



ISSUE DESCRIPTION



COMMITTEE Disarmament and International Security Committee
ISSUE Reviewing the Iran Nuclear Deal
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Introduction

The Iran nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), is an agreement between Iran and several world powers, like the United States, which was signed in 2015. The deal's purpose was to ease the tension and prevent conflict between Iran and its regional states, like Saudi Arabia and Israel by monitoring the nuclear program of Iran. "ii. The full implementation of this JCPOA will ensure the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program."

In exchange for limiting its nuclear activities and allowing international inspections, the United Nations lifted economic sanctions related to Iran's nuclear program. However, in 2018, the United States of America stepped back from the agreement and announced that it will reinstate the previously lifted sanctions. Donald Trump, former president of the United States of America, announced the withdrawal because Iran was allegedly not in compliance with the JCPOA. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which was responsible for the monitoring of nuclear actions, cleared the allegations. Even after the end of the deal, the IAEA announced that they will have regular access to information about Iran's nuclear program.

In retaliation for the withdrawal and deadly attacks on prominent Iranians, Iran resumed stocking up uranium. In 2019, the stockpile limit of uranium was reached, and Iran announced its intention of continuing the enrichment of the substance.

In April, 2021, negotiation restarted about the restoration of the JCPOA in Vienna. It was stated that Iran must reverse any steps that are inconsistent with its nuclear-related commitments, however, the country insists on the lifting of sanctions first.

Although the talks were paused in June as a new Government took office in Iran, they continued in November with a goal of returning to the original terms. On 19 June, Ebrahim Raisi won Iran's presidential election. He is conservative and he has expressed his commitment to reviving the JCPOA. The president's pick for foreign minister, Hossein Amirabdollahian, is a career diplomat whose main expertise is in West Asia affairs, signaling the administration's focus on prioritising

ties with the region. The new Government assured the other countries that they are ready to return to full implementation. In 2021, Joe Biden stated that the USA would also want to return to the deal. The main goals of the two countries are aligned, they do, however, disagree on the steps that need to be taken by governments and other entities in order to reach them.

Definition of Key Terms

Sanction: an official order, such as the stopping of trade, that is taken against a country in order to make it obey international law

Enriched uranium: an isotope of uranium that is a critical component of nuclear weapons

Proliferation: the fact of something increasing a lot and suddenly in number or amount

General Overview

The aim for the Nuclear Agreement was to curb Iran's ability to create nuclear weapons by dismantling its nuclear program to an extent in exchange for lifting sanctions on the country.

WHY WAS THERE A NEED FOR AN AGREEMENT?

Prior to the JCPOA Iran had already agreed to obtain from the development of nuclear weapons in the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty in 1970. According to the views of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's (leader of Iran from 1941-1979) on nuclear weapons, they were the gateway to industrialisation and a symbol of modernisation. The Shah was personally involved in the nuclear program, he complained that US safeguard requirements for nuclear cooperation with Iran were "incompatible" with Iran's "national sovereignty."

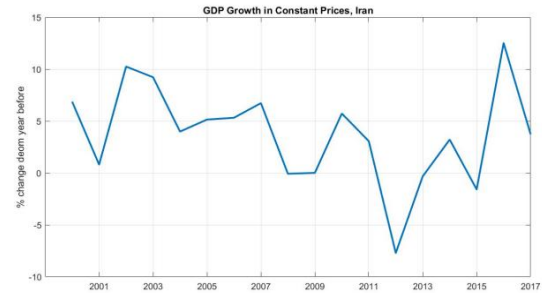
His goal was to diversify the energy resource of Iran with nuclear power and to defend the state without triggering a regional nuclear arms race.

However, after the overthrow of the Pahlavi Dynasty in 1979, the situation changed. One of the pillars of the Islamic Revolution was independence. Revolutionary leaders argued that nuclear technology was too expensive and it would make Iran dependent on western technology, thus contradicting the pillar. During the Iraq-Iran war, between 1980-1988, nuclear work resumed.

Prior to the JCPOA, there had been negotiations with Iran for years, offering its government various incentives to halt uranium enrichment. After the 2013 election of President Hassan

Rouhani, who was viewed as a reformer, the parties came to a preliminary agreement to guide negotiations for a comprehensive deal.

