

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT BETWEEN IRAN AND P5+1 (A Critical Perspective of Region and International Actors)

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Abstract:

A Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (also known as JCPOA) was signed on 14th July 2015 between Iran and P5+1 at Vienna. This phenomenal deal has been seen as a significant move towards Iran-West relations. Because it is widely believed that the successful implementation of this deal will shift the balance of power towards Iran. Although Tehran is playing key position in the politics of Middle East but in case of successful implication of this agreement it could obtain the same position which it had before the 1979s Islamic revolution. Because the normalized relation with West specifically with the US will further strengthens the Iranian position in the region. Therefore some observers called this agreement as the deal of the century. Initially American President Barack Obama and his government faced complications to make this deal acceptable to their regional allies as well as the fellow congressmen. The article examines the implication of this agreement on the regional and international politics. It also tries to examine and evaluate the futuristic approach of important regional players on the issue of nuclear Iran.

Keywords: *JCPOA, E3+3, IAEA, Gulf Cooperation Council, Security Council, Vienna, Middle East, Hamas, Hutties*

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Introduction

From last thirty years Iran's nuclear program has been seen as a global phenomenon and because of countless claims of US and Israeli officials and agencies, many of us believed that Iran has a clandestine nuclear program. Iran's intrusive policy in the region further strengthened the perception that Tehran is seeking nuclear technology for the weaponry purposes, so it can obtain the regional dominance. The comprehensive agreement between Iran and E3+3 signifies as the most effective of several alternatives to make sure that Tehran cannot acquire nuclear weapons capability. However, U.S strategic partners in the Middle East, as well as Republicans in Congress disapprove this agreement because they believe that Tehran would utilize its nuclear infrastructure to develop a nuclear weapon after the agreement expires. The regional heavy weights express concern that an accord would give Iran additional resources to extend its influence in the region. On the other hand many optimists in Washington believe that a nuclear agreement could produce greater U.S.-Iran cooperation against the common enemy of both parties which is the ISIS. The U.S officials acknowledge that Iran and the United States have held bilateral talks on the Islamic State and other regional issues at the margins of the negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear accord (Katzman, Kerr & Garcia, 2015, p. 1)

Historic Negotiations between P5+1 and Iran

On November 24, 2013, E3+3 (England, France, Germany, Russia, China and United States) successfully bargain a nuclear deal with Iran. This agreement is now known as the interim agreement ("Joint Plan of Action," JPA) which imposed some partial jurisdictions on Iran's nuclear program and in return some of the international sanctions had been removed. Initially both parties agreed that this interim agreement will be applicable for six months, during which time both sides would make effort to negotiate for an inclusive agreement for the enduring status of Iran's nuclear program. The IAEA inspectors were satisfied with Iran's compliance with its JPA commitments. After satisfactory report from IAEA no further sanctions refrained by the P5+1 and Tehran also got access to its frozen oil sales proceeds. Because of the JPA all jurisdiction regarding trade of petrochemicals, gold and other expensive metals were removed. Iran also started business with foreign firms which were entrusted in its auto industry sector.

Throughout 2014 and thus far in 2015, the attention of the international community increasingly turned to the potential outcome of negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear accord (Katzman, Kerr & Garcia, 2015, p. 2). The E3+3 and Iran commenced talks in February 2014 and claimed that they are progressing towards a comprehensive agreement. But the process was slow which caused various extensions of the JPA. On April 2, 2015, the P5+1 and Iran announced that they had reached an overarching framework for a comprehensive agreement, with the intent of finalizing a detailed agreement by the expiration of the current JPA period on June 30, 2015 (Katzman, Kerr & Garcia, 2015, p. 01). The outline of this preliminary deal was based on the scale of Iran's enrichment rights; the timeframe of the inclusive agreement; and the level of the removal of nuclear-related sanctions.

