

1. **cloud** (noun) – threat, menace; trouble, problem.
2. **dial down** (phrasal verb) – reduce, lessen, decrease (the intensity of something).
3. **pull back** (phrasal verb) – withdraw, retreat, disengage.
4. **drone** (noun) – unmanned aircraft /missile.
5. **strait** (noun) – a narrow sea passage (connecting two seas); channel, stretch of water.
6. **restraint** (noun) – constraint, control, restriction.
7. **amid** (preposition) – in the middle of, surrounded by; during.
8. **escalate** (verb) – heighten, intensify, magnify.
9. **rationale** (noun) – reason/basis; principle.
10. **in favour of** (phrase) – in support of, to the advantage of, approving of.
11. **prolonged** (adjective) – continuous, lengthy, unending.
12. **ballistic missile** (noun) – a missile, which is shot from the ground, takes a long distance to travel well outside the atmosphere and falls to the earth to explode on its target (due to the gravity).
13. **militia** (noun) – armed forces, military unit, soldiery (from the civil population to support main forces).
14. **relatively** (adverb) – somewhat, to some extent, to a certain degree.
15. **vibrant** (adjective) – spirited, full of life, determined.
16. **seaborne** (adjective) – travelling, transportable, transferable/movable.
17. **provocation** (noun) – prompting, inducement, incitement.
18. **overlook** (verb) – fail to notice/observe, ignore, disregard.
19. **pull out** (phrasal verb) – withdraw, leave, get out.
20. **compliant** (adjective) – submissive, accommodating, cooperative.
21. **set off** (phrasal verb) – give rise to, cause/ invoke, begin/start.
22. **escalation** (noun) – intensification; an increase in the intensity of something.
23. **squeeze** (verb) – compress, squash/crush; pressurize/pressure, exploit.
24. **on the table** (phrase) – have something for discussion/discourse.
25. **on the brink of** (phrase) – on the edge/verge of difficult/dangerous situation; at a crucial or critical point.
26. **sanctions** (noun) – action taken, or an order given to force a country to obey international laws by limiting or stopping trade with that country, by not allowing economic aid for that country, etc (Courtesy: VOA Learning English).
27. **breach** (verb) – break, contravene, violate.
28. **enrichment** (noun) – the method of making more powerful or explosive Uranium by increasing the composition of uranium-235 isotope through the process of isotope separation. (The process of concentrating the U-235).
29. **downing** (noun) – knocking down, bringing to the ground; toppling.
30. **stranglehold** (noun) – complete control, power, influence/domination.
31. **dilemma** (noun) – quandary, predicament, difficulty.
32. **warrant** (verb) – justify, vindicate, validate/call for.
33. **recalibration** (noun) – reevaluation, reassessment, reorganization/revamp.
34. **call off** (phrasal verb) – cancel, abandon, drop.
35. **red line** (noun) – boundary, limit.
36. **seize the moment** (phrase) – To take full advantage of life's opportunities.
37. **stick to** (phrasal verb) – abide by, adhere to, keep/hold to.
38. **counter-productive** (verb) – harmful, damaging, dangerous/destructive.

39. reprieve (noun) – cancellation, suspension, postponement (of something undesirable event).
40. trigger (verb) – give rise to, bring about, evoke/prompt.
41. dangerous slope (noun) – slippery slope, catastrophe, bad situation.

Clouds of war: on U.S.'s 'maximum pressure' tactics with Iran

The United States needs to dial down on its 'maximum pressure' tactics with Iran

U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to pull back from air strikes on Iran, after the latter shot down an American drone near the Strait of Hormuz, was a rare moment of restraint amid otherwise escalating tensions between the two countries. The rationale behind the pull-back, according to Mr. Trump, was that he did not want to cause any loss of Iranian lives as no American lives were hurt by the Iranians. Clearly, Mr. Trump, who had campaigned against the costly wars of the U.S. overseas, does not seem to be in favour of launching an open conflict with Iran. A war with Iran could be prolonged and disastrous. Iran has ballistic missiles, proxy militias and a relatively vibrant navy. And the Strait of Hormuz, through which one-third of the world's seaborne oil shipments move, is within its range. Mr. Trump does not want to take a risk unless there are provocations from Iran targeting American lives. While this approach is better than that of Mr. Trump's National Security Adviser, John Bolton, who has threatened Iran with war several times, what the U.S. President overlooks is that the current state of tensions is a product of his "maximum pressure" tactic. A year ago Mr. Trump pulled the U.S. out of a nuclear deal with which Iran was fully compliant, setting off the escalation. His plan was to squeeze the Iranian economy and force Tehran back to the table to renegotiate the nuclear issue as well as Iran's missile programme and regional activism, for a "better deal". A year later, the U.S. and Iran are on the brink of a war.

The problem with Mr. Trump's "maximum pressure" approach is that he doesn't seem to have a plan between the sanctions-driven pressure tactics and a potential military conflict. Iran, on the other hand, is ready to take limited risks, as its actions such as the threat to breach the uranium enrichment limits set by the nuclear deal and the downing of the American drone suggest, to break the stranglehold of the sanctions. As a result, Mr. Trump

has a situation where maximum pressure is not producing the desired result, and both countries are edging towards a **war** he doesn't want. This is a strategic dilemma that warrants a recalibration of policy. Mr. Trump's decision to call off the strike and the new red line he set for Iran could create an opportunity for such a recalibration. He could seize the moment to assure Iran that his primary goal is engagement, not conflict. What Iran wants the most is relief from the sanctions. Instead of sticking to a policy that has proved to be counter-productive and risky, Mr. Trump could offer Tehran some reprieve in return for its remaining in the nuclear deal, which could be followed up by a fresh diplomatic opening. If he continues with the pressure tactics, tensions will stay high, the Strait of Hormuz would be on the brink, and further provocations by either side, or even an accident, could trigger a full-scale conflict. That is a dangerous slope.