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**IRAN'S NUCLEAR DEAL: RESPONSES
AND IMPLICATIONS**

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IRAN'S NUCLEAR DEAL: RESPONSES AND IMPLICATIONS

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Introduction

The nuclear programme of Iran has been the main cause of confrontation between Iran and the West for the last three decades. Tehran portrayed its nuclear programme as only aiming to meet the energy deficiency in the country, and tried to assure the international community that uranium enrichment would only be used for peaceful purposes. On the other hand, the West generally and the US specifically pressurized Iran to dismantle its nuclear programme because they believed that Iran's enriched uranium could fall into the hands of non-state entities to endanger world peace. The contradictory views of Iran and the West over the nuclear issue of the former led them into a series of confrontations, allegations, and counter-allegations.

Getting nothing out of the confrontation, the US finally engaged Iran in a series of bilateral discussions. In March 2013, the last bilateral discussions with the administration of former Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad were held in Oman. These talks were attended by Jake Sullivan and William Joseph Burns

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from the US and Ali Asghar Khaji from Iran.¹ When Hassan Rouhani was elected as President of Iran in June 2013, the pace of negotiations accelerated. The reason for this was that the newly appointed president was moderate, flexible, and more willing to have negotiations with Western countries over the nuclear programme of Iran as compared to his predecessor. In August 2013, Rouhani invited the West to table-talks over the nuclear programme of Iran. Right after the invitation, US President Barack Obama had a direct telephonic conversation with President Rouhani. It was considered a big breakthrough, since it was the first high-level contact between Iran and the US after 1979. Soon after the telephonic conversation, US Secretary of State John Kerry held a meeting with Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. It paved the way for cooperation and negotiations.²

After a series of meetings and discussions, finally on 24 November 2013, an interim agreement was concluded which was officially named Joint Plan of Action. The said agreement on Iran's nuclear programme was signed by P5+1 (US, Britain, Russia, China and France + Germany), European Union, and Iran in Geneva, Switzerland. The interim agreement bound Iran to freeze a small portion of its uranium enrichment for a short period, while on the other hand, Western countries agreed to reduce the number of sanctions which had been imposed on Iran. Moreover, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was assigned the task to inspect nuclear sites of Iran and submit its reports at the earliest possible. On 20 January 2014, IAEA issued a report in which it stated that Iran had been following the terms and conditions of the interim agreement. The report further stated that Iran had reduced its enrichment of uranium to 20 per cent, started the reduction process, and stopped work on the Arak heavy water reactor.³

It should also be noted that under the terms and condition of the interim agreement, Iran accepted to end its medium-enriched uranium, eliminate its low-enriched uranium by about 98 per cent from its stockpile, and decrease its

centrifuges to almost two-thirds for a period of 15 years.⁴ It was also agreed that for the coming 15 years, Iran would have uranium enrichment up to 3.67 per cent. Iran also accepted the condition that it would not construct any heavy water facilities for the same period. Iran agreed that its existing uranium enrichment materials would be confined to one facility where First Generation centrifuges would be used for ten years with no other similar functional facilities.⁵ Furthermore, the agreement gave IAEA access to Iran's entire nuclear plants and authorized it to monitor and verify whether Iran was complying with the Interim Agreement or not. It was also agreed by the signatories to the Interim Agreement that if it is verified that Iran has completely complied with it, the US and EU, along with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) would lift nuclear-related sanctions against Iran.

Moreover, in order to formalize and regularize the agreement for a longer period of time, Iran and the West started negotiations. The series of negotiations, which continued for 20 months, laid the foundations of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).⁶ Before, the formal conclusion of JCPOA, Iran, P5+1, and EU concluded Iran's Nuclear Deal Framework on 2 April 2015 in Lausanne, Switzerland. Actually, after the conclusion of Iran's Nuclear Deal Framework, Iran agreed to restrict its nuclear programme and allow the international agencies to access its nuclear sites and facilities on regular basis. Therefore, flexibility on the part of Iran and the West formally paved the way for concluding a comprehensive agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, in Vienna on 14 July 2015.⁷ The Nuclear Deal Framework of April 2015 was thus the founding stone of JCPOA. Before the conclusion of JCPOA, many observers felt that the negotiations may not be successful, but the negotiators continued their efforts and finally reached an agreement.⁸ As the signatories were about to conclude the deal, the US Secretary of State John Kerry directly asked Foreign Minister of Iran Mohammad Javad Zarif to make sure whether he had the

authority to make a final deal or not. The latter assured Kerry that he had come to negotiate with full authority.⁹ As a result, the huge breakthrough was announced publicly that JCPOA has been finalized. The said announcement brought relief not only at official level but also among public in general.¹⁰ No doubt, the true spirit of the agreement lies in the intention of Iran and the West. But the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and IAEA need to play their pivotal roles for the true protection of the agreement so that tensions between the West and Iran de-escalate.¹¹

