

Trump's big gamble, Iran's trump card

OPINIONS

While Iran insists on indirect negotiations with the US, Donald Trump, in his latest claim, asserted that he doesn't think "that's necessarily true anymore." The US president further argues that negotiations should be carried out bilaterally. Earlier, Axios reported, citing sources, that Washington is seriously reviewing Tehran's response and may accept Iran's request for indirect talks.

Amid contradictory statements from Western media and the ambiguous positions of US officials — which have made predicting the future of tensions between Tehran and Washington more complex — some experts believe the deployment of American bombers to the Indian Ocean was solely meant to show off strength. They claim that Trump, following his own unique strategies, is seeking to reach negotiations or even an agreement, yet he is trying to achieve his goal by relying on the alleged "carrot and stick" tactic — a possibility Tehran has drawn as its red line, insisting it will not negotiate under pressure.

On the other hand, another group, expressing serious concern over the audacious approach of the White House occupant, believes that if Washington's demands are not met as the US president intends, the stage could be set for a military confrontation — a costly option for both the region and the United States.

On this note, the Persian-language newspaper Etemad spoke with several experts on international relations, namely Abdolreza Faraji-Rad, Amir Ali Abolfath, and Hassan Beheshtipour, to analyze the current situation between Tehran and Washington and the future of tensions under the shadow of contradictory statements and pressure.

Faraji-Rad believes Trump's recent claims indicate that Iran and the US are moving toward direct talks, provided Washington adopts a non-supremacist approach focused on nuclear issues.

Abolfath, however, stressed that more important than the format of the talks is their outcome and the balance of concessions between the two sides. Regarding the regional military buildup due to Washington's recent moves, he said that the likelihood of a military attack depends on the outcome of negotiations and the US assessment of the costs.

Beheshtipour, from a different angle, believes the US has no issue even with indirect talks, but Iran must explain to the public why direct negotiations are not advisable.



● NEWSWEEK

Trump after showing off power, not confronting Iran



Anwar Gargash (L), diplomatic advisor to the president of the United Arab Emirates, meets with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in Tehran, Iran, on March 12, 2025, delivering a letter from the US President Donald Trump to Iran's leader.

● IRNA



By **Abdolreza Faraji-Rad**
Former diplomat

Given the statements of Iranian officials as well as Donald Trump's remarks — especially his latest claim during his recent trip — it can be concluded that the letter sent by Iran to Trump has had an impact. Based on available information, the American side received this letter just a few days ago, and it can be inferred that the process of starting negotiations between Iran and the US is gradually taking shape.

In other words, it can be concluded that if the US agrees to negotiations based on Iran's

demands — that is, within the framework of a dialogue from an equal position focused on the nuclear issue (and not other topics such as missile capabilities) — the possibility of direct talks between Tehran and Washington could open up. It appears that the American side has accepted that, for now, negotiations should revolve solely around nuclear issues.

Moreover, some Iranian officials have hinted at the possibility of defining joint economic projects with the US. This is also significant for Trump, as his economic policy is centered on raising tariffs, boosting domestic production, and increasing US exports. Trump is looking to ramp up

American domestic production and export to global markets rather than heavily relying on imports from other countries. This is one of the Trump administration's economic priorities, and when the US pulled out of the JCPOA, it claimed that the deal had mostly benefited Russia, China, and Europe while the US gained nothing.

Therefore, I believe that if talks begin, even if indirectly at first, evidence suggests that the US and Trump himself have no desire to get into a military conflict and their recent moves confirm this. This is a behavior specific to Trump — not just toward Iran but in relations with other countries as well. He uses a particu-

lar rhetoric, whether in dealing with Europe, Russia, China, Canada, or even Mexico.

Ultimately, if we compare the current situation with the last week's, it seems we are seeing progress. Although it is slow, regardless of the accuracy of the news circulating, both sides appear to be gearing up for negotiations. Initial negotiations may kick off indirectly, as Iran has already agreed to this format. However, if Trump's point man in the talks avoids a condescending or coercive stance, indirect talks could easily turn into direct discussions.

From the very beginning, Trump has both called for negotiations and reaching an agreement

and placed fostering favorable relations with the Iranian people on his agenda. At the same time, however, he has claimed that if no deal is reached, he will launch military strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities. A person with such behavioral traits is flexing power to convey the message that if Iran does not enter talks, the US will resort to force.

Another key point is that the US military deployment in the region and the Indian Ocean is not solely related to Iran. Part of these military movements is tied to America's clashes with the Houthis and the intense battles between the two sides. Currently, various US warships and military aircraft are stationed in the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and these assets are not solely aimed at threatening Iran.

Part of this military capability is deployed in the Persian Gulf, but we are not seeing a significant uptick in military activity within the Gulf itself. Some movements may be underway at US military bases in Bahrain, but most operations are concentrated in areas like the Indian Ocean, the island of Diego Garcia, and the Red Sea. Therefore, these movements do not necessarily signal an imminent military conflict — especially when talks are also on the table.

Trump's recent remarks — such as "forget the letters" and the possibility of direct talks — indicate that groundwork for dialogue is being laid. It seems he has picked up signals from Iran, whether through the statements of the country's officials, who have adopted a calculated diplomatic approach, or through messages that may have been relayed via intermediaries, particularly Oman.



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