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**The U.S. Withdrawal from the JCPOA and its Effect on
Terrorism and Nuclear Proliferation.**

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Dedication

This modest work is dedicated to:

My parents,

My Sisters,

My brothers,

And my best friends.

Acknowledgment

All praise is to Allah, the Most Graceful, and most Compassionate the Almighty, who gave me strength and health to accomplish this work. I would like to thank my supervisor Mr. Dekhakhena Abdelkrim for his insightful remarks, guidance, kindness and help. I would also thank the members of jury, Mrs. Amiar Mounira and Dr. Boudechiche Hamid for accepting to evaluate this work. Special gratitude goes to Miss. Mebarki Asma, Miss Moumene Soumia, Mr. Aty Mourad, Mr. Zemmouri Layachi and Mr. Alizoui Mahfoud.

Abstract

This research intends to discuss the U.S withdrawal from the Iranian nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). It analyses the different phases of Iran's nuclear program and how the deal was reached. It primarily sheds light on the U.S. exit from the deal and its main effects. The deal aimed at lifting the sanctions imposed on Iran in return of stopping nuclear activities for a specific time. After a certain recovery for the Iranian economy, Trump's dissatisfaction with the deal led to his withdrawal and the reimposition of new sanctions. The Trump administration advanced a number of reasons for its exit. Iran has been specifically accused of supporting terrorist groups. Therefore, the withdrawal could escalate the situation and would lead to more complicated issues of retaliation. It may lead Iran to return to nuclear activities.

Key words: Nuclear deal, sanctions, U.S. withdrawal, terrorist groups.

ملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى مناقشة تداعيات انسحاب الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية من الاتفاق النووي الإيراني و المعروف باسم خطة العمل الشاملة المشتركة. يقوم هذا البحث على تحليل المراحل المختلفة لبرنامج إيران النووي وكيف تم التوصل إلى الاتفاق بالإضافة إلى انه يلقي الضوء على خروج الولايات المتحدة من الاتفاق و مختلف آثاره. يهدف هذا الاتفاق إلى رفع العقوبات المفروضة على إيران و التي كانت لها عدة سلبيات في المقابل وقف الأنشطة النووية لفترة محددة. بعد انتعاش الاقتصاد الإيراني مجددا أبدى الرئيس الأمريكي دونالد ترامب عدم رضاه و استياءه من الاتفاق أدى إلى انسحابه وإعادة فرض عقوبات جديدة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، إيران دولة متهمه من قبل الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية و القوى الأوروبية الأخرى بدعم الجماعات الإرهابية. وبالتالي ، فإن الانسحاب قد يؤدي إلى تأزم الوضع و عليه انتقام إيران و عودتها إلى الأنشطة النووية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاتفاق النووي ، العقوبات ، الانسحاب الأمريكي ، الجماعات

الإرهابية.

List of Abbreviations

AEOI	Atomic Energy Organization of Iran
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRGC-QF	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force
JCPOA	The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
JPA	The Joint Plan of Action
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PMFs/ PMUs	Popular Mobilization Forces/ Units
U.S.	United States
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

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General Introduction

Developing nuclear power is an aim that many countries want to achieve. However, the spread of nuclear weapons and using nuclear energy in harmful ways are forbidden. Therefore, signing different agreements and protocols could be a good solution to limit nuclear proliferation. But, sometimes these could not reach its goals and could be violated. Iran is a good example of a country that seeks to develop nuclear power within the volatile region of the Middle East which is dominated by the American influence and hegemony.

The Iranian nuclear program goes back to the 1950s under the Shah reign. With the aid of the United States program “Atoms for peace”. It received help from President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Although this aid ended with the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran stayed interested in having nuclear power but for peaceful purposes. With this interest and insistence, Western countries including the U.S. feared that Iran’s nuclear ambition was for developing a nuclear powerful state in the region. Thus, this issue became among the most important issues in the world. It led Iran to many negotiations and sanctions which ended up with the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in July 2015, which is an agreement between Iran and the P5+1 (US, UK, France, Russia, China plus Germany).

The aim of this study is to give an overview about the history and reasons of creating the agreement. Moreover, it intends to clarify the reasons of U.S. withdrawal. It tries to discuss the main consequences of the U.S exit. This study is significant because it is an investigation of one of the most sensitive issues in the international community. The information that would be given throughout this research would enrich the reader’s knowledge about the origins of the nuclear deal and the reasons that led to its signing as well as the withdrawal of U.S. - a crucial member of the agreement.

This research is going to discuss the implications of the Iran deal on the Iranian nuclear program and how the JCPOA was reached. In addition, it discusses the U.S. withdrawal from this deal and the main results that are left behind. Thus, it requires the use of the historical method. It would be suitable for describing the past events of Iran's nuclear program to facilitate the understanding of present events and developments concerning the JCPOA. Additionally, this research will be divided into three chapters. The first chapter will shed light on the origin of the Iranian nuclear deal. It will be divided into four sections; the first section tackles the history of Iran's nuclear program and its main phases. The second section discusses the negotiations that led the JCPOA. The third section is about the reactions toward signing the deal. The last section tackles another title which Iran's policies in the Middle East.

Moreover, the second chapter is going to discuss situation of Iran after the nuclear deal and Trump's withdrawal from it. It is divided into three sections; the first section discusses Iran's economy and regional policies after the deal. The second section tackles Trump's policy toward the JCPOA, his withdrawal and why he left it. The last section is about the main reactions toward U.S. leaving.

The last chapter is discusses the effects of U.S. withdrawal. It is composed of three sections. The first section discusses Iran's economy after the U.S. withdrawal and how the new sanctions affected on it. The second section tackles the Iranian relation with the Middle East and the impact of Trump's decision on it. The last section is about the future of the deal in the absence of the U.S. in addition to discussing the non-proliferation regimes relations with North Korea.

This study will look into the American opposition to Iran's nuclear program which stems from its interest in the region and the ambitions of American elite to dominate the

Middle East and defend its allies against the potential expansion of the Shiite influence in the region. It also looks into the possible outcomes of a momentous American foreign policy under the Trump administration.

Chapter one

1. History of Iran's Nuclear Program

Introduction:

Iran is a Middle Eastern country which is characterized by the richness in different natural materials especially oil. It is a significant member of the OPEC. Its economy is based on different activities like industry, agriculture, and exporting natural oil to different countries. Nuclear energy is among the main important industrial activities in Iran. Developing nuclear energy helps prospering other domains as medicine and agriculture. Therefore, Iran aimed at developing nuclear power and pursuing nuclear program in order to reach progress. Its nuclear program passed through multiple phases and faced several obstacles ranging from political to economic ones.

This chapter tends to discuss how the nuclear deal was reached after a long history of disagreements between the two countries. It is divided into four sections. The first section deals with the history of the Iranian nuclear program and the main phases it has passed through. The second section discusses the negotiations that led to the JCPOA and depicts the different circumstances underlying its conclusion. The third section shows how major countries reacted to its signing. The last section is about the role of Iran in the Middle East, its policy of supporting some specific groups and proxies in the region.

1.1. The Nuclear Program under the Shah Reign

Iran is a rich country mainly with natural oil. During the 1950s in the time of the downfall of its Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, the Iranians considered their country like any other rich country as being occupied by western world. So, they wanted Iran to be powerful and get rid of western sovereignty through developing nuclear power. At that time,

the shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi had the desire of promoting the Iranian Nuclear Program mainly to reach prosperity. His belief was that in order to be more developed Iran should imitate the western countries. Thus, promoting nuclear technology was a way not only of gaining power and getting rid of domination, but also for being prosperous (Joyner 4). In other words, nuclear ambition would lead Iran to self-government and advancement in different domains.



Fig.1. Major Nuclear Sites in Iran.

Source: "Iran's Key Nuclear Sites."

In 1957 after introducing the Atoms for Peace program by the American President Eisenhower, the US and Iran signed a deal of working together in developing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. This contract created an opportunity for the United States to widen its nuclear projects in Iran like medicine (Bruno). A reactor in Tehran Nuclear Research Center was bought in 1960. However this reactor began in 1967, a year later Iran signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty¹ (NPT) in 1968 (Wright 77).

During the 1970s the Shah increased his ambitions in promoting the Nuclear Program. In 1974 the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) was founded. In the same year Iran

¹ NPT: aims to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology to foster the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of disarmament.
<https://www.iaea.org/publications/documents/treaties/npt>

started to deal with western powers like France and West Germany. A clear example of this cooperation is the agreement with West Germany in constructing two reactors at Bushehr. By trying to obtain an entrance to the full fuel cycle, the Shah wished to preserve the choice of the progress of nuclear weapons. Moreover, the evolvments of laser enrichment technology as well as the obtaining of a plutonium reprocessing ability were the aims that Iran wanted to reach in the 1970s. Also, the United States had a big role during the 1970s. It displayed the documents of its government in 1974 until 1977 which represented its attitude against the Iranian reprocessing ability. Furthermore, the nuclear deal of 1978 which contained the right of depositing and getting back the reactor fuels in Iran was fixed by Washington (Wright 78).

1.2. The Nuclear Program during the Islamic Revolution and after it

The Islamic Revolution broke out in 1979 due to the Iranians modernization; its main goal was the change. The Iranian society wanted to be free, independent and ruled according to Islam. The crisis at that time was that the Shah's followers would not support him anymore mainly because of the American policy which on the one hand stopped its assistance to the Shah; on the other hand caused political problems (Hooglund 3).

The events of the 1979 affected the Iranian nuclear program as well as on the relations with the Western countries especially the United States. The Hostage Crisis was a major element that made the U.S. Iran relations more irritated. Thus, it led U.S. to stop nuclear partnership with Iran and impose sanctions. And due to the fact that the nuclear program was considered as an essential factor of technology in the Western world, the new government of Khomeini was at first against promoting the nuclear program (Joyner 11). The president of the Atomic Energy Organization Fereyduun Sahib declared on April 11, 1979 that the AEOI reduced its tasks (Cordesman and Al-Rodhan 107).

In order to complete the reactor of Bushehr, Iran in the 1980 started again to search for corporations but it failed in doing so. At that time, different companies from different countries wished to deal with Iran whereas did not reach anything (Cordesman and Al-Rodhan 107-108). A significant event in 1980 was the beginning of the Iran- Iraq war which also affected the Iranian nuclear program. Due to this war, the Iranian government started to renew its nuclear program for instance the research groups working on the US-supplied reactor at Amirabad Center were given different financial support despite that this reactor was guaranteed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) (Cordesman 367).