The facts of JCPOA

No doubt the JCPOA forced Iran to compromise on its nuclear programme, but it also relieved it of a host of international sanctions. The agreement that Iran would decrease its existing low-enriched uranium by about 98 per cent means that Iran would reduce its stockpile of said uranium from 10,000 kg to 300 kg. The said reduction will be sustained for 15 years.¹² Iran has also been restricted to limit its uranium enrichment to 3.67 per cent since it is believed that the 3.67 per cent will be enough for the use of civilian nuclear power and research.¹³ The 3.67 per cent could also be enough for development of nuclear weapons but Iran will not be allowed to use it for that purpose.¹⁴ The reduction of Iran's uranium enrichment is the greatest decline in Iran's nuclear energy ever. But after 15 years, the West will remove all physical limits on enrichment of uranium which includes the types and numbers of centrifuges. Iran will also enjoy the enrichment facilities.¹⁵

Iran also accepted the condition in JCPOA that for the duration of ten years, it would keep two-thirds of its centrifuges in storage. Among the existing stockpile of 19,000 centrifuges (10,000 are operational) Iran would only be able to use 5,060 to enrich uranium only in Natanz Plant.¹⁶ It was also agreed that for the same period, Iran would use its IR-1 centrifuges at the Natanz site. It should

be noted that IR-1 are the oldest and least effective centrifuges of Iran. On the other hand, Iran would not use its more modern IR-2M centrifuges according to the agreement.¹⁷ Moreover, the centrifuges which are not operational would be kept and stored in Natanz under IAEA supervision. Iran would be allowed, however, to replace any failed centrifuges with the IR-2M versions. Iran also agreed under JCPOA that it would not construct any new facilities for enrichment of uranium for the next 15 years.¹⁸ Further, Iran can only conduct research and development activities on enrichment at Natanz Plant, albeit with certain limitations, for eight years.¹⁹ Moreover, Iran with the collaboration of P5+1, will construct the Arak heavy water reactor in accordance with the agreed conditions of JCPOA for research and energy generation. This was actually aimed at reducing the production of plutonium in order to stop the production of weapons-grade plutonium. According to the terms and conditions of JCPOA, the P5+1 assured Iran of full support for the construction of Arak complex. It was also agreed that Iran would send all the spent fuel outside the country along with all the excess heavy water when Iran's need is sufficient, and sell it in the international market on reasonable prices. Furthermore, as per the JCPOA, Iran cannot do research on or use the spent fuel within its facilities for 15 years.

As per the JCPOA, the Fordow nuclear facility of Iran is neither allowed to enrich uranium nor conduct research on enrichment of uranium for 15 years. Iran is required to convert the Fordow facility into a nuclear physics and technological centre. For the said period, Iran will sustain the quantity of 1,044 IR-1 centrifuges in six cascades in one branch of Fordow. Among these, two cascades would be maintained without any uranium with the suitable infrastructure modification for the purpose of production of radioisotopes which would be used only in agriculture, medicine, science, and industry. The remaining four cascades will remain inactive since Iran would not be allowed to use or keep any sort of fissile materials in the Fordow facility.²⁰

In the JCPOA, it was decided that Iran will enforce an Additional Protocol Agreement, which will be carried on unless Iran becomes a party to NPT because the Additional Protocol Agreement will be the symbol of continuation of the monitoring and verification process.²¹ It was also decided that an inspection team will be formed to monitor and ensure whether Iran has fully complied with its obligations or not.²²

IAEA has been assigned the work of oversight and monitoring of the nuclear programme of Iran including its enrichment of uranium, uranium mills, processing, and its sites and plants.²³ IAEA would be allowed access to the nuclear facility of Natanz and Fordow on daily basis along with its surveillance equipments. IAEA has been authorized to use different sorts of technologies including fibre-optic, which electronically sends information to IAEA. The IAEA would use infrared satellite technologies which help detect secret sites. It would also use environmental sensors and detective technologies that find minor signs of nuclear elements, and tamper-resistant and radiation-resistant cameras.²⁴ Moreover, in order to collect information and detect anomalies, IAEA has been given the task to use computerized accounting programmes.²⁵ The inspectors' team would be expanded from 50 to 150. They would be chosen from countries with which Iran has diplomatic ties.²⁶

