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Iran Pulse

## 5 potential scenarios for Iran deal

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[Seyed Hossein Mousavian](#) April 13, 2018



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#### Article Summary

With only weeks to go until US President Donald Trump faces a deadline to sign sanctions waivers, the nuclear deal with Iran could go very different places.

US President Donald Trump listens during an event on tax cuts in the Rose Garden of the White House, Washington, April 12, 2018.

President Donald Trump's tapping of Mike Pompeo and John Bolton for secretary of state and national security adviser, respectively, should do away with any pretense that the US administration wishes to "fix" the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). While Trump has long telegraphed his desire to undo the nuclear deal, Pompeo and especially Bolton have long advocated regime-change [policies toward Iran](#), including war. As the May 12 deadline for Trump to renew sanctions waivers under the JCPOA approaches, five scenarios exist for how Trump's "[fix it or nix it](#)" saga on the accord will play out.

The first possible scenario is that Europe gives in to Trump's demands and agrees to new sanctions on Iran over its regional activities and ballistic missile program. In this case, Iran will benefit even less from the nuclear deal, especially given how much of its JCPOA-ordained sanctions relief has already been stymied by US sanctions and threatening rhetoric. Even in this scenario, there is no assurance that Trump will still not seek other ways to kill the deal. For instance, Iran may choose to remain in the deal but would retaliate against regional sanctions by forgoing any regional cooperation with the West. In recent months, Iranian diplomats have met with their European counterparts to discuss regional issues, including in [London](#) and [Munich](#). [Hamid Baeidinejad](#), Tehran's ambassador to London, recently stated, "Iran and Britain have made important decisions to take action to end this [the Yemeni] crisis." If Europe joins in on new non-nuclear sanctions, this vital diplomatic path that has started may be suspended.

The second potential scenario is that Trump follows through on his rhetoric, withdraws from the JCPOA but chooses not to block European business dealings with Iran through secondary or extraterritorial sanctions. In this scenario, Iran's response will depend on the reaction of the remaining powers that negotiated the deal. If Russia, China and, most importantly, Europe act proactively to uphold the JCPOA and oppose further US efforts to undermine it, Iran will be incentivized to remain in the agreement. However, Trump would kill chances for US-Iran regional dialogue and cooperation with Iran and increase Iranian opposition to US interests in the region. Given that the United States is entangled in several quagmires, including Afghanistan and Yemen, Iran could — instead of potentially facilitating face-saving solutions that allow for an American departure — seek to increase the cost of America's presence.

Third, Trump may withdraw from the JCPOA and reimpose all US nuclear-related sanctions, including secondary sanctions targeting international trade with Iran. In this case, European trade with Iran might collapse, leaving Iran with what would be in effect a JCPOA minus the entire West — and not just the United States. European countries will find it difficult to resist the United States, and any token measures they take to placate Iran will not make a difference. Thus, Iran will be left with the option of leaving the JCPOA but remaining in the nuclear nonproliferation treaty (NPT). This would terminate the voluntary nuclear transparency measures Iran has agreed to under the JCPOA, such as its implementation of the Additional Protocol to its International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreement and the limits on its uranium enrichment program — including its commitment to restrict enrichment to below 5%. For example, Iran's nuclear chief [Ali Akbar Salehi](#) has said that if such a decision is made by Iran's establishment, Iran will "only need four days to ramp up 20% enrichment" at its fortified Fordow nuclear facility. Russia and China will be more open to an Iranian nuclear program confined to the NPT if Trump is to blame for the JCPOA's failure, not Iran. The United States will not, however, and can be expected to push for harsher coercive policies short of war — leading Iran into greater alignment with Russia and China in confronting Western aims in the Middle East and beyond.