Moreover, the period of 1990s witnessed more progress concerning nuclear energy. During these years new sponsors became cooperative with Iran like Russia and China which were important partners. China for instance supplied Tehran with a range of materials and research reactors. At that time, the United States started worrying about these kinds of assistance and cooperation that's why it applied a harsh policy against those new sponsors. China was affected by the American pressure to cut its partnership with Iran but Iran continued working on the development of its nuclear program (Reardon 13-14).

After the 1990s, different events about the nuclear program happened. The changes during this new period became more interesting, developing the nuclear program became a serious issue in the international community and because of it Iran seized a big attention in the world. The new developments were the results of different events that the country has witnessed during the previous decade.

In 2002, the revelation of a secret Uranium enrichment installation at Natanz as well as a heavy water plant at Arak was done by an Iranian opposition group. A year later, a group from the International Atomic Energy Agency visited these secret facilities. This visit helped the group to find out that Iran had contraventions. Thus, Iran reached crisis and the only way

to lessen the irritation of this crisis was allowing the IAEA to have more visits to the nuclear sites (Pilat and Busch 43). In other words the IAEA feared that Iran would develop its nuclear energy and increase nuclear weapons secretly. Breaking the IAEA laws and gaining nuclear power not for peaceful uses would threaten the world peace.

2. The Nuclear Program Negotiations

After proving the existence of the two secret facilities, IAEA and the other powerful countries started to view this issue more seriously and they began negotiating it. Two different decisions were made; the United States wanted the issue to be held by the UN Security Council. Whereas, the United Kingdom France and Germany (EU-3) wanted the negotiation. As a consequence, signing a protocol to the non-proliferation treaty would help to widen the IAEA examinations. Moreover, they made another decision which is stopping temporarily the Uranium Enrichment works as well as continuing the negotiation process with the EU-3. Later on, in 2004 the Agreement of Paris regularized this decision (Reardon 15).

Furthermore, Iran returned to gas centrifuge as well as to Uranium enrichment at Isfahan facility after it had stopped these operations because of Paris agreement. Besides, in 2006 Iran was no longer abided by the Additional Protocol so that it did not provide the IAEA with sufficient information about its nuclear activities. Three years later, the situation became more serious and led the United States to enter the negotiations with the E-3 to discuss the issue with Iran. However, these negotiations did not arrive at any solution. Later on, the negotiators declared that Iran was attempting to develop a nuclear bomb through constructing a covert Uranium enrichment site that would facilitate the process of making nuclear bomb. After publicizing this event Iran turned this Uranium enrichment place under the protection of the IAEA (Albright and Stricker).

On March 2013, covert meetings have started only between the United States and Iran. After that in June, Iran presidency has changed and Hassan Rouhani took the office. Moreover in September, connection between United States and Iran was made and considered as the starting point of collaboration between them since 1979 (Lyons). That is to say, Hassan Rouhani with Barack Obama could arrive at better solutions together concerning Iran's nuclear issue.

2.1. The Joint Plan of Action (JPOA)

On November 24, 2013 in order to lessen the sanctions imposed on Iran's economy in return of giving up the nuclear program for a period of time, Iran and the P5+1 signed a deal that guarantees the previous requirements. The main goal of the deal was to stop constructing more centrifuges of Uranium enrichment as well as the development of the important nuclear facilities. All of this should be achieved in a period of six months. Besides, Iran should accept to be inspected by the IAEA everyday and to stop the heavy-water facilities. Thus, Iran was prevented from further nuclear developments. According to Rouhani, the deal could be understood from different sides depending on the situation of each party. For Iran, it still has the right of enrichment works. However, John F. Kerry replied to Rouhani by saying that the deal does not include "the right to enrich" (Gearan and Warrick).

In spite of the fact that the first period of accomplishing the Joint Plan of Action was specified from January 20, 2014 until July 20, 2014, it was expanded many times. Thus, November 24, 2014, was the time of the second expansion during which John F. Kerry stated that the deal has been applied exactly. This means that the two parties have been adhering to the main principles of the Joint Plan of Action (Davenport).

2.2. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

After implementing the Joined Plan of Action, more negotiations took place between the signatories until they reached another agreement. Despite that the governments of Iran and United States were against it, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was signed on July 14, 2015 between Iran and the P5+1. Under this deal, different prerequisites should be applied by Iran. Including the confirmation of an additional protocol, lowering the activities at Natanz, stopping the Uranium Enrichment for 15 years and transferring the Fordow enrichment place to research uses (“Iran Nuclear”).

By applying the deal the signatories will reach different purposes. The most crucial purpose is to prohibit Iran from developing a nuclear bomb. That’s why international community agreed to approve the resolution 2231 of the UN Security Council (Magri and Perteghella 20-21). Moreover, the JCPOA is composed of a major section which includes the main elements in addition to five principal annexes each one is for a specific issue. The second and the fifth annexes are very important, the former is concerned with the sanctions and the latter is concerned with the application of the deal as well as when the sanctions would be raised (“Information Note on EU sanctions to be lifted under the JCPOA” 3-4).

At the time of signing the JCPOA, it was hard to expect its continuing implications. It only reduces nuclear weapons production for a specific period of time and does not guarantee further nuclear activities when the limited period is over. Those who oppose the deal view that it will do nothing with the Iranian attitude toward the United States and will help Iran to have sovereignty in the Middle East. Whereas, those who support it see that nuclear weapons could be eroded and any military dispute between Iran and America would be prevented (Samore et al 8). In other words, the JCPOA is seen from two perspectives one is in favor of Iran and the other does not meet with the Iranian interests.

Detractors particularly in Iran and the United States welcomed the deal. They considered it a victory since they had previously a negative tendency in addition to the very hard negotiations. The “breakout time” is considered a critical feature of the JCPOA, because the American analysts previously stated that Iran could easily build a nuclear bomb. But Iran constantly confirmed that it did not aim at developing nuclear weapons. And what made the analysts think about Iran’s purpose of building weapons was the amount of centrifuges that Iran collected during the last years. More considerably, the final phrase in the initial passage of the deal is a crucial part of it, for asserting no more nuclear weapons in Iran (Cantey 75).

Different nuclear collaborations between Iran and other countries as well as the IAEA are included in the deal. The supply of nuclear fuel is among these collaborations. It aims at preventing Iran from making a nuclear fuel of its own. These collaborations do not include U.S. due to some parts of the IAEA which put limitations to any nuclear corporation between the two countries. Also the U.S. sanction laws prevent U.S. from involving in nuclear collaborations with Iran. But, for Iran the collaborations with other countries help in making its nuclear program more credible and transparent (Katzman and Kerr 15).

Additionally, some major tasks like supervising the movement of materials of nuclear activities and solving the conflicts associated with supervising the covert nuclear sites are the responsibility of the Joint Commission which is headed by Federica Mogherini. This Joint Commission is founded by the JCPOA for observing the deal’s application. Also, the facilities of the deal are confined to specific periods of time, that is to say; when the obligations of the agreement for instance the IAEA’s inspection of the secret nuclear sites would be finished (Laub).

The JCPOA according to the point of view of the P5+1 failed to meet all the standards phase since it did not address improving the last phase of nuclear weapon development which

is the delivery systems, but dealt with the first and second phases which are manufacturing materials of nuclear weapon construction and the use of these weapons. Thus, the deal was seen as an arms control deal rather than a non-proliferation one because both Iran and United States receive it differently (Tabatabai 240).

3. Main Reactions to the JCPOA

After the announcement of the Nuclear Deal, the international community reacted differently towards it. Many countries were in favor of the JCPOA and expressed their pleasure of reaching this agreement. In contrast, some other sides were against it due to different reasons.

3.1. National Reaction

Iranian people welcomed the deal; they considered it the candle of hope for their country. It is an effective way of reviving their economy and getting rid of isolation. They celebrated in the streets expressing their great pleasure and satisfaction (Nouri and Deghanpisher). This means that the deal marked a turning point for Iran especially at the economic level.

According to the President Hassan Rouhani the deal was a successful achievement. He said: “No one can say Iran surrendered; the deal is a legal, technical and political victory for Iran. It’s an achievement that Iran won’t be called a world threat anymore”. He added: “It was really difficult to preserve some of our red lines, there was a time we doubted there could be a deal, it’s a historic deal and Iranians will be proud of it for generations to come” (“Rouhani says nuclear deal political victory for Iran”). This means that Rouhani viewed the deal as a way of saving Iran’s economic as well as political position in the international community.

3.2. American Reaction

The President Barack Obama was pleased with the agreement. He said in a speech after the announcement of the deal: “This deal meets every single one of the bottom lines we established when we achieved a framework earlier this spring”. He declared that “the deal is not built on trust, it is built on verification”. He added “I am confident that this deal will meet the national security interests of the US and our allies. So, I will veto any legislation that prevents the successful implementation of this deal” (Obama, “Statement by the president on Iran”). In other word, Obama strongly supported signing the agreement with Iran and the other major powers because it would realize what they planned for. In addition, they signed the agreement because Iran accepted to be monitored regularly by the IAEA and the deal should be applied effectively and should not face any obstacles.

In contrast, the Republicans reaction to the JCPOA was severe. They considered it a wrong and a risky decision. According to the Republican leader Mitch McConnell, the deal had not succeeded in achieving the main needs. The main aim was stopping the nuclear program and by signing the deal, this goal will not be reached. Besides the republicans, a small number of Democrats were against the agreement; their opinion was that the deal would organize the Iranian Nuclear Program instead of stopping it. They added that the agreement would help Iran more in enhancing its nuclear program (Lewis et al).

3.3. Arab and Gulf Countries Reaction

For the UAE, the agreement was a successful move that would enhance the economic relations between the two countries as well as the economy of the Middle East. Similarly, Egypt’s reaction also was positive. The Foreign Affairs Ministry believed in the power of the deal in providing safety to the Middle East through stopping nuclear weapons proliferation (“Iran nuclear deal: an overview of global reactions”).

In contrast, Saudi Arabia's reaction was negative. The country views Iran as the source of terrorism in the Middle East and considers the deal a way through which the United States disregard the dangerous Iranian strategies. According to Jamal Khashoggi, Iran is a dangerous country that threatens the Middle East, a country that only uses force for reaching its aims and through the deal it will get an economic recovery due to the sanctions relief. Consequently, it would help and supply terrorist groups in the region. That's why he said that Iran is an "aggressor" (qtd in Hubbard).

3.4. Europe

Europe was pleased with the JCPOA; most European politicians expressed their positive reaction and considered the agreement as a great and historic achievement that is beneficial for the whole world. Turkey too was among the supporters of the deal. The Turkish politicians appreciated this agreement through which the Middle East economy would be recovered and peace would be guaranteed. They strongly believed that the outcomes of the agreement would be significant for the entire globe ("Iran Nuclear Deal: an Overview of Global Reactions").