It is to be further noted that the inspectors of IAEA would be allowed to inspect any of Iran's non-declared sites if they have even minor reservations over it. The process of inspection would begin, however, with the request of IAEA to Iran for grant of permission to access and verify undeclared nuclear materials and activities. Iran would be obliged to give permission for inspection of any site about which IAEA has concerns.²⁷ If any disagreement would occur between IAEA and Iran during the process of inspection, they would be required to resolve it among themselves within 14 days, if it would remain unsolved; it would go to the Joint Commission (a commission formed by the members of JCPOA to

supervise and observe the implementation of JCPOA) for resolution within a week. The majority of the commission will have the final decision, which Iran will have to comply. In case of failure to comply within three days, the sanctions will be re-imposed automatically on the basis of snapback provision.²⁸

International response to the deal

As soon as the JCPOA was concluded, the international community responded with different views. Most of the states applauded the deal and termed it a big breakthrough of modern age. On the other hand, however, the Israeli government and the Republicans from the US termed it an inescapable danger for world peace. Some hardliners within Iran criticized the deal too.

US stance

In an address, US President Barack Obama said that the deal was deliberated thoroughly and take into account every single factor of Iran's nuclear programme with provisions of inspection for verification of each item of its nuclear sites.²⁹ The US President further said that the deal was concluded on verification rather than trust.³⁰ The president also said that he would veto any Congressional bills that would be against the deal and its implementation process since the said deal met all national security needs of the US and its allies. He publicly criticized the people who were against the deal.³¹

US Secretary of State John Kerry termed the deal a successful agreement and added that it was a great step to halt further proliferation of nuclear weapons. He further said that the deal would, by any means, stop Iran from enriching uranium secretly.³² John Kerry argued that the way the critics wanted to halt Iran's nuclear programme was not possible because coercive options were not a solution.³³ Former US secretary of state Hillary Clinton labelled the deal as an essential step in stopping Iran's nuclear race. Former chairperson of the US Senate's Committee on Veterans' Affairs Senator Bernie Sanders said that the

deal was the triumph of diplomacy over any military action in Iran that would throw the US into another never-ending war in the Middle East.³⁴ House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, who is a Democrat, called the deal an important step towards the non-proliferation of nuclear bombs. Supporting the deal, she said that it is a bold and positive work of President Obama for the assurance of peace and harmony in the world and stoppage of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.³⁵

Democrat Senator Harry Reid, currently serving as Senate Minority Leader, said in a statement on 14 July 2015 that the deal was the result of many years of struggle; therefore, Congress had to review it sincerely and with positive attitude.³⁶ Appreciating the deal, he said that it would stop Iran from getting nuclear bombs.³⁷ Experts among Democrats not only consider it an act to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons but also a step to reshape the politics of the Middle East. Therefore, they believe that it would be foolish to let go of such a great chance.³⁸

On the other hand, the critics of the deal, especially the Republicans, term the agreement hazardous, imperfect, and thoughtless. Senior Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said that the deal would make Iran superior to Israel. He further said that the state of Israel would be at risk because of it.³⁹ Republican leader and the Speaker of the House John Boehner called it a very bad deal.⁴⁰ The Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell strongly condemned the deal as having positive and best options for Iran rather than covering and advancing the US national security goals.⁴¹ Chairperson of Senate Foreign Relations Committee Bob Corker opposed the deal, saying that the US along with the West had given too much room to Iran for its nuclear programme.

Iran's points of view

The President of Iran Hassan Rouhani called the deal a great step of international cooperation with Iran. He said that unnecessary confrontations would lead the international community nowhere, adding that problems would be resolved on the basis of mutual cooperation and collaboration.⁴² Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif issued a statement saying that the deal had brought a new hope for Iran, which it had to further build on.⁴³ He added that the deal was in fact a defeat to the Zionist Regime of Israel since the very agreement had isolated Israel from its Western allies.⁴⁴ On 12 July 2015, Zarif met the leader of Hezbollah Hassan Nasrallah and said that the deal created an important opportunity for regional cooperation to end extremism and terrorism created by Israel.⁴⁵

Moreover, public in Iran believes that the deal is a sign of peace as well as a great achievement of Iran. People of Iran even took to streets to celebrate the day of the announcement of the deal.⁴⁶ On 16 July 2015, the Supreme Leader of Iran Ayatollah Ali Khamenei applauded the negotiators saying that it was a big achievement for them that they converted the negotiations into a permanent deal.⁴⁷ He further said to the US that Iran would not change its policies towards the arrogant regime of the US.⁴⁸ He termed the deal a great sign of success and said that he could not oppose or reject the agreement in the Supreme National Security Council or the parliament.⁴⁹ He accepted and welcomed the deal and strongly praised the struggle of Rouhani.⁵⁰ The Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) published a report that Iran's nuclear programme was accepted by the world powers, and that becoming nuclear was the right of Iran within the international norms.⁵¹ It further reported that there would not be any sort of pressure over Iran with respect to its nuclear programme after the deal.

