

Ramifications of Iran Nuclear Deal:

By

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Abstract:

Iranian agreement with the P5+1 regarding its nuclear program is a step forward for the stability in the Iran and its neighbors. The deal would help Iran to pursue its peaceful nuclear program without any international pressure. On the other hand, Iranian neighbors had shown concerns over the deal that it will alter the balance of power in the Middle East. The deal paved way for economic progress of Iran as the sanctions were lifted which were imposed on Iranian banks; governmental and private entities beside its oil and gas exports. The deal has many negative and positive effects on regional stability not only in the Middle East but also other neighboring countries like Pakistan, Central Asian Republics and Turkey and the post US withdrawal scenario and its implications.

Keywords: P5+1, JCPOA, JPA, Pakistan, Iran, Middle East, Etc.

Introduction:

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) generally known as Iran Nuclear Deal was signed by Iran and P5+1 in July 2015 has provided Iran with an opportunity to continue its peaceful nuclear program (Litwak, 2015, p.16). The deal provided an opportunity to both Iran and P5+1 to settle Iranian dispute over militarization of Iranian nuclear program which Iran negated on every forum but P5+1 remained utterly suspicious of the peaceful nature of Iranian program. Both the parties have engaged in diplomacy over the issue since early 2000 and reached some sort of

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agreement like Tehran Declaration in 2003 and Paris Agreement in 2004. The efforts were expedited when President Hassan Rouhani came into power as he was a leading negotiator for Iran in Tehran Declaration and Paris Agreement.

On the other hand, before agreeing to JCPOA or Iran Nuclear Deal in 2013, both parties signed Joint Plan of Action (Litwak, 2015, p.34) which provided the basis for the comprehensive agreement between Iran and P5+1. Iran entered into the nuclear deal because of its economic isolation. People of Iran had fed up with prolonged duration of sanction imposed by the USA and other European nations. They direly wanted an end to the controversy in order to take benefit of free world. The deal provided Iran with an opportunity to come out of economic isolation and independently carryout its peaceful nuclear program. The deal has multiple ramifications for the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Middle East region. In order to analyze such ramifications of the deal, this research paper briefly discusses Iranian nuclear diplomacy, the causes of deal and major elements of the deal.

Iranian Nuclear Diplomacy:

Diplomacy is an instrument of “policy in international politics and it is commonly known as an art of negotiation” (Hussain & Abdullah, 2015). It is practiced to reach a

mutually acceptable settlement between conflicting parties for common interest. As diplomacy only cannot solve the dispute as per wishes of the weak party, however, it brings a feasible compromise for both parties. There are two types of diplomacy i.e. Public Diplomacy and Coercive Diplomacy. Public diplomacy is a sort of negotiation in which there is no pressure upon the State having issue with big powers and wherein solutions are sought in a peaceful manner. The concept of coercive diplomacy entails three major elements: e.g. “a demand, a threat and time pressure”. Demand means that the goal is to achieve change in behavior or reversal of policies of negotiating (weak) state (Hussain & Abdullah, 2015).

In 2003- 2004, they have failed in negotiations, which gave hardliners an impetus to exploit the situation. On the other hand, 2005 elections in Iran saw Ahmadinejad, a hardcore conservative winning presidential elections. During the period when President Ahmadinejad was in office, Iran’s nuclear

issue went into a level of non-compromise which hardened attitude of the government in Iran. It turned Iran's position viz-a-viz its nuclear program. To improve the chances of their electability at home, they tried to convince populace that reformist's engagement with US was a sign of weakness and considered Khatemi's men as traitors and stooges of Western world. Further they seemed to have sold Iran's dignity and ambitions. They also jailed President Khatemi's top negotiator Hossein Mousavian on charge of espionage (Raisi, 2013). Iranian leaders persisted with their policy of resistance and refused to engage in any sort of negotiations, which lead to more economic sanctions and international isolation for Iran. These measures forced Iranian to think rationally and re-evaluate their nuclear strategy and engage diplomatically with the international community.

The start of 2013 brought new dimensions in Iran's nuclear program and diplomacy, as Iran shown willingness to meet with P5+1, global powers in order to make an attempt to find an amicable and mutually agreeable compromise, but it ended in a deadlock without any agreement. In the backdrop of negotiations Iranian President called for growth of its uranium enrichment and indicated advances in other atomic energy needs. In 2006 during Nuclear Technology day speech Ahmadinejad boldly declared that, "Iran has already become a nuclear country and no one is capable of stealing this title" (Raisi, 2013).

