

Tensions between U.S. and Iran

What is the issue?

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Tensions are likely to increase between the U.S. and Iran ahead of the coming battle for southern Syria.

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Why is there an on-going war in Syria?

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- In March 2011, pro-democracy protests erupted in the Syrai after the arrest and torture of some teenagers who painted revolutionary slogans.

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- Security forces opened fire on demonstrators, killing several, more took to the streets.

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- The unrest triggered nationwide protests demanding more rights and President Assad's resignation.

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- The government's use of force to crush the dissent merely hardened the protesters' resolve.

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- Opposition supporters/Rebels also eventually began to take up arms, first to defend themselves and later to expel security forces from their local areas.

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- Later it has acquired sectarian overtones.

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- Syria is a Sunni majority country and the president belongs to Shia Alawite sect.

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- This had drawn in regional and world powers.

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- The rise of the jihadist group Islamic State (IS) has added a further dimension.

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How Iran is involved in Syria?

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- Iran, being a shia majority country wanted to back Assad.
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- Since the war started, Tehran has sent money and troops and Shiite volunteers to support Mr. Assad's men.
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- Over the past two years, Russia and Iran, along with Hezbollah and several Iraqi Shiite militias, helped the Syrian President.
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- Russian has been helping with airstrikes and Iran with ground support.
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- With this help Assad recaptured the rebel-held sections of Aleppo, Syria's largest city.
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Why U.S is opposing Iran's involvement?

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- The Trump administration is worried that Iran and its allies might carve out a "Shiite crescent" extending from Iran, through Iraq and Syria, and into Lebanon.
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- Such a prospect is against the interest of U.S. and its allies in the Arab world, especially Saudi Arabia.
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What is the recent rift?

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- Since the dawn of new administration, the U.S. military has struck the Syrian regime/allies at least five times.
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- American personnel have been training anti-Islamic State fighters in south-eastern Syria.

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- U.S recently announced that it had shot down an Iranian-made drone in south-eastern Syria. It also shot down a Syrian jet in Syrian airspace.
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- U.S is portraying it as a defensive measure to protect the Syrian rebels it has been training..
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- But Mr. Assad's regime and its Iranian allies view them as an aggression.
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What will be the impact?

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- The Syrian conflict has expanded into a war that involves regional and world powers including the U.S., Russia, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar.
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- Various forces continue to converge on eastern and southern Syria to reclaim strategic territory from the Islamic State (IS).
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- Even if U.S may not want to directly engage Syrian forces, these activities might lead to an accidental escalation.
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- Trump administration is also constantly attacking the agreement Tehran signed with the U.S. to limit its nuclear programme in exchange for the lifting of international sanctions.
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- These events could overreach and provoke a new confrontation that spirals out of control.
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Source: The Hindu

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