4. Iran's Regional Policies

The relations between Middle East countries and Iran are based on different interests and ran by different policies and strategies. These strategies are specified by the aims that Iran wants to reach in Middle East countries (Pollack). In other words, Iran has a particular policy in each country. Each policy depends on the common and mutual interests between Iran and each country, and what Iran intends to achieve.

Starting with Iraq and Syria, Iran's policy in these two countries is based on supporting their governments which are of Shia leadership. It works on protecting them from

any threat. After the downfall of Saddam Hussein government in 2003 by U.S., it was replaced by a government which led by Shia Islamists and has strong relations with Iran. Consequently, these relations enabled Iran to start its influence on Iraq. In addition, the IRGC-QF helped many Shia militias. The latter known as PMFs or PMUs, they are provided with different materials like the Improvised Rocket Assisted Munitions (“Iran’s Foreign and Defense Policies” 37).

Furthermore, Syria has a significant relation with Iran which developed considerably after the Syrian crisis in 2011 (Bazoobandi 4). Since that time, Iran began its assistance to President Bashar Al-Assad government. Either through providing militia groups for fighting with Al-Assad troops or through financial support (Humud et al 2). Providing such kind of help to Syria is because Syria represents a way through which Iran can guarantee a safe access to its ally Hezbollah in Lebanon. It also can help in protecting Hezbollah across the Syrian borders. Besides, to prevent the downfall of Assad government which is the closest Arab ally to Iran (“Iran’s Foreign and Defense Policies” 41).

Additionally, Iran’s involvement in Iraq and Syria has increased notably in 2014. With the appearance of ISIS as well as the uncertain situation of Assad government. Therefore, Iran should be able to balance its intervention in Syria and Iraq. On the one hand, it should protect the Syrian government from falling; on the other hand it should fight ISIS (Akbarzadeh109). In other words, the Iranian policy in Iraq and Syria can be described as a defensive policy. It is based on protecting what interests Iran in these areas.

Lebanon like Iraq and Syria is a region of Iran’s interest too. The strong link between the two countries is depicted in the Shiite group Hezbollah. This relation started when Iran enhanced the creation of Hezbollah in 1982. Hezbollah represents a crucial means of Iran’s security strategies particularly against U.S. and Israel (Hokayem 1). Hezbollah is a crucial

nonstate ally to Iran. It helps Iran in different ways for instance combating Israel. Therefore, this kind of help and support is considered as terrorist activities. Moreover, Iran provides Hezbollah with several types of support. Financially, through providing millions of dollars, and military by giving different kinds of weapons. Also, assisting fighters and training them in Iranian camps (“Iran’s Foreign and Defense Policies 45-46). In other words, Lebanon relation with Iran is shaped in the powerful ties with Hezbollah and the common interests mainly deterring U.S. and Iran.

Moreover, Iran is interested in Yemen and has an important alliance there. Historically, Iran did not have such interest in Yemen. However, the rebellion Zaidi Shia Houthi groups marked an opportunity for Iran to easily encounter Saudi Arabia (“Iran’s Foreign and Defense Policies 46). Iran and Yemen relation is not such a close relation. The Iranian help given to Yemen is not as much as described by media. Yemen represents the region of Iran and Saudi overlap (Esfandiary 231-232).

Conclusion

To sum up, Iran’s nuclear program started during the 50s under the Shah authority with a support from the U.S. It passed through different stages and witnessed different events. The most crucial development of the nuclear program was the arrival at signing the JCPOA. This deal aimed at stopping nuclear activities and lifting the sanctions imposed on Iran. It was welcomed by different countries and realized the main intended requirements. Therefore, it was viewed as a historical success and victory to Iran and the entire world. But it has raised controversial reactions among the international community.

The American stand against Iran has never waned and the imperial ambitions of American hegemony over the region still hinder the international relations. The United States led successful negotiations for a nuclear deal (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action)

intended to dismantle Iran's nuclear weapons capabilities, and when Iran complied in 2016, sanctions on Iran were lifted but concern over the Iran regime and the country's influence in the region still irks on the American psyche.

Chapter Two: Iran after the JCPOA and US Withdrawal

Introduction

The nuclear agreement was the outcome of a long period of negotiations between Iran, US and major world powers. Signing it represented a victory for Iran because it paved the way for the country to regain its position in the world especially the economic situation. It also represented a great success for Obama presidency. The deal has considerable positive effects that would benefit and help Iran since it was appreciated by different countries. But after the American presidential elections, things may change. The question to be raised then is how the new administration of Trump would view the agreement. And what policy would be practiced on it.

This chapter is going to deal with the economic situation of Iran and main improvements and changes that occurred after implementing the deal and lifting the sanctions. In addition, the chapter examines the deal's impact on Iran's regional policies. It also looks into the nature of the deal and what happened to it under Trump administration. This chapter is composed of five titles. The first title represents the reasons behind signing the deal. The second title discusses the economic changes that occurred and how the deal affected Iranian economy. The third section tackles the impact of the deal on Iran's regional policies. The fourth title tackles Trump's change of policy towards the JCPOA and his decision of unilateral exit from the deal. The last title shows how Iran and the other signatories responded to Trump's decision.

1. Why Did the US Sign the Iran Deal?

There is an ongoing controversy on why Trump reversed Obama's deal with Iran. When it came to Iran and nuclear weapons, Obama had two pretty clear stances. Here's his

first: “My goal, when I came into office, was to make sure that Iran did not get a nuclear weapon and thereby trigger a nuclear arms race in the most volatile part of Iran’s after the JCPOA the world,” Obama told NPR’s Steve Inskeep on April 7, 2015, three months before the US and six world powers signed the Iran deal. Here’s the second: “There really are only two alternatives here: Either Iran getting a nuclear weapon is resolved diplomatically through negotiation,” Obama said at the White House on July 15, 2015 — the day after the agreement’s completion, “or it is resolved through force, through war. Those are the options.” To put that all together, Obama didn’t want Tehran to acquire nukes, and he claimed the only way to stop Iran from getting them was either to strike a deal or strike it with bombs.

A war with Iran, of course, would be very nasty. The first issue is that, as Zack Beauchamp reported, the US would need to “destroy Iran’s air defenses, including fighters and surface-to-air missiles, in order to ensure the bombs hit their targets and to prevent Iran from doing serious damage in response” (qtd in Beauchamp). The US would repeatedly need to hit multiple Iranian targets, including nuclear and centrifuge production facilities. According to Robert Farley, a professor at the University of Kentucky and an expert on air power, this “would involve long-range bombers, drones, electronic warfare, land-based fighter-bombers, carrier aircraft, and submarine-launched cruise missiles” (qtd in Beauchamp).

Here lies the problem though. Experts doubt that airstrikes alone could end Iran’s nuclear program and it gets worse. Experts at the Wilson Center think tank, after reviewing military studies on the issue, concluded that even if the US military carried out strikes “to near perfection,” (“Trump’s Iran Nuclear Deal”) the best-case scenario would still be only a four-year delay in Iran’s progress toward a nuclear weapon. That all sounds bad, and perhaps explains why Obama said diplomacy proved a better option than war to keep Iran from getting the bomb. Trump, however, thinks Obama’s gambit failed.

2. Iran's Economy after the Nuclear Deal

After applying the deal, the Iranians believed that their economy would be better because of the sanctions relief. The most important aspects of the economy were oil exports, and the position in OPEC production. Concerning oil exports which were low before the JCPOA, revived after the deal specifically in 2016. The production extremely rose. This growth in oil exports was significant. Iranian leaders wanted to raise the oil exports to European countries for broadening their economic relations. Additionally, after the deal came into force international trade witnessed a boom and different partnerships occurred between Iran and other European and Asian countries as well as different contract were reached; recovering import and export connections was the crucial element of those contracts (Habibi 1-4).

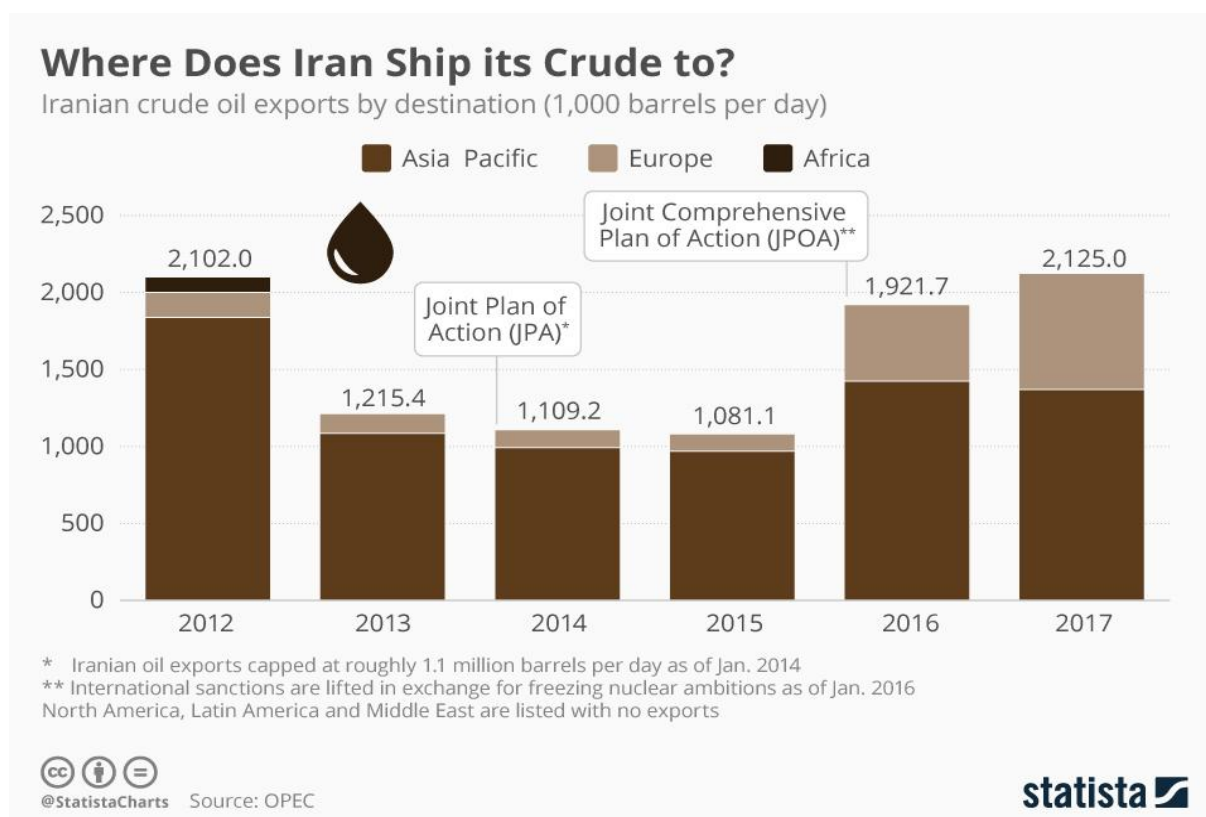


Fig.2. Destinations of Iran's Oil Exports.

