

The Geopolitics of Kitchen Fire

Sabreen Ahmed March 28, 2026



The first sign of how the war in West Asia had impacted my home did not arrive through televised debates or social-media clips. It arrived instead as a sharply ringing doorbell at eight in the morning, followed immediately by a breathless apology.

My house help, Pooja, who usually enters silently so as not to disturb my son's nap, stood at the door visibly shaken. 'Didi, do you have an extra cylinder? I need one immediately,' she whispered, her voice trembling. Her husband had been waiting outside the gas agency near the Sonipat railway station since four a.m., only to be told when the sun rose that the delivery truck would not arrive.

Overnight, the much-discussed LPG shortage transformed from an abstract news story into an urgent crisis shaping her morning. Her distress was not simply logistical. It was the fear of slipping backward into a life her family had fought to leave behind a life of *chulah* smoke, unpredictable flames, *andaa* meals determined by fuel scarcity rather than appetite.

How West Asia's Conflict Travels Through the Strait of Hormuz into Indian Kitchens

India imports nearly 85–90 percent of its LPG from Gulf countries. When the conflict involving Iran, Israel, and the United States intensified, its impact rippled across one of the world's most vital maritime arteries the Strait of Hormuz.

With heightened military tensions and rising insurance costs, LPG carriers faced delays or rerouting. Delivery delays mounted, stockpiles tightened, and distribution agencies struggled to meet demand.

The government, under the [Essential Commodities Act](#) understandably prioritized domestic supply to protect households that nonetheless produced long queues, booking delays, and localized panic. A distant military escalation had now altered the basic rhythms of everyday cooking in northern India.

The Strait of Hormuz supplies almost 60 percent of India's cooking gas, meaning that when conflict disrupts its waters, the consequences enter homes like Pooja's before policymakers finish their press briefings.

For Pooja, the [Ujjwala connection](#) her family received years ago felt like a declaration of progress. '*Mujhe laga ab hum bhi aage badhenge,*' (I thought we will also progress in life) she once said. Yet now, with a booking gap stretched to twenty-five to forty-five days and black-market sellers demanding ₹3,000 per cylinder, she is back to scavenging for charcoal and pleading for borrowed fuel.

As she silently lit my PNG-powered stove that morning, her expression carried a truth India's energy debates often overlook: modernity is unevenly distributed. Families with access to PNG pipelines or induction cooktops can navigate shortages. Families like hers cannot.

The Quiet Shutdown of Local *Dhabas*

The same supply-chain breakdown that extinguished the flame in Pooja's kitchen also silenced the *tandoor* at the neighborhood *dhaba*. With domestic LPG prioritized, commercial cylinders became scarce or unaffordable.

Restaurants cut their menus, reduce staff, or shut down temporarily. This silence is more than an absence of sizzling tandoori *rotis*. It represents lost livelihoods for cooks, helpers, and delivery workers who depend on these small establishments.

Globalization is often portrayed as a network of opportunity through trade corridors, integrated markets, and economic aspirations. But the current crisis exposes globalization's other face: deep interdependence means deep vulnerability.

A single conflict in a faraway desert has blown out the fire in Indian kitchens. It highlights how dependent the country remains on external supply routes and how precarious energy security becomes when chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz falter.

It raises urgent questions about diversifying import routes, strengthening domestic infrastructure, expanding alternative fuel networks, and improving crisis-time safety nets.

As I drink my morning tea brewed by Pooja, the silence between us feels heavier. It is the silence of someone who knows her progress can be undone by events unfolding in a region she has never seen. In that silence lies the real lesson: geopolitics does not remain confined to borders or treaties.

It flows into households, kitchens, neighborhood eateries, and the lives of people whose stories rarely enter policy debates.

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