

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

Abbas Al-Zein

13.06.2025

Pressure leverage:

How the US and Iran weaponize negotiations

Washington and Tehran are not simply negotiating – they are employing instruments of coercion to dictate the terms of regional order. Understanding the tools each side brings to the table is key to understanding the stakes.

The question today is not whether Washington and Tehran will reach a nuclear deal or descend into open war. It is how both are using the illusion of diplomacy to escalate and reduce confrontation. As Gaza burns under Israeli bombs and western powers scramble to protect their interests, the US–Iranian talks have become a battleground for shaping the region’s future through pressure, not compromise.

This is not about centrifuges and inspectors. At stake are the very rules of engagement in West Asia – rules that Tehran seeks to reshape through force-multiplying alliances with resistance factions, and that Washington seeks to preserve through its military, financial, and political stranglehold in various parts of the region.

The Islamic Republic’s ties to Palestinian, Lebanese, Iraqi, and Yemeni resistance movements, its growing deterrent posture, and its centrality to the Axis of Resistance are all on the table. So too is Tel Aviv’s role as an instrument of US aggression in the region.

Meanwhile, the US is not negotiating in isolation but from a position deeply entangled in Israeli military operations and an expanding regional war doctrine. Trump’s overt alignment with Tel Aviv and pursuit of unchallenged dominance across [energy and trade routes](#) remain the backdrop to these talks. Washington’s presence at the table is inseparable from its broader effort to reinforce western hegemony by rolling back Iran’s influence.

This is not a negotiation between equals seeking common ground. It is a contest of coercive capabilities, where threats, sanctions, and proxy escalations are deployed not to reach peace but to extract capitulation. The process, if it deserves the name, is one of strategic blackmail dressed up as diplomacy – a fragile choreography of threats masquerading as talks.

US threats masquerading as diplomacy

From Washington's standpoint, Iran is currently vulnerable; therefore, negotiations are a more feasible channel to apply pressure on Tehran. After years of economic attrition, internal unrest, and geopolitical isolation, US policymakers believe Tehran can be pushed into concessions on its [nuclear program](#), on its ties to the Axis of Resistance, and on its longstanding influence within the Palestinian struggle.

But the language of US negotiation is not compromise; it is a preemptive threat. The entire architecture of US diplomacy with Iran hinges on the notion that pressure yields results. This is not a diplomatic innovation, but a continuity of Washington's hegemonic tradition in the region.

When Trump "warned" Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu against striking Iran to preserve diplomatic channels, Tehran did not miss the subtext: If talks fail, [Israel will be unleashed](#). Tel Aviv, in this framework, is not a rogue actor, but an American pressure tool – an extension of US power cloaked in plausible deniability.

Gaza, too, has been weaponized. Washington's blanket support for Israeli war crimes sends a message: De-escalation is conditional on Iranian retreat. Even diplomatic developments – such as the proposed Hamas [ceasefire](#) – are filtered through this lens of pressure, signaling to Tehran that any path to calm requires Iranian concessions elsewhere.

In [Lebanon](#), the US has shifted from managing escalation to actively enabling it. Washington's latest endorsement of Israeli airstrikes in Beirut's southern suburbs marks a new precedent: pre-approved aggression. This is not deterrence. It is escalation-as-negotiation, using the Lebanese front as coercive messaging in Washington's indirect dialogue with Tehran.

Sanctions remain Washington's most potent economic bludgeon, now reinforced by the European "[snapback](#)" threat. But Iran has made clear that any hostile International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) resolution – no matter how European its face – will be read as a US move, and met with direct consequences. Tehran has [warned](#) that politicizing the IAEA process will jeopardize the entire negotiation track, and potentially trigger Iran's exit from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) altogether.

“Its response to any escalation from the agency will have a direct impact on the course of the ongoing indirect talks,” political sources told [Al Mayadeen](#), emphasizing that Iran will not accept “the use of technical decisions as tools of political pressure.”

The US strategy weaves military, economic, and psychological pressure into a single matrix. Every policy shift is calibrated to increase Tehran’s costs while preserving Washington’s strategic flexibility. The goal is not dialogue for peace, but submission through attrition.

