



# Discussing Iran's nuclear activity in the light of the Iran Deal

Committee: IAEA

Student Officer: The Chairmanship

**Forum:** International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

**Issue:** Discussing Iran's nuclear activity in the light of the Iran Deal

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## Introduction

In 2015, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, otherwise known as the Iran Nuclear deal, was signed by the P5+1 (USA, UK, Russia, China, France, Germany) and Iran, together with the European Union. Under the terms of this deal, Iran agreed to significantly decrease its nuclear activity and open its facilities to international inspections, in return for billions of dollars worth of sanctions relief. The main goal of this deal was to prevent a resurgence of Iran's nuclear weapons program, in the hope that this would decrease the tensions between Iran and its rivals, mainly Saudi Arabia and Israel. However, in 2018, President Donald Trump Jr of the United States of America withdrew from the deal, for a multitude of reasons, and reimposed sanctions on Iran. Since then, tensions between Iran and the US have only increased, due to the American assassination of Qassem Soleimani, the Iranian general, and Iran bringing down an American surveillance drone. Iran responded to this by restarting their uranium enrichment program and increasing their support of terrorist groups. They are increasing their nuclear activity, and continue to edge closer to achieving the possession of a nuclear weapon. This must be addressed, as Iran possessing a nuclear arsenal would escalate the current conflicts and tensions in the region, and internationally, to an undesired level.

## Definition of Key Terms

### The joint comprehensive plan of action (JCPOA)

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), often known as the Iran Nuclear Agreement, is a historic agreement that was made between Iran and other superpowers, notably the United States, in July 2015. Following its provisions, Iran consented to destroy a substantial portion of its nuclear program and permit more thorough international inspections of its facilities in exchange for sanctions relief worth billions of dollars.

### Nuclear weapon

A nuclear weapon is a device that uses a nuclear reaction to create an explosion. This explosion is much more powerful than that of conventional explosives (like TNT). When a nuclear weapon explodes, it gives off four types of energy: a blast wave, intense light, heat, and radiation.

Nuclear weapons can be in the form of bombs or missiles.<sup>1</sup>

### Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (NWFZ)

Defined by the United Nations as:

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/multimedia/infographics/nuclear\\_weapon.html#:~:text=What%20is%20a%20nuclear%20weapon,light%2C%20heat%2C%20and%20radiation.](https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/multimedia/infographics/nuclear_weapon.html#:~:text=What%20is%20a%20nuclear%20weapon,light%2C%20heat%2C%20and%20radiation.)

"Any zone recognized as such by the General Assembly of the United Nations, which any group of States, in the free exercises of their sovereignty, has established under a treaty or convention whereby:

(a) The statute of total absence of nuclear weapons to which the zone shall be subject, including the procedure for the delimitation of the zone, is defined.

An international system of verification and control is established to guarantee compliance with the obligations deriving from that statute."<sup>2</sup>

The establishment of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZ) is a regional approach to strengthen global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament norms and consolidate international efforts toward peace and security.<sup>3</sup>

### **Uranium enrichment**

Uranium enrichment is a process where the percentage of natural uranium is increased from 0.7 per cent to about 3 to 5 per cent. This is for the use of fuel for nuclear reactors.

The enrichment of uranium is critical for civil nuclear power generation as well as for military nuclear weapons. The IAEA is there to monitor and control enriched uranium supplies and curb nuclear weapons proliferation. The IAEA further aims to ensure that nuclear power generation is done safely.

### **Ballistic missile**

a missile (= flying weapon) that has the power to direct it on its flight, but that continues and falls towards its target without power.<sup>4</sup>

### **Non-proliferation**

Preventing something from increasing or spreading. Now refers to the prevention of an increase in the spreading of nations possessing nuclear weapons and their production of them. Non-proliferation has a similar meaning to nuclear disarmament.

## **General Overview**

The JCPOA was signed in 2015. The exact terms of the agreement were that Iran would completely halt their production of medium-enriched uranium, cut its stockpile of low-enriched uranium by 98%, and reduce its amount of gas-centrifuges for 13 years. It also agreed that the IAEA would have access to all Iranian nuclear facilities, to ensure that Iran was keeping up their end of the deal. In return for abiding by the terms of the deal, Iran would receive relief from US, EU, and UNSC nuclear-related sanctions.

However, in 2018, Trump withdrew from the deal due to what he considered to be a few major flaws. First of all, he criticized the deal's temporary nature and believed that it rendered the deal useless in the long run. Secondly, while the deal does significantly hinder and effectively block Iran's ability to produce nuclear weapons, it lacks control over their ballistic missile problem, something he also considered to be a major problem. The deal also failed to address Iran's support of multiple terrorist groups. Due to these reasons, the US withdrew from the deal and reimposed sanctions on

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/nwfz/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/nwfz/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ballistic-missile>

Iran. After this, in 2019, Iran announced that they had breached the limit of their stockpile of low-enriched uranium set by the agreement, which the IAEA was able to confirm.