But at the end of deadline both parties failed to reach an agreement and with joint consciences P5+1 and Iran agreed to extend the talks in Vienna. The negotiations were so intense that there was a time when international media groups speculated the news that Iranians are not happy with West and the foreign minister of Iran alleged that the negotiating parties from West changed their stance while they were near to achieve the agreement. However, after two weeks of marathon negotiations Iran and P5+1 reached a comprehensive nuclear agreement on 13th July 2015. The document signed by the both parties is now known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOC). It has more than one hundred and fifty pages which also include five annexes (<http://america.aljazeera.com>). Soon after signing the historic agreement Iranian chief negotiator Dr. Jawad Zarif and European Union foreign policy Chief Federica Mogherini who also chaired the talks made a joint statement. Federica Mogherini declared the day as a historic one she also appreciated the constructive efforts and determination showed by all parties to reach this historic agreement. She stated that: "We have successfully concluded negotiations and resolved a dispute that lasted more than 10 years" (<http://eeas.europa.eu>)

Iranian chief negotiator and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif declared it as a historic moment and said that "We are reaching an agreement that is not perfect for anybody, but it is what we could accomplish, and it is an important achievement for all of us. Today could have been the end of hope on this issue. But now we are starting a new chapter of hope" (<http://eeas.europa.eu>)

Soon after this joint press conference President Barack Obama also made a statement from White House and said that the deal had “achieved something that decades of animosity have not he further added that “This deal is not built on trust. It is built on verification. No deal means a greater chance of more war in the Middle East” (<http://eeas.europa.eu>).

In his tweet Iranian president Hassan Rouhani said: "Iran Deal shows constructive engagement works. With this unnecessary crisis resolved, new horizons emerge with a focus on shared challenges (Rouhani, 2015)"

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated that, “I hope — and indeed believe — that this agreement will lead to greater mutual understanding and cooperation on the many serious security challenges in the Middle East” (European External Action Service, 2015)

What Iran Agreed on?

According to JCPOA Iran agreed on following terms:

- Iran will decommission the two third of its centrifuges. Currently more than 19000 centrifuges are working in different facilities but within next few months nearly 6100 centrifuges will be used for enrichment and research purposes. Excess centrifuges will be stored under constant IAEA monitoring.
- Iran can continue its research and development program on advance centrifuge technology but these centrifuges can only be utilized in nuclear facilities after eight years of this agreement.
- Iran agreed to lower its stockpile of enriched uranium from 10,000 kg to 300 kg for next fifteen years. Furthermore Iran can only enrich uranium up to 3.67% which is necessary as a fuel for the nuclear plant.
- According to agreement Natanz facility will be used for enrichment purposes. Controversial Fordow facility will be converted into the Nuclear physics and technology center and limited number of centrifuges will be used for the production of nuclear isotopes. The Arak heavy water plant will be redesigned and rebuild by the Iran with the coordination of IAEA and international powers. The Arak reactor will produce radio isotopes for medical and industrial purposes. Additionally Iran can't build the heavy water plant for next fifteen years.

- All spend and excess fuel will be shipped out from Iran. The world powers will make sure that Iran gets the right price of this fuel. The remaining 5 to 20% enriched uranium will be fabricated into fuel for the Tehran Research Reactor (TRR).
- Tehran also agreed that IAEA Inspectors would have 24/7 access to all of its nuclear facilities. Furthermore, Inspectors will be able to inspect those suspicious sites where they believe that undeclared nuclear activity might be going on. But for these inspections IAEA will provide the basis of concerns in written and if Iran failed to provide the reasonable clarification then the inspectors will get the access to the sites.

What Will Iran Get from It?

As Iran takes the agreed steps listed above to reduce the capacity and proliferation risk of its nuclear infrastructure, the US and EU would provide guarantees that financial and economic sanctions will be suspended or cancelled (Borger, Julian, 2015).