Heading into the JCPOA negotiations, U.S. intelligence officials estimated that, in the absence of an agreement, Iran could produce enough nuclear material for a weapon in a few months. Iran's interest was the cut of sanctions, which was more than a 100 billion dollars in revenues between 2012-2014.



Islamic Republic of Iran's GDP in constant prices year-on-year growth rate between 2000 and 2017. Source: FRED Databank, FRB St. Louis.

CONTENTS OF THE IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is a detailed, 159-page agreement with five annexes reached by Iran and the P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) on July 14, 2015. The nuclear deal was endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231, adopted on July 20, 2015. Iran's compliance with the nuclear-related provisions of the JCPOA is verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) according to certain requirements set forth in the agreement.

In the JCPOA it was stated that "The full implementation of this JCPOA will ensure the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program." Iran agreed not to seek, develop or acquire any nuclear weapons. However, Iran could use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, under the relevant articles of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in line with its obligations therein.

According to details of the deal published by the US government, Iran's uranium stockpile will be reduced by 98% to 300 kg (660 lbs) for 15 years. The level of enrichment must also remain at 3.67%. There are two uranium enrichment facilities in Iran—Natanz and Fordo. The Natanz facility will be limited to installing no more than 5,060 of the oldest and least efficient centrifuges for 10 years. At Fordo, no enrichment will be permitted for 15 years, and the underground facility will be converted into a nuclear, physics and technology centre.

The implementation of JCPOA followed by lifting of all the UN Security Council sanctions as well as all economic and financial embargoes by the United States and the European Union imposed on Iran's banks, insurance, investment, and all other related services in different fields, including trade, technology, finance and energy.

Iran will be required to provide the International Atomic Energy Agency access to all of its declared facilities so that the agency can be assured of the peaceful nature of the nuclear program. "The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will be requested to monitor and verify the voluntary nuclear-related measures as detailed in this JCPOA."

IMPACT

The IAEA certified in early 2016 that Iran had met its preliminary pledges; and the United States, EU, and United Nations responded by repealing or suspending their sanctions. Most significantly, U.S. President Barack Obama's administration dropped secondary sanctions on the oil sector. Prior to the JCPOA, Iran's economy suffered years of recession, currency depreciation, and inflation, largely because of sanctions on its energy sector. With the sanctions lifted, inflation slowed, exchange rates stabilised, and exports—especially of oil, agricultural goods, and luxury items—skyrocketed as Iran regained trading partners, particularly in the EU. The deal nearly collapsed when President Trump reinstated the sanctions. In a bid to keep the agreement alive, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom launched a barter system, known as INSTEX, to facilitate transactions with Iran outside of the U.S. banking system. However, the system is only meant for food and medicine, which are already exempt from U.S. sanctions.

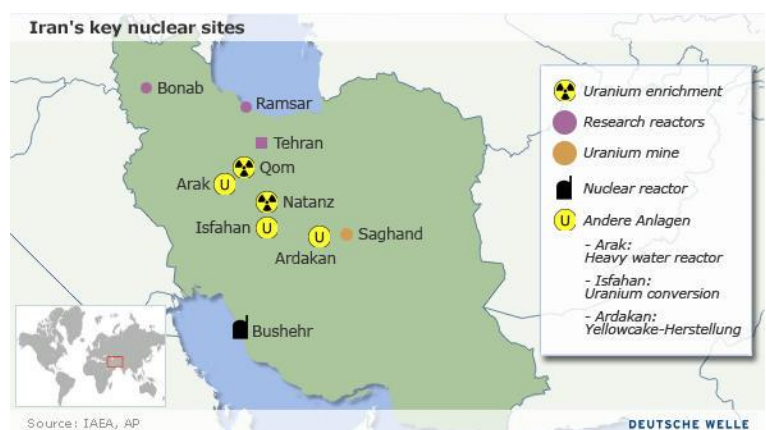
After the step back from the deal, Iran's export of oil and petroleum declined and their currency fell further against the US dollar. With sanctions deterring international trade, black markets have boomed at the expense of the regular economy.



IRAN'S NUCLEAR ACTIVITY AFTER 2018

Iran exceeded the limit of uranium, which was stated in the agreement. Since then, the country has been enriching the uranium to an even higher concentration, but it is still not sufficient to create a nuclear weapon.