On the other hand, some hardliners of Iran opposed the deal and called it a victory of the West over Iran. They criticized President Rouhani as much as

President Obama was denounced by the Republicans in the US. Alireza Zakani, a conservative lawmaker, said that it was too early for the people of Iran to celebrate the deal since it would send negative signals to the West.⁵²

Views of Israel

The JCPOA was strongly condemned and criticized by the officials of Israel. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu strongly rejected the deal and termed it a threat to Israel's security. He further elaborated that Israel would not accept the deal by any means, calling it a big mistake of the West.⁵³ Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely said that the deal was a historic surrender of the West and Israel would not let it get ratified in the US Congress by any means. Another leader of Bayit Yehudi Party of Israel, Naftali Bennett clearly opposed the agreement by saying that it would make the period dangerous and hazardous.⁵⁴

Zionist Union leader Isaac Herzog staunchly condemned the deal and said that it would make Iran's position stronger in the Middle East and would allow it to acquire nuclear weapons.⁵⁵ Many experts and politicians from Israel believe that it is a failure of the government of Netanyahu and its weak diplomacy with the West. They call it the failure of Prime Minister of Israel in safeguarding Israeli interests in the region. The opposition leader of Yisrael Beiteinu Party Avigdor Lieberman, condemned the agreement and said that it would boost Iran's position in the Middle East.⁵⁶

On the other hand, some officials appreciated the deal and said that it was the best option for the security of Israel. Ami Ayalon, ex-leader of Israel's internal security service Shin Bet, said that the deal is the right choice for Israel and its security. He further said that the deal had driven Iran back from the nuclear path since it was so close to getting a nuclear bomb.⁵⁷ Former Director General of Israel's intelligence agency Mossad Efraim Halevy (1998 -2002) said

that the JCPOA included certain components which were very much essential for the security of Israel and that an end to the deal would make Iran free to do what it wished.⁵⁸

Stance of the Gulf states

The Gulf states including Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia also appreciated the deal and called it a big breakthrough. Terming the deal a great success, they congratulated the nations who were part of JCPOA. The Arab community believes that the deal would bring stability to the region.⁵⁹ Oman actually played an important role for the initiation of negotiations between Iran and P5+1 since Oman has friendly relations with both Iran and the US.⁶⁰ Oman had been trying to bring Iran and the West to the negotiating table, and had even offered to launch backdoor channels between Iran and the US for successful negotiations over Iran's nuclear programme in 2009. Eventually Oman was successful in arranging the first secret talks between the US and Iranian diplomats in Muscat in July 2012.⁶¹ Qatar and Saudi Arabia welcomed the deal and called it the best option for regional peace and stability. The government of Saudi Arabia believes that the deal is the only option which prevents Iran from becoming nuclear and also gives a mechanism through which all the nuclear sites of Iran will be inspected, verified, and checked clearly. The deal is also welcomed because it has clauses that would re-impose the released sanctions if Iran was found guilty of violation of any article of the deal.⁶² The Secretary-General of the Arab League Nabil Elaraby called the deal a great success and said that JCPOA would result in peace and harmony in the region and ensure stability in the Middle East.⁶³ On 2 August 2015, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) publicly supported the deal in Doha, Qatar, stating that it would bring peace to the region.⁶⁴

Stance of Pakistan

Pakistan strongly welcomed the deal and said that it would promote confidence building measures and create peace and harmony in the region.⁶⁵ Former president of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari described the agreement as great diplomacy and a triumph of table-talks over confrontation, hostility, and gunboat diplomacy. He was of the view that negotiation was the only solution to the problem.⁶⁶

Experts' views

Experts have criticized as well as appreciated the deal. Experts related to arms control believe that it is a positive step through which peace will be ensured and Iran will be stopped from becoming a nuclear state. They further argue that the deal will slow down the pace of Iran's nuclear programme. But other analysts and experts who have a soft corner for Israel describe it as a dangerous step that invites Iran in the pace of arms race. They are of the opinion that the deal is an actual recognition of Iran's nuclear status.

The Director of the East Asia Non-Proliferation Programme at Monterey Institute of International Studies Jeffrey Lewis has called the deal a positive step in the right direction. He further said that the final deal would slow down the nuclear programme of Iran and compel it to go through verification, monitoring measures, and a cooperation process with the IAEA.⁶⁷ Actually, the deal does not change the US-Iran relations but brings them on one point over the nuclear issue of Iran.

