

## Oil price hike looms if tensions boil in Persian Gulf: Deakin expert

Thursday 20 June 2019

The Trump administration's decision to increase its military presence in the Persian Gulf raises the real prospect of conflict in the region, a Deakin University academic has warned.

Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh, an expert in Middle East politics and Deputy Director (International) at the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, said any escalation of tensions was detrimental to regional security and presented significant risks to the global economy.

"A disruption in the flow of oil and petroleum products through the Strait of Hormuz will push up oil prices internationally and this could cause a shock to the global economy," Professor Akbarzadeh said.

The Strait of Hormuz, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, is a strategically important trade passage, particularly for Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar and United Arab Emirates.

Professor Akbarzadeh said the current tension in the Persian Gulf was partly stoked by Saudi's pressure on the United States to contain Iran.

"Tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia has become the defining feature of Middle East politics," Professor Akbarzadeh said.

"While it may be tempting to see this rivalry as the ultimate manifestation of sectarianism between Shia and Sunni communities, it is in fact geo-strategic in nature and represents regional ambitions governed by a zero-sum approach to power and supremacy."

Professor Akbarzadeh said the Trump administration's policy on Iran was in line with the position advocated by Saudi Arabia and Israel.

"This is in contrast to the US policy under the Obama Administration when an historic nuclear deal was negotiated in 2015."

Professor Akbarzadeh has published a detailed exploration of the state of **Middle East Politics and International Relations: Crisis Zone** with co-author, Dr Kylie Baxter, from the University of Melbourne.

<https://www.routledge.com/Middle-East-Politics-and-International-Relations-Crisis-Zone/Akbarzadeh-Baxter/p/book/9781138056275>

### Media contact:

Pauline Braniff

Senior Media Coordinator, Deakin University

P: +61 3 5227 3586, M: 0418 361 890

[pauline.braniff@deakin.edu.au](mailto:pauline.braniff@deakin.edu.au)

T: @DeakinMedia