

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نېاشد تن من مېباد بدین بوم و پر زنده یک تن مېباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

Salman Rafi Sheikh

15.04.2025

Why the US won't immediately attack Iran

Israel has spent the last three months actively trying to convince the Trump administration to “finish the job” of permanently neutralising Iran.



Even though President Trump has threatened military action, Washington is unlikely to attack Iran amidst the ongoing global trade war, its eagerness to improve ties with Moscow, with hopes for an ultimate Sino-Russia split, and a lack of support from the Arab world.

Amidst this massive turbulence, a war with Iran will hit the US as hard as it would hit Iran, at least economically

“Finish the Job”

Israel's push for “finishing the job” of neutralising Iran's nuclear programme has its roots in how it has conducted its genocidal war on Gaza. Israel's basic calculation is that, due to its successes against Hamas in Palestine, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and al-Asad in Syria, and due to Washington's recent strikes against the Houthis in Yemen, Iran has lost allies and is too weak to strike Israel back. At this stage, therefore, there is a good reason for Iran to boost its

nuclear programme to maintain deterrence. Feeding into this strategic calculation is also Iran's weak economic position, which, once again, is largely a function of US sanctions. Therefore, in order to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear power, Israel wants to neutralise such a possibility permanently. The Trump administration has threatened military action, with Donald Trump saying, "If they don't make a deal, there will be bombing ... It will be bombing the likes of which they have never seen before." Washington's rhetoric notwithstanding, a military attack on Iran is too big a "job" even for Washington at this stage to accomplish without paying a heavy cost and without making major policy compromises along several dimensions of national interest.

No "reverse Kissinger"

A key strategic aim of the Trump administration is to improve ties with Moscow to leave Beijing alone in the former's trade war with the latter. This goal has been described as "reverse Kissinger" in the US, a reference to the US National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger's success in the 1970s to establish US-China ties amid tense China-Soviet ties, thus deepening the split. Today, by seeking to improve ties with Russia via a peace deal on Ukraine, Washington is seeking to reintroduce the split. Only this time, China is the main target. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has called for the United States "to have a relationship" with Russia rather than let it "become completely dependent on" China.

While making Russia and China split is already nearly impossible for several reasons, an attack on Iran will permanently kill it (from Washington's perspective). Its reason is that both Moscow and Beijing have their several strategic interests intertwined with Iran. Moscow has already ruled out any possibility of an attack on Iran as "unacceptable", with Beijing also supporting calls for relying on diplomacy to resolve tensions. Beijing is particularly concerned because any war in the Middle East will shoot oil prices up, which will drastically impact its economy. This is particularly unaffordable for Beijing at this stage due to Washington's imposition of tariffs and the impact it will have on its economy. Thus, the mere threat of war has already allowed both Russia and China to come even closer, defying US hopes for an ultimate split.

Who will support a US war on Iran?

When Donald Trump recently imposed tariffs on 60 states worldwide, including its traditional allies in Europe and Asia, Washington ended up introducing a split with these nations on trade lines. Many states, including the EU and Japan, have not only called US actions unacceptable and unreasonable, but are preparing their countermeasures as well. France's Macron has proposed pausing EU investment in the US, indicating a trade split.

Japan and the EU also happen to have already announced their plans to become militarily autonomous, i.e., no longer predominantly relying on the US support for external defence, indicating a security split. In other words, in today's global scenario, Washington stands quite unlikely to find any major support from its allies for an attack on Iran.

Beyond the EU, the largest source of opposition against a war on Iran will come from the Arab states. There is little denying that a war on Iran will not be limited to Iran only. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar and Kuwait, therefore, have all told the US they will not permit their airspaces or territories to be used as a launchpad against Iran, including for refuelling and rescue operations, a senior US official told Middle East Eye. If Gulf states were to allow the US to use their airspace and military bases to attack Iran, they would become a party to the attack, which would expose them all to Iranian attacks. The war, in that sense, would spread beyond Iran, drastically affecting not only the entire Middle East but also the whole world (given that this war will have a major impact on the production and supply of oil, driving up oil prices massively and affecting the global economic health at a level difficult to imagine at this stage).

Domestic Implications

Higher oil prices mean inflation and recession overall. But this will especially be the case for the US. Trump's tariffs mean commodity prices are already going up in the US. Wall Street fell earlier in the week, immediately after Trump announced tariffs. With countries like China announcing their tariffs on US exports into their countries (Beijing has announced a 34% hike in tariff rates), the US imports worldwide will also be affected drastically. Amidst this massive turbulence, a war with Iran will hit the US as hard as it would hit Iran, at least economically. The mere imposition of tariffs has already wiped out US\$ 2 trillion in value from US stocks. Continuing down the path of self-destruction will only intensify domestic opposition against Trump as well, whose campaign promise was to 'Make America Great Again', not poorer and conflict-ridden internationally and domestically. A massive failure to deliver on his fiercely projected campaign promises will actually turn his ambition for a third term as US President into a joke.

Salman Rafi Sheikh, April 14, 2025

Salman Rafi Sheikh, research analyst of International Relations and Pakistan's foreign and domestic affairs.