The most important development, however, came in the aftermath of what happened on January 3d, 2020. The United States of America, under orders from President Donald Trump Jr, conducted the Baghdad Airport Airstrike, where Iranian major general Qasem Soleimani was targeted and successfully killed by a US attack drone. In response to this, two days later, Iran announced that it would no longer abide by the terms of the JCPOA, and restart its nuclear development program without keeping in mind any of the limitations set by the deal. Iran did also state that it would continue to coordinate with the IAEA, which still leaves open the possibility for cooperation.

In December 2020, Iran expressed that it was willing to rejoin the deal, under the condition that the US also rejoin the deal and make promises regarding the lifting of sanctions.

The existence of some kind of agreement concerning this situation is of utmost importance because if Iran were to obtain a nuclear arsenal, it would thrust the region into a very high level of conflict and tension - and eventually possibly a crisis. Saudi Arabia has stated that if Iran were to successfully detonate a nuclear weapon, they would make it their priority to also obtain such a weapon, and Israel has taken preemptive military action against suspected nuclear activity in Syria and Iraq in the past. But any deal that would be negotiated could not be the same as the original one. Besides the critique of the original deal provided by former President Trump, Saudi Arabia and Israel also critiqued the original JPCOA, by saying that relieving sanctions benefitted Iran economically and allowed them to develop nuclear weapons in secret. There are therefore a great number of things that the delegates will have to take into account if they wish to negotiate a new type of agreement concerning Iran's nuclear activity and prevent escalation, and possible nuclear conflict in the region.

## Timeline of Key Events

| Date          | Event   |
|---------------|---|
| 2013          | The US and the P5+1 agree to form a deal concerning Iran's nuclear program.           |
| July 2015     | The JCPOA is agreed to by the P5+1, Iran, and the European Union.                     |
| May 2018      | The United States of America withdraws from the deal and reimposes sanctions on Iran. |
| 2019          | Iran begins exceeding the limits on low-enriched uranium.                             |
| Jan. 3 2020   | Qasem Soleimani is assassinated in the Baghdad Airport Airstrike.                     |
| Jan. 5 2020   | Iran announces that they will no longer abide by the terms of the JCPOA.              |
| December 2020 | Iran announces their willingness to rejoin the deal.                                  |

## Major Parties Involved

### Iran

Despite having signed the NPT, Iran has not abided by the deal. By neglecting to notify its uranium enrichment program, Iran was found to have repeatedly broken the terms of the accords in 2003, according to the IAEA. Iran, on the other hand, asserts that doing so for peaceful purposes is legal. Iran also claims that its nuclear energy program for civilian use includes the enrichment effort. The UN has urged for a peaceful solution to the problem and supports cooperation between Iran and the IAEA.

More recently Iran started exceeding agreed-upon limits to its stockpile of low-enriched uranium in 2019 and began enriching uranium to higher concentrations. Iran continued to backslide from its nuclear commitments in 2020 as a result of numerous attacks on its interests. Iran declared in January that it will no longer place restrictions on its uranium enrichment following the deliberate killing by the United States of Qasem Soleimani, a senior Iranian top general.

It started building a centrifuge production facility at Natanz in October to replace one that had been destroyed in a strike it claimed Israel was responsible for months earlier. And in response to the murder of a well-known nuclear scientist, which it also blamed on Israel, Iran's parliament approved a law in November that significantly increased uranium enrichment at Fordow. Iran declared fresh limitations on the IAEA's capacity to inspect its sites the following year, and shortly after that, the country fully cancelled its monitoring arrangement with the organization.

In December 2020, Iranian officials expressed further willingness to rejoin the deal, provided that U.S. officials make assurances regarding lifting sanctions and also rejoin the deal.

*\*As of now Iran has never been closer to reaching nuclear bomb-making capability.\**

### United States of America

As a part of the P5+1, the USA is part of the Iran Nuclear Agreement and asserted that a "historic understanding" had been reached with Iran and noted that the agreement with Iran is a positive one if it will help the US achieve its main goals, the reducing the nuclear energy production in Iran. However, The United States left the JCPOA in May 2018 after Trump promised to negotiate a stronger agreement. Trump left office without carrying out that promise, and researchers found that Iran has advanced in its nuclear weapons development since the American pullout.

A renewal of the agreement that restricts Iran's nuclear program may open the door for the US to end its sanctions against Iran and reinstate its energy exports to international markets. On the other hand, the likelihood of fresh deals is not very high given that President Joe Biden declared the JCPOA to be "dead" in early November.

### IAEA

The International Atomic Energy Agency aims to facilitate the peaceful use of nuclear energy and ensure assistance is not used for military purposes. The IAEA now has a more than essential role in the Iranian nuclear issue as it is the international community's eyes and ears monitoring the machines and scientists of the Iranian program. Its role is now even increasing with the growing concern about Iran's atomic ambitions.

The Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA) was drafted and signed by Iran and the IAEA in 1974 as a signatory to the NPT. It requires that monitoring and verification inspections be carried out by the IAEA to guarantee that Iran's declared nuclear materials are only used for peaceful purposes.

### United Kingdom

The United Kingdom, a part of the P5+1, is reconsidering its support and involvement in the 2015 Iran nuclear deal after a British-Iranian dual national was executed. Foreign Secretary James Cleverly has announced a series of measures in response to the execution, including further sanctioning the regime's persecutor general. He also stated that the sanctions show that the United Kingdom is serious about holding Iran to account for its "appalling human rights violations."

The British ambassador to Iran has temporarily been recalled to the United Kingdom for urgent talks about possible next steps. In its denunciation of the execution, Britain has garnered backing from the United States, France, and Germany, all JCPOA signatories.

### Russia

As a part of the P5+1, Russia plays a big role in the Iran Nuclear Agreement. Iran deepened its connections with Russia in a year that some had believed would see the resuscitation of the Iranian nuclear agreement and effective negotiation with the West.

The future of Iran and its international endeavours will have a big impact on millions of Iranians as well as on Ukraine, Russia, most of the Middle East, and the foreign policy of Western nations. The Biden administration went from supporting efforts to revive the Iran nuclear agreement to increasing sanctions against Tehran and denouncing it for supplying deadly equipment and military training to Russian forces battling in Ukraine.

The relationship between Russia and Iran is relatively good and Russia is more likely to support Iran in making new agreements. On the other hand, it is important to note that Russia probably not wishes Iran to become a nuclear superpower.

### France

As a part of the P5+1, France also has a lot to do with the Iran Nuclear Agreement. A "new framework" will probably be required to address the issue, French President Emmanuel Macron said, adding that he did not think any new suggestions could help revive a nuclear deal with Iran shortly.

Iran was urged by Western nations to provide an explanation for uranium traces discovered at three locations throughout the nation. Iran has agreed to allow the U.N. nuclear inspectors to visit (in December 2022) to offer information.

A global gathering of regional powers, including Iran, according to Macron, is something he hopes to organize.

### China

China is also a part of the P5+1, thus part of the Iran Nuclear Agreement. The relationship between China and Iran is relatively good. Seeing as the Chinese and Iranian foreign ministries signed the Iran-China 25-year Cooperation Program, also known as the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the I.R. Iran and the P.R. of China, in Tehran on March 27, 2021; the precise terms of the agreement have not yet been made public. According to a draft of the 25-year agreement that The New York Times previously obtained, China will invest \$400 billion in Iran's economy over that period in exchange for a consistent and significantly discounted supply of Iranian oil.

## Germany

The last member of the P5+1 is Germany. Berlin's main focus is on supporting the Iranian protest movement rather than jump-starting nuclear negotiations, a Foreign Ministry spokesman says. Germany further said that it sees no reason to revive the stalled talks on the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

"From our point of view, there are currently no indications or reasons for a resumption of the Iran nuclear negotiations," Foreign Ministry spokesman Christofer Burger told media representatives in Berlin.

Burger stressed that Berlin's main concentration was on supporting the Iranian protest movement rather than jump-starting the Iran nuclear talks.

"Our focus is not on the negotiations at the moment, but to be on the side of the people who are on the streets in Iran standing up to be able to live in freedom and dignity and to increase the pressure on Tehran to stop the oppression of the population through (new) likely round of sanctions," he Added.<sup>5</sup>

## European Union

For the European Union, the Iran deal is a big case. The European Union has implemented multiple sanctions on Iran, yet is hoping that the Iran Nuclear Agreement can be restored or that new agreements can be made.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/germany-says-it-sees-no-reason-to-resume-iran-nuclear-talks/2774743#>

## Previous attempts to solve the issue

A previous attempt to solve the issue is hard to define. The United States, for instance, views the enrichment of uranium in Iran by Iran as the issue, whereas Iran does not. Previous attempts to solve the issue were mainly the creation of a variety of agreements, of which the Iran Nuclear Agreement in 2015 was the biggest. Furthermore, there have been multiple negotiations trying to find an agreeable solution for all parties, which have not been a great success in solving the issue yet.

## Possible Solutions

It is more than clear that a new solution needs to be found to solve the current issue. To make this happen, all parties first need to be willing to cooperate. Because without cooperation no solution and no solution will be found, which would be a shame. In this process of cooperation, all the parties are encouraged to be willing to take a step back to make a compromise with the other parties involved. The delegates will of course determine whether this would happen during the debating time.

A solution to the issue could be restoring the Iran Nuclear Deal. This, however, is very unlikely as different parties do not believe that restoring the Iran Nuclear Deal would be a solution to this matter. But with good negotiation, this could of course be made possible.

A different solution could be the creation of a new agreement. Seeing as most parties were not satisfied with the last deal that was made, this new deal would need multiple changes as opposed to the Iran Nuclear Deal. What the exact changes in this potential new deal would be is up to the delegates to decide.

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