

US-Iran: avoiding military confrontation

Emily B. Landau / July 29, 2019

As the crunch of the Trump administration's maximum pressure campaign is being acutely felt by the regime in Iran, the Iranians have been lashing out in recent months—in the Persian Gulf and regarding their nuclear commitments according to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The actions of the regime have so far been measured, because their message is mainly to European powers. The Iranians want to scare the Europeans with hints of how bad the situation can get, to further distance them from the Americans and to push them to be more active in ensuring that sanctions are either successfully circumvented or lifted. So far, it seems clear that their provocations are not intended as a message to the United States that they are preparing for war.

Nevertheless, as has been repeated by virtually every commentator on the topic, the situation can inadvertently escalate to more serious military clashes in the Gulf. Therefore, while neither side desires war, the increasing tensions cannot be taken lightly.

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