Source: Loesche, Dyfed.

The figure shows that Asian Pacific countries represent the main destination of Iran's oil before reaching both the JPOA and the JCPOA. For Europe, it represents a very small amount when compared to Asia. After the JPOA, Asia remained Iran's crucial destination. Moreover, economic relations between Europe and Iran revived after signing the JCPOA. The amount of oil exports to Europe had significantly increased mainly in 2017. Asia Pacific still dominates the oil exports of Iran even after the JCPOA.

The agreement marked the enhancement of Iran's economy. The amount of oil production reached 3.8 million barrels per day in May 2016. This growth was the result of lifting sanctions. The first load of Iranian oil was exported to Europe in February 2016 after the application of the deal. In March, Asian countries as well received large amounts of oil. The amount raised 50 percent in comparison with the amount in March 2015. The amount of oil exports reached double of the previous amount before lifting sanctions which is 2.3 million barrels per day (Glenn).

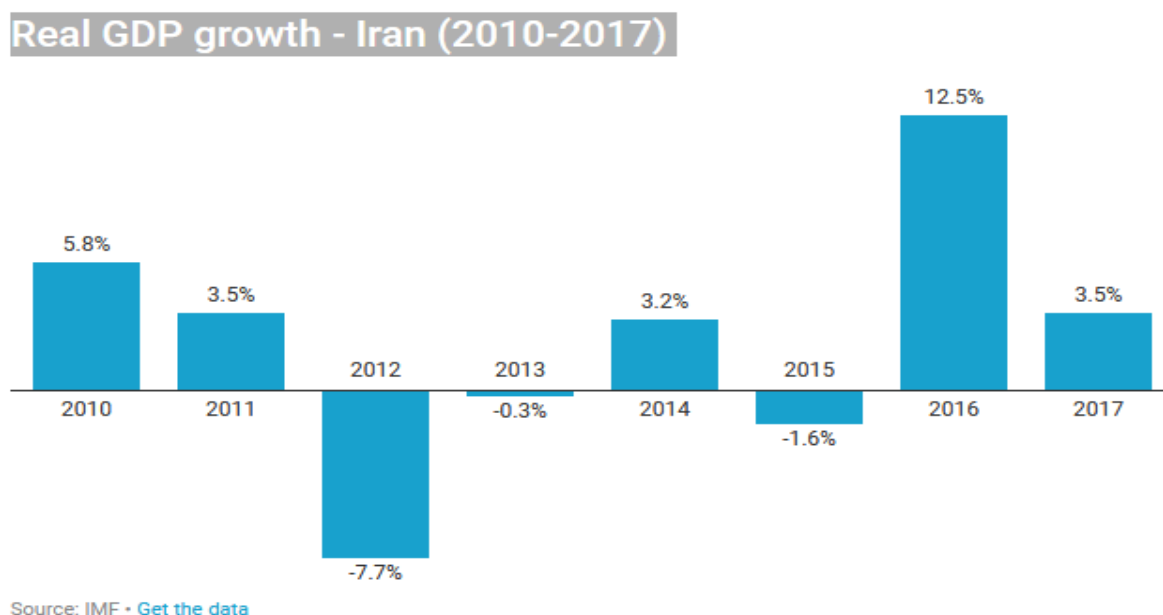


Fig.3. Iran's GDP Growth from 2010 to 2017

Source: Meignan, William.

The sanctions imposed on Iran affected negatively on different aspects of its economy like trade and oil sectors. Thus, removing these sanctions helped in recovering the economy. Moreover, as shown in the previous figure, GDP of Iran development was about 12.5 percent in 2016 and 3.7 percent in 2017. This amount is the opposite of development figures during earlier years. Many Iranians thought that their economy had not been enhanced by the deal. Some reasons were behind their opinion including that American sanctions were too tough compared with European ones. Also, economic enhancement was hindered by the domestic government (Meignan).

Moreover, economic enhancement should be in both the financial and monetary systems which would respectively prompt the non-oil sector improvement and aid government credit policies as well as decrease inflation. Whereas, applying these reforms by Rouhani's administration was the problem, whether the government is able of doing so or not. Additionally, other obstacle to applying the reforms was corruption; in 2016 Iran was the country number 131 among 176 corrupted countries in the world according to the Transparency International (Meignan).

Predictions about Iran's economy improvement were not totally realized. The American sanctions deterred trade and investment. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is among the companies that could not deal with sanctioned bodies related to it. Far from sanctions, there are other reasons that impeded the total economic enhancement including misconduct and corruption these were mainly obstacles of industry (Laub).

Despite these obstacles, various Iranian agencies demonstrated the enlargement amount of development. For instance the Central Bank of Iran declared an amount of 12.5 percent GDP growth from March 2016 to March 2017. Also, the Statistical Center of Iran mentioned that it was 8.3 percent; similarly, the Parliament Research Center stated that it was

8.9 percent. These huge amounts of development are the results of oil and gas exports which increased after implementing the nuclear agreement. Other aspects of economy are not of such high amount of growth like oil; however, it is somehow enhanced. For instance, manufacturing covers an amount of 0.8 from 12.5 according to the CBI (“How the Nuclear Deal Boosted Iran’s Economy”).

3. The Impact of the JCPOA on Iran’s Regional policies

The nuclear agreement has a considerable influence on the relations between Iran and the Middle East. It marked an opportunity of political conversations in the region (Esfandiary 230). Some political experts see that the deal would affect positively on Iran’s policy towards the Middle East, whereas others see that the deal’s effects would be negative (Mohseni 7). In other words, the deal would either increase the Iranian threat to the region or lessen it.

Moreover, Iranian involvement in the region’s conflict would be reduced because the country would pay more attention on enhancing its relations with western and neighbor countries which would help in renewing the political relations between Iran and the Middle East. In addition, political experts view that the agreement would push Iran toward moderation. Therefore, its foreign policy would be moderated as well. However, others believe that economic relations recovery which started after the agreement has nothing to do with the foreign policy (Mohseni 7-8). In other words, the Iranian role in the region would not change or be affected by the deal.

3.1. Syria

Syria is amongst the Middle East countries that has a strong relation with Iran. Therefore it would be affected by the events occur in Iran. It would be affected by the nuclear

deal. From the beginning of the conflict in Syria, Iran has been and still an ally to Bashar Al-Assad system.

The JCPOA would guarantee more power to Iran politically and financially. Iranian Shiite militias spread in Syria for helping Assad's army. Iran is a leading supplier of the "National Defense Forces Militia Network" and this aided in compensating the shortage in Assad's army. The Iranian assistance to Syria is very significant because it made Assad's economy getting strong and after the JCPOA was reached, the Iranian aid raised because the Iranian economy was recovered (Lund). Furthermore, Syria received assistance from Iran in order to protect its situation in Lebanon. Syria is seen as an ally to Iran that guarantees an easy entrance to Lebanon and Hezbollah. That's why it is receiving help from Iran since the beginning of the civil war (Rabinovich).

3.2. Iraq

Different political events influenced the relationship between Iran and Iraq, mainly the 1980s Iran-Iraq war as well as the collapse of Saddam Hussein government in 2003 (Ehteshami et al). Iran's interest in Iraq refers to their geographical borders which led to more connection between the two countries. Iraq is very significant to Iran due to its effect on the Iranian regional security. Thus, Iran was always aware in following the Iraqi political system. Another factor that made Iraq significant to Iran is religion; the Iranians are Shiite likewise the majority in Iraq (Taremi).

Iran aimed at affecting the political system in Iraq since the collapse of Saddam Hussein in order to form a Shiite system that could be easily affected by Iran through combining different groups together both Shiite and Kurdish (Wright 151).

The Iraqi people viewed the deal from two different opinions. Some welcomed it and others disagreed with it. For the supporters who were of Shiite majority believed that the deal would have positive impact benefit their country and help in providing peace due to the good relation between Iran and US which realized by the deal. In contrast, the view of the opponents who were Sunni was that Iran would be allowed to intervene in Iraqi issues in the absence of American objection. Moreover, they added that the supporters of the JCPOA could cooperate secretly with Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf countries (Habib).

Furthermore, with the appearance of the ISIS, relation between Iraq and Iran became stronger. The two countries began fighting the ISIS and the main purpose of the Iranian existence in Iraq was combating the ISIS groups. After signing the nuclear deal in 2015 relations between Iran and Western countries became better. Therefore, collaborated together to fight ISIS efficaciously (Esfandiary 232). In other words, the signing of the JCPOA was approximately at the time of the ISIS appearance and thus Iranian interest in Iraq was to stand by Iraq's side in fighting the ISIS and providing the needed help to reach this goal.

4. American Policy towards the JCPOA

At the start of his presidency, it wasn't clear what exactly President Donald Trump had planned for Iran. Attacking Obama for his Iranian nuclear deal undoubtedly won points with Trump's conservative, evangelical base. Still, there were moments on the campaign trail when Trump expressed interest in negotiating a better nuclear deal with Iran. Trump offered several times to meet with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani without preconditions to negotiate a new nuclear accord. However, the Trump Administration has embraced America's traditional role of backing its allies in the Middle East and defending their vital interests against Iran, even if that means hurting Europe's marginal commercial interests in trading with Iran.

4.1. American Policy under Trump Administration

Before being elected as a president, candidate Donald Trump considered Iran as an enemy to U.S. During his campaign, he showed his attention of either stopping the American involvement in the JCPOA or renegotiating it in case he became president (Katzman 23). He was against the agreement from the beginning and promised to break it down (Singh 112). Moreover, he accused Iran of different dangerous practice like supporting terrorism. He considered the nuclear deal as a shameful mistake for the U.S. to be a member of it. He delivered those words in a speech to the UN on September 19, 2017. He said: “The Iran deal was one of the worst and most one sided transactions the United States has ever entered into. Frankly, that deal is an embarrassment to the omitted States.” (“Federal policy on the Iran nuclear deal, 2017-2018”).

His policy toward Iran which is based on the six month review was declared on October 13, 2017. It focused on the Iranian dangers and violations such as supporting terrorism (Katzman 24). It was also based on confrontation strategy which helps US facing Iran by different ways. Mainly through practicing economic and military pressure (Maloney par 6). The agreement was harshly criticized by Trump. It does not meet with the American needs concerning the Iranian ballistic missile program and the so called harmful activities in the Middle East as well as the expiration of nuclear restrictions. He threatened to pull out of the agreement. In addition, if the Congress and European countries did not act to enlarge the nuclear restrictions over the ballistic missile program, he would impose harsh sanctions. He would also make sure that Iran permits the IAEA to monitor any site. He would leave the agreement as he announced this on October 13, 2017 as well as on January 12, 2018 (“Iran’s Foreign and Defense Policies”, 13).

