

# Three different stances in less than 24 hours

## What will be Trump's next move?

International Desk  
**ANALYSIS**

Donald Trump, the president of the United States, revived his maximum pressure policy against Iran by signing a presidential memorandum, while also expressing his willingness to engage in direct negotiations with Tehran. This apparent contradiction in Trump's stances has raised several questions about the real objectives of Washington, the possibility of a military attack, and the potential consequences.

### Pressure, coercive diplomacy

In less than 24 hours, Trump took three different stances on Iran:

1. He signed a memorandum reinforcing maximum pressure to "prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and reduce its oil exports to zero".
2. He expressed his willingness to negotiate with the president of Iran and referred to the possibility of a "verifiable" nuclear agreement.
3. He coordinated with Benjamin Netanyahu, the prime minister of Israel, to counter Iran's "regional threats".

This dual approach has been interpreted by analysts as "coercive diplomacy," a strategy aimed at forcing Tehran to accept Washington's demands through a combination of severe sanctions and negotiation openings. Trump emphasized in his interviews that they have the right to block Iran's oil sales, but he prefers to reach an agreement.

### Military threats, coordination with Israel

Despite Iran's earlier implicit announcement of its readiness for conditional negotiations (including the lifting of sanctions and international guarantees), Trump seems to be prioritizing the path of exerting pressure, ignoring the positive signals from Iran. One of the main reasons for Trump's decision is his current perception of Iran being in a "weak position," a perception that, according to political experts, is far from reality. Based on the published documents, Trump's plan includes:

1. Unprecedented economic sanctions: The sanctions are aimed at reducing Iran's oil revenues to zero — despite China's opposition and potential consequences for the US's own goals — reducing the value of the rial,

and exacerbating the economic crisis affecting the livelihood of Iranians.

2. Indirect military threats: Trump emphasized the US's "right" to attack Iran's nuclear facilities during his meeting with Netanyahu. Israel has recently requested the purchase of \$7 billion worth of advanced weapons from the US, which Trump has accepted. On the other hand, analysts believe that a direct attack on Iran is less likely due to the "high regional costs" and that it is more likely that Israel will provoke Iran into attacking Israel, providing a legal pretext for Israel to counter-attack Iran.
3. Pressure on Europe: Washington has asked its European allies to activate the "snapback" sanctions mechanism. The US is seeking to build a consensus against Iran among European countries through the International Atomic Energy Agency.
4. Technological restrictions: This will be done to prevent Iran from accessing sensitive missile and nuclear technologies.

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### Objectives beyond nuclear program

Although Trump claims that his main objective is to "prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons," internal US documents reveal broader goals:

1. Weakening Iran's regional influence: He will try to cut Iran's support for groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Ansarullah (Houthis) in Yemen.
2. Curbing Iran's ballistic missile program: The US has prioritized limiting the development of Iranian missiles with a range of over 2,000 kilometers.
3. Changing the behavior of the Islamic Republic: Creating divisions within the Iranian government by exacerbating the economic crisis is desirable for the Americans.

### Iran's response to reciprocal threats

Iranian officials have responded to Trump's actions in a unified manner, emphasizing the following points.

Abbas Araqchi, Iran's foreign



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minister, emphasized that "maximum pressure is a failed experience, and re-imposing it again will lead to another failure".

Iranian officials have repeatedly stated that, according to the religious decree of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the production of nuclear weapons is forbidden. Therefore, Trump's policies against Iran are based on incorrect assumptions, and the US's excuses for preventing Iran from accessing nuclear technology are driven by hegemonic ambitions.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian had previously stated that Tehran is ready for principled negotiations without preconditions, but the lifting of sanctions is essential. However, the threatening tone of Trump has led to a change in his counterpart's tone as well. In response to Trump's policy of maximum pressure and the possibility of "reducing Iran's oil sales to zero," Pezeshkian said: "The Americans think that we are totally dependent on oil. Iran has vast resources. If we manage those resources correctly and interact positively with our

neighbors, we can render the sanctions ineffective".

### Potential consequences of attack on Iran

In such circumstances, political analysts believe that any military action against Iran will lead to a regional conflict with economic, political, and military dimensions. The main consequences of an attack on Iran include:

1. Exacerbating the global economic crisis: It will lead to an increase in oil prices to over \$200 and a recession in financial markets, as predicted by economic experts.
2. Proxy war in the region: An escalation of conflict in Yemen is among the potential consequences of an attack on Iran.
3. Russia and China's response: The possibility of Russia and China vetoing resolutions against Iran in the UN Security Council and strengthening their military cooperation with Tehran are among the significant consequences of a Western coalition attack on Iran.
4. Increased tensions within the US: Even Israel's involvement in a war with Iran will lead to increased costs for the US in the region and will be met with opposition from Democrats and some

Republicans, who will oppose a new war in the Middle East.

### Navigating between war, negotiation

In his second term, Trump is trying to bring Iran to the negotiating table by reviving the maximum pressure policy and threatening military action. However, Tehran, emphasizing Trump's breach of promise in withdrawing from the JCPOA, is seeking practical guarantees in the event of any potential negotiations. Negotiations under current circumstances are unlikely to happen.

Meanwhile, Israel, as a key player, is playing the provocation card, encouraging Iran to carry out military operations so it can then persuade the US to attack Iran's economic and nuclear infrastructure. Therefore, the shipment of new military equipment and weapons from the US to Israel can be seen in this context. As the Leader of the Islamic Revolution also emphasized in his latest response to Trump's statements, "negotiating with the US is unwise, unintelligent, and dishonorable".

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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (front-2nd L) visits the Ministry of Defense missile and defense achievements exhibition in Tehran on February 2, 2025.

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US President Donald Trump (L) and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hold a press conference in the White House on February 4, 2025.

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