- Iran will receive more than \$100bn of its assets which were frozen in foreign banks. Furthermore, Tehran will be able to sell oil on global markets and would be able to do business in the swift electronic banking system which is necessary in today's global economy.
- P5+1 also agreed to lift all UN security council sanctions as well as multilateral and bilateral sanctions related to its nuclear program, including areas are trade, technology, finance and energy.
- The JCPOA has been incorporated into a new Security Council resolution intended to replace and supersede six earlier sanctions resolutions imposed on Iran over its nuclear program. The resolution has been passed on 19th July but the agreement will only be effective if US congress approve this accord in next 90 days.
- In JCPOA both parties agreed that the UN will lift its arms embargo from Iran if Tehran continues to comply with the agreement for next five years. Furthermore, the UN embargo on the transfer of missile technology would also be removed after eight years of successful implementation of this agreement.

Iran will not see sanctions lifted until the IAEA confirms that it has followed through with its end of the JCPOA. Should Iran violate any aspect of the deal, the UN sanctions will automatically "snap back" into place for 10 years, with the possibility of a five-year extension.

Concerns and Approval from the Regional Countries

It is an interesting fact that Israeli administration disapproved this deal without even reading the text of this agreement. The agreement invoked the series of harsh tweets and statements from the Israeli authorities. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated:

"When you are willing to make an agreement at any cost, this is the result. From the initial reports, we can already conclude that this agreement is a historic mistake for the world" (Rodriguez, 2015). In his another tweet he wrote: "I don't oppose the Iran deal because I want war. I oppose the deal because I want to prevent war, and this deal will bring war" (Netanyahu, 2015).

Israeli deputy foreign minister Tzipi Hotoveli tweeted that, "This agreement is a historic surrender agreement of the west to the axis of evil headed by Iran. The state of Israel will take all measures to try and prevent the approval of the agreement" (Hotovely, 2015).

The initial reaction from the GCC states was positive and in their official press conferences they welcomed the deal. Iran's biggest Gulf rival Saudi Arabia accepted the deal Saudi Foreign Minister Adel bin Ahmed al-Jubeir said that his country would welcome any agreement that would guarantee Iran's "inability to obtain a nuclear weapon." But unofficially they are concerned regarding the economic relief for Iran because Iranian authorities have been involved in many of the region's conflicts. The GCC and Iran are supporting opposite sides in wars in Syria and Yemen. Furthermore, GCC claims that Tehran is also involved in their domestic affairs and influencing the Shia population for revolt. In a statement posted by the Saudi embassy in Washington on its web site Saudi Arabia showed its concerns by saying:

"Under the nuclear deal, Iran has to use its resources for domestic development and to improve the living conditions of its people rather than use it to incite turmoil in the region, which would only be met with

harsh and determined responses from the countries of the region” (Lippman, Thomas W., 2015).

On the other hand despite the political and sectarian differences UAE and Oman has long standing economic ties with Iran. Therefore it is obvious that after the successful implementation of JCPOA these countries will be able to achieve more significant economic benefits from Iran.

Skeptics View on JCPOA

The agreement is facing severe resistance from Republicans in the U.S. Congress. On 20th July 2015 United Nations Security Council endorsed the JCPOA by adopting unanimous resolution which established a monitoring system for Iran’s nuclear program. After this adoption US Congress had 60 days to review the agreement. During this time the republicans which have majority in the house and have good relations with Israeli authorities showed their skepticism on the deal and confronted the Obama administration's approach on this deal. During this time Israeli lobbies used their influence in the US Congress to impede the progress of the deal.

The question arises that why this deal is facing so much skepticism from the region especially from Israel and US Congress. Following are the fundamental reasons behind the criticism.

The critics believe that after the confiscation of economic sanctions Iran will have a significant amount of cash which will be used for the funding and armament of its allies and proxy groups which are protecting Iranian entrusts in the region like Hezbollah to fight against Israel, and forces which are fighting for Bashar ul Assad in Syria, and Shia militias in Iraq for fight against ISIS, and Hutties in Yemen.

Furthermore GCC states also believe that Tehran will increase its funding to the Shia rabbles for the riot against their regimes and this scenario will escalate the confrontation between Iran and GCC states.

