

acceptance of an agreement; therefore, Trump simultaneously contemplates both dimensions of the matter: both the prospective opportunities inherent in such an approach and the threats emanating from it. What is determinative is his personal and his team's perception and calculation of these threats and opportunities. Outside the United States, including in Iran, there may exist the perception that such action could lead to the attenuation of Trump's position in the midterm elections. However, the crucial consideration is the calculation of Trump's team, particularly under circumstances in which he already does not occupy a favorable position in polling related to the midterms. In such an environment, the possibility exists that he will assume risk and undertake action in order to alter the situation. This analysis stands in contraposition to the classical and prevalent view that asserts that military intervention on the eve of midterm elections is detrimental to the incumbent president. Nonetheless, it must be observed that in the majority of cases, incumbent presidents in midterm elections encounter a reduction in their party's seats, and instances contrary to this rule have constituted exceptions.



● BRETT DEERING/GETTY IMAGES

Therefore, it may be argued that Trump is already confronted with a challenging electoral outlook and may pursue such measures not from a position of superiority, but as an instrument for reversing the situation and ameliorating his standing; meaning that, because he does not occupy a favorable position, he may regard such actions as a means of consolidating his electoral base and mobilizing his supporters in the midterm

elections. The report recently disseminated by Reuters and The New York Times can be analyzed within this very framework. The New York Times has alleged that the Pentagon is preparing for a multi-week conflict with Iran, and Reuters, employing different terminology, has corroborated this assessment. If one seeks to comprehend the prospective logic of this American action, it appears that Washington has

taken seriously Iran's threat to regionalize the war and, consequently, is fortifying its military deployments in the region in order to prevent the expansion of the conflict's scope and the infliction of damage upon its allies. From this perspective, the augmentation of America's military presence, rather than necessarily signifying a definitive decision to initiate war, may be construed as an effort to contain the scenario of war expansion.



Some in America, particularly Trump's adherents, believe that even if he consents merely to a symbolic action or ultimately refrains from action, his credibility will nonetheless diminish because he has articulated a statement that he has not implemented.

In this context, Tehran's reaction possesses determinative significance. It remains necessary to await developments and ascertain whether Iran will gravitate toward an approach that elevates the defense to an expansive and maximalist level and utilizes all its capacities to strike the United States and its allies, or whether it will endeavor to avert movement toward an apocalyptic and survival-centric war. This constitutes the pivotal ambiguity that appears to subsist both in Tehran and in Washington. In Washington, certain currents maintain that the trajectory of conflict should be directed toward regime change in Iran; conversely, within Iran, perspectives also exist asserting that expanding the scope of war and increasing the cost for the United States will preclude subsequent actions by Washington. This strategic ambiguity is an exceedingly significant matter, and the augmentation of the American fleet's presence in the region may likewise constitute an effort to manage this very uncertainty and to maintain preparedness for diverse scenarios.

*The article first appeared in the Persian-language newspaper Etemad.*

## US will likely exhibit greater pliancy regarding nuclear issue



By Ali Bigdeli  
Expert on American affairs

### OPINION

I harbor the hope that the negotiations between Iran and the United States soon reach a decisive juncture, and that, to the fullest extent feasible, the prevailing tensions — particularly the security, and military tensions emanating from the United States — decrease. Trump has articulated the doctrine of "peace through strength" and continues to follow that very paradigm. During the preceding round of negotiations, of which five stages were convened, and at a moment when arrangements had been effectuated for the convening of the sixth round, they initiated a military assault; their rationale and allegation were that Iran had engaged in procrastination. The policies and international, and even regional, conditions are at present scarcely advantageous to Iran, and determinations must be calibrated in conformity with prevailing circumstances. They imposed sanctions upon our armed forces, including the Islamic Revolution's Guards Corps, declined to extend an invitation to Iran for the Munich Security Conference, and, in effect, the United States has transmuted pressure upon Iran into an international demand so that a global consensus against Iran may crystallize. Under the current circumstances, it is in our interest to embark upon a new trajectory and to possess an alternative for every conceivable contingency; however, if our political adversary acquires augmented latitude and we remain seated as mere spectators, time will elapse and culminate in detriment to us.



● ALHURRA

It is probable that during Mr. Larjani's visit to Oman and Qatar, certain matters were exchanged between Iran and the United States. Concurrently, I maintain that we possess only a limited temporal margin. The international system has

undergone transformation, and numerous alterations remain in progress. Modifications must likewise be instituted within Iran's foreign policy, and action must be undertaken in consonance with prevailing conditions and developments. Although the

decision in this regard is difficult, our inaction engenders complications. The United States will likely demonstrate greater flexibility regarding the nuclear issue. Of course, pursuant to the regulations of the International Atomic



● Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi (R) meets with US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff (C) and President Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner ahead of the indirect US-Iran talks, in Geneva, Switzerland, on February 17, 2026.  
● OMAN'S MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



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Energy Agency, all countries retain the right to enrich below 4%. I propose that within the course of negotiations we preserve, on the basis of the JCPOA in 2015, enrichment at 3.67% and permit the Agency to dispatch its inspectors to Iran. In the President Pezeshkian's speech on February 11, he likewise declared that "we are honest with our own people and are not seeking nuclear weapons and are prepared for any verification." We are at a moment of decision; if we do not resolve the nuclear issue, time will be forfeited. In my estimation, we should permit the Agency's inspectors to enter Iran. This measure may constitute a form of preemption; otherwise, conditions will become severe. Developments indicate that if in any round of negotiations, we fail to approximate a final outcome, the probability of intensified tensions increases. Neither the United States desires war nor does Iran; that is to say, neither party exhibits an inclination toward warfare. The countries of the region are likewise sensitive to this matter, yet in light of the threat articulated by Trump, the probability of descent into tension and conflict remains conceivable. The prospect of sustaining simultaneous military confrontation with Israel and the United States does not even admit conceptual accommodation. Civil unrest, domestic dissatisfaction, subsistence conditions, and the instability of the international system have collectively engendered an atmosphere of general precariousness; nevertheless, endeavors must be undertaken, to the greatest extent feasible, to diminish the existing tensions.

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