



**Center for Global & Strategic Studies  
Islamabad**

## **Prioritizing Pakistan's Maritime Agenda In US-Iran**

### **Escalation**



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It is a bitter truth that the United States of America has violated international law as well as moral norms by killing the in-service top rank military official of a sovereign nation. According to the latest news sources, Tehran has decided to abandon the 2015 nuclear deal which may be considered the beginning of the series of official retaliation responses. This would not stop here and things would likely go in a wrong direction due to which both U.S. and Iran will suffer in one way or the other way.

Earlier, Iran responded in a mature and responsible way when the President of the United States of America had withdrawn the U.S. from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the 8th of May 2018. The unilateral U.S. action was generally condemned by the European Union, Russia and China, and the majority of the international community. The JCPOA was the result of more than a decade of negotiations between Iran and the European Union, Germany and the five permanent members of UNSC. It was one of, if not the most important international agreements of the 21st century. It was a testament to ability of the current system of international governance to resolve a crisis peacefully.

The killing of Major General Qassem Soleimani is another immoral and unlawful act committed by the same U.S. President. A general consensus has been observed at the level of majority of relevant international multi-stakeholders and neutral opinion makers that the U.S. President committed a wrong act for which the Americans would have to pay for all kind of losses. The international reputé of America is badly affected due to this act which can be observed with the latest development in the region, transformational changes on diplomatic fronts and increased hate element for the U.S. at large. The current scenario depicts that this would not likely end at this stage as Iran is determined to avenge Soleimani which would further aggravate tension and unrest in the region and beyond. The red flag on Jamkaran Mosque is a clear sign of war. On the other hand, tweets of President Donald Trump are further stimulating the retaliation factors. It is pretty clear that U.S. wants to safeguard its interests which can be only possible by maintaining its global hegemony with the right to kill, kick or undermine anyone without taking care of any legal or moral obligation.

In the context, there are growing concerns regarding the functional aspects of Gwadar, CPEC and other trade through Hurmuz due to which maritime agenda of Pakistan would likely be at high risk if Pakistan commits anything unwisely. At the same time, there is alternate opinion that a lot of stakes of international community are present in this region due to which operational aspects of Hurmuz would be safeguarded. But, things would be uncontrolled if military actions enter into an endless or a level that is being projected by both sides. Then, this would also affect Pakistan's maritime interests and the situation could be further worsened if any imbalance act reflected by Pakistan.

Reiterating my concerns published by The Financial Daily International on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2017 regarding the challenges to Pakistan for the entry into another international obligation through "Islamabad Declaration and Vision 2025" - as a conclusion of the 13th ECO Summit. The ECO Vision 2025 underscored promotion of cooperation among member states and flagged up doubling intra-regional trade and promoting connectivity in a time of five years. At that time, among others, I also emphasized the importance of a good relationship between Pakistan and Iran for the success of ECO Vision. The ECO Vision will also complement the CPEC intervention and the maritime agenda of Pakistan. It was pretty good that Pakistan maintained a neutral position in a responsible way for the scenario emerged due to unilateral withdrawal of U.S. from JCPOA. So, my alternate theoretical perspective of brighter prospects of Islamabad Declaration can be linked well with the recent Border and Security Agreement between Pakistan and Iran signed on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2020 regarding enhanced cooperation over many issues which are not only important for the

success of Gwadar and CPEC but also to boost the overall maritime agenda regarding peace, prosperity and sustainability in the region and beyond.

In the backdrop of recent US-Iran escalation, Pakistan has responded in a neutral, wise and responsible way. Conversely, Pakistan had made the wrong decision after 9/11 incident due to which it suffered a lot and war-on-terrorism / proxy-war was a super imposed factor. Like May 2018, the current neutral stance by the Government of Pakistan is again a healthy sign for the country to prosper and maintain its influential role with good diplomatic ties at regional and international level. Pakistan needs to maintain this position and not to allow any unlawful act from its territory. In addition, Pakistan also needs to be vigilant for ensuring its maritime security and smooth operations related to Ports and Shipping.