Skeptics from the US Congress and Middle East believe that the Iranians have won the negotiations in Vienna and so called P5+1 had no match for the negotiating skills of the Iranians. The critics claimed that the international negotiators were divided, China, Russia and Europeans were eager to do business

with Iran. During the negotiations these countries showed entrust to invest in Iran's banking, energy, industrial and trade sector. Therefore, Tehran have been able to exploit these entrusts.

The detractors also raise questions on American President Barak Obama's approach towards these talks. They believe that Obama tried to achieve a historic legacy like Nixon achieved with China. But on the other hand Iran who is known as the exporter of revolution in the region is not ready to soften its course of action towards its neighbors; especially it's not willing to soften its stance towards Israel and the United States.

The provision regarding the inspection of those suspected sites where IAEA believe that undeclared nuclear activity occurred also became under fire from the deal's opponents. Because of the complicated procedures agreed by the both parties, Tehran can evade IAEA inspections to alleged sites for at least twenty four days. Which many opponents believe that is good enough time to cover up the events.

Another important concern on this deal is based on disbelief on Iran's consistent claim that its nuclear program is and will be use for the peaceful purposes. Most of the critics claim that there is no guaranty that after fifteen years of nuclear monitoring Tehran will continue its nuclear activities as peaceful as it agreed to do now only because of international pressure and sanctions.

It is a reality that Iranian nuclear program is a driving force behind the nuclear ambitions of the regional states. Recently Saudi Arabia signed agreements with France and Russia for attaining the nuclear power plants. Other regional states like UAE and Qatar are also looking for the nuclear technology. The critics believe that this technology race would transfer into the nuclear arm race if world power failed to halt Iranian nuclear program.

The skeptics also showed their concerns regarding the removal of arm and missile technology transfer embargo which will be removed within next five to seven years. They believe that this act will escalate the conflict in the region and Tehran will play a more active role to strengthen the rough elements in his neighboring states to destabilize their realms.

Idealist's Opinion on JCPOA

The supporters of this deal claim that this deal is not intended to solve all problems with Iran. The agreement is intently focused on solving one problem: the Iranian capability to build a nuclear weapon. The scholars believe that the successful implementation of this agreement guaranties us that Iran wouldn't achieve weapon grade uranium. This brings the satisfaction for the regional and international players that for at least next quarter of this century Iran can't acquire nuclear weapons domestically. This is a big achievement for the negotiating team of P5+1.

They also believe that after the normalization of relations between Iran and West. Tehran will become a constructive player in the regional issues. Many optimists believe that Iran can play a mediator role between West and Syrian President Bashar- ul- Assad for the peaceful transition of a newly elected government.

However, the deal did not force Tehran to change its policies regarding Syria or Yemen, where the Iranian regime is supporting the Houthi rebels against the GCC-backed administration. In his speech the Iranian president Hassan Rouhani, said: "The Iranian nation and government will remain at the side of the Syrian nation and government until the end of the road ...Tehran has not forgotten its moral obligations to Syria and will continue to provide help and support on its own terms to the government and nation of Syria (Goodarzi, Jubin M., 2015)."

The supporters also claim that while Iraqi forces failed to defend their territory in fight against ISIS, Iran is the only and most effective force on ground which got success against ISIS by providing training and expertise to the Shia militias who on different occasions fought under the Iranian military generals. Therefore the nuclear deal could bring possibility for the US-Iran cooperation in fight against ISIS.

Independent Observers views on the Agreement

The independent observers welcomed the deal. They rejects the Israeli and Republicans stance for more strict nuclear agreement because according to them Iran is a party to NPT and therefore it has a right to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. But they also support the strict site inspections by the IAEA.

Secondly these observers also claim that the sanctions and threats were failed to stop Iran's nuclear activities and through negotiations World powers finally achieved a historic success. This will normalize the relations between Iran and the Western powers.

Unlike those optimists who believe that after this agreement relations between Iran and United States will get improve and Iran will play constructive role in the region. Independent observers strongly disagree with this believe and claims that Iran will not change its regional policies in favor of Western powers only because of this agreement. They highlight Iranian supreme leader Imam Khomeini's speech which he delivered after the historic agreement on the Eid celebrations day. In his speech he stated: "Iran still had sharp differences with the US, above all over the Middle East. Iran would continue to back Syria, Iraq, the Palestinians and 'oppressed people' in Yemen and Bahrain" (<http://www.bbc.com>).