Iran's counter-leverage

Iran enters these talks not as a supplicant, but as a force that has mastered the calculus of pressure. It has no illusions about US intent, and wields its own cards with tactical precision. Tehran’s approach is rooted in resilience and asymmetry – a recognition that its strength lies not in parity, but in the ability to impose costs on its adversaries through unconventional means.

Any Israeli or US strike will, Tehran warns, spark a region-wide eruption – not as provocation, but as the logical extension of US vulnerability. US [military bases in the Persian Gulf](#), naval presence in key maritime chokepoints, and reliance on uninterrupted energy flows all provide Iran with asymmetric advantages.

When it comes to Israel, Iran is not only rhetorically signaling defiance. Its threats are strategic, aimed at altering the foundational deterrence equation. Tehran has publicly revealed its interception of a massive trove of [intelligence on Israeli military and nuclear facilities](#) – information that could calibrate future retaliation. This is not posturing. It is doctrine.

Equally vital is Iran’s framing of Gaza and Lebanon – not as liabilities, but as frontlines of shared struggle. Where Washington sees them as tools of pressure, Tehran sees them as arenas of resistance. Any US effort to exploit these fronts risks flipping them into political demands: Restrain Tel Aviv, or negotiations collapse.

Iran’s doctrine of layered resistance uses a web of regional partnerships to extend deterrence beyond its borders. Whether through Hezbollah’s readiness on the Lebanese front or Yemen’s Ansarallah-aligned armed forces’ expanding [strategic reach in the Red Sea](#), Tehran signals that escalation anywhere could trigger consequences everywhere.

The nuclear file remains Iran’s ultimate card. Though it insists the program is peaceful and doctrinally bound by a religious fatwa, Tehran has begun to suggest that existential threats could prompt a [doctrinal shift](#). If diplomacy becomes a trap, enrichment may evolve from a bargaining chip to a deterrent umbrella.

Iran’s power projection also draws from its integration into a shifting Eurasian bloc. Strategic ties with [Russia and China](#) – both under sanction pressure themselves – create an alternate

pole of support, reducing Tehran's dependence on western economic systems. This eastward pivot is not merely tactical but existential, positioning Iran as a key node in the emerging multipolar order.

Additionally, Iran's influence over non-state actors – from Hezbollah to the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) in Iraq – gives it a unique advantage: the ability to activate pressure points without crossing thresholds that trigger open war. This dynamic allows Tehran to communicate red lines while maintaining deniability.

Negotiation or managed confrontation?

What we are witnessing is not diplomacy in the traditional sense, but a duel of deterrence. Washington is practicing “proxy deterrence” through Israel and economic coercion, while Tehran employs flexible deterrence: signaling escalation without closing the door to talks.

Each side calculates that negotiation is cheaper than war, but only if the terms reflect its relative power. There is no trust. Only cost-benefit analysis. The resulting talks resemble a standoff more than a settlement process, with mutual red lines enforced through implicit threats rather than mutual understanding.

But coercive tools do not operate in a vacuum. The genocide in Gaza, enabled by the US, has become a moral and strategic rupture. No deal can be struck while Iran's allies are being massacred with US approval. And Washington, for all its posturing, remains unwilling to curb Israeli escalation, undermining its own negotiating credibility.

Diplomacy and warfare have become indistinguishable. The same tools – missiles, sanctions, militias, media – are used to both negotiate and threaten. Any settlement, if reached, will not emerge from consensus but from a temporary equilibrium of force. And even then, it may serve only as a pause before the next battle.

The lesson is clear: In this phase of US–Iran relations, the real negotiation is not about uranium enrichment or inspections. It is about who can bend the regional balance of power without breaking it, and which instruments of coercion can be wielded without tipping into catastrophe.

Until that balance is struck, every round of talks will be shadowed by [missiles](#), every gesture of diplomacy backed by [gunboats](#), and every whisper of peace drowned out by the logic of pressure.

JUN 10, 2025