In the meantime, on November 24, 2013, Iran and UNSC permanent member and Germany announced a groundbreaking pact that: Iran would momentarily freeze its nuclear program, which would lay underpinning for a long-term agreement. The objective of the arrangement was provision of ample time to international negotiators in order to perusal of a more wide-ranging agreement which would provide guarantee that Iranian nuclear program be only employed for peaceful purposes (Parsi, 2012).

Before entering into any agreement, Iran possessed enough enriched uranium and centrifuges in order to create nuclear weapons within months and referred to as nuclear breakout capability. Iran had agreed to cease its uranium enrichment beyond 5% level that is enough for production of energy under the interim deal. Following the talks in May next round to talks between P5+1 and Iran was started aimed at drafting an agreement but both Iran and P5+1 had left negotiation due to the lack of consensus over

uranium enrichment issue. During the talks Iran continued to assert its position by saying that it would continue to increase number of centrifuges, but the United States and other negotiating countries contended that Iran should reduce number of centrifuges. But, Iran had refused to shut down any of its nuclear facility, which Iran considers as equal to national pride and achievement. Therefore, Iran called for removal of economic and military sanctions as a prerequisite to agreeing upon any long-term accord with P5+1 (Jett, 2018).

Causes of Iran Nuclear Deal:

There are a number of internal and external reasons, which led to finalization of nuclear deal. The most important of all are those causes, which convinced the ruling elite in Iran to manifest flexibility in terms of its nuclear programme. This is generally believed that three main factors led to this change of mind and preceding agreements conceived through a comprehensive nuclear deal. Following are the Major causes of Iran Deal. Iran has been witnessing serious economic hardships in the wake of sanctions imposed by the USA and other western nations. President Ahmadinejad's policies worsened the economic situation of the country to a disastrous level. On realizing their mistakes, the ruling elite supported Rouhani as a presidential candidate and got him elected. President Rouhani is known for favoring economic development over the nuclear programme hence he led a task to reach a compromise with P5+1.

Popular Demand:

People were facing serious economic issues that were resultant of economic and trade sanctions imposed by the USA. Hence it has emerged as a popular demand that Iranian government should reach a settlement with the international community. Even during election campaigns, Rouhani himself publically favored a compromising stance on Iran's nuclear programme. In this regard, this can be concluded that President Rouhani capitalized on the public sentiment and waded through a hectic process of negotiations, threats and concerns to reach a deal with P5+1.

Openness to the World:

In Iran, there are two major political players in terms of ideology and vision. The one category is of conservatives who believe themselves as true guardians of Iranian Islamic ideology whereas on the other side, there is a

category of reformists who cherish democratic values and liberalization of Iranian political system. One of the major cause behind the reformist agenda is economic plunge which the country had taken in the wake of US economic and trade sanctions. These causes of deal are related to Iran as to why Iran agreed to conclude the nuclear deal.

Nuclear Proliferation:

Major cause of the deal for international community particularly P5+1 was related to fears of Iran becoming a nuclear weapon state. P5+1 engaged in negotiations because they feared Iran might acquire nuclear weapons overtly. P5+1 acted in this manner because they were unable to spot or it was not clear how Iranian nuclear program is progressing and by achieving a deal now they will be able to keep check and balance and deter Iran to go for development of nuclear weapons.

Stability in the Region:

To achieve stability in the region as the Middle East region is engulfed in many conflicts like Saudi-Iran and Israel-Iran being major rivalries. There was a threat to stability of the region in case Iran be able to develop nuclear weapons. Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons might have destabilized the region. On the other hand, isolated Iran would have been more threatening to the interests of the United States in the region.

In fact, Rouhani is garnering support from a popular demand for openness and negotiation with P5+1. This led him to strike an unprecedented nuclear deal, which can best be understood through a critical review of the observations made by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the content provided in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Opportunities for Iran and Middle East:

The deal has provided Iran with economic, political and security related opportunities as after the lifting of sanctions Iran would be able to exploit its natural resources. The deal ensured that The UN or EU will not impose new nuclear sanctions over Iran, UNSC will terminate all its sanctions once Iran take actions to satisfy reservation about IAEA verifications measures (Geranmayeh, 2015). It would reduce the sanctions period regarding ballistic missiles beside provisions of relief by European Union regarding sanctions over IRCG (Schwart, 2015).