Senior fellows at the Centre for American Progress, Lawrence Korb and Katherine Blakeley, maintain that the deal is the best option.⁶⁸ They have called it an excellent step for the US specifically and the international community in general. They further wrote that it prevented Iran from continuing its nuclear programme since it closed the ways and paths of Iran that could be used to build

up enough nuclear material to make a nuclear weapon. They appreciated the terms of the deal that compelled Iran to be the subject of different IAEA verifications.

Another senior research physicist and professor of the Programme on Science and Global Security at the Princeton University Frank Von Hippel called the deal a milestone in the political structure of the world. He said that for the sake of sanctions relief, Iran had stepped back from nuclear enrichment.⁶⁹ He further maintained that the nuclear programme of Iran needed to be taken seriously even after ten years because the nuclear arm race in the Middle East could escalate to the dangerous phases of nuclearization.

Former CIA analyst Fred Fleitz's statement, analyzing the provisions of the agreement, said that the deal had given too much to Iran. He argued that Iran would easily meet the terms and conditions of the deal and would later develop advanced centrifuges to easily get back on the nuclear track.⁷⁰

Siegfried S. Hecker of the Centre for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University described the agreement as the best alternative. He argued that Iran had agreed on many areas to restrict its nuclear programme.⁷¹ He appreciated the deal saying that the international community would collectively respond in case of violation of the agreement on Iran's part.

Zia Mian of the Programme on Science and Global Security at Princeton University said that the deal provided three essential lessons which would ensure peace and harmony in the world: First, it opened the way for successful nuclear diplomacy which was necessary to create a common ground for negotiations and table-talks. Second, JCPOA has been concluded despite a lot of criticism from within the US, Israel, Gulf States, and Iran. Concluding a successful deal in a tense situation amid internal criticism is a political milestone in world politics. Third, nuclear disarmament problems cannot be dealt with by one state alone. Therefore, it is a process that requires involvement of different powers.⁷²

Approval of the draft of JCPOA by the UNSC

On 15 July 2015, the US Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power forwarded the draft consisting of 14 pages to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for approval.⁷³ It was finally approved unanimously in a 15-0 vote by the Council on 20 July 2015 under the UNSC Resolution 2231.⁷⁴ The resolution was supposed to take 90 days for implementation to give time to US Congress for consideration and deliberation under the Iran's Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015. Moreover, the resolution also created a mechanism for lifting the seven sanctions, which had been imposed by UNSC.⁷⁵ However, ballistic missile technology ban and the arms embargo of UNSC would retain their own places. Moreover, the said resolution of the UNSC would have nothing to do with the sanctions separately imposed by the US and European Union. The hardest part of the resolution for Iran was that it codified the terms of snapback mechanism of the deal by virtue of which all lifted sanctions would be re-imposed automatically if Iran would be found guilty of violating the agreement.⁷⁶

When the voting process was over, Samantha Power told the Security Council that sanctions will be lifted on Iran after it would meet all its obligations. In addition to this, she asked Iran to free all under arrest Americans who were imprisoned in Iran, such as: Amir Hekmati, Saeed Abedini, and Jason Rezaian.⁷⁷ On the day of the approval of resolution by UNSC, the European Union held a meeting of Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels where they sanctioned the JCPOA following which the EU member states started lifting the sanctions on Iran. However, the sanctions of EU with respect to forbidding the export of ballistic missiles technology, and the sanctions related to abuse of human rights were not lifted forthwith.⁷⁸

Public debate in Iran and the US

People in general have different views regarding the JCPOA. There are two schools of thought. The ones who are anti-Iran believe that Iran has been recognized as a nuclear power; and that the current deal has encouraged Iran to slowly progress further. They consider Iran as the beneficiary of the deal. They believe that the deal did not end the nuclear dream of Iran but gave it a green signal to continue further with a ten or fifteen years pause. The deal was strongly condemned in Israel where anti-Iran people took to the streets. Israeli propaganda continued through media in order to pressurize the West and the US to impose harder strings so that Iran's nuclear programme could be dismantled permanently. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee constituted an informal body called Citizens for a Nuclear Free Iran. The body continued propaganda through advertisements against the deal in order to create public agitation.⁷⁹ Another group, United Against Nuclear Iran (UANI) severely condemned the deal and called it completely foolish to allow Iran in the nuclear club.⁸⁰