The fourth potential scenario is for Trump to leave the JCPOA and pursue an agenda of bringing maximum pressure on Iran, including paving the way for war. This will spur powerful voices in Iran to push for withdrawing from the NPT and follow the North Korean model to bring the United States to the negotiating table. In other words, the conventional understanding regarding North Korea is that the United States will not attack it because it has nuclear weapons, and the reason Trump now wants to negotiate with North Korea while he is increasing pressure on Iran is that the former has nuclear weapons. The strength of the case for this option would not be little in Tehran, as its adherents can argue Iran has not been afforded its rights under NPT rights and that the treaty has in effect become a vessel for punishing Iran. There will also be a greater chance that Iranian military commanders will take steps to play a greater role in the country's politics to confront warmongers in Washington, Tel Aviv and Riyadh. This scenario would mark the worst point in the history of US-Iran relations and heralds the potential for another devastating Middle Eastern conflict that would dwarf the costs of the Iraq war for the United States.

The fifth and the most prudent scenario is that Europe convinces Trump to fully implement the JCPOA in return for the European powers — along with possibly the United States, China and Russia — engaging Iran in serious negotiations over regional disputes. The fact is that Iran has fully abided by its commitments under the agreement, as has been [repeatedly verified by the IAEA](#), and the JCPOA is an international obligation for the United States as it was endorsed by a UN Security Council resolution. This scenario holds the prospect of finding political solutions to regional crises that would address Trump's long-time accusation of malignant Iranian designs in the region. It would also allow for progress on efforts to build on the JCPOA and establish a formal regional nuclear weapons-free zone.

Found in: [Iran deal, US President Donald Trump](#)



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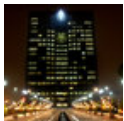
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**Amin San** • a day ago

There is a sixth option which may be difficult for Iran to swallow and that is to give up the right to enrich uranium. Something like the 123 nuclear agreement. If Khamenei's fatwa is not to make a nuclear weapon, what does this dancing around on enrichment from 3.5% to 20% get you? You can't be half pregnant. North Korea has developed nuclear weapons and therefore has leverage. Iran even at 20% will have no such leverage. It is a threat but not a leverage. Time to come to terms with reality. What has Iran's pursuit of the nuclear right brought Iran or its people in the last 25 years? Pride, may be, but a lot of misery. Iran's economy is not in the best shape. Time to think this through. There are many countries without nuclear weapons, they all survive and prosper.

2 ^ | ▾ • Reply • Share ›

**Count Iblis** → Amin San • 18 hours ago

Iran's pursuit of enrichment forced the Bush Administration to accept Iran's right to pursue a peaceful nuclear program without enrichment in 2006. Before 2006, the US didn't even accept that Iran could operate nuclear power plants fueled by Russia. In the 1990s, Bill Clinton signed legislation that imposed sanctions on companies that would deal with Iran on nuclear matters. This was way before Iran decided to pursue enrichment.

Before that, the US had successfully pressured Germany to get out of the Bushehr project, leaving Iran with a half finished reactor. Russia then stepped in and they were then pressured by the US to get out. The Iranians could therefore not be sure if Russia would be able to finish the reactor, let alone fuel the reactor. At that time before the Putin era, Russia was a lot more pro-Western than today, but companies like Rosatom were not yet dealing with the West all that much so they were insulated from US sanctions. But this would not last forever, so Iran needed to make sure that it could deal with Russia bowing out of the Bushehr project or not being able to fuel it due to US sanctions.

Since pursuing enrichment would be even more objectionable to the US than operating a nuclear program without any enrichment activities and the US was imposing sanctions on the latter activities, the only way Iran could get equipment for enrichment was by violating the IAEA transparency rules and buying whatever they needed in the black market. Any attempt to get the equipment via the normal channels would fail because the IAEA transparency rules would allow the US to see who is dealing (legally) with Iran and they would then be subject to US sanctions.

[see more](#)

2 ^ | ▾ • Reply • Share ›

**muhtia** → Amin San • a day ago

Sorry I do not think this is about enrichment. It is all about Israel. If Iran gives up resistance against Israel and accepts the Israel as a lawful state, they would probably have no worries about enrichment. Look at Saudis. They are being encouraged to build their reactor and their aggressive plans are being entertained.