Trump's negative opinion about the nuclear agreement was not the only one. Because there were some officials during Obama presidency who share the same opinion of Trump. They believed that Iran would not adhere to the deal and could return to its different nuclear works. Especially in the case of re-imposing new sanctions (Friedman). Trump's administration was only seeking to put harder restrictions on Iran's nuclear activities. Moreover, American pressure and harsh strategies would be practiced against any issue that may impede the implementation of the deal (Maloney).

Legal conditions do not link the countries together. Thus, the decisions of leaving any agreement are accepted according to the international law. But things are different in the case of the JCPOA, because this deal is approved by the resolution 2231 of the UNSC. This resolution obliges the members to be linked to each other under the UN charter. Consequently, to be bound under the international law. However, it was debatable to determine US attitude toward the JCPOA. Some viewed that US is not bound under international law, others viewed the opposite and US must abide by the JCPOA. The other opinion is in between the two former views and US could either continue working by the deal or leave it (Mulligan 2).

4.2. Trump Withdrawal from the JCPOA

The Trump administration's Iran policy can be characterized as following what it considers its North Korea model. And that is a strategy of maximum pressure against Iran, in this case, along with a sort of bold effort and a bold diplomatic opening, in order to reach what President Trump has characterized as a better deal with the Iranians. Some have characterized the policy in different ways, suspecting that maybe regime change is the underlying objective. But in fact to take the president and senior officials at their word that's not the objective. In fact, a better deal is the objective.

Donald Trump declared that he would leave the JCPOA and re-impose sanctions on Iran. “In theory, the so called Iran deal was supposed to protect the US and our allies from the lunacy of an Iranian nuclear bomb. A weapon that will only endanger the survival of the Iranian regime” he explained (Trump). According to President Trump, the deal should prevent the threat of developing an Iranian nuclear bomb and preserve the US and its allies from the Iranian nuclear dangers. He added, “The deal was so poorly negotiated that even if Iran fully complies, the regime could still be on the verge of a nuclear breakout in just a short period of time” (Trump). The deal’s items are about stopping nuclear activities not forever but only for only a specific period of time then would expire. Consequently, the nuclear risk would continue.

For the President the deal has a lot of fallacies that should reconsider and readdressed. He plainly explained that:

The deal does nothing to constrain Iran’s destabilizing activities including its support for terrorism. Since the agreement, Iran’s bloody ambitions have grown only more brazen. In light of these glaring flaws, I announced last October that the Iran deal must be either renegotiated or terminated. Three months later, On January 12, I repeated these conditions. I made clear that if the deal could not be fixed, the US would no longer be a party to the agreement (Trump).

Moreover, he added “We will be instituting the highest level of economic sanctions. Any nation that helps Iran in its quest for nuclear weapons, could also be strongly sanctioned by the US” (Trump).

That is to say, president Trump was not satisfied with this agreement and viewed it a failure because it did not match his concerns. He was planning to pull out of the deal from the beginning of his presidency. He needed either fix the deal's disastrous flaws, or the United

States will withdraw. He threatened to either renegotiate it or end it, because of its shortcomings as well as the different violations practiced by Iran mainly supporting terrorism. He also would re-impose harsh economic sanctions on Iran and punish any country that would deal with Iran or assist it.

What the administration has done is to re-impose sanctions in order to generate economic pressure on the regime. This worked well from the administration's perspective, because in fact the United States has tremendous unilateral economic and financial power in the world. Iran has effectively been isolated from the international financial community. But still, perhaps, it's surprising just how effective those sanctions have been. Those companies that actually reengaged in the Iranian economy - many companies never reengaged in the Iranian economy because they suspected that sanctions might continue to be a problem - have largely left. The IMF and World Bank have projected that the consequences for Iran macro economically will be severe, the re-imposition of sanctions (Dobbins et al.). And in fact, to the Trump administration's pleasures, they've managed to do all of this without a spike in oil prices.

4.3. Reasons of Withdrawal

Different reasons were behind US withdrawal. According to Trump, a better deal would be reached by terminating the JCPOA. First possible reason is the Iranian situation of nuclear weapons. Trump along with Benjamin Netanyahu believe that Iran lied about its nuclear weapons. This means that they think Iran is violating the nuclear agreement. The other reason is Trump dissatisfaction with the limited restrictions which will be over after ten years. The deal specified the duration of the imposed restrictions. Furthermore, Iran's policy and violations in the Middle East marked a key factor in pushing Trump towards withdrawal (Ghodsi 10-11).

Also, Trump desires at allowing inspections of Iranian military facilities of suspected nuclear activities. This means Trump wanted to enlarge the monitoring process of nuclear activities. Besides, the US allies in the Middle East especially countries which are against the JCPOA need to be protected. Consequently, leaving the deal would guarantee for them that US is supporting them and standing by their side. Moreover, changing the Iranian government is a crucial motive that pushed Trump to leave the agreement. Changing the Iranian government was mentioned by Mike Pompeo the Secretary of State. It was supported by the meeting John Bolton as National Security Advisor, and who thinks that if sanctions affect negatively on Iranian living standards. A revolution is likely to take place (Ghodsi 11).

Pundits from other political spectra characterize Trump's hostility toward the nuclear deal as just a means of opposing his predecessor Barack Obama and all what he had achieved during his presidency. Since the nuclear agreement was signed under the Obama administration, Trump wanted to break it down. So leaving the agreement happened because Trump wanted to tear the achievements of Obama (Zurcher). This means that Trump strongly rejects Obama policy and mainly what is concerned with Middle East issues. He wants to deal with such issues on his own way and to bring different strategies.

These speculations do not stand on their own. So why does Trump really want to leave the Iran deal? Trump has condemned the Iran deal since the early days of the presidential campaign. He called the agreement "the worst deal ever" and "one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into." There are three main reasons why. First, Trump says Iran is violating the "spirit" of the deal, if not the letter, mostly because Iran continues to work against America in the Middle East. In essence, Iran remains a US enemy, and Obama failed to address that with the deal ("Trump's Iran Nuclear Deal").

But Trump's objection misses the point. "You could say it's a terrible deal because it doesn't cover Hezbollah, and Syria, and Yemen, and missiles, and human rights," Ernest Moniz, Obama's energy secretary and top Iran deal negotiator, commented. "That's not what the agreement is." Take the missiles part: The Iran deal doesn't prohibit Iran from testing missiles. There is a totally separate UN Security Council resolution that includes language specifically about Iran's ballistic missiles, and Iran is probably violating at least the spirit of that resolution (Resolution 2231, 2015).² But again, that's separate from the Iran nuclear deal itself, which only targets Tehran's nuclear program. That was by design: The Obama administration knew that to get Iran to agree to curb its path to a nuclear bomb, the US would have to give up a lot more than simply lifting a few sanctions.

Second, Trump does not like that certain restrictions of the deal — like the ones on uranium enrichment and the use of centrifuges — end. He would prefer those restrictions remain indefinitely so it's even harder for Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon. All of that leads to Trump's third reason which is to make a better deal. In fact, Trump had signaled his wish to improve the Iran deal, not necessarily leave it. "I have outlined two possible paths forward: either fix the deal's disastrous flaws, or the United States will withdraw," Trump said in January.

The Trump administration engaged in talks with European officials on Trump's proposed changes, but they have yet to reach an agreement. Meanwhile, a parade of European leaders — French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and UK Foreign Minister Boris Johnson — have personally appealed to Trump to remain in the agreement. The European signatories said, however, they have no intention of leaving the deal even if America does. European businesses have started to do business well with Iran since

² The restrictions shall apply until the date eight years after the JCPOA Adoption Day (18 October 2015) or until the date on which the IAEA submits a report confirming the Broader Conclusion, whichever is earlier.

the deal was signed. If the deal ends, it's possible that Europe would have to end its newfound economic ties to Tehran which will harm their economic and financial assets in country.

5. Reactions to Trump's Decision

The very first thing that happened is that the US re-imposed the sanctions it lifted on Iran's nuclear program and is thinking of taking other retaliatory actions. But what happens after that is not totally clear. But that is partly dependent on how the other countries that are party to the deal reacted. How Iran reacted. Trump's decision was rejected and faced by negative responses from all sides. Most of the countries were not in favor of US withdrawal from the nuclear deal. The signatories of the agreement criticized Trump's attitude and requested him not to leave. Because US withdrawal would result in negative effects and put Iran in an unstable situation.

5.1. Europe's Reaction

Withdrawing from the JCPOA was not praised by the EU countries. They promised to maintain the deal as they consider it the essential factor of international non proliferation structure and the Middle East security (Immenkamp 4). European leaders considered US withdrawal a disastrous mistake. According to France's ambassador to US, Francois Delattre, the foreign policy of Trump administration was a risky mix of unilateralism and isolationism. His opinion is significant because it represents the European worry about Trump's decision. The French president Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the British Foreign Minister failed in convincing to not to leave the agreement. Moreover, Trump's decision matters for Europe because the agreement paved the way for European firms to deal with Iran due to sanctions relief (Yochi).

The French president expressed his disappointment over Trump's decision. He opposed the US withdrawal and expressed his dissatisfaction with it. He also insisted on the danger that the region would face. He stated on Twitter: "France, Germany, and the UK regret the US decision to leave the JCPOA. The nuclear non-proliferation regime is at stake" (Macron). This means that Trump's decision is not welcomed at all by EU countries. Mainly because of the dangerous consequences they expect.

Additionally, the high representative Federica Mogherini maintained that the US withdrawal would not affect the interests of the European Union because they would work together to preserve their economic projects. "The nuclear deal is not a bilateral agreement and it is not in the hands of any single country to terminate it unilaterally. She added: "the European Union is determined to act in accordance with its security interests and to protect its economic investments" (Mogherini "Remarks by HR/VP Mogherini on the statement by US President").

5.2. Iran's Reaction

The Iranian leaders refused any kind of negotiating a new agreement. They ensured that the country would continue following the deal and working by its conditions (Kerr and Katzman 26). Iranian president Hassan Rouhani said that his country would stay in the agreement. According to him, Trump's decision was just a psychological warfare. He stated: "If we achieve the deal's goals in cooperation with other members of the deal, America has officially undermined its commitment to an international treaty". Rouhani's response means that though US left the agreement, Iran would continue abiding by it along with the other signatories ("Donald Trump announces US withdrawal"). President Hassan Rouhani said on Monday that the deal could survive even without America. "If we can get what we want from a deal without America, then Iran will continue to remain committed to the deal," Rouhani

said. “What Iran wants is our interests to be guaranteed by non-American signatories,” adding that “getting rid of America’s mischievous presence will be fine for Iran” (Ward).