The deal helps Iran to come out of isolation as easing of sanctions would enable Iran to have cordial relations with the United States and other world powers and will be able to complete energy projects which are necessary for development of Iranian economy. One the security and political front deal would help Iran in consolidating its presence and influence in the Middle East beside having friendly relations without any conflict with Pakistan and Turkey.

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action:

The “Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)” has laid out a set of commitments which Iran has pledged to abide by to be eligible for the benefits offered in the treaty including unfreezing of frozen assets overseas, oil export etc.

Here below, a brief but analytical review of these outlined commitments is provided as per the priority and sensitivity parameters.

Uranium Enrichment:

Under the agreement, Iran is bound to heavily reduce its stockpile of enriched uranium for the next 15 years. The uranium enrichment will eventually reduce by 98% which will merely be 300kg. The uranium enrichment has multiple purposes while the most important use of it include making either a nuclear reactor or a nuclear weapon. Natanz and Fordo are two of the most prominent nuclear facilities in Iran where uranium (U-235) is enriched which is usually used for making nuclear weapons. Iran, at the time of nuclear deal had as many as 20,000 centrifuges whereas the JCPOA limited Iran to installing less than 5,060 of centrifuges at Natanz. However, this closure and reduction of centrifuges was supposed to happen over 10 years until 2026. Iran complied by the JCPOA provisions by taking serious measures to drastically reduce the number of its centrifuges.

Plutonium Pathway:

Arak reactor in Iran is known for plutonium enrichment. P5+1 was particularly interested in re-designation of the nuclear reactor so that Iran could not stockpile weapons-grade plutonium. This was a heavy water nuclear facility, which had a potential to enable Iran, prepare a nuclear bomb. As per the nuclear deal, Iran has started redesigning the Arak reactor to satisfy the international community especially P5+1 that it had no design to use plutonium enrichment for nuclear weapons. Additionally, as per the

agreement, all uranium-enriched fuel would be sent out of the country till the final re-designation of the reactor. However, this does not deprive Iran of having nuclear facility for peaceful purposes, which is evident from the fact that Iran had been granted permission to build more heavy-water reactors or accumulate any excess heavy water until 2031. Though such terms have actually compromised Iran's determination to become a declared nuclear power but in terms of its capacity to generate a vast source of free energy does have a potential to turn Iran into an economic and industrial giant.

Covert Activity:

This is an important component of the terms agreed under JCPOA that Iran will allow easy and secure access of any site the IAEA inspectors would have wanted to visit. This provision was included to make sure that Iran did not succeed in developing a nuclear programme secretly. In a way Iran had made a commitment itself that, "extraordinary and robust monitoring, verification, and inspection" of its nuclear activities". The Inspectors hailed from IAEA and the global nuclear watchdog that was mandated to holistically monitor Iran's nuclear sites, which also included a perspective that they would also verify that Iran did not commit any such act of secretly moving nuclear fissile material to other locations. To further make sure that Iran does not adopt any covert means to develop nuclear weapons, it was decided that Iran will have just 24 days to comply with any of the request made by IAEA to access a site of their choice. In case, the permission is not granted within defined timeframe, an eight-member Joint Commission including Iran will come into action to rule on the situation. The commission was mandated to take punitive measure as well, which included re-imposition of earlier sanctions. Lastly, the commission simply needed a majority decision to give its rulings.

Break-out Time:

This is pertinent to share here that under JCPOA terms; Iran will keep facing a UN ban on the import of ballistic missile technology. This ban will remain effective till eight more years after the deal terms comes into practice. This was largely believed by P5+1 especially the Americans that had a huge stockpile of enriched uranium and a wide number of centrifuges as many as 20,000, which they feared could have been sufficient enough to develop 8-

10 atom bombs (Samuel, 2018). By that time, it was estimated that it would take Iran at least 03 months to make a uranium enriched bomb which in effect is referred to as "break-out time". P5+1 led by the Obama administration wanted to extend the breakout time to at least one year or even more by addressing many other concerns through remaining provisions of JCOA. Moreover, they, through hectic negotiations, made Iran agree to avoid indulging in any such activities, which include research and development that could eventually tacitly lead to the development of nuclear weapon device.

JCOA also took into account military aspects of Iran's nuclear vision. They were unanimous in endorsing a continued 'UN arms embargo' on Iran, which would expire in next five years. On a good note, they brought in lenient provisions as well which included a possibility of revoking the embargo if the IAEA, on its satisfaction, declared the Iran nuclear programme as entirely peaceful. The break out time is inherently linked with all other terms and conditions agreed by all the parties under the famous Iran nuclear deal.

