

# Trump Is a Belligerent Isolationist. But on Iran, He Needs Allies.

by [Dennis Ross \(/experts/dennis-ross\)](#)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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**If the president wants to blunt Tehran's sabotage campaign without a war, he needs to work closely with countries that share a stake in the free flow of oil.**

In keeping with what was historically a real, if fringe, strain of thinking about America's approach to the world, Trump favors unilateralism over alliances that carry obligations and responsibilities. The paradox, of course, is that anyone who disclaims interest in being the world's policeman needs allies. Nowhere is that more evident than in the escalating tensions with Iran. The Islamic republic is practicing its own version of "maximum pressure" on the United States and its interests in the Middle East, employing proxies and deniable sabotage **to attack tankers** (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iran-seems-prepared-for-major-but-measured-escalation-in-the-gulf>), petroleum pumping stations and even airports in Saudi Arabia, **firing rockets at an oil facility** (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iran-backed-militias-test-the-credibility-of-iraqs-prime-minister>) used by ExxonMobil, at bases where U.S. forces are present and near the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, even as it signals it will **incrementally respect fewer nuclear limits** (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-deceptive-nuclear-messaging>). At this point, the Trump administration seems to have few answers for the Iranian asymmetric responses to our pressure campaign...

**Read the full article on the Washington Post website.** ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/an-international-coalition-to-protect-ships-from-iran-is-the-best-way-to-avoid-a-war/2019/06/19/d7e708de-92d1-11e9-aadb-74e6b2b46f6a\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/an-international-coalition-to-protect-ships-from-iran-is-the-best-way-to-avoid-a-war/2019/06/19/d7e708de-92d1-11e9-aadb-74e6b2b46f6a_story.html)) ❖

*Washington Post*

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