Additionally, the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said that Iran would remain complying with the agreement in case the European countries present guarantees which preserve Iran’s incomes from oil sales to Europe. Similarly in a speech in July 4, president Rouhani stated the same opinion (Kerr and Katzman 27). Moreover, the foreign minister Javad Zarif expressed his dissatisfaction with the American pullout of the deal. He noted that through imposing new American sanctions, the agreement would be broken. He also stated in Twitter that he would work to check if the other signatories of the agreement could guarantee its full benefits for Iran or not. He added that the Iranian response would be specified according to the reached outcome (Roberts).

That is to say, the Iranian attitude towards US withdrawal from the nuclear agreement was unpleasant. Trump’s decision would worsen the situation and complex the issue. Additionally, it escalate the relations between the US and Iran. It also would affect negatively on Iran’s economy because of the new sanctions that Trump promised to impose. However, the Iranian officials’ responses reflect their great awareness about the expected results of Trump’s decision as well as their readiness to face the coming.

Conclusion

To sum up, the nuclear agreement which was signed after long and hard negotiations marked a turning point for Iran and mainly for its economy. It boosted its economy due to the relief of sanctions and the recovery of its economic relations with different countries. However, after American presidential elections things had changed due to the new administration. The prosperous economy which Iran witnessed after the nuclear deal did not last for long. Because Trump’s policy toward the deal was harsh. He did not accept expressed

his dissatisfaction with it and criticized it since his campaign. He showed a great hostility to it and described it as the worst deal ever. Therefore, he decided to leave it and to re-impose new severe sanctions on Iran. This decision was opposed by Iran as well the other signatories. They considered it as a violation to the agreement conditions. They believe that Trump's withdrawal would lead to negative effects. Whereas, they promised to stay in their commitments to the agreement and save it despite the US absence.

Chapter three

Iran after U.S. Withdrawal from the JCPOA

Introduction

In one of the most momentous foreign policy moves of Donald Trump's presidency, the president declared on May 8, 2018 that he's withdrawing the United States from its historic 2015 nuclear accord with Iran. The end of the nuclear deal means a new beginning for economic sanctions against the country -sanctions that, over the decades, have damaged Iran's economy and destabilized relations throughout the Middle East. Technically, the United States and Iran have never been at war. But by imposing unilateral sanctions, the U.S. has long used economic processes as a weapon in a shadow war that's been raging since 1979.¹ It created a state of permanent deadlock between the U.S. and Iran - a tense standoff characterized by a pattern of sanctions over direct negotiations.

Signing the nuclear agreement mainly aimed at reducing nuclear activities in return lifting the sanctions imposed on Iran. After its implementation, Iran revived and its economy was recovered. It also stayed committed to it and did not practice nuclear activities. Whereas, the Trump administration's policy toward the agreement was very harsh. It ended up with a decision of pulling the U.S. out of the agreement. This decision was not welcomed especially by Iran because it would harm it.

Thus, this chapter is going to deal with the situation of Iran after the American withdrawal and the influence of the new American policy into Iran's status as a pivotal state in the Middle East. The latter influenced negatively on Iran's economy as

¹ The history of American sanctions against Iran began with a bang when a group of Iranian students stormed the American embassy in Tehran on November 4, 1979, taking more than 60 United States citizens hostage and sparking an international crisis.

well as its politics and more specifically foreign policies. So, the chapter contains five titles. The first title describes the meltdown of Iran's economy. The second title discusses Iran's economy after the U.S. withdrawal and how the new sanctions affected on it. It also explains the Iranian relation with the Middle East and the impact of Trump's decision on it. The third title is about the future of the deal in the absence of the U.S. The fourth title tackles the nuclear proliferation after U.S. exit. The last title is about discussing the non-proliferation treaties in relations with North Korea.

1. The Iranian Economic Meltdown

In 2002, the international community learned that Iran had been enriching uranium and was developing a nuclear program. The United States had long suspected Iran of a covert nuclear program, and when President George W. Bush dubbed the country part of an "axis of evil" after the 9/11 attacks, relations between the two countries began to degrade. Soon, the U.S. was working to freeze the assets of individuals and businesses it suspected of aiding Iran. As the international community put pressure on Iran, the U.S. tightened the grip of its existing sanctions, enforcing them more vigorously and levying large penalties on banks and individual that didn't comply with rigorous rules.

Sanctions tightened even further under President Obama, who targeted Iranian petroleum purchases, banks, and automobile industries in response to Iran's nuclear activities. Ultimately, the United States forbade almost all trade with Iran. It was joined by much of the international community, which levied significant economic and political sanctions. As a result, what was left of the Iranian economy tanked. Healthcare, banking, and other critical sectors suffered, and Iran's currency (the Riel) plummeted.

Sanctions pushed up prices within Iran, spurring inflation and unemployment. The sanctions are “severely weakening the middle class, breaking the collective will and marginalizing democratic voices while solidifying the power of the ruling elite,” wrote Iranian-American filmmaker Beheshteh Farshneshani in the New York Times in 2013 (Qtd in Blakemore). These devastating effects only shifted once President Obama announced a historic pact that lifted nuclear sanctions in exchange for an end to Iran’s nuclear program in 2015. The deal gave Iran the ability to sell oil on international markets and effectively opened up the global markets that had slowly closed over decades of sanctions.

The deal, greeted with euphoria by Iran and its allies and denounced by Iran’s arch-enemy Israel, did not, however, survive long. President Trump withdrew after calling it, in his characteristic style, as “The worst deal ever negotiated” and re-imposed US sanctions on Iran. As irresponsible war rhetoric started vitiating the Middle-East environment ever since, on the anniversary of America’s exit this year, Mr. Rouhani too threatened to stop complying. Now that President Trump has canceled the nuclear deal, sanctions against Iran will once again be instituted, as they have been for every crisis since 1979. The US move to reimpose sanctions on Iran and choke off the last remaining sources of Tehran’s oil revenue has crippled the Iranian economy.

2. Impact of U.S. Withdrawal on Iran

Trump’s decision has considerable effects on the economic and political aspects. It plays a significant role in changing the economic situation as well as the political one. More specifically, the foreign policies in the Middle East region.

Therefore, different strategies were followed by Iran in order to face the renewed American severe policy.

2.1. Impact on Iran's Economy

The Iranian economy is in a spiral descent, as the sanctions keep biting hard. The Iranian Riel has fallen from 40000 to a dollar before the sanctions to 150000 now in the black market, inflation rate has quadrupled to more than 50 percent, oil production has fallen by half to only a million barrels a day and new sanctions have been imposed on Iranian iron, steel, aluminum and copper as well. The USA is threatening to punish any country that trades with Iran or buys Iranian oil. Iran is already blacklisted by the Financial Action Task Force, and it is unlikely to make an effort to remove itself from that list ("The Iran Imbroglio").

After sanctions were imposed in 2018, India was allowed a special waiver along with China and six other countries, but the Trump administration has not renewed the waiver this year. After the waivers expired this May, India has now stopped importing Iranian oil, but given our increasing energy demands, it will be a challenge to find an economical substitute. It will be in India's interest to continue to have good relations with Iran, not only for Eurasia but also for building pressure on Pakistan, which is not in the best of relations with Iran at the moment.

Waivers related to American nuclear sanctions were stopped after Trump's decision of withdrawal from JCPOA. The strategy followed in applying the new sanctions is similar to the Obama's administration strategy which is the wind down periods of either 90 or 180 days. This strategy relies on the set of the sanctions. In addition, secondary sanctions which directed toward the economic activities of third countries with Iran would be imposed (RaminJalilvand 2).

The strategy of wind down periods was applied to finish economic activities depending on the type of each intended activity. Neither persons nor establishments could continue or start another economic activity after the end of the wind down period because they would be considered as violators to American Sanctions and may face punishments (Aslan 10-11).

Oil sector is the crucial part of Iran's economy. It represents more than two thirds of the total economic growth. The economic growth of 2018 was very low in comparison with the growth in 2017 ("Iran's Economy Update"). The new American sanctions mainly oil ones caused pressure to Iran's economy. In 2018, sanctions resulted in a negative growth of 1.5% and 3.6% in 2019 (Fleitz).

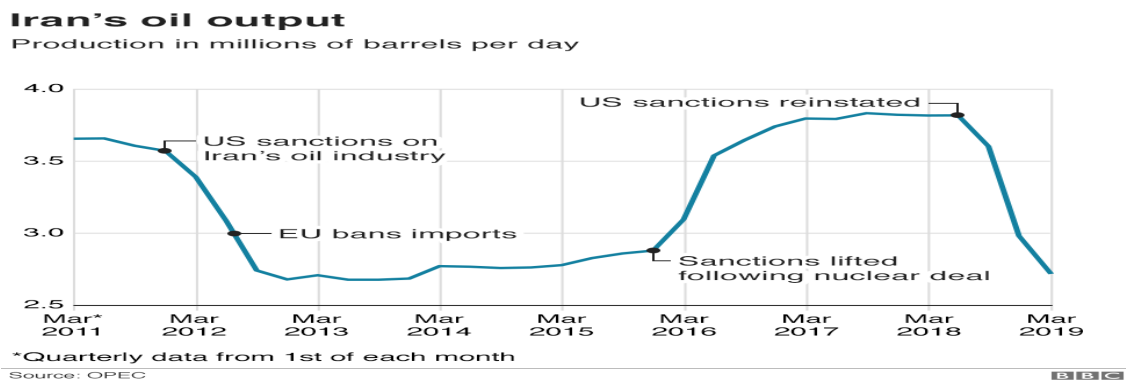


Fig.4. Iran's Oil Production.

Source: "Six Charts that Show How Hard US Sanctions Have Hit Iran."

President Rouhani's economic accomplishments for instance reducing inflation were hindered by the U.S. withdrawal. The U.S sanctions hit Rouhani's economic program. It resulted in losing some important parts of Iran's economy including foreign investments and technology (Salehi-Isfahani). That is to say, Rouhani's efforts of enhancing the economy of his country were easily destroyed.

Inflation increased considerably after U.S. withdrawal from JCPOA. The value of Iran's currency has decreased by more than 60%. The Iranian government made effort in helping its people and lessening the negative effect of price rises (Bozorgmehr and Klasa). Different sectors of Iran's economy were hampered by the American sanctions. The financial sector was harshly affected despite the government attempts to assist the people.

