

Committee: DISEC

Topic: The question of the future of the Iran Nuclear Deal

Chair: Nadine Sjahsam

School: Ste Victoire Int'l School

Summary

Also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the Iran Nuclear Deal is a deal agreed upon in 2015 between the P5+1, the European Union, and Iran. The aim of this deal was to “normalise Iran's relationship with the rest of the international community in the areas of trade, technology, finance, and energy”, as well as limit the possibility of nuclear arms being built. According to the framework established, Iran would reduce their uranium stockpiles, keep them at low refinement, and reduce their centrifuges, all in exchange for lifted sanctions. Iran would also adhere to monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on all declared and suspected nuclear sites, as well as military sites on request.

Over the past few years, the future of the Iran Nuclear Deal has become an increasingly urgent topic, especially after the withdrawal of the USA under President Trump in 2018. Since then, sanctions on Iran have been reinstated, and Iran has since boosted their uranium enrichment to 20%; far exceeding the limit set by the JCPOA.

Definition of Key Terms

P5+1: The UN Security Council's 5 permanent members, i.e. the United States, the United Kingdom,

Russia, France, and China—plus Germany

nuclear site: site used to manufacture and/or refine uranium to construct nuclear weaponry

centrifuge: machine used to enrich uranium

sanctions: limitations on trade put in place by another country or organisation

Background Information

Iran has long had a tenuous relationship with the USA especially, dating back to 1979 when radical students held hostages in the American embassy in Tehran, causing the USA to react with sanctions which were lifted upon the embassy's release in 1981 under the Algiers Accord. Sanctions were reimposed in 1987 in response to Iran's support of non-state terrorist organisations such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza.

Sanctions related to nuclear development were placed on Iran for the first time in 2006, in response to Iran refusing to comply with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1696, which demanded that Iran stop its uranium enrichment. Sanctions placed upon Iran by the USA and the EU have expanded to include a large number of sectors, including the missile/arms industry, the nuclear industry, the energy/petroleum industry, banking, the shipping industry, international trade, and insurance. Sanctions against Iran are not only in place because of their nuclear programme, but also because of violations against human rights and support of terrorist organisations. With the rollback of Iran's nuclear activity, the US may be willing to lift some of their nuclear related sanctions; however, Iran wants all of their sanctions lifted in exchange for their cooperation.

The beginning of the development of Iran's nuclear program dates back to 1957, after Eisenhower's 'Atoms for Peace' speech. The cause for the beginning of Iran's nuclear program was a "proposed agreement for cooperation in research in the peaceful uses of atomic energy". In 1967, the US equipped Iran with a 5-megawatt nuclear research reactor, powered by highly enriched uranium. Since then, Iran has expanded their plants. Although Iran has recently declared they are enriching their uranium, it is still not clear whether they intend to develop nuclear weapons or not. Despite this, the possibility of a nuclear equipped Iran is an issue because it could be the catalyst for the beginning of an arms race in the Middle East.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Iran - Iran has had their economy halted by the numerous amounts of sanctions imposed. Because of this, they hoped to reach a comprehensive agreement and have some of their sanctions removed by complying with the restrictions. Since the US' withdrawal, though, they have been largely uncooperative as they are unsatisfied with the previous deal.

United States of America (USA) - The USA pulled out of the JCPOA in 2018 under Trump, who called the JCPOA a "horrible, one-sided deal that should have never, ever been made". He followed his declaration by adding more stringent sanctions on Iran. Since Biden has entered into office, his cabinet has stated that they are interested in reviving the deal, but only as a stepping stone.

China - China continues to trade with Iran despite the sanctions from the US, which opens them up to the possibility of being sanctioned as well. Every P5+1 country intends to follow the conditions outlined in the JCPOA.

France - French companies such as Total and Peugeot Citroen have previously entered deals with Iran and continue to trade.

