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## Warmongering on Iran

THE threats to Iran are being ramped up by the United States. Some sections of the Trump administration are beating the war drums and the threat of military hostilities against Iran is being ratcheted up.

The attack on two oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman on June 13 has become another pretext for targeting Iran. The Trump administration has been quick to hold Iran responsible for the attack. The US secretary of state, Mike Pompeo has blamed Iran “based on intelligence, the weapons used, and the level of expertise needed for the operation.”

However, there is strong suspicion that this was a false flag operation (ie, a covert operation meant to deceive and create the appearance that the responsibility for it lies with another party).The US has a long history of such false flag operations starting with the infamous Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964 which was used to begin military operations against North Vietnam.

It is unlikely that Iran would be involved in such an attack at a time when Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was visiting Tehran to explore whether talks could be held between the US and Iran. Furthermore, the tankers affected by the attack were transporting oil to Japan.

There are also grounds to believe that there might be other forces behind the attack, especially, since Israel and Saudi Arabia are keen to see the US launch a military attack on Iran.

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The Trump administration has been set on a course of collision with Iran. Trump had withdrawn from the nuclear deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which America had signed along with the other four permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany, with Iran during the Obama presidency in 2015. Though all the five other partners to the agreement and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had acknowledged that Iran was in compliance with the terms of the agreement, the US unilaterally withdrew and imposed sanctions on Iran. The main target of the sanctions is the Iran oil industry and its exports in order to cripple the Iranian economy.

The United States has also sent a nuclear powered aircraft carrier group to the Persian Gulf and stationed B 52 bombers at the Central Command airbase in Doha. After the attack on the tankers, an additional thousand troops have been sent to West Asia by the Pentagon.

Iran has refused to bow down to such threats and sanctions. It has given an ultimatum to the European partners to the agreement that they should act to protect the agreement and counter the sanctions within sixty days, failing which Iran would begin to lower its compliance of the terms of the agreement such as enrichment of nuclear fuel.

The unpredictability of the Trump administration's moves and the differing signals emanating from factions within the administration are lending a dangerous dimension to the threat of war in the West Asian region. National Security Advisor, John Bolton, is a declared opponent of Iran and a war mongerer. The Pentagon has been more restrained and circumspect about the prospect of hostilities with Iran. But the Trump administration has been blindly supporting Israel, whether it be on the annexation of the occupied territory of Golan Heights or legitimising the illegal settlements. Israel, which was opposed to the Iranian nuclear agreement, is openly egging on the Trump administration to start military operations against Iran. In this venture, it has the covert support of Saudi Arabia.

A military conflagration, centering Iran, will have disastrous consequences for the region. Iran is not Iraq or Syria. It has the resources both economic and military to fight any aggression by the US. If it blockades the Strait of Hormuz, a substantial part of the world's supply of oil would be choked off. Any military action against Iran will engulf the whole region in military conflict.

The Trump administration is solely responsible for creating such a perilous situation. It has torn up a perfectly good agreement with Iran and has set about creating provocations in this highly sensitive region.

The European allies of the United States, who are usually unable to stand up to the financial and military clout of America, should take a stand at least now in their own interests, to prevent another Iraq like military misadventure. Russia and China who have stood by Iran must also do everything to rally the European powers to jointly rein in US belligerence on Iran.

As for India, the Modi government for the sake of national interest, must tell US secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, when he visits Delhi next week that India opposes any aggressive move against Iran.

(June 18, 2019)