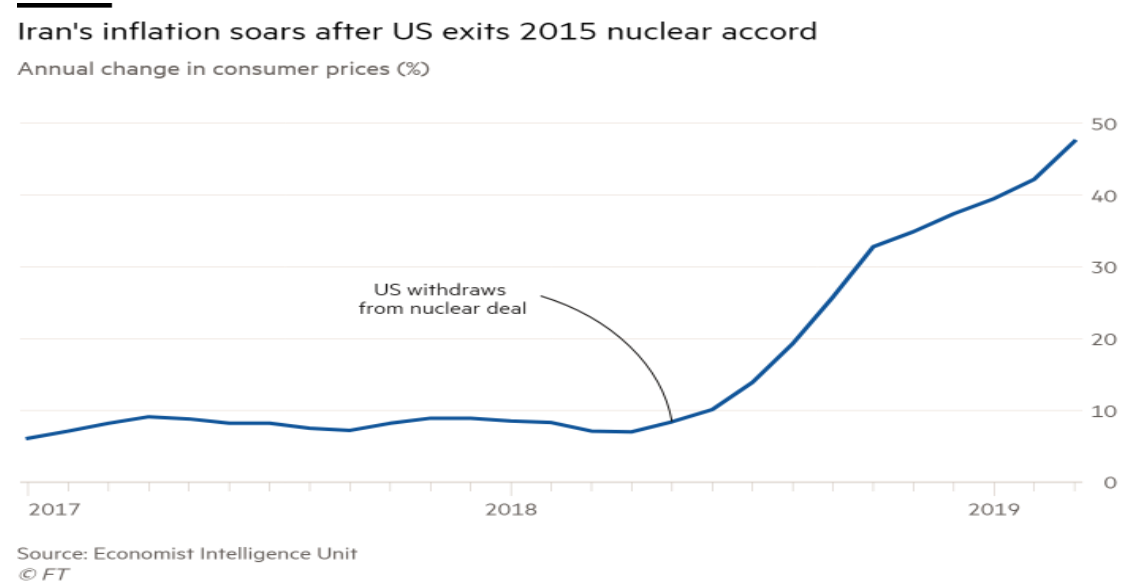


Fig.5. Inflation in Iran 2017-2019.

Source: Bozorgmehr and Klasa.

Furthermore, Trump's withdrawal from the nuclear agreement led to economic volatility. The parallel market was closed by the government. The currency has lost a lot in value. At the same time, prices of numerous non-essential imports began to increase. Besides, smaller exporters who have to sell their foreign currency earnings to the government are about to close down. High interest rates are detrimental to a large number of businesses (Salehi-Isfahani).

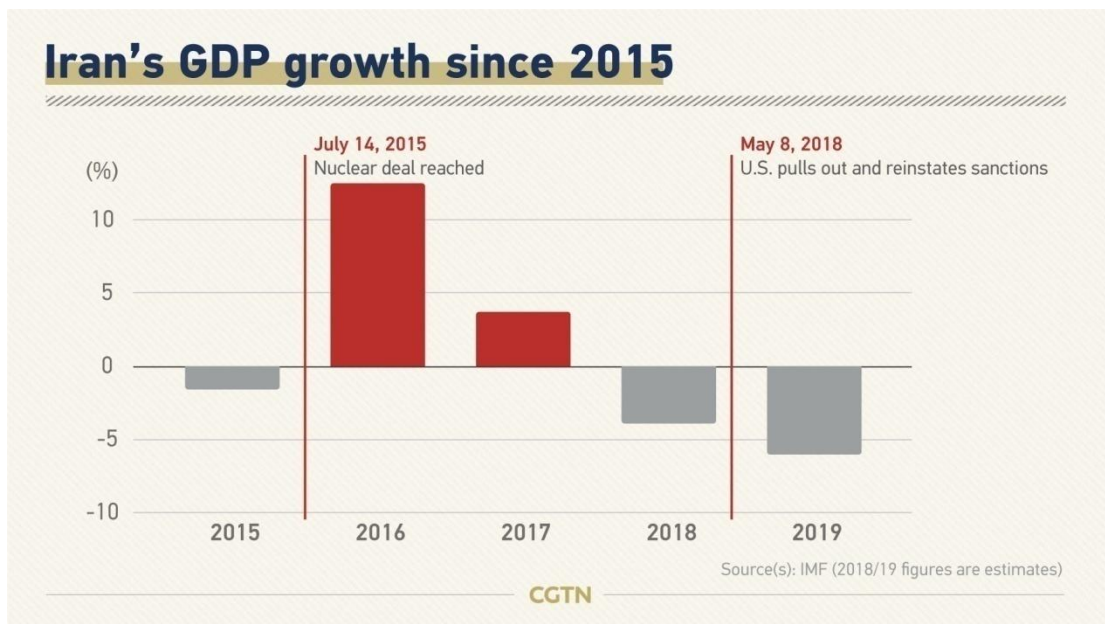


Fig.6. Iran's GDP Growth

Source: “Sanctions and pressures: U.S. ditching Iran’s nuclear deal one year on.”

According to the IMF, Iran’s economy was strongly hit by the American sanctions in 2018. The year characterized by the low amount of the GDP. It is estimated to be valued at 3.9 percent. Additionally, the IMF expected the downfall of the economy by an amount of 6 percent due to Trump’s promise of bringing Iran’s oil to zero (“Sanctions and pressures: U.S. ditching Iran’s nuclear deal one year on”).

The U.S. exit also influenced on the employment sector. Iranians thought that their job chances would be enhanced after the nuclear deal. However, their hope of improvement was vaporized due to the U.S. withdrawal (Ray). The situation of workers in Iran worsened after Trump’s withdrawal. The latter affected on different economic aspects which may result in bad work conditions like low incomes or unemployment basically in companies.

The economic downfall resulted in escalating tensions between the hardliners who are against negotiations with U.S. and reformists allied to Rouhani. Other

negative outcomes of American sanctions would be enforcing the main countries that buy Iran's oil to stop doing so (Kerr et al).

The outcomes of the U.S. leaving and re-imposition of new sanctions were harmful for crucial sectors and fields of Iran's economy. They resulted in a number of economic problems like inflation and which hindered the process of making several economic investments and projects.

2.2. Impact on Iran's Regional Policies and Terrorism

Trump's administration aim is to face Iran's proxies across the Middle East. These proxies are supported politically and financially. And what matters for U.S. is Iran's providing those allies with missiles and mines. These American attempts to counter the Iranian proxies came out of economic relations between Iran and U.S. which could lead to a clash between the two (De Luce and Windrem).

Iran returned to harsh military strategy in the Middle East after the U.S withdrawal. This also was due to the increasing pressure practiced on it. This strategy aims at preventing external violence and not to enlarge its power over the region (Behraves). In other words, Iran's powerful policy in the Middle East was practiced as a way of showing opposition toward U.S. measures.

Iran is known for using proxies in the Middle East. Most of these proxies are Shiite groups. Iran's goal behind supporting such groups is to gain power in the region and to oppose U.S. and its allies in the area (Parker). Also, Iran's support of Middle East proxies aims at protecting its borders and threatening its enemies that attacking Iran is not easy as they think (De Luce and Windrem).

American officials stated that Iran raised its support of its Middle East proxies because of the American pressure that is going under. Iranian government does not show any intent to either negotiate with Trump or lessening the assistance to its allies. Rather, it is waiting in hope that Trump will not be elected in the coming presidential elections. A new president would get U.S. back to the JCPOA (Salvin).

According to the Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Iran launched some attacks on May 2019. He considers this Iranian Action as a way of irritating the situation between Iran and U.S. (Parker). An attack occurred near the oil export port of Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates coast. U.S. officials accused Iran; however they have to give clear evidence. Despite Iran's rejection of this claim, American officials believed that Iran wanted to warn the U.S. that it is able of obstructing oil shipping lanes at any waterway (De Luce and Windrem).

Understanding the situation in the Middle East and finding a solution to its main conflicts are considered hard tasks that resulted from U.S. withdrawal. Clashes in Syria or Yemen for instance could not be solved without Iran. Iran's response to Trump's harsh descriptions is enlarging more its existence and policies in the area. Trump's tough strategy toward Iran's allies and policies in the region would result in solving the region's issues by force (Isaev 11).

According to the U.S. Iran promotes terrorism in the Middle East due to its support for Shiite groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon, Iraqi militias and other organizations. From an American point of view, such groups and organizations are specified for beating American interests in the region as well as protecting Iran and its survival (Uskowi 1). Therefore, U.S. and its allies consider Iran's proxies and allies as terrorists. U.S. tends to accuse Iran of any attack that may occur in the region. When

it threatens its own interests or those of its allies. Moreover, U.S. believes that Iran raises its harsh military strategy in the region as response and threat to Trump's pressure policy against it.

Moreover, Trump's policy of maximum pressure campaign aims at forcing Iran to negotiate a new deal which would be broader than the JCPOA. It would contain further conditions and restrictions of Iran's activities like the missile program and allies' support (Einhorn and Nephew). This policy affected a great deal on the economy. Consequently, irritation between Iran and U.S. escalated after the withdrawal from the nuclear deal and re-imposition of sanctions (Tan 9).

3. Preservation of the Nuclear Agreement

Europe would support Iran economically and politically to guarantee that Iran would continue adhering to the JCPOA commitments. Another European attempt is to prevent a probable war in the region. Europeans also refuse American claims that Iran endangers the region (Salvin). This means that European countries would try to save the nuclear agreement in order to preserve their interests in the region.

Trump's decision of pulling the U.S. out of the JCPOA was not welcomed by the other signatories. And since they did not succeed in convincing him to stay and not to leave, they decided to continue working by its commitments along with Iran. The EU countries did efforts to preserve it and guarantee its economic advantages. So, in order to protect the EU companies from punishments related to American sanctions, they permitted those companies to recover damages resulted from noncompliance. This step was achieved through updating a blocking regulation of 1996 in June 2018 (Cimino- Isaacs, et al 2).

The JCPOA after U.S. withdrawal was at risk of destruction in case the European efforts do not succeed in protecting it. Hence, the most effective strategy that could be followed by the European countries in order to save the nuclear deal is to work on enhancing the oil trade with Iran. In addition, to keep the European companies from American secondary sanctions (Laub).

Furthermore, in order for Iran to recover businesses with the European Investment Bank (EIB) the European Commission updated the external lending mandate of that Bank. Besides, to enlarge businesses with Iran the EU countries encouraged small companies that have no relations with U.S. markets. Thus, those companies would not be punished by U.S. for doing businesses with Iran. The European Commission in August 2018 also helped Iran with an amount of € 18. A large part of this amount was specified for the Iranian private sector (Cimino-Isaacs, et al 2).

Other countries refused Trump's decision and declared that they would continue economic businesses with Iran. India for instance will not follow sanction imposed by any country except for UN sanctions. Also, Turkey would continue its economic activities with Iran and viewed the American exit from the JCPOA as an opportunity as stated by its Minister of economy (RaminJalilvand 4).

