecture. This dynamic turns the "Shanghai illusion" into an analytical concept: a normative claim to systemic alternative status, but limited solidarity in moments of crisis.

Türkiye's Narrowing Strategic Space

In recent years, Türkiye has intensified its engagement with Eurasian platforms in an effort to generate diplomatic flexibility. NATO membership, economic integration with the European Union, and dependence on the Western financial system have continued, while relations with the Shanghai axis have been treated as a maneuvering space. In peacetime, such a strategy might have produced a certain degree of leverage. In conditions of active conflict, however, gray zones contract.

Türkiye's dependence on imported energy creates vulnerability, particularly in the face of oil price volatility. The Western-centered structure of its financial system implies exposure to secondary sanctions risks in the event of deeper engagement with Iran and Russia. Consequently, in the post-February 2026 period, Türkiye's primary challenge is no longer axis selection but vulnerability management.

¹ ***Institutional Limits of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization*** : The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was established in 2001 by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Initially structured around border security and counterterrorism cooperation, it later expanded with the inclusion of India, Pakistan, and Iran, broadening its agenda to encompass economic and diplomatic coordination. However, the organization does not possess a binding collective defense clause comparable to NATO. Its decision-making mechanism is based on consensus, and no formalized or automatic military intervention capacity has been institutionally defined. In the academic literature, the SCO is often characterized as a "normative balancing platform." In other words, it articulates an alternative discursive framework to the Western-centered security architecture, yet it does not function as a binding alliance providing automatic security guarantees. Latent leadership competition between China and Russia, combined with divergent strategic priorities among member states, constrains the organization's institutional depth. Consequently, in moments of crisis, the SCO's ability to generate collective military capacity remains significantly weaker than that of classical alliance structures.

At this point, the long-wave perspective becomes significant. If the post-2010 period is defined as K6²—a new technological wave shaped by artificial intelligence, biotechnology, clean energy, and digital infrastructure—then Türkiye’s future depends less on energy geopolitics and more on production capacity. While the Iran war risks pulling Türkiye back into a twentieth-century, security-centered equation, twenty-first-century competition increasingly unfolds along axes of institutional quality and productivity.

For this reason, the February 2026 Operation is not merely a military crisis; it is a geoeconomic warning for Türkiye. A multi-vector strategy that is not supported by strong institutions turns into pendular movement. And pendulums, in moments of crisis, produce violent swings.

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² **K6 (the Sixth Kondratieff Wave)** refers, within the long-wave literature, to the possible new productivity regime associated with the post-2010 period, one that has not yet been historically consolidated. According to Kondratieff’s hypothesis of approximately 40–60-year cycles and Schumpeter’s theory of innovation clusters, each long wave is structured around a dominant technological paradigm. In Perez’s framework, such paradigms unfold in two broad phases: an initial period of financial expansion and installation, followed by institutional adjustment and the diffusion of productivity gains.

The proposed technological core of K6 typically includes artificial intelligence, big data infrastructures, biotechnology, clean energy systems, semiconductor technologies, and the digital platform economy. However, a central warning of long-wave theory is that the durability of a new wave depends less on technological breakthroughs themselves than on institutional synchronization. In this sense, K6 is not merely a bundle of emerging technologies; it represents a potential productivity regime requiring simultaneous institutional restructuring in areas such as state capacity, educational reform, data governance, and energy transition. For that reason, K6 should be understood not as a historically completed phase but as an analytical hypothesis and a threshold concept.