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## Iran war looms over Trump's China visit, shifts alliances

By [Andrea Shalal](#), [Emily Rose](#) and [Timour Azhari](#)

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[1/3] U.S. President Donald Trump walks with Chinese Vice President Han Zheng during an arrival ceremony at Beijing Capital International Airport, in Beijing, China, May 13, 2026. REUTERS/Evan Vucci/File... [Purchase Licensing Rights](#) Read more



### Summary

Middle East alliances shift as Israel and UAE strengthen ties, Gulf states strike Iran-backed militias

Global oil supply disrupted, IEA warns of 3.9 million bpd shortfall in 2026

Trump seeks Chinese support but is unlikely to get it, analysts say

US VP Vance sees some progress in talks

WASHINGTON/JERUSALEM/RIYADH, May 13 (Reuters) - The U.S.-Israeli war with Iran loomed over U.S. President Donald Trump's visit to China, as signs emerged that the conflict is causing a shift in alliances across the Middle East.

Trump arrived in Beijing on Wednesday ahead of talks with President Xi Jinping that are set to begin on Thursday. Trump is expected to ask for China's help to resolve the costly and unpopular conflict, which he launched with Israel in late February, but analysts say he is unlikely to get the support he

wants.

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New reports on Wednesday highlighted how the Iran war is accelerating geopolitical realignment across the region.

Israel said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [secretly travelled to the UAE](#) in March for talks with Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, which Israel said resulted in a "historic breakthrough" in relations between the two. They had re-established ties in 2020 as part of the Trump-backed Abraham Accords and the relationship has strengthened since the UAE came under Iranian attack.

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But the UAE's foreign ministry denied that the trip took place. "Any claims regarding unannounced visits or undisclosed arrangements are entirely unfounded unless officially announced by the relevant authorities in the UAE," it said in a statement.

Iran, which has struck the UAE more than its other Gulf neighbours in response to the U.S.-Israeli attacks, had sharp words for the UAE. "Enmity with the Great People of Iran is a foolish gamble. Collusion with Israel in doing so: unforgivable. Those colluding with Israel to sow division will be held to account," Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi wrote on X.

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Separately, Reuters reported that Saudi fighter jets have [bombed Iran-backed militias](#) in Iraq, part of a broader pattern of military responses involving Gulf nations during the war that have remained hidden. Retaliatory strikes were also launched from Kuwait into Iraq, sources said.

Tehran, meanwhile, has tightened its grip on the Strait of Hormuz, which before the war handled one-fifth of the world's oil supply. It has cut [deals](#) with Iraq and Pakistan to ship oil and liquefied natural gas through the waterway, according to sources with knowledge of the matter.

Iranian officials have signalled they see control of the strait as a long-term strategic goal. An army spokesperson said supervision of the passage could generate revenue amounting to twice Iran's oil income, while strengthening its foreign policy leverage.

"After this war ends, there will be no place for retreat," the spokesperson said, according to comments carried by ISNA news agency.

More than one month after a tenuous ceasefire took effect, U.S. and Iranian demands remain far apart as diplomatic efforts have so far failed to end the war.

Washington has called for Tehran to scrap its nuclear program and lift its hold on the strait, while Iran has demanded compensation for war damage, an end to the U.S. blockade of Iranian ports and a halt to fighting on all fronts, including in [Lebanon](#), where Israel is battling Iran-backed Hezbollah. Trump has dismissed those positions as "garbage."

Vice President JD Vance said on Wednesday he believes progress is being made in negotiations. "The fundamental question is, do we make enough progress that we satisfy the president's red line?" Vance told reporters at the White House. "And the red line is very simple. He needs to feel confident that we put a number of protections in place such that Iran will never have a nuclear weapon."

Iran denies seeking nuclear weapons.

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The conflict is weighing heavily on global energy markets. Global oil supply [will fall](#) by around 3.9 million barrels per day in 2026 and undershoot demand due to disruptions caused by the Iran war, the International Energy Agency said on Wednesday, with more than 1 billion barrels of Middle East supply already lost.

The United States hopes to convince China "to play a more active role in getting Iran to walk away from what they're doing now and trying to do now in the Persian Gulf," Secretary of State Marco Rubio told the Fox News "Hannity" program in a clip released on Wednesday, while Trump was in Beijing.

"We've made clear to them that any support for Iran would obviously be detrimental for our relationship. That obviously is going to come up in this conversation on trade," Rubio also said in the interview that took place on board Air Force One en route to China.

The Trump administration said on Tuesday that senior U.S. and Chinese officials had agreed last month that no country should be able to charge tolls on traffic through the region, in an effort to project consensus on the issue ahead of the summit. China, a major buyer of Iranian oil which maintains close ties with Tehran, did not dispute that account.

On Wednesday, a Chinese supertanker carrying 2 million barrels of Iraqi crude [sailed through](#) the Strait of Hormuz, ship-tracking data showed, marking the third known passage by a Chinese oil tanker through the channel since the U.S. and Israel launched strikes on Iran on February 28.

Other countries are exploring shipping arrangements similar to Tehran's deals with Iraq and Pakistan, sources said, potentially entrenching Tehran's control of the waterway through which fertilisers, petrochemicals and other bulk commodities vital to global supply chains normally flow.

Stacked bar chart about Trump's Iran approval

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