

indigenous military capabilities, particularly in asymmetric warfare and anti-access strategies, have increasingly complicated traditional US power projection in the region. As a result, the United States has become more dependent on forward deployment, allied bases and coalition-based frameworks to preserve operational flexibility. The concentration of US naval assets in Bahrain underscores this reliance. Rather than operating freely from distant waters, American forces increasingly require regional infrastructure, logistical depth and sustained political cooperation from host governments. This dependence exposes underlying vulnerabilities and highlights the high costs of maintaining a


long-term military presence in an increasingly contested environment. The current US posture also carries a pronounced psychological and political dimension. Warships are not deployed solely as military assets but as tools of strategic communication. Their presence sends messages not only to Iran, but also to domestic audiences and international partners. It projects resolve, helps mask strategic uncertainty and buys time for diplomatic maneuvering. In this context, naval deployments function as instruments of signaling as much as instruments of force. Crucially, a heightened military presence does not automatically confer strategic advantage. Large naval platforms face growing ex-

posure in confined maritime spaces where advanced surveillance, missile systems and unmanned technologies can blunt traditional forms of superiority. The geography of the Persian Gulf itself limits maneuverability, turning sustained presence into a calculated risk rather than an unambiguous show of strength. Ultimately, the US military build-up in the Persian Gulf is best understood not as an assertion of uncontested power, but as an effort to manage declining strategic freedom. It reflects Washington's attempt to preserve influence in an environment where deterrence is increasingly mutual, escalation is costly, and miscalculation could produce consequences that extend well beyond the region.



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US seeks to press Iran into concessions without regime change



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West Asia is facing an exceptionally complex and sensitive moment, one that increasingly appears to be the most critical phase the region has experienced since the start of the 21st century. Tensions between Iran and the United States have escalated at such a pace that it has become difficult to predict what might unfold over the next 24 hours, the next few days, or even the coming week. What is unmistakable, however, is the scale and configuration of the US military build-up around Iran, alongside the tone and substance of Washington's political messaging. At the level of US leadership, particularly in statements and signals coming from President Donald Trump, a clear narrative has taken shape. That narrative revolves around two central assumptions about the region's immediate future. First, the United States appears intent on intensifying political and psychological pressure in order to force Iran, under its current conditions and with its existing political system intact, to accept US demands across multiple fronts, especially at the regional level. The expectation in Washington is that Tehran should comply with US terms without considerations, preconditions or counter-demands, with the implicit promise that such compliance would avert a US military strike. Second, the situation has entered what can best be described as a decision-making phase. This is not only a decisive moment for Iran, but also for the United States and for the wider international system. From Washington's point of view, decisions must be taken swiftly. US officials increasingly claim that Iran has failed to act in time and that decisions must therefore be imposed upon it. This approach, framed from a position of superiority and de-



The photo shows Iranian missiles on display at an exhibition in Tehran.
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livered in a directive manner, has significantly heightened the risks surrounding a potential military attack on Iran and has made such a scenario far more plausible than in the past. Should war erupt, it would not be limited or symbolic. The likelihood is a full-scale, wide-ranging military confrontation. Past experience suggests that when the United States enters a theatre where it has already established a military presence, it

does so at maximum capacity, deploying its full range of military power. Under these conditions, any conflict would pursue a combination of military, political and strategic objectives. What can be assessed with greater confidence is the pattern of US military positioning and, in parallel, the nature of Iran's official and media discourse. There are growing indications that Tehran itself now considers a military attack more likely than other scenarios. The current alignment of forces and rhetoric between Iran and the United States points less to diplomacy and more to a clear war posture. As military and security pres-

ures continue to mount across the region, the probability of armed confrontation rises accordingly, pushing conditions into territory far more severe than anything seen in recent years. At the core of this assessment lies a critical point: the US administration's approach toward Iran is fundamentally strike-oriented. From Washington's perspective, military action increasingly appears to be the last remaining lever of pressure, a conclusion reinforced by regional movements and deployments now playing out across West Asia. When these developments are compared with similar episodes



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in previous decades, the differences are stark. The scale, scope and nature of the current military arrangements around Iran are unprecedented. Historically, such configurations have rarely led to anything other than a full-scale conflict with long-term aims. In this sense, the present moment stands apart as highly exceptional. The United States, acting in coordination with its NATO allies and regional partners, appears to have accepted the risks inherent in a military strike on Iran. Another factor shaping the current landscape is the deeply painful episode Iran experienced between 8 and 10 January, when peaceful protests over economic hardship escalated into violence and bloodshed. Beyond their immediate human and social costs, these events produced a significant security outcome: they exposed the vulnerability of Iran's major and strategically important cities. The January unrest demonstrated how susceptible large metropolitan areas, major urban centers and even the capital Tehran itself can be under conditions of internal instability. Attention now turns to how the situation will evolve in the days ahead. What is clear is that Iran is likely to face a series of highly unusual and consequential political and security developments in the months to come, developments that may push the country from one phase into another.

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A Boeing F/A-18E Super Hornet lands on the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln in the Indian Ocean on January 22, 2026.
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