2 ^ | ▾ • Reply • Share ›

**Justnfree** → Amin San • a day ago

Iran already kept enrichment under 3%. The 20% enriched Uranium is need for Tehran research reactor that produces isotopes for medical and industrial use.

^ | ▾ • Reply • Share ›

**Amin San** → Justnfree • a day ago

As I said before, you can't be half pregnant. Either get a nuclear weapon or give up nuclear enrichment. This half step has not helped Iran. There may be a thousand uses at 20% but there are a number of countries that don't enrich and are able to survive and prosper. This half step has been a yoke around the neck and has brought nothing but misery!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Jennifer K** → Amin San • a day ago

Half pregnant analogy doesn't apply. You can enrich to low levels for other purposes but still not be in nuclear weapon business.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Amin San** → Jennifer K • a day ago

I am not talking theory. I am saying that given the situation that Iran is in now, what options does it have.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Justnfree** → Amin San • a day ago

Japan, Germany, Brazil and Argentina are half pregnant. Why are they not sanctioned or condemned, or vigorously under inspection?

If there is anything illegal about it let me know.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Amin San** → Justnfree • a day ago

You are right but we don't live in an ideal world. These countries can get away because politics plays a big part. One of the comments by Muhtia is that it is all because of Israel, that is correct. The question is that given the situation, where do you go from here.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Justnfree** → Amin San • a day ago

So it's rule of jungle then, stop lecturing about what Iran should or shouldn't do. Iran didn't break any law. Those who accuse Iran are lying.

All are slaves of bunch of racist war criminals Zionists, while pretending to care for peace, democracy and freedom. How disgusting and pathetic is that? Thank you for admitting it.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Lost in america** • a day ago

The decisions are predicated on the view of Iran as a monolith. Making that assumption just reinforces the equally simplistic foreign policy of the regime.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Liberacion** • an hour ago

There are mainly three realistic scenarios:

1. Trump decides to pull the United States out of the deal so that he can say he did the opposite of Obama, yet refrains from interfering yugely (not a typo) with the Europeans' handling of the deal. The deal's prospects of continuing in this scenario become uncertain.

2. Trump pulls the United States out of the deal and proceeds to try to push sanctions. Iran also leaves the deal and increases enrichment, eventually developing a breakout capacity. Asian countries do not return to sanctions. Europeans split over the matter, but some take trade and legal action to block the ability to sanction their companies.

3. Trump, perhaps restrained somewhat by Mattis, decides to keep the United States as a participant in the deal. U.S.-

Iran relations remain icy in the near-term, Europeans slowly expand business.

Basically, it always boils down to end of deal = Iran increasing enrichment action. Whether the deal survives now largely depends on what Trump does.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Y.K.** • 16 hours ago

This is an oververbose list of threats, since the first three scenarios are essentially identical. If, for example, Trump repeals JCPOA and doesn't issue secondary sanctions, he will as soon as "Iran seeks to increase the cost of America's presence". All of the threats here are empty. Iran is already aligned with Russia and China, pulling out of the NPT is a suicide pact, trying to attack American troops will backfire since Iranian presence is just as vulnerable (we saw the wailing after the recent T4 attack by Israel), and having Iranian military commanders take a greater role in governance would be an \*improvement\*. That's almost a good case for arguing Iran can't do much more than it already does post-JCPOA.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**psage** • a day ago

Its obvious what is going to happen, iran's known nuclear sites will be destroyed in a covert strike

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**alejandro casalegno** → psage • 19 hours ago

Yes.....like the pathetic "Covert" yesterday attack in Syria ???

