

The Case for a Stalemate With Iran

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America can win if it maintains the blockade on Iran while gradually increasing pressure; the challenge is to ensure that Tehran doesn't respond by starting another region-wide conflict.

Six months in, the U.S. and Israeli war on Iran has settled into a stalemate. Neither Washington nor Tehran can achieve a clear military or diplomatic victory. Instead, the two sides have found themselves locked in a mutual blockade of oil and other shipments through the Strait of Hormuz and into Iranian ports, with no obvious way to change the status quo. The costs of accommodating the other side's demands to end the stalemate are so high, and the costs of the stalemate sufficiently low, that a mutual blockade has emerged as the least bad option for both the United States and Iran for the foreseeable future. This situation may not be ideal for Washington, but it avoids both defeat and escalation. It also works to the United States' advantage over time: as the blockade drags on, Tehran's position is likely to weaken faster than Washington's...

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