



By: *Nawaf Obaid*

# Is the U.S.-Iran war quietly ending?



Only ten days ago, the military situation appeared entirely different.

On 18 May, and again on 23 May, the evidence indicated renewed large-scale American military action against Iran.

US forces had moved beyond what could reasonably be described as final-phase pre-strike conditions.

Tanker movements, ISR positioning, force posture, communications discipline, logistics sequencing, and operational deployments all indicated the same direction. The military architecture being assembled was not intended for deterrence; it was designed for use.

Today, that **situation has changed**.

The United States still maintains overwhelming military superiority across the region.

Carrier strike groups remain deployed. Strategic bombers are available. Long-range strike assets are within reach.

American forces retain the ability to conduct major operations against Iran at short notice. None of that has disappeared.

What has changed is the sequencing.

## Washington is still carrying a large stick

Over the past week, many indicators associated with campaign-level planning have either disappeared entirely or returned to normal operating patterns.

Logistical movements have slowed. Force positioning has stabilised. Operational behaviour increasingly resembles deterrence maintenance rather than preparation for a renewed air campaign.

Washington is still carrying a **very large stick**;

it simply no longer appears eager to use it.

This distinction is important because wars often end militarily before they end politically.

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The current military posture increasingly suggests that the United States believes it has already achieved the **principal objectives** of the campaign.

The purpose of force is therefore shifting from creating new outcomes to preserving those already achieved.

This does not mean the possibility of renewed strikes has disappeared; it means the threshold for resuming them is now considerably higher than it was only a week ago.

## Negotiations have moved well beyond conceptual discussions

The diplomatic situation indicates the same trend.

Information emerging from Islamabad over the past forty-eight hours suggests negotiations have advanced well beyond conceptual discussions.

The principal actors are no longer debating whether a framework should exist.; they are debating how it should be implemented.

The focus has increasingly shifted to drafting language, implementation schedules, verification mechanisms, sequencing arrangements, and technical details.

That is a significant difference.

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Peace negotiations rarely fail because parties cannot agree on a headline; they fail because they cannot agree on the details that follow.

The fact that discussions now appear to focus on implementation rather than principle suggests that many of the larger political obstacles have already been reduced.

The nuclear file appears to be the clearest example.

A broad understanding seems to have emerged regarding the future disposition of enriched nuclear material, the logistics of its removal, the custodianship arrangements, and the restrictions governing future enrichment activities.

The issue is no longer whether a mechanism exists; the issue is how that mechanism is executed.

## The Strait of Hormuz

The same pattern is evident in discussions about the **Strait of Hormuz**. The debate increasingly centres on sequencing rather than objectives.

Iranian restrictions affecting maritime traffic and American restrictions affecting Iranian-affiliated shipping appear to be moving towards a parallel implementation framework.

Neither side is discussing permanent confrontation in the Strait. Both sides appear focused on when and how normal traffic will resume.

Even sanctions relief, traditionally one of the most difficult issues in any negotiation with

Iran, appears to be moving in the same direction.

Discussions increasingly revolve around timing, verification, and phased implementation rather than outright rejection.

Early releases are expected to focus on Iranian state assets currently held in Qatar before expanding into broader arrangements under agreed schedules.

None of this means a final agreement has been reached.



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There are still unresolved issues. Drafts are still under revision. Political decisions have yet to be made. The region remains one miscalculation away from renewed escalation.

The military forces assembled over the past several months have not disappeared and retain the ability to resume combat operations rapidly if circumstances require.

However, the broader trajectory is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore.

For the first time since the war began on 28 February 2026, the military and diplomatic tracks are pointing in the same direction.

One shows decreasing preparation for major combat operations; the other shows increasing preparation for the implementation of a settlement.

That does not guarantee peace. It does, however, suggest that the kinetic phase of the war may be approaching its conclusion.

The most important development in the Middle East today is therefore not a strike, an interception, or a deployment. It is the gradual convergence of military posture and diplomatic behaviour towards the same outcome.

For the first time since this conflict began, both are signalling that the war may be ending.

Dr Nawaf Obaid is a Senior Research Fellow at the Department of War Studies, King's College London.