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**psage** → alejandro casalegno • 18 hours ago

Don't know anything about that but i do know that rogue regimes have lost their nuke reactors before

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Justnfree** → psage • 12 hours ago

When ever you're ready! The only rogue regime in region is going to lose a lot more than a reactor.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**psage** → Justnfree • 10 hours ago

Haha the iranians don't have the tech to fight america or israel face to face, they would lose easily

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Justnfree** → psage • 10 hours ago

Hezbollah didn't have that either.

What are you waiting for?

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**psage** → Justnfree • 8 hours ago

Even you aren't so delusional to believe that the party of satan stands a chance in a real war

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**moosehorn** → psage • 6 hours ago

The Satanic Zionist entity is counting on the US to fight its dirty wars.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**psage** → moosehorn • 6 hours ago

Not really the idf is one of the world's strongest militarys. I doubt if they were allowed to fight with no restrictions that Hezbollah would last a week or two

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**pbsdafsd mbewew** • a day ago

The Iranian nuclear program can be understood by grasping one fact. There were no scientific, logistical or security reasons for locating the Fordow enrichment plant where it was placed. None. Zero. Zilch. Nada.

Its location, however, is a theological stone's throw from Qom, and from the well at the Jamkaran Mosque. THAT is the reason Fordow was put there.

And THAT says, the theocracy will make toilet paper of whatever agreement it chooses to sign, if doing so advances the theological objective.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**R. Arandas** • a day ago

Well, I guess North Korea already has nuclear weapons, and the West doesn't seem to have done much, but so possibly Iran might be thinking, why can't it have the same thing?

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Free man** • 2 days ago

A thorough and serious analysis.

In addition, Trump's behavior must also be taken into consideration. He keeps his election promises meticulously, he acts authoritatively, he is close to Saudi Arabia and Israel and he wants to please his base.

So my conclusion is that he appointed Mike Pompeo and John Bolton with the aim, among other things, to present a firm stance against Iran. A position that will be expressed in a number of levels and by a number of countries, evidence of which can be seen for a long time.

So a variation of the fourth scenario is the most logical.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Justnfree** → Free man • 2 days ago

From day one of negotiation, Khamanei said Americans can't be trusted. They are liars and deal breakers. He was right, now rest of the world know he was right.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Free man** → Justnfree • a day ago

Do you know the concept of self-fulfilling prophecy ?

The mullah regime does not understand "American English".

When Khamenei says that Iran's greatest enemy is the United States, when demonstrators at official rallies in Tehran shout "Death to America", when an Iranian ship "takes captive" American soldiers (All this during negotiations and after signing the agreement). Americans believe what they hear and see. And the American response is clear and predictable.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Jennifer K** → Free man • a day ago

Absolutely right. Also, People in power like Pompeo who is in his mid 50s experienced the hostage crisis as teenagers. It was a tense and humiliating experience and the feeling hasn't gone away.

Every time you see the rallies in Tehran, all those feelings come rushing back.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Justnfree** → Jennifer K • a day ago

Imagine how Iranians feel every time they see missiles, air strikes, chemical attacks, lies of international community, wars, terror attacks, etc. Imagine how Iraqis and Afghan feel. Imagine how people in South East Asia feel.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**roumeli** → Justnfree • 15 hours ago



The Vietnamese, who have more reason to be angry than anyone since the Apache, can't get close enough to the US. They want more trade, more defense cooperation, etc.

Iran is not a normal country, although the people are generally good people. Most Iranians don't dislike America. They know that anything that the government says is the opposite of truth, including all this death to America stuff. The Iranian government is extremely lucky that the US has not taken them out and changed the regime.

There is always time, however

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Ali** → roumeli • 43 minutes ago

Too bad China and Russia don't agree

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**IranMan** → Justnfree • a day ago

and many people in Africa, South and Central America feel, too.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**roumeli** → IranMan • 15 hours ago

Not really. Those days are over.

