

GLOBALIZATION AND SOVEREIGNTY

OPINIONS

Trump and the Chance to Resolve Iran's Nuclear Issue: Two Core Issues Requiring Focus

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Tehran has pragmatically agreed to negotiations based on the belief that diplomacy is the only viable solution to its nuclear issue, and that it might be possible to reach an agreement with Trump, [Alireza Noori](#) writes.

Direct negotiations between Iran and the United States began on April 12, at a time when Trump adopted an aggressive approach toward Iran (as other countries). Emphasising a “maximum pressure” strategy, he has sought to place Tehran in a strategic dilemma: either to accept a (US-dictated) agreement with extensive restrictions or face military strikes. Although his declared objective is to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, evidence suggests that the real aim is to curtail the Iran's strategic independence and manoeuvrability. Accordingly, Trump's policy also targets Iran's missile programme and its regional influence.

The use of this coercive approach and the language of force is not unfamiliar to Iran; previous US presidents have also employed such rhetoric. Given Iran's political psychology and the orientation of its foreign policy, which reflect the meta-discourse of the Islamic Revolution, it considers the language of force to be fundamentally unacceptable, as its past reactions have demonstrated.

Therefore, the notion that Iran has entered negotiations with the US out of fear of threats is inaccurate, as such threats have existed before, and Iran is well aware that Trump is unlikely to embark on a costly and protracted war with Iran. Tehran has pragmatically agreed to negotiations based on the belief that diplomacy is the only viable solution to its nuclear issue, and that it might

be possible to reach an agreement with Trump. Given Trump's unique psychology – the need to claim achievements to project strength – Tehran perceives that it can offer concessions equivalent to those in the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in exchange for certain advantages, such as a reduction of pressure. This is particularly significant, considering that August marks a critical deadline for the possible activation of the snapback mechanism; reaching an agreement with Trump could prevent the mechanism's activation and its potential negative consequences.

This, however, may be overly optimistic. If Trump insists on taking a hard-line approach and imposing a forced agreement on Iran, no deal will be reached. In such a scenario, the situation would become more challenging not only for Iran, but also for the US and the region as a whole, while the risk of a military conflict – with far-reaching and unpredictable consequences – would increase. In this context, the statements made by American officials, including White House National Security Advisor [Mike Waltz](#)'s warning: *"Give it up, or there will be consequences"*, and that the US seeks to dismantle the *"full programme"*, fail to offer a constructive solution to the issue.

In order to achieve a viable agreement, two fundamental principles must be taken into consideration: first, reciprocal concessions to Iran through a balanced agreement, and second, refraining from the use of coercive language. Neglecting these two key preconditions has led to the protracted complexity of the issue; that's why it has remained unresolved for over two decades. Several other fundamental issues must also be addressed as well:

First and foremost, prior to the Trump administration and its threats, there had been a prevailing consensus within Iran that the optimal scenario is a nuclear agreement. Other scenarios – including war, surrender or regime change under pressure or even the acquisition of nuclear weapons – have all been viewed as detrimental to Iran's national interests. Long before Trump, there existed an understanding in Iran that the potential costs of acquiring a nuclear bomb far outweigh its perceived benefits, and that Iran fundamentally has no desire to weaponise its nuclear programme. Nuclear weapons would not only fail to enhance Iran's security, but would undermine the country's stability, security and international standing. Such a move would carry numerous negative consequences, including the escalation of political pressure, increased international isolation, harsher economic sanctions, the deprivation of legitimate right to 'the peaceful atom', and the securitisation of both its domestic and foreign policies.

Second, official international institutions have consistently confirmed – both in the past and in the present – that Iran has neither been developing nor is currently pursuing the development of a nuclear bomb. The latest [report](#) by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in February 2025 (GOV/2025/8) explicitly states that there is no evidence indicating the diversion of Iran's nuclear material toward weaponisation. Similarly, the [US](#)

[intelligence community](#)'s assessments confirm that Iran is not engaged in the construction of nuclear weapons.

