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THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR ISSUE AND REGIONAL SECURITY: DILEMMAS, RESPONSES AND THE FUTURE

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Disclaimer: The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author and do not represent the official positions of the United Nations.

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Executive Summary

The Iranian nuclear issue has been one of the most contentious international conflicts in recent decades. This protracted crisis has increased tensions in the region and beyond, presenting a dilemma to all involved, including Iran itself, the P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (particularly Saudi Arabia) and Israel. Due to imperfect information, particularly a lack of understanding of each other's intentions and calculations, numerous actions and counteractions have been made at the international, regional and national levels to address the perceived Iranian nuclear threat. In the end, despite strong objections by some elements in Tehran and Washington as well as by Israel and Saudi Arabia, the P5+1 and Iran reached a long-term, comprehensive deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Whether the deal will hold for its duration remains unclear, but many uncertainties, including those related to domestic politics in Iran and the US, will certainly affect its full implementation.

It is widely hoped that a diplomatic resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue will eventually usher in an era of greater cooperation between Iran and the West, as well as among the countries in the Gulf region. Nevertheless, there are fears that the JCPOA, by addressing the nuclear issue only and not dealing with non-nuclear concerns about Iran, may increase tensions in the region in the short-to-medium term. A regional security framework that takes into account both the nuclear and non-nuclear concerns of all players is therefore urgently required for a sustainable resolution of the nuclear issue and lasting peace in the region. Although such a framework is unlikely to be achieved under current circumstances, especially while the wars in Syria and Yemen continue, world powers, particularly the US and Russia, will need to push their allies towards realizing the goal. The UN can play an important facilitating role in this regard.

THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR ISSUE AND REGIONAL SECURITY: DILEMMAS, RESPONSES AND THE FUTURE¹

The Iranian nuclear issue and security in the Persian Gulf have long been high on the United Nation's peace and security agenda. This research is aimed at obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the nuclear issue and its linkage to regional security, with the hope to inform the UN's work on peace and security in the region. To that end, I delved into the history of Iran's relations with three of its main counterparts (namely the United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia) since the 1950s. I examined why and how the concerns about Iran's nuclear programme had escalated into a protracted and complex international conflict, and how the nuclear issue had affected the four countries' strategic thinking and decision-making on national and regional security. The dilemmas facing them and their respective responses to the nuclear crisis were analyzed; uncertainties in implementing the hard-won nuclear deal – the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – were discussed; and the future of the nuclear issue within a regional security framework and the UN role in that regard were explored.

A brief history: Iran's nuclear programme became an international crisis²

Iran's nuclear programme would likely not have become an international crisis as it has been in the past decades if not for the Islamic Revolution in 1979, which fundamentally changed the political and social system in Iran and disrupted its cordial relations with the West. Ever since the coup, orchestrated by the United States and the United Kingdom, reinstalled Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to the throne in 1953, Iran was a key ally of the West in countering Soviet influence and maintaining security in the region. Particularly, following the British withdrawal from the Persian Gulf in 1971, Iran became the principal player of the Twin Pillars Policy under the Nixon Doctrine (with Saudi Arabia as the junior partner), effectively acting as "policeman of the Gulf".³ In return, the West had provided vital supports to the Shah regime in many areas, including nuclear assistance.

Iran's nuclear programme started in 1957 as part of US President Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" initiative aimed at balancing fears of continuing nuclear armament with promises of peaceful use of uranium.⁴ American Machine and Foundry built the first nuclear reactors for Iran, Israel and Pakistan, among others.⁵ Arguably the US had laid

¹ The original title, as indicated in my application for the sabbatical leave, was "The Iranian nuclear issue and regional security in the Gulf." Based on a suggestion by my academic advisor, Professor Gottlieb, I changed the title to the present one to better reflect the research actually done.

² For a comprehensive and balanced treatment, see Mousavian, "The Iranian Nuclear Crisis;" Patrikarakos, "Nuclear Iran: The Birth of An Atomic State;" Melman and Javedanfar, "The Nuclear Sphinx of Teheran;" and Porter, "Manufactured Crisis."

³ Molavi, "Iran and the Gulf States."

⁴ The initiative was first presented to the world in a speech to the United Nations General Assembly by President Eisenhower on 8 December 1953.

⁵ The company changed its name to AMF in 1970 and is more commonly known as a major manufacturer of bowling and other recreational equipment.

the foundation for the Iranian programme by rendering crucial material and technological assistance and by training Iranian scientists. West Germany and France also provided important help by enriching uranium and building facilities for Iran. By the mid-1970s, the nuclear programme had become so substantial and ambitious that Iran's "Twenty-Year Vision Plan" aimed to generate 20,000 MW(e) of nuclear power from 1974 to 1994. Immediately after the Islamic Revolution overthrew the Shah in early 1979, however, the US ceased supplying high enriched uranium fuel for the Tehran Nuclear Reactor, forcing Iran's first nuclear reactor to be shut down for a number of years. The West German contractor⁶ also withdrew from the Bushehr nuclear project, leaving one reactor 50 per cent complete and the other 85 per cent complete. Iran's nuclear programme was largely halted.

At the same time, Iran's new Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini denounced the nuclear programme as fundamentally "un-Islamic" and ordered its suspension. The programme was reactivated during the Iran-Iraq war, apparently in response to the repeated chemical weapons attacks by Iraq. It then underwent slow but steady expansion after Ayatollah Khomeini passed away in 1989. During the presidency of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani between 1989 and 1997, Tehran publicly appealed to overseas Iranian scientists to return home to work on the nuclear programme. It also actively sought cooperation with China, Russia, North Korea and Pakistan after Western European countries, under US pressure, refused to help. Some progress appeared to be made in the 1990s. But in 1997 the US pressured China to cancel an important project aimed at converting yellow cake (uranium-ore concentrate) into uranium hexafluoride (UF₆), and Russia repeatedly delayed reconstruction of the damaged Bushehr plant because its nuclear technology could not reconcile with the original German equipment.⁷

In accordance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) provided technical assistance to Iran's nuclear programme and monitored its nuclear activities in the 1980s. Allegations about undeclared nuclear activities in Iran emerged as early as in 1992, but IAEA inspectors concluded following their visits to Iran that all activities observed were consistent with the peaceful use of atomic energy. The situation dramatically changed on 14 August 2002 when the National Council of Resistance of Iran, an exile opposition group, revealed the existence of two previously unknown nuclear sites under construction in Iran: a uranium enrichment facility in Natanz (part of which is underground) and a heavy water facility in Arak. In its 6 June 2003 report on the implementation of the Safeguards Agreement in Iran, the IAEA noted that Iran had failed to provide relevant information in a timely manner and expressed concern about the possible diversion and military use of nuclear facilities, as well as the existence of many technical ambiguities.⁸

Against the backdrop of divisions among the West over the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, France, Germany and the UK (known as EU3) undertook a diplomatic initiative

⁶ Kraftwerk Union, a subsidiary of