Lifting The Sanctions:

The only lucrative aspect of the nuclear deal from Iran's perspective was lifting of sanctions on its trade and export with international community. Iran's economy, over the years, has suffered enormously due to a number of economic sanctions especially on export of crude oil from Iran. The experts believed that those sanctions were costing Iran a huge monthly loss of worth \$4bn to \$8bn. However, the countries endorsing the sanctions imposed by the UN, EU and US believed that it would force Iran to abandon its uranium enrichment programme and focus on building its economy and human resource.

JCOA terms were acceptable to Iran from economic perspective because it also enabled her to have access to its overseas frozen assets worth \$100b. Mostly importantly the deal brought Iran back into the international community by letting it "resume selling oil in international markets and using the global trade". Iran's economy has long been witnessing a depression as the value of its currency had fallen to record low, inflation rate was soaring whereas the foreign investors had either fled away or they were reluctant to make any venture in Iran's economic plans.

Lastly, the sanctions remained lifted only if Iran continued confirming that it did not violate any of mutually agreed upon terms of the deal. If the UN and P5+1 were not satisfied with Iran's effort to meet its commitments, the sanction could be re-imposed with extended timeframe as a punitive measure. Similarly, it was also provided if the JCPOA could not resolve a dispute, it would immediately be referred to the UN Security Council for further deliberations and decisions. The sanctions were actually lifted only once the IAEA and International nuclear watchdog confirmed that Iran had complied by all such provisions which could stop it from developing nuclear weapons.

Ramifications of Iran Nuclear Deal:

Iran nuclear deal is a step forward in achieving regional stability but there are serious ramifications for the region in the longer period of time. Most of the regional states showed reservations over the nature of deal. There are fears of an arms race in the Middle East, which will ultimately alter the regional balance of power, and achieving of nuclear weapons free zone would be at stake. Following are the ramifications of the Nuclear deal over the Middle East region and other neighboring countries of Iran.

1. Iran nuclear program achieved overt acceptance by the P5+1 as Iran agreed to limit its program to only peaceful uses. But there are apprehensions that in any eventuality, Iran might convert its program towards military use. For the time being the deal has provided Iran with an opportunity to continue its peaceful nuclear program unabated. Overall, the deal is beneficial for Iran and has affected positively as Iran came out of isolation.

2. Regional security environment would be changed that other regional powers might feel threaten from Iran going nuclear at any time. That would create a nuclear arms race in the region especially for Saudi Arab, a major rival for Iran in the region. They have shown reservation over the deal and most likely there would be conflicting situation between both states. On the other hand, security situation in the Middle East region would worsen. There are many existing conflicts in which both Iran and Saudi Arab are involved as for example, major being Syria and Yemen. The deal has provided Iran an opportunity to come out of isolation that would fuel enmity

towards Iran by Saudi Arab and her allies in the region which might further push the region into a reign of instability.

3. As for as Pakistan is concerned the deal doesn't have much implications for her vis-à-vis its security. Rather it poses to have positive impact on its economic relations with Iran. Earlier due to sanctions over Iran, Pakistan was not able to carry out projects that involve Iran but in aftermath of the deal wherein sanctions over Iran's different institutes including oil and gas export were lifted, Pakistan got engaged with Iran on multiple economic fronts such as Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline which would alter the economic condition of Pakistan. On the other hand, revival of RCD between Turkey, Pakistan and Iran after nuclear deal would lead to stability in the region as Pakistan and Turkey enjoy good relations to Gulf States and Iran alike and can transform their relationship in better way that would lead to stability. Although Iran and Turkey are having different point of view over Syrian conflict which can have destabilizing effect on the region.

4. In case of China and Russia, the deal has positive impact on their relations with Iran and both states can play their role in peaceful settlement of disputes in the region beside China getting economic benefits by involving Iran in its One Belt and One Road (OBOR) initiative

5. Israel has reservations over the nuclear deal and declared it as a big mistake. This shows that Israel will try to consolidate balance of power in her favor, which can lead to instability in the region.

6. Iran deal has serious implications for the Palestine and Israel conflict; Iran is supporting Hezbollah and Hamas in their fight against Israeli occupation. Historically, Iran and Israel enjoyed relatively cordial relations during the regime of Shah, prior to revolution. Without resolution of disputes, there remains threat of violence in the region. There is a possibility that Iran might try to convince Hamas, Hezbollah and others; to attack Israel, therefore the regional security environment would further deteriorate and at any point of time, Israel and Iran get involved in direct hostility.