On the other hand, a huge number of people appreciated the deal and some even labelled it as the biggest diplomatic breakthrough ever. This school of thought believes that the agreement ensures peace in the region and ends hostility between Iran and the West to a large extent. The deal, according to its supporters, not only ends the political crisis between Iran and the West but also discourages the nuclear proliferation programme of Iran. They further argue that it brought Iran under strict terms and conditions to obey the rules and regulations of IAEA and NPT. The National Iranian American Council (NIAC) termed the deal a great success of negotiators. NIAC said that the negotiators of the deal successfully concluded the agreement which apparently halted Iran's nuclear programme. They suggested to Congress to further strengthen the deal since it had come to the final stage with a lot of hard work. The NIAC, with the help of different advertisements in media, tried to win public support in favour of the deal.⁸¹ It also

forwarded a suggestion to the Congress that in order to stop the war permanently between Iran and the West, the deal ought to be implemented in good faith and with honest intention. A great number of former US ambassadors consider the deal a great success. They believe that if the deal is implemented in true spirit, it would stop Iran from the proliferation of nuclear weapons, bring peace and stability to the Middle East, secure the security interests of the US in the region, and check the arms race in the world.⁸² A good number of scientists from the US issued a statement on 8 August 2015 in which they congratulated President Obama on his great, inventive, rigorous, and West-oriented deal with Iran which not only ended a nuclear arms race in the Middle East, but also protected US interest.⁸³

Even the military cadre of the US is divided over the deal. A good number of retired military officers staunchly endorsed the agreement and forwarded a letter titled ‘The Iran Deal Benefits US National Security’ on 11 August 2015 in which they said that the deal was truly aimed at halting the nuclear programme of Iran. They further said that it would be a diplomatic opportunity for Iran to stop its nuclear path; otherwise it would be justified for the US to use the military options against it after its failure in complying with the agreement.⁸⁴ On the other hand, a group of retired military officers showed displeasure with the deal and said that it did not completely halt Iran’s nuclear programme, and rather gave it a recognized way to obtain nuclear weapons.⁸⁵

The deal has also been under discussion in Iran where a majority of people supported it and said that it had opened the way for Iran to trade with the international community. They are of the view that the economy of Iran would get a boost when the sanctions are released; therefore, the deal is essential for saving it from isolation in world politics. There was also a strong domestic condemnation of the deal, but Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani paid a deaf ear to the criticism and continued to do what he considered the best for his country.⁸⁶ He further said

to the hardliners that Iran had no option; it had to choose either to get out of economic crises or continue nuclear confrontation with the West which was never going to end. He said that oil export and access to the international banking system were blocked and Iran had been isolated in world politics. Most people in Iran believe that in this modern era, Iran cannot afford to engage in a fruitless confrontation with the West. Therefore, they think that the ones who oppose the deal would fall in the category of extremists.⁸⁷ Most human rights activists and intellectuals in Iran appreciated the deal and said that it would decrease the political and economic gap between Iran and the West and would create conducive relations between them.

Implementation of JCPOA

The successful conclusion of JCPOA between P5+1 and Iran made many believe that almost the entire international community was on a single page with respect to peace, nuclear proliferation, and arms race. Therefore, the international community applauded the efforts of the US and hoped that it would show sincere efforts for the true implementation of JCPOA. In order to ensure the proper and timely implementation of the deal, the Obama administration brought JCPOA to US Congress on 19 July 2015 to get it approved.⁸⁸ The deal was reviewed and discussed in the US Congress under the terms and conditions of Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015 which had been concluded on 22 May 2015.⁸⁹ After the submission of JCPOA, the US Congress had 60 days for the review during which it could approve or disapprove it.⁹⁰ Keeping in view the Republicans' majority vote against the approval of the deal, President Obama said that he would veto any such disapproval.⁹¹ But the US president could maintain his veto power if he had the support of 34 votes in the Senate and 146 votes in the House of Representatives.⁹²

During the period of review, hot debates over the deal opened up, not only in Congress but also among US public. The Republican leaders tried their best to get the deal rejected as they believed that it would officially recognize Iran's nuclear programme. They further viewed the deal as ill-planned, not covering all aspects of cutting off Iran's nuclear ambitions. Therefore, they wanted the Obama administration to avoid lifting of the sanctions. On the other hand, the deal also had a good number of supporters in the US Congress creating problems for its approval or rejection from both the houses. The review period, which ended on 11 September 2015, was marked by a failure of the resolution with a vote of 269 nays (25 Democrats and 244 from Republicans), and only 162 ayes, which all came from Democrats.⁹³

On the other hand, Iranian government also faced similar resistance in getting the JCPOA approved in the parliament where the hardliners strongly criticized it. They argued that the deal put the sovereignty of Iran at risk.⁹⁴ The president of Iran, however, staunchly supported it as the need of the time for the recovery of Iran's economy, and called for an internal compromise on it to reach a final settlement with the West.⁹⁵ Nobody could doubt the sincere efforts of Iran when it even prohibited all media men, officials, and the analysts from criticizing the JCPOA.⁹⁶ Through the efforts of the Iranian government, the parliament of Iran eventually approved the deal on 13 October 2015, despite strong pressure from the hardliners, by a vote of 161 in favour and 59 in opposition, with 13 parliamentarians being absent.⁹⁷

To save the sincere efforts and commitments of Iran and the EU from going to waste, the Foreign Minister of Iran Javad Zarif along with the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, jointly declared the "Adoption Day" of the deal on 18 October 2015.⁹⁸ On the same day, it was expressed by all parties that JCPOA would soon be implemented.