Another interesting fact which is highlighted by very few observers is phenomenal and practical. If we observe the political and economic dynamics of the region we can see that Iran is a very attractive market for the foreign investors because its population is equal to the entire residents of GCC states. As a fact we all know that because of the historic fragile relations between West and Iran. The Iranian market is untouched by the Western market giants and from last few years they are showing their keenness to explore this vast consumer market. We saw this eagerness on its highest point soon after the interim agreement and during the negotiations for the comprehensive agreement, when investors from the Europe and United States were traveling to Iran in a business packs. Many of these have already signed memorandums of understanding with their counterparts in Iranian business communities.

The desire to get business opportunities in Iran greatly influenced the western powers on state level and in numerous reports many media houses claimed that American, French, German and British business giants signed different agreements with Iranian counterparts to invest in energy sector, automobile industry and food chains in Iran. The famous Oil firms Eni and Shell, and French car manufacturer giant Peugeot are among those who have held recent business talks in the country. These multi nation industries influenced their governments for the successful nuclear agreement so they can bring revenue for their countries.

Therefore we can see that soon after the nuclear agreement high ranked British, French and German delegations visited Iran and with few state officials majority of these delegations belongs to the business community which went there to secure their entrusts in this vast market.

US Congress and the Nuclear Deal

Although Republicans immensely criticized the deal and US secretary John Kerry faced difficult times defending the deal in front of senate's foreign relation committee. But they were failed to block it. On 10th September 2015 with the margin of only two votes Democrats succeeded to block a Republican resolution to reject nuclear accord with Iran, ensuring the landmark deal will take effect without a veto showdown between Congress and the White House. The republicans needed 60 votes to make it through for a procedural hurdle in US Senate. But they got 58 votes in favor of their resolution. The independent observes count this as a historic victory of President Obama because the Israeli lobbies were quite active against this deal and millions of dollar to prevent this deal.

Conclusion

The JCPOA has been seen as a significant step forward for the normalization of the relations between Iran and the Western powers Specifically the United States. But this agreement is facing constant criticism from Israeli authorities and American Republicans party. The reason behind this disapproval is Iran's regional role and policies.

It's a harsh reality that from last thirty years American and Israeli spy agencies are failed to find any key evidence in favor of their claim that Iran has a clandestine nuclear program. They only succeeded to find some irregularities otherwise Iran's claim that its nuclear program is based on peaceful purposes is widely admitted by the international community. The American president also admitted that we don't have valid reasons to prolong the sanctions on Iran which Republicans and Israelis are insisting. In reality the regional states knew that under the strict monitoring system of the IAEA, it's very difficult for Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon domestically. The basic concern relates to Iran's interfering policies towards its neighboring states domestic issues. That's why the regional states believe that after the removal of sanctions Tehran will have more

money to spend on rough aliments to destabilize them. On the other hand many American thinkers and policy makers believe that the normalization of relation with Iran will play a vital role in fight against ISIS. So far President Obama has been successfully defended this agreement in US congress and from now on with the gradual implementation of this agreement US will remove its unilateral and bilateral sanctions from Iran. But there is a good chance that next Presidential election brings a Republican as an American President which might bring problems for the future of this phenomenal nuclear agreement. The European giants are happy with this deal because after this agreement they gained access in Iranian economy and their companies are now keen to do business with Iran in all sectors such as food industry, banking sector, energy sector, automobile industry etc.

It appears that both signatory parties are happy with this agreement but Western powers especially the US has been failed to satisfy the GCC and Israel on their concerns regarding the repercussions of cash bonanza which Iran would expend on its allies in the region. According to the agreement the successful implication of this agreement will remove the arm embargo within next five years and missile technology transfer embargo within eight years which is also a concerning issue for neighboring countries. It will further escalate the conflict in the region and strengthen the Iranian backed alliance in the conflicting parts of the region.

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