7. Turkey and Iran enjoy good economic and political relations despite differences over the Iranian involvement in Syria and commercial interest in Central Asian republics, but overall both states enjoy good relations. Iran already has put behind differences and it has started working with Turkey in different fields where their interests converge. Iranian President Rouhani is of the view that “Iran and Turkey are determined to increase their cooperation to establish stability in the region” (Hafezi & Karadeniz, 2014). On economic front the deal would benefit both the states that they can revive RCD and Turkey may become route for Iran gas pipelines to the Europe, which will help Iran and Turkey alike and their economies would flourish with those developments. As a whole the deal has positive implications for Iran-Turkey relations, which would result in achieving stability in the region.

8. Saudi Arabia is wary of Iran nuclear deal due to its sectarian differences with Iran. Both the states are also competing in Yemen against each other. Economically strong Iran, in the aftermath of deal, is a threat to its other regional states like Saudi Arabia because Saudis would be more affected by opening up of Iranian oil market for the world. And such economic rivalry has the potential to destabilize the region, but close cooperation between Iran and Gulf states can overcome the destabilizing effect.

9. The conflicts prevailing in the region like in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, may continue to cause instability in the region. In all these conflicts there are various groups some are supported by Saudis and US while Iran support others that may lead to more hostile environment in the region.

10. The sectarian conflict in Middle East where Iran is supporting Shiite groups operating in various countries like Bahrain, where ruler is Sunni but majority of population belong to Shiite School of Thought. Saudi Arabia is supporting Bahrain government on the other hand Iran supporting Shiite groups which is creating rift in the region. Such conflict can destabilize the region after the nuclear deal as well.

11. Iran nuclear deal may fuel nuclear arms race in the Middle East region as Israel already developed nuclear devices. After the deal other states especially Saudi Arabia a regional rival to Iran may go nuclear or start their nuclear program. They would do so by claiming Iran deal has provided independence to Iran for pursuing its peaceful nuclear program and that can be turned to producing nuclear weapons in any eventuality such as backing out of from the deal by Iran.

US Exit and Implications for Iran and Pakistan:

In May, 2018 President of United States of America Donald J. Trump made an announcement that US is withdrawing from Iran Nuclear Deal by saying that “I made clear that if the deal could not be fixed, the United States would no longer be a party to the agreement that Iran deal is defective at its core. If we do nothing, we will know what exactly will happen” (Liptak and Gaouette, 2018)

The withdrawal of US from the deal has repercussions for not only for Iran but it would hugely affect Pakistan as well because due to US withdrawal from the deal would halt any progress in IPI gas pipeline, which might have solved Pakistan’s energy problem and get her some form of leverage over India.

For Iran the US withdrawal means the return of economic and military sanctions, which hurt Iran over the years. Deal made sure Iran came out of isolation but US withdrawal would again cause Iranian economic isolation. The withdrawal of US from the deal would prompt Iran to restart its weapon development program, which would intensify the desire of Saudi Arab to get nuclearized to counter Iranian nuclear threat i.e. to maintain its influence and achieving balance of terror there would be an arms race in the Middle East region. Beside this as diplomatic relations between Iran and the US would further deteriorate thus the conflicts in the region would not be resolved politically which would cause loss of human life i.e. Syria and Yemen.

Conclusion:

Iran Nuclear Deal, a step that would help in achieving stability in the region despite several ongoing conflicts and Arab-Iran rivalry. Deal would help Iran to connect with international community, which in turn gives a way to enhanced cooperation. Once Iran came out of isolation then international

community can play its role in easing of tensions in the Middle East. And to reduce threat to regional stability there us a need of resolution of Palestine conflict. Stability can be achieved by taking steps which can ease the tensions between Iran and Saudi Arab and in order to achieve this role of international community would be important.

Iran Nuclear Deal, a step that would help in achieving stability in the region despite several ongoing conflicts and Arab-Iran rivalry. Deal would help Iran to connect with international community, which in turn gives a way to enhanced cooperation. Once Iran came out of isolation then international community can play its role in easing of tensions in the Middle East. United States pull off from the deal may have negative consequences for Iran and the Middle East region as a whole. But extensive diplomatic efforts can bring both states to a middle ground so as to maintain peace and stability in the region.

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