Trump, Iran and Israel: The perils of a narrow nuclear deal

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 11.02.2026

Meir Ben-Shabbat: from Iran's perspective, the very existence of negotiations already constitutes a strategic gain. From the standpoint of the Iranian regime, the very fact that talks are taking place already provides it with a series of benefits.

Talks blunt international pressure, weaken the morale of regime opponents, and gradually erode the credibility of military action. Time is Tehran's most valuable asset. By dragging out negotiations, Iran seeks to turn diplomacy into a containing and wearing mechanism" that exhausts its adversaries while preserving its own freedom of action.

From Israel's perspective, the worst outcome is not war but a bad agreement, because it would give the regime oxygen to breathe at its most difficult moment.

A narrow deal would enable continued military buildup, strengthen Iran's regional posture, and institutionalize future crises. A situation in which there is no agreement at all is preferable to a bad agreement, since sanctions would remain in place and continue to undermine the regime's survivability.

The challenge for the United States and Israel alike is ensuring that the display of American power near Iran does not become a substitute for strategic rigor. Lasting security will not come from managing Iran's ambitions, but from ending them. Until then, even the largest armada offshore cannot compensate for a deal that trades long-term stability for short-term convenience.

Published in JNS, February 11, 2026.