Russia and China, the other two signatories of the agreement asserted that they support its implementation. Russia would make efforts to preserve the deal in order to protect its economic relations with Iran. According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, the country along with the other signatories would stay committed by the deal conditions mainly to keep safe the economic relations with the Middle East (Reid).

China which is amongst the larger buyers of Iran's oil, decided to preserve economic relations with Iran. It reduced the amount of oil it would buy but it would continue importing from Iran in order to aid it overcome its economic downfall caused by sanctions. Although the U.S. sanctions are severe, China could manage some of its companies to keep on making businesses with Iran. Therefore, it would help Iran's economy to reduce somehow the effects of sanctions (Cimino-Isaacs 2).

4. Nuclear Proliferation after U.S. Withdrawal

Iran has been adhering to the commitments of the nuclear agreement and did not violate it. Thus, it is put in a situation of internationally well behavior. However, it is the opposite for U.S. (Nephew). This means that Iran did not practice any nuclear activity under the deal and kept abide by its conditions.

However, according to the state-run IRIB Iran decided to resume some of its nuclear program which has been stopped under the JCPOA ("Iran to restart some nuclear activity"). Due to the harsh sanctions, president Hassan Rouhani stated that his country would keep supplies of enriches uranium and heavy water. He added that if the sanctions would not be lifted, Iran would resume enriching uranium (Wintour).

Resuming nuclear activities stands as a response to U.S. withdrawal from JCPOA. It also directed to the unreal promises of EU to preserve the agreement ("Iran to restart some nuclear activity" par 4). Under the deal commitments, Iran is forced with uranium enrichment restrictions. It is also prohibited from storing specific amounts of enriched Uranium and heavy water (Wintour). But Iran threatened that if the European countries would not preserve the deal and find a way to lessen the impact of the sanctions, then it will return to nuclear activities within 60 days ("Iran nuclear deal").

5. Non-proliferation Regime vs. North Korea

The United States faces twin crises involving nuclear proliferation, as both North Korea and Iran seem poised to barge into the global nuclear-weapons club. The outbreak of the North Korean nuclear crisis allowed Donald Trump to rebound on the national and international scene. In 2017, Donald Trump inherited this Middle Eastern situation where the States have lost their hands to Russia. If in the Middle East the axis Russia-Iran-Iraq-Syria-Hezbollah continues to score points against the United States, the new president has not posed great problems on the certification of the Iranian nuclear agreement. Twice he certified the agreement during the first half of 2017.

The extent of North Korea-Iran cooperation on their nuclear programs is unclear. The outbreak of the North Korean nuclear crisis has accelerated Trump's interest in changing his mind. North Korea's nuclear and ballistic tests, attesting to its control of nuclear power (A and H bombs) and the ballistic range of its missiles (13,000 km), have made it a declared nuclear power, similar to the great powers that sit on the Security Council. In view of the loss of influence of the United States in the Middle East, and a president pursued by an investigation to determine whether there is collusion between the Trump team and the Russia during the 2016 election campaign, this nuclear crisis could not be better. It allowed Donald Trump, by confronting the North Korean president in a violent verbal battle to bounce back on the national and international stage. The nuclear crisis played a bit like a lifeline for the US president.

The verbal escalation between the American president and the North Korean president and this showdown on the North Korean nuclear issue, the Iranian nuclear program could only resurface. Thus, in the warm relationship with North Korea, the

US president links the Iranian nuclear agreement to the North Korean crisis and refuses (on October 13, 2017) to certify it as required by US law in the United States. This refusal serves the American president in the sense that it appears as a riposte to signify to Russia and Iran that they have not yet won in the Middle East. Then, begins the standoff over Iran's nuclear deal. Neither the US Congress nor the European countries follow him in his decision.

Why ? Quite simply, faced with the North Korean threat of provoking an "ocean of fire" on the United States, following Donald Trump meant not having a nuclear crisis but two nuclear crises, that of North Korea and Iran. The fear was that Iran would end the agreement and resume the enrichment program, which would trigger a dangerous gear, which could only lead Iran to control the military nuclear power.

Having power over the Korean peninsula as well as, assuring the Kim's rule long-term security are the main goals of North Korea national security strategy. This country aims at developing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles to gain more power. Also, to coerce the U.S. and South Korea under a policy that guarantees the continuation of its regime ("Global Nuclear Landscape" 19).

A Strategic Force was developed by North Korea in 2012 and labeled as nuclear-armed ballistic missile force. The country can produce enriched uranium in addition to large amounts of plutonium for nuclear weapons. Moreover, it is capable of easily making a nuclear armed missile that represents a threat to U.S. ("Global Nuclear Landscape."22). Thus, because of its rich nuclear power North Korea is very important for U.S.

Trump's aim in North Korea is denuclearization. If this aim is reached and North Korea denuclearized, then he would assist the country in both its economy and security. Or he could follow a strategy of maximum pressure in order to force North Korea to fully denuclearize. Kim Jong-Un thinks differently. In the Singapore joint statement, he showed his intent to denuclearize step-by step. Each step is faced with an American step of providing peace in the Korean peninsula. Lifting U.S. sanctions and enhancing the relations between U.S and North Korea (Einhorn).

The situation of Korean- American issue has not reached to a solution yet. Washington is demanding from North Korea to present all what is related to its nuclear power. For instance, locations and numbers of missiles, production facilities (Einhorn). Trump's decision of leaving the JCPOA would negatively effect on the situation in North Korea. The country may not reach an agreement alike the JCPOA with the U.S. Because Iran was adhering to all the conditions of the deal before U.S. exit (Bort).

Furthermore, U.S. strategy with North Korea concerning its nuclear program differs from the strategy with Iran. U.S. follows a tough policy with Iran. After he took office, Trump applied all what he promised with during his election campaign. Especially with sensitive issues like nuclear programs and mainly that of Iran. His approach with Iran is very harsh. He threatens then he applies what he threatens of. He imposed severe sanctions that caused the downfall of Iran's economy. However with North Korea he imposed sanctions but they are not as severe as those of Iran.

Besides, his harsh policy against Iran came out in order to preserve the U.S. interests as well as its allies' interests in the region. Because he believes that Iran is a threat to his allies in the area. Whereas, the case of North Korea is different. The

country is geographically located far from U.S. main interest 'Israel'. Therefore, U.S. administration applied the most severe policies with Iran because it considers it as a main enemy that endangers its main concerns.

US President Donald Trump inherited an improving economy, two of America's longest wars in abeyance, and ISIS on the way out. But he failed to appreciate one of the most fragile gifts Obama handed to him. Aaron David Miller asks: If Donald Trump can summit, negotiate and send self-described love letters to Kim Jong Un, one of the world's last true authoritarians why he was set on withdrawing from the 2015 nuclear accord and re-impose sanctions. Indeed in his own mind, why is North Korea a more acceptable partner than Tehran?

Donald Trump has publicized his summit with North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un as so great a breakthrough that Pyongyang is no longer a nuclear threat to the US. But he still deems Iran, which is not thought to have nuclear weapons, "a regime of great terror" that does pose a risk, or threat to the US ("Why does Trump treat Iran differently). According to Trump, Obama's deal was an agreement to hurt the world and, certainly, Israel. The deal gave this regime and it's a regime of great terror — many billions of dollars to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the security of US allies. Iran also has many enemies in the region, notably Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that American hostility against Iran has grown beyond measure. The US objective is to cut Iran off from the global economy. Its hostility is pushing Iran to the brink, because the international community especially EU cannot be expected to bend over backwards to support Iran and risk sacrificing the valuable US market for its exports. The USA believes that economic pressure would topple the

Mullahs' regime in Iran, without realizing that it would only fortify their stranglehold. Mullahs are not scared of war, chaos or mayhem; all these will ultimately help reinforce their grip on power. This is precisely what Mr. Rouhani has all along been fighting against.

The Nuclear program still remains Iran's best bargaining tool with the West. Despite all the confrontational talks, it is not clear if a military strike by the US is really an option, because Iran is bound to retaliate by blocking the Strait of Hormuz. That would take the escalation to a dangerous flashpoint. Sanctions have so far proved inadequate to topple the regime despite the hurt caused, and even one or two pre-emptive strikes can hardly diminish Iran's nuclear capability, especially in terms of the technical know-how already acquired; at best it may push the nuclearisation program underground.

If Iran succeeds in producing a bomb despite the sanctions, it would change the geopolitical dynamics of the entire Middle-East, and any miscalculation or provocation by either side is fraught with grave danger. A nuclear Iran may spread proliferation through the Middle East, especially in countries that breed and nurture jihadi terrorists and Islamic suicide bombers. Threats and belligerent incitements cannot alter the underlying geopolitical realities. Isolating Iran certainly will not foster peace and development in the region, as Iran remains a key player in countries Yemen, Libya, Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan; and further irresponsible posturing by the USA may push Iran into an already developing Russia-China axis.

General Conclusion

It is hard to accept the argument that Iran poses a serious threat to American security or its national interests. In fact, no Iranian citizen has been caught either

committing or planning a terrorist attack on US soil in the last three decades or more. And most of those who committed such terror attacks have come from the Sunni Arab world, the maximum number being from Saudi Arabia as was in the case of 9/11 attacks. Such being the facts, why is President Trump so paranoid about Iran. The point is both Trump and Pompeo are merely echoing the dangers highlighted by Israel and Saudi Arabia, their strongest allies in the region. Their main argument is that Iran is funding and supporting violence through Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in the Palestinian territories, the Assad regime in Syria, the Houthi rebels in Yemen, Shiite militias in Iraq, and that its agents are plotting terror attacks around the world. The fact that in almost all these cases, Iran is reacting to Israeli and Saudi provocations seems to have completely escaped the attention of Pompeo. But that has been the hallmark of US policy in the West Asia since the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1979.

President Trump follows a multi-pronged pressure campaign with reference to Iran. Economic sanctions are one part while deterrence is another part. The goal of these sanctions is to force the Iranian regime to make a choice: whether to cease or persist with the policies that triggered the sanctions in the first place. Of course, the end objective of the sanctions has always been about 'regime change.' Having failed to achieve that with the policy of sanctions for the last three decades or more, the Trump Administration has now been talking of 'behavior change' of the regime; a decidedly more modest objective.

Trump set himself up on the losing side of the JCPOA, with the US being the irresponsible party wrecking the agreement and Iran being the party honoring its words. Third, he bridged the gap between anti-American propaganda and the official U.S. position for the Iranian public as the United States is playing into Iran's official

narrative. One can barely hear a voice criticizing the Iranian government inside the country as the blame is squarely placed on the United States for the probable collapse of the deal.

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