

THE US-IRAN TENSIONS MAY SPIRAL OUT OF CONTROL

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

The tensions between Iran and the US have escalated over the past few days. On May 5, the US announced the deployment of an aircraft carrier strike group and a bomber task force to the US Central Command region to send “a clear and unmistakable message” to Tehran. Apparently, this was in response to intelligence showing that Iran was planning to target American forces in Iraq and other countries in the region. However, many observers suggest that the US was looking for an excuse to coerce the Iranian regime.

The fight started with the arrival of Donald Trump in the White House. At the outset, he made his dissatisfaction with the Iran nuclear deal — or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) negotiated between Iran, the US, the UK, France, Russia, China and Germany — very clear. Mr Trump had three problems with the deal: a) it did not restrict Iran’s ballistic missile programme; b) many of the restrictions had sunset clauses; and c) it did not put curbs on Iranian sponsorship of terrorist groups. In May last year, Mr Trump announced the US’ exit from the deal. While the European signatories are still sticking to the deal, the reimposition of American sanctions — Mr Trump imposed new ones on Wednesday — are taking a toll on the Iranian economy.

The Hassan Rouhani regime, which had gone out on a limb to sign the JCPOA, is facing tremendous internal pressure, especially from the hardliners. Now he has given an ultimatum of 60 days to the European signatories of the deal to save Iran from the debilitating impact of the sanctions. Failing that, Tehran would begin walking out of some of the commitments in the JCPOA, Mr Rouhani has warned. The US’ gamble is based on the assumption that its pressure would lead to a regime change. The risk is that a more hardline regime might come to power and double down on the nuclear weapons programme. While North Korea’s acquisition of the bomb has made us realise that isolated, sanctioned regimes can become nuclear weapons power, Iran’s journey won’t be easy. Unlike North Korea — which had China — Iran has no protection from any nuclear power. Both Israel and the US can threaten, or even execute, military strikes to damage any nascent weapons programme. Whatever happens, the action will happen too close to India for comfort.

First Published: May 10, 2019 07:48 IST

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com