But congratulations- Bolivia voted with you guys over the Syria Strike.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**IranMan** → Jennifer K • 21 hours ago

Only the simpletons. There are many smart Americans who are not stuck in the past as you are.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Justnfree** → Free man • a day ago

So what? Yankees don't understand Persian, Arabic, Russian or Chinese. As the matter of fact most of Iranians know some English because it's part of their official school program, but Americans don't speak language of countries they are invading or interfering in their business. They didn't know the language of native Americans whom they wiped out and took their land. They didn't understand their own language when Iranian foreign minister was speaking with it to them. They just understand one language.

American boat violates Iran's waters, they get captured, their intentions would be investigated, if they didn't do any harm or intend to do so, they get freed. Which is exactly what happened. It's basic international law. Problem is you think Americans are above that and everyone must bow down to them, but Iranians don't.

What Americans see or hear doesn't matter. Most of it are lies anyway. International law is the frame work of how countries should interact to one another.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**roumeli** → Justnfree • 14 hours ago

"Yankees don't understand Persian, Arabic, Russian or Chinese. As the matter of fact most of Iranians know some English because it's part of their official school program, but Americans don't speak language of countries they are invading " Yes, but over 1,000,000.00 Iranian Americans live the US. They include many of the most talented and gifted Iranians Most of them do not like your regime at all. If America invades Iran, there will be whole lot of native Farsi speakers among the soldiers and administrators.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Free man** → Justnfree • a day ago

By "does not understand American English" I meant the lack of understanding of mentality, and the inability to communicate with the Americans. Look at my answer to iranman above.

Iran intended to humiliate the American sailors. There is no need to make excuses. In a democratic society, public opinion is all that counts. The leaders do what their voters want. A person who lives in a country ruled by a totalitarian religious regime will not understand that.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**IranMan** → Free man • 21 hours ago

"Glib man", opinions can be manufactured. And indeed they are, especially in "democratic" societies.

Two words for you to chew on: Cambridge Analytica.

Get a clue!

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**IranMan** → Free man • 21 hours ago

If you have to explain yourself repeatedly, then you're the one who does not understand, capisce?!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Free man** → IranMan • 12 hours ago

I use Western / American expressions on a Western website.

The American who read them understood and agreed completely, but you and your Iranian friend didn't.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**IranMan** → Free man • a day ago

"The mullah regime does not understand American English."

-Ali Akbar Velayati, senior advisor to Khamenei, and former foreign minister. Graduate of John Hopkins University.

-Ali Akbar Salehi, Head of the Energy Organization of Iran. Graduate of MIT.

-Javad Zarif, Iran's FM. Graduate of San Francisco State University, University of Denver.

To name a few who "don't understand American English".

Do you?!

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Free man** → IranMan • a day ago

Did you really think I meant "American English" literally , or you are playing dumb .

Interpretation of what I wrote : the mullah regime doesn't understand the American mentality . The mullah regime doesn't know how to communicate positively and constructively with the United States.

It seems that the mullah regime is doing all it can to alienate the Americans .

The people whose names you wrote speak the language but don't know how to communicate with the Americans.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**IranMan** → Free man • 21 hours ago

The IRI high officials, and many influential Iranian people are keenly aware of the American people's powerlessness to influence the decisions made by the cabal that makes up the American establishment, including the character who claims to "drain the swamp."

Who can forget the huge multi-city demonstrations organized against the GW's, and his mainly neo-con handlers, decision to start the war in Iraq?! What did the American people managed to do in that case? Nothing!

By the way, that goes for the people's anti-war Iraq war demonstrations in the "democratic" Europe,

too.

High time for you to get a clue!

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Free man** → IranMan • 12 hours ago

1. My father had a clue so he left Iran, without looking back. So my family and I have a good life in the West.
2. You seem to live in the West physically but mentally you are still living in Iran.
3. You and other supporters of the mullahs regime swim against the current (this is an expression). And the current is getting stronger (expression again).
4. Did you notice what the coalition against Iran did on Friday?