The long wait came to an end on 16 January 2016 when, despite strong opposition from the Republicans in the US and the hardliners of Iran, implementation of the JCPOA was finally announced by Zarif and Mogherini in Vienna after the satisfactory report from IAEA.⁹⁹ Moreover, the report of IAEA confirmed Iran's compliance with all the terms and conditions of JCPOA. Soon after the announcement of the Implementation Day, the EU, the US, and the UN lifted the nuclear-related sanctions against Iran.

Although the implementation of JCPOA was warmly welcomed by the officials of Iran and the peace-loving nations of the world, on 17 January 2016 the US imposed some new sanctions on the companies of Iran on the pretext of Iranian involvement in testing of ballistic missiles.¹⁰⁰ It has to be noted that these new sanctions were imposed only a day after the US, UN, and EU lifted all sanctions related to the nuclear programme of Iran. This demonstrates the non-seriousness of the US in getting the issue resolved peacefully.

Positive impacts of JCPOA for Iran

Economic impacts

The deal not only ends the political tensions between Iran and the West, but also allows the former to take part in international trade in the world market. Iran, which holds 10 per cent of the world's oil and 18 per cent of its natural gas reserves, would be very much beneficial for the international community to trade with.¹⁰¹ The deal allows Iran to export its oil to Europe, which benefits both the West and Iran.¹⁰² Foreign investors would invest in technologies and industries in Iran for the refinery process of oil and natural gas. Multinational companies and foreign firms would be allowed to invest in Iran since Iran has a great energy market. The details of sanctions relief are as follows:

- The UN or EU will not impose new nuclear-related sanctions on Iran.

- When IAEA publishes the satisfactory verification report with respect to compliance with the nuclear-related measures by Iran, the UN will terminate all its sanctions, the EU will terminate some sanctions and other will be suspended, and the US will stop the application of its nuclear-related sanctions against Iran.¹⁰³ This was achieved with the implementation of JCPOA in January 2016 as per the earlier expectations.¹⁰⁴ Iran's foreign assets worth around US\$100 billion frozen in foreign banks were also released following the announcement of implementation of JCPOA.¹⁰⁵
- The sanctions imposed on Iran in relation to ballistic missile technologies will continue for eight years. On the other hand, the sanctions which are enforced on conventional weapons sales to Iran may continue for five years.¹⁰⁶
- EU would lift a good number of sanctions against Iranian companies and institutions, including Revolutionary Guards after eight years into the agreement.¹⁰⁷

Through the said agreement, the US will not lift the sanctions connected to human rights abuses, missiles, and terrorism support.¹⁰⁸ The sanctions of the US are stricter as compared to the sanctions of the EU.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, it was agreed in the deal that if Iran was found violating the agreement, the sanctions can be re-imposed by any of the P5+1.¹¹⁰

Basically JCPOA aims to settle Iran's nuclear-related issues with the Western countries through the following process:

If any member believes that the other party of JCPOA is not complying with the terms of the agreement, the complaining party may take the issue to the Joint Commission.¹¹¹ If the complaint has been carried to the Joint Commission by any opposing members of Iran, and is not resolved in accordance with the satisfaction and wishes of complaining member within 35-days, the concerned

member may term the issue unresolved and will stop to perform its commitments under JCPOA by notifying the UNSC that JCPOA is not effective. Within 30 days, UNSC will pass a resolution for the purpose of lifting more sanctions.¹¹² If the UNSC fails to adopt the resolution within the said period, all nuclear-related sanctions of the pre-JCPOA will be automatically re-imposed. On the other hand, Iran clearly stated that in such cases, Iran will stop to comply with the nuclear deal.¹¹³ The aforementioned rule simply means that any one of the five permanent members can veto the sanction relief but no permanent power will deny the re-imposition of sanctions.

The Executive Director of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) in Washington Mark Dubowitz opposed Iran's views that on such grounds Iran would stop to follow the terms of deal as, on the other hand, the US would be unwilling to enforce a "snapback" for minor violations. If the violation on the part of Iran would be serious, the issue would be taken to the UNSC; otherwise for minor violation, no sanctions would be re-imposed.¹¹⁴

Political impacts

In the 1950s, the US established cordial relations with Iran. After the 1958 revolution of Iraq, which was anti-Western, the US aided Iran militarily by strengthening its defensive potentialities. When Cold War entered the Middle East, Iran's importance was further boosted in the US point of view. As a result, the US continued to sell weapons to Iran for its defence. In the 1960s, US developed cordial political relations with Iran for the sake of its dominance in the Persian Gulf.

During the reign of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (1941-1979), US-Iran relations were further strengthened. US had interest in Iran because it shared a long border with the USSR and was also the most dominant power in the Persian Gulf through which US could strengthen its foreign policy in the Middle East.

Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi received diplomatic support and financial aid from the US during the Cold War. US forces were stationed in different cities of Iran; in return Iran was guaranteed every kind of security.

In 1963, Pahlavi even tried to Americanize all of Iran through the White Revolution. It included the grant of right of votes to women, growth of industries, development and enhancement of health facilities, building of schools, expansion of transportation, land reforms, and construction of roads, railways and airports. It was carried out with the help and friendly cooperation of the US.

The friendly relations experienced a massive setback when Islamic Revolution took place in Iran in 1979. The converging interests of the US and Iran converted into diverging interests. Their friendly relations turned into bitter relations. The mistrust, misconception, and confrontation between both states took a serious turn which Iran had to pay the price for. Iran was politically and economically isolated and socially cut off. Iran was forced to dismantle its nuclear programme which it insisted to be for peaceful purpose. After a confrontation of three decades over the nuclear issue of Iran, finally Iran and the West concluded JCPOA which politically relieved Iran. After the successful conclusion of the deal, Iran would enjoy friendly relations not only with the US but also with the European states. Britain re-opened its embassy in Iran which was shut down when Iranian mobs attacked it in 2011.¹¹⁵ British-Iranian relations have considerably improved after the arrival of Hassan Rouhani as president of Iran. The deal further boosted the diplomatic relations where both countries have developed mutual trust to resolve their problems peacefully.

Positive impacts of the deal for Middle East and South Asia

Nuclear confrontation between the US and Iran also has serious implications for the political and economic structures of the Middle East and

South Asia. Moreover, in case of a future confrontation between Iran and the US, the latter would want to station its forces either in the Middle East or in South Asia to try to dismantle or seize the nuclear materials of Iran. Any kind of resistance from Iran might cause disturbance for the said regions. The nuclear confrontation between Iran and the US would possibly spread in the entire region of Middle East and South Asia.

Keeping the direct consequences of a nuclear confrontation between Iran and the US in mind, the neutral states of the two regions want a permanent solution to the problem. Therefore, the deal is the best option for the region. A majority of states of the region warmly welcomed the deal and drew the attention of the signatories towards its sincere and quick implementation. Positive impacts for the Middle East are as follows:

- The JCPOA would put to an end the series of allegations and counter-allegations between Iran and the West;
- The deal would help in weakening the arm race and nuclear proliferation in the region;
- Middle East, which is an oil-rich region, will enjoy trade with international community without any disturbance;
- International firms and companies will be allowed to invest, which ultimately benefits the region;
- Peace will be ensured.

If Iran had been allowed to acquire nuclear weapons, the balance of power in the region would have been disturbed and other smaller states would have got encouraged to initiate their own nuclear programmes. Thus, the possibility of nuclear bombs transferring to the hands of extremists and terrorists would have exacerbated.

Conclusion

The JCPOA has been welcomed by the peace-loving nations of the world since it brought the West and Iran to an agreement on peaceful resolution of the dispute over the nuclear programme of Iran. Moreover, Iran has resolved to limit its nuclear programme for the period of ten years for the sake of its economy because it was burdened by sanctions. The conclusion of nuclear deal between the P5+1 and Iran would pave the way for peace and stability in the region. Therefore, the neighbouring states of Iran, including Pakistan, have strongly welcomed the deal and asked the signatories for its sincere implementation.

However, another substantial pressure group of experts and politicians within Israel and the US strongly condemned the deal, saying that it would officially recognize the nuclear programme of Iran. They believe that Iran would easily meet the terms of the deal and would soon register itself in the nuclear club which would ultimately disturb the balance of power in the Middle East.

Although the deal was implemented in January 2016, from the oppositions' vote and resistance in US Congress against the deal, there is a growing apprehension that implementation of the deal might face resistance in the US. But one has to realize that the ultimate solution of any issue would take place at the negotiating table. Therefore, the Republicans need to cooperate with the US president for approval of the deal. There is no denying that fact that the deal would not only end the hostile relations of US and Iran but would also ease the tension of the region. Therefore, the peace-loving nations have to play their role for successful implementation of the deal from both sides.

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