Germany - German industrial equipment manufacturer Siemens, has multi-billion-euro contracts with Iran for rail, power plants and other projects.

United Kingdom

Russia - Russia and Iran have historically been allies since the fall of the Soviet Union.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) - The IAEA is an independent organisation that strives to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to prevent its military use.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description
1979:	The Iranian Revolution and the seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehran result in a severing of U.S.-Iranian ties and damages Iran's relationship with the West. Iranian nuclear projects are halted.
January 19, 1984:	The U.S. Department of State adds Iran to its list of state sponsors of terrorism, effectively imposing sweeping sanctions on Tehran.
1992:	Congress passes the Iran-Iraq Arms Nonproliferation Act of 1992
October 18, 2015:	Iran and the P5+1 formally adopt the nuclear deal. Iran begins to restrict its nuclear program. The EU announces it passed legislation to lift nuclear-related sanctions on implementation day.
May 8, 2018:	President Trump announces that he is withdrawing the United States from the JCPOA and signs a presidential memorandum to institute the "highest level" of economic sanctions on Iran. British Prime Minister May, German Chancellor Merkel and French President Macron re-state their continued commitment to the deal and pledge to work with all parties to make sure its terms are upheld.
May 20, 2019:	Iran announces it will quadruple uranium enrichment output at Natanz and says it will soon surpass the 300 kilogram limit on uranium gas enriched to 3.67 percent set by the deal.
January 16, 2020:	Iranian President Hassan Rouhani announces that Iran has exceeded pre-JCPOA levels of enriched uranium production.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

February 1970: Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). This treaty is the basis of international cooperation on stopping the spread of nuclear weapons by promoting disarmament, nonproliferation, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

July 31, 2006: UN Security Council Resolution 1696. The Security Council demands that Iran halt its uranium enrichment programme.

December 23, 2006: UN Security Council Resolution 1737. Imposes sanctions against Iran for failing to stop its uranium enrichment program following resolution 1696.

July 17, 2017: Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This treaty prohibits the use, threat of use, development, production, manufacturing, acquisition, possession, stockpiling, transfer, stationing and installment of nuclear weapons or assistance with any prohibited activities.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

April 8, 2009: Following an Iran policy review by the new Obama administration, the United States announces that it would participate fully in the P5+1 talks with Iran, a departure from the previous administration's policy requiring Iran to meet UN demands first

April 14, 2012: Iran meets with the P5+1 in Istanbul for talks both sides call "positive." They agree on a framework of continuing negotiations with a step-by-step process and reciprocal actions.

January 20, 2014: Implementation of the Joint Plan of Action begins. The IAEA issues a report on Iran's compliance with the deal.

July 20, 2015: The UN Security Council unanimously passes a resolution endorsing the nuclear deal and the lifting of UN Security Council nuclear sanctions once key steps are taken in the deal.

June 20, 2021: Talks in Vienna adjourned, both sides say significant gaps remain. Since April, Ebrahim Raisi, Iran's top judge, is set to be Iran's next president. He is set to be inaugurated in August and holds ultra-conservative views. He claims that Iran is open to discussions but will not succumb to Western "pressure".

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Possible Solutions

- Continuing to attempt to foster a positive working relationship with Iran and the European Union.
- Trying to negotiate a similar deal with Iran, but modifying aspects of previous deals that weren't effective.
- The UN might consider making concessions such as temporarily lifted sanctions as a show of goodwill, such as removing sanctions on sectors such as banking or other sectors outside of nuclear production.
- Attempting to reduce hostility towards Iran in negotiations to attempt to convey a more willing approach. As there is still no proof that Iran is developing a nuclear weapon, talks may be more fruitful if approached with more openness towards Iran.
- Attempting to also reach conclusions that are reasonable not only for Iran, but for neighbours such as Israel and Saudi Arabia as well.
- Iran might also consider opening themselves up for further investigation as a show of willingness to reach a peaceful solution.

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