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Ali** → Free man • 42 minutes ago

Nothing at all. They did nothing at all. Iran has gotten stronger under Trump

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

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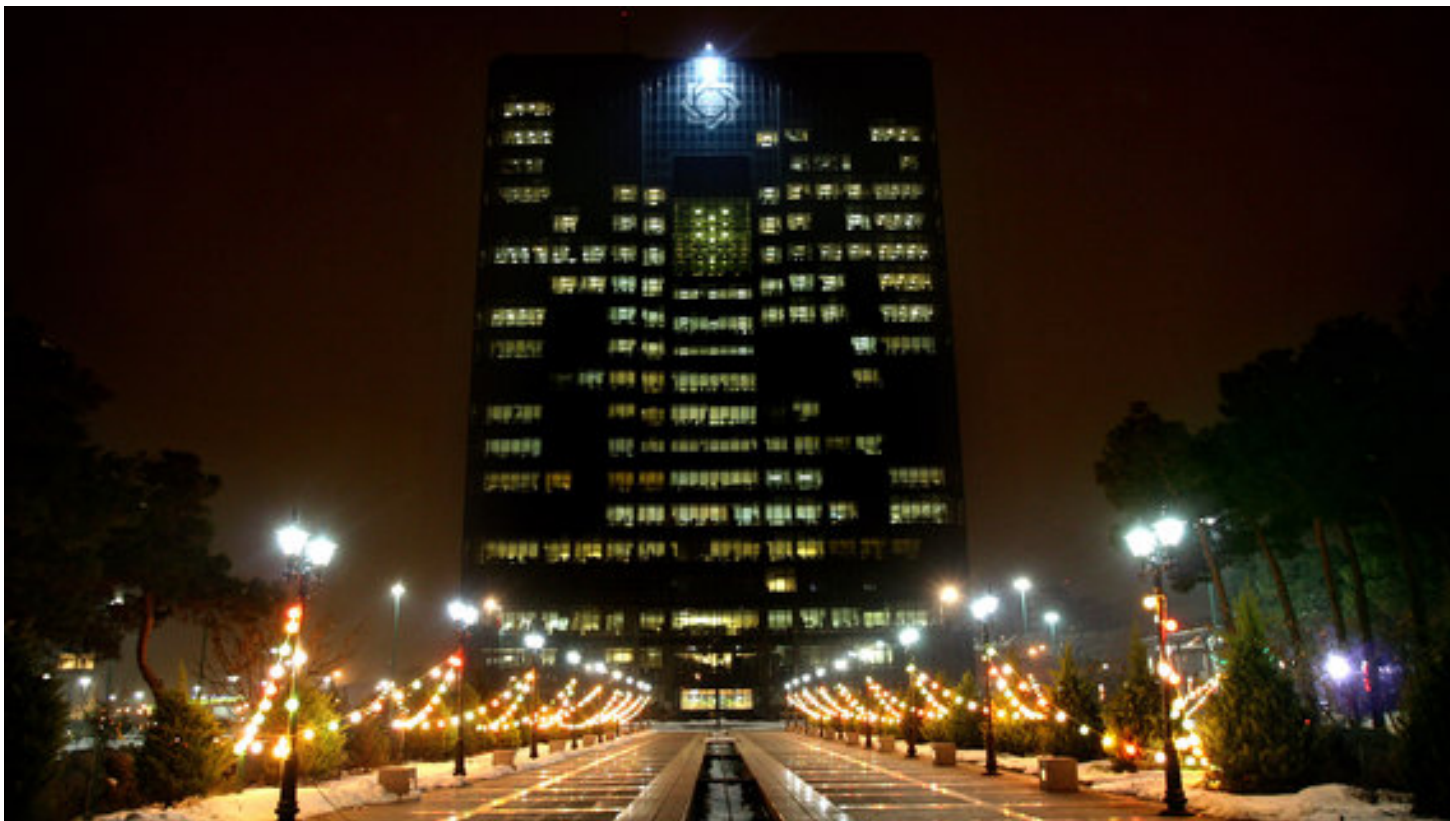
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