

Iran-US MoU to manage conflict, not end it

INTERVIEW

The signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Iran and the United States constitutes the most paramount development, for which not only the region but also the world, in a certain sense, awaits with bated breath. Nevertheless, the vicissitudes and fluctuations along the path of achieving this understanding, given the parameters governing Tehran-Washington relations, have induced some analysts to predict the signing of this memorandum as extremely close and others as extremely remote.

According to statements made by Abbas Araghchi, Iran's minister of foreign affairs, negotiations between the two countries are currently underway to arrive at an understanding. The examination of this memorandum of understanding within various capitals proceeds slowly for numerous reasons, among which the most significant are the absence of decisive resolution within the White House and the hesitations confronting Donald Trump as he contemplates this decision. Decisions, each of whose adoption will entail particular repercussions and consequences for his political future, as well as for the interests of the United States and Washington's regional and extra-regional allies.

Trump's perplexity in arriving at a definitive and consistent position has caused analysts, in their assessment of this approach, to scrutinize diverse scenarios, the spectrum of which extends from economic rationales to pervasive psychological pressures.

In order to investigate the factors that have induced indecision in the US president and slowed the negotiation process, an interview was conducted with Rahman Ghahremanpour, an analyst of international affairs.

Rahman Ghahremanpour



The process of message exchange between Iran and the United States is characterized by sluggishness. Considering that this process is consequential for nearly the entire world, what are the causes of these protracted interruptions? The spokesperson for Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs identifies the approach of the American president and the incessant revisions of the draft as the principal impediment. What is your analytical assessment in this regard?

GHAHREMANPOUR: The optimistic answer to the question is that, given the profound disagreements existing between the two parties, sluggishness in the exchange of messages is a natural phenomenon. Furthermore, negotiations are not conducted directly, and Iran typically transmits these messages through intermediaries and facilitators; hence, this delay and sluggishness are natural. However, if we were to adopt a pessimistic perspective, one could assert that perhaps this delay in message transmission and information exchange serves to enable the United States and Iran to compensate for their respective deficiencies in military combat and to prepare for another war.

In any case, to render a judgment on this matter, we must ascertain whether precise information exists or not. Currently, we do not possess precise and publicly available information explaining why Trump is acting with delay and why, despite having expressed satisfaction with the agreement, he refrained from signing it recently.

Decision-making for the American president regarding the war with Iran has, at least superficially, become difficult. Is Trump incapable of deciding? Or does indecisiveness and the current condition constitute a component of his primary strategy?

The reality is that he, like any other politician, is subjected to multiple and contradictory pressures. On one hand, Democrats, on the eve of the congressional midterm elections, repeatedly proclaim that Trump has been defeated in the war with Iran, that he has, contrary to his campaign promises, embroiled the United States in another war, that he has been deceived by Netanyahu's rhetoric, and similar allegations.

On the other hand, ultraconservative Republicans such as Lindsey Graham and others exert pressure upon Trump to initiate another war and bring the matter to a conclusive end. Moreover, at the regional level, some American allies, such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, desire that the United States not commence another war, whereas other allies, such as Israel, desire that the United States enter another war once more.

Furthermore, economic considerations and the impact of this crisis upon the global economy constitute another variable influencing Trump's decision. According to a report by the International Energy Agency, the consequences of the Strait of Hormuz blockade and the world's energy reserves will reach a dangerous phase within the coming month; therefore, if this trend continues, the price of oil may increase substantially. This, too, represents a concern for the United States.

On the other hand, we know that the



The illustration shows, from left to right: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth, US President Donald Trump, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

● STEPHEN P. KELLY/GETTY IMAGES



If Iran and the United States succeed in reaching a durable agreement, the United States can restrain Israel. Indeed, during the Barack Obama era, we witnessed that Benjamin Netanyahu's efforts to dismantle the JCPOA did not succeed. Israel, because of its special relationship with the United States and also because of the intertwinement of security and political considerations between the United States and Israel, cannot act entirely contrary to Washington's wishes. In the past, whenever disagreements between the two parties have been serious, Tel Aviv has typically preferred to retreat.

interest rate on United States Treasury bonds has increased, and this indicates a rise in long-term inflationary expectations within the United States, which is not favorable news for Trump. Hence, theoretically, one can comprehend why Trump cannot decide with ease.

Some believe that Trump's strategy for postponing the memorandum of understanding consists of gradually reopening the Strait of Hormuz through targeted military strikes. Would such a strategy, given that Iran also responds to those strikes and that the primary losers are the regional countries, prove efficacious?

Whether Trump intends to reopen the Strait of Hormuz through limited military actions, or in other words through a "liberation project," currently remains ambiguous. Among the ambiguities is the fact that, if this action, namely a rapid liberation operation, is not executed successfully, it could itself transform into a protracted crisis, contrary to its original objective.

In other words, if Trump's objective is that the Strait of Hormuz be reopened and the global economy attain a stage of confidence, a conflict that becomes prolonged could exacerbate uncertainty within the global economy and markets. A third factor of importance to Trump is the non-participation of Europe and NATO in this operation, a circumstance that could escalate costs for the United States.

Assuming the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Iran and the United States — which the American secretary of state also considers not very distant — which scenarios from the United States should we anticipate? Or, fundamentally, is a definitive cessation of war and the withdrawal of American forces from the Persian Gulf (the forces augmented since the February war) even possible, given all the disagreements between the two countries? Or will these tensions recur intermittently?

What is currently under discussion is, in fact, a provisional agreement or a memorandum of understanding for the continuation of the status quo and the perpetuation of a cease-fire, which does not necessarily mean the attainment of a durable agreement, nor necessarily means war. In effect, this memorandum of understanding extends the status quo so that the two parties may discover an honorable resolution for exiting this conflict because defeat would entail consequences for both sides. Neither does the United States wish to be perceived as defeated in this war, nor does the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Therefore, if the memorandum of understanding is signed, the two parties will have an additional two months to arrive, through practical action and via message exchange, mediation, and reassessment of their respective capabilities and resilience, at the conclusion of what constitutes the most appropriate path for exiting the existing conflict.

The Israeli regime and Netanyahu, in particular, are evidently the most significant obstacles to arriving at an understanding at this juncture. Will Trump be capable of restraining the Israeli prime minister? And if not, what future can be imagine for any peace process in the region?

If Iran and the United States succeed in reaching a durable agreement, the United States can restrain Israel. Indeed, during the Barack Obama era, we witnessed that Benjamin Netanyahu's efforts to dismantle the JCPOA did not succeed. Israel, because of its special relationship with the United States and also because of the intertwinement of security and political considerations between the United States and Israel, cannot act entirely contrary to Washington's wishes. In the past, whenever disagreements between the two parties have been serious, Tel Aviv has typically preferred to retreat.

Hence, in this instance as well, Israel's behavior will depend on the type of Iran-US agreement, as well as of that agreement's durability and stability. Indeed, within Israel, there exist groups that believe that, if Trump reaches an agreement with Iran, Israel will have no choice but to accept it and should not endeavor to destroy that agreement because doing so would, in effect, threaten American interests in the region.

The interview first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, R-La., shrugs as he and the GOP leadership talk about a resolution to limit the US president's war powers, during a news conference at the Capitol in Washington, on March 4, 2026.

● J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP