

**OPINION / IRAN**

## **Iran will wait for Trump to lose power**

*Iran has no reason to talk to a hostile, war-mongering administration which may lose power very soon.*



by **Seyed Hossein Mousavian**  
26 Sept 2018



US President Donald Trump sits in the chair reserved for heads of state before delivering his address during the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly on September 25, 2018 [Reuters]

Before his speech at the United Nations General Assembly, US President Donald Trump tweeted: "Despite requests, I have no plans to meet Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. Maybe someday in the future. I am sure he is an absolutely lovely man!"

The tweet came after weeks of speculations that a meeting between Trump and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani might take place on the sidelines of the UNGA sessions.

Indeed, such a meeting did not happen, not because the US president tweeted his refusal, but because the Iranian side is simply not interested. Last year, the Iranian government had to turn down requests from the White House for such a meeting eight times and this year President Rouhani again emphasised that his government is not interested in holding direct talks with the present US administration.

There are several reasons why Iran really doesn't want to talk to Trump.

First, it sees no reason to abandon the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which took many years of hard negotiations to conclude. Former US President Barack Obama also saw the JCPOA as the "most robust and intrusive inspections and transparency regime, ever negotiated for any nuclear programme in history," based on "unprecedented verification."

The provisions of the deal addressed the main concern of the international community: that Iran's nuclear programme remains compliant with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and limits its work to civilian projects. It was ratified by all governments involved and endorsed by the United Nation's Security Council in Resolution 2231.

Over the past three years, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has reported that Iran remains in full compliance with the provisions of the JCPOA deal. Given that Iran has stuck to its end of the deal and all sides have recognised it as a comprehensive and rigorous agreement, it does not see a reason to negotiate a different one.

Second, the current US administration has been employing hawkish policies, war-mongering and constant threats as a strategy to bring Iran to the negotiating table. Under the influence of Israel, it is seeking to establish an anti-Iranian military alliance in the Middle East.

While such an approach might have worked with North Korea, it is highly unlikely that it would yield a positive result with Iran. This behaviour has left Tehran doubting the readiness of the Trump administration to negotiate in earnest. Furthermore, by withdrawing from a deal approved by a previous US administration and the UN Security Council, the world's top rule-enforcing entity, the Trump White House casts doubt on its own commitment to observing agreements and being a reliable negotiating partner.

Third, the present US administration has been seemingly pushing for regime change in Iran. Top officials such as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and National Security Adviser John Bolton have been at the forefront of such efforts. What government on earth would engage with a partner that is publicly pushing for its violent overthrow?

Fourth, Iran would not negotiate with a hostile government which might itself soon lose power. The possibility of Trump getting impeached is growing by the day. The process of impeachment could soon be triggered over violations of the emoluments clauses of the US Constitution or over alleged complicity with Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election. And if the Democrats gain control of Congress in the November midterm vote, that possibility would get that much higher.

But even if Trump does not get impeached, he is likely to lose his bid for re-election in 2020. His current approval rating is lower than that of any of the nine presidents who preceded him. The fact that leaders of the whole world burst out laughing when he claimed in his General Assembly speech that his administration has accomplished more than any other in US history is highly indicative of where he stands in the eyes of the world and his own people.

Given these unfavourable circumstances, Iran may wait for Trump to lose power and seek to engage with his successor who in all likelihood would be a better negotiating partner. And the Iranian government is not in a hurry at all. Its European partners, who stood by the JCPOA and their commitments despite pressure from the Trump administration, just offered to establish a legal entity that will process payments to Iran and effectively circumvent the US sanctions. China and Russia are also likely to join this new arrangement.

In other words, Iran can easily wait another two years for a new administration to be elected in the US. In the meantime, if Trump somehow decides to drastically change his rhetoric and approach, the Iranian government might reconsider and talk to him.

***The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera's editorial stance.***

---