

What happens when neither peace or compromise is on the

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The supposed ceasefire in the Middle East ended yesterday.

Trump has said he wants new talks, but his team is not in Pakistan to take part. Why? Because Iran says it will not turn up until the US stops the blockade on its shipping, which is just about the only military action the US can now undertake, given the crisis it has created in its own military stocks due to the depletion they had already suffered in this war, [about which I spoke some time ago](#). The consequence is that there are no peace talks at present, whatever is being said, and the Strait of Hormuz remains closed, with all the dire consequences I have discussed on this blog for some time, and again this morning.

So, the question is, will meaningful negotiations really happen? As I have also discussed here recently, that depends entirely on the willingness of those participating to seek to reach an agreement.

So, is there any likelihood of that in this case? It seems very unlikely.

The fact is that the United States and, most especially, Israel are seeking to weaken or destroy Iran as a regional power in the Middle East.

Iran, meanwhile, is seeking to survive, with time appearing to be entirely on its side right now since it has de facto control over all traffic through the Strait. At the same time, it seeks to reduce or remove US influence, and expand its own power base.

Compare these goals, and the best that can be said is that they are mutually exclusive. In that case, is it likely that there is a real willingness between these parties to reach an agreement? That would seem to be exceptionally unlikely.

So why might talks even take place? There is only one reason, and that I think is that they are performative. That is clear from what has already been said. For example, when J D Vance left Islamabad last time, he said the final and best US offer was already on the table and would not change. Can the US really be seen to change that position in that case?

In the same way, can Iran give much away? It too has a domestic audience to appease and win over. The Strait of Hormuz has to stay shut in that case for that audience's sake.

The US, then, cannot re-escalate this conflict because it lacks the means to do so, and Iran has no incentive to de-escalate it because it has no incentive to do so given its reading of the US position, which will, I think, be similar to mine.

Is a deal likely then, even if the two parties do get to meet? That seems immensely unlikely. There is nothing approaching enough common ground to let that happen that I can see. We have a stalemate.

What is going to happen then? I suspect that "talks" will happen, and Vance will make a similar statement to the one he made last time on their conclusion.

There will, however, be no recommencement of hostilities: the US cannot afford the strategic risk of doing that.

So what will happen instead? Nitpicking hostilities of the sort now being seen will persist. Both parties have much to gain, and, as far as they are concerned, little to lose from doing that, although the rest of the world will pay an enormous price as a result, and that is what all the rest of us need to worry about.

The fact is that the USA, at the behest and almost certainly on the demand of Israel, has begun a war for which there is no obvious resolution in sight, most especially for these two countries in the role of aggressors.

Iran, meanwhile, has all the cards in this scenario, which few Western powers will feel comfortable with.

But what can they do? Iran will not bow to their pressure. It has no incentive to do so, and all these countries will face a crisis if they do not act.

These supposed Western powers are then left with one choice, given that right now there is little chance of the parties, by themselves, will seek to find one, meaning they must bring pressure to bear on the USA and Israel to compromise.

How? That is an issue I will return to.