Although these reports also emphasise that Iran has violated its commitments under the JCPOA, including uranium enrichment up to 60 percent and imposing restrictions on the inspection – a critical question arises: why has Iran breached an agreement that it itself signed and has considered the most favourable scenario? In addressing this question, two fundamental points must be taken into account:

First, Iran's breach of commitments has been a reaction, not an aggressive action. The JCPOA was a bilateral agreement, and from its signing in 2015 until July 2019, Iran fully complied with all of its commitments. However, in return, the US withdrew from the agreement and escalated pressure on Iran, while Europe and other signatories, including China and Russia, failed to take effective action to fulfil their commitments, particularly in lifting sanctions. As a result, Iran, citing the non-fulfilment of obligations by the other parties, invoked Articles 26 and 36 of the JCPOA, gradually reducing its own commitments in response.

The second key point is that Iran's "nuclear threshold strategy" has also been a response, a reaction to concrete threats of bombing from nuclear-armed Israel and Washington. It has led Tehran to the realistic conclusion that it must be prepared for a worst-case scenario.

Therefore, although Iran, for the aforementioned reasons, continues to believe that the disadvantages of acquiring a nuclear weapon outweigh its benefits, the possibility of a worst-case scenario has led Tehran to conclude that adopting a "nuclear threshold strategy" could serve as a deterrent against military threats. Given that Iran's breaches of its JCPOA obligations have essentially been reactive, all of its commitments remain reversible in the event that a new, balanced agreement is reached. However, this would be contingent upon the two key aforementioned conditions.

Direct negotiations between Iran and the US present an opportunity to address these conditions as underlying principles for solving the problem. If they are acknowledged, there remains hope for a resolution of the issue; if they are ignored, the issue will inevitably become even more complex and difficult to resolve.

Despite its mistrust of the US, Iran has entered the negotiations in a spirit of optimism, seeking to assert its nuclear rights and to reassure the international community that its nuclear programme is peaceful in nature. Accordingly, Iran's audience in these negotiations is not limited to the US; it includes the broader international community. Iran's objective is to demonstrate that it considers diplomacy and dialogue as the most effective approach, and a negotiated agreement as the most desirable outcome.

However, just as the American side has expressed scepticism, there are similar doubts in Iran as well. The scepticism stems from a realistic

assumption that the deep state in the US has a vested interest in portraying Iran as a threat. Through this narrative, it seeks to secure certain economic interests (including arms sales), political advantages (such as maintaining the dependency of countries in the region), and military objectives (ensuring a continued military presence in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf) by instilling fear of Iran among neighbouring states.

Another factor that will complicate the resolution of the nuclear issue is the presence of unreasonable demands on Iran, including efforts to link the nuclear file with the country's regional policies or its missile programme. Iran has repeatedly declared that it will not accept such a connection and considers its missile programme as non-negotiable.

One of the tools the US employs to impose its demands is the threat of military attack. In Iran, however, such threats are largely regarded as mere bluffs and worn-out instruments of pressure. Officials in Tehran – including Supreme Leader [Ayatollah Khamenei](#) – have explicitly stated that while Iran does not seek war, its response to any military aggression would be decisive. In the event of an attack, Iran would employ all its symmetrical and asymmetrical capabilities across the region against the US and its allies. Such a war would carry unpredictable regional and international consequences.

One of the immediate – and not the only – consequences would be a shift in Iran's nuclear doctrine, potentially steering it toward the development of nuclear weapons as a means of deterrence and response to threats. In such a scenario, the international arms control regime and the political and security order in the Middle East would face highly unpredictable and destabilising challenges. Reaching a balanced agreement and putting an end to the language of force is the only way to prevent this scenario.

Since resistance to America's coercive approach is intrinsically linked to Iran's strategic independence, Tehran has consistently emphasised – and will continue to emphasise – that threats are not the solution to the nuclear issue. Iran possesses the political will to resolve the problem, yet the main obstacles appear to be Israel and the deep state within the US. Although we do not wish to be pessimistic, it appears that Trump lacks the will to accept Iran's two conditions and the necessary capacity to overcome both Israel's warmongering demands and the US deep state's project to fabricate Iran as an enemy.

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