A report of the IAEA from November 2020 said that Iran has further developed a centrifuge technology, which was strictly prohibited by the JCPOA. The report also states that Tehran holds 12 times the allowed enriched uranium permitted under the 2015 agreement. In 2020, there were attacks on the enrichment plants and one of them (located in Natanz) was destroyed by physical sabotage by Israel. There



has also been an assassination against the former head of the Iranian Atomic Energy Organisation.

In retaliation, by 2021 Iran increased their uranium by 60% compared to the amount they stocked before the JCPOA, they announced new restrictions on the IAEA's ability to inspect its facilities, and soon after ended its monitoring agreement with the agency completely.

Major Parties Involved

Iran: In the JCPOA, Iran agreed to stop the production of enriched uranium and plutonium and they agreed that the nuclear facilities will do civilian work, like medical research. Iran also agreed to monitoring and verification. Iran's representative said the Plan of Action can only be restored and implemented if all necessary conditions are met in real terms. His country is not imposing any preconditions or new conditions. (7 December 2021. Vienna)

United States of America: The USA's representative stated that they are ready to return to compliance with the original deal if Iran does the same. They are ready to lift sanctions if Iran returns to the negotiation with urgency. "The United States cannot allow Iran to accelerate its nuclear program and slow-walk its nuclear diplomacy, which is unfortunately what is happening at the talks in Vienna," she said.

France, Germany and EU countries: The European countries have lifted sanctions according to the JCPOA. They stated that the European countries were alarmed by the fact-paced development of Iran's nuclear program. They urged Tehran to fully cooperate with the IAEA.

Russia: Discouraged EU countries from judging Iran's negotiating position, because it is still developing. They highlighted that the USA withdrew from the deal and they should not put pressure on Iran and make destructive steps to the deal by doing so.

Timeline of Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

2015 – Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

2018 - President Trump announces the withdrawal and re-issuing the sanctions.

May, 2018– The representatives of Germany, UK, France, and other EU countries negotiate on future coordinated work

March 6, 2019- The JCPOA Joint Commission meets in Vienna and all parties reiterate their commitment to the full implementation of the JCPOA.

July, 2019 - It is confirmed that Iran has reached the limit of enriched uranium gas allowed.

April, 2021- Negotiations restart in Vienna

June 19, 2021 - Ebrahim Raisi wins Iran's presidential election. A conservative, he has expressed his commitment to reviving the JCPOA.

July 6, 2021 - The IAEA reports that Iran has initiated the production of uranium metal enriched up to 20 percent.

November 29, 2021 - The seventh round of talks to restore the JCPOA begins in Vienna, five months after the sixth round concluded.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Reviewing the nuclear deal has been a long process with lots of negotiations, however, a new agreement has not been reached yet. There has been a total number of 8 talks in Vienna with no success of the restoration. Joe Biden and the EU leaders are ready to settle the agreement, but they want Iran to stop the forbidden activities first. Iran does not accept any preconditions and the negotiations are moving at a very slow pace. The leaders of the EU and USA fear that if Iran continues its activities and develops even more uranium, then it will be impossible to return to the original deal.

Possible Solutions and Approaches

The future of the agreement is still uncertain. Joe Biden announced that the USA is ready to rejoin the agreement if Iran returns to compliance. He also said that he wants to negotiate a broader agreement that addresses Iran's other activities, such as its missile program.

On the other hand, the leader of Iran stated that the "Regional and missile issues are non-negotiable". Since the election of Ebrahim Raisi, the negotiations are stalling. In August 2021, Raisi nominated Hossein Amirabdollahian as foreign minister. Some analysts say Amirabdollahian could boost his political influence and thus enable him to bring Iran back to the negotiating table.

The agreement can only be made if Iran and the USA agree on the terms. One possibility is that Iran stops the nuclear development and agrees to the USA's preconditions. That way, they will no longer have to face the sanctions on their economy.

A different outcome occurs if the USA lifts the sanctions first and then Iran has to agree to the terms as well. The USA demands inspections and reports to prove that Iran is in compliance with the deal.

The end goal is a future without a threat of nuclear weapons. This agreement is one of the most important steps to reach this goal, but it can only happen if the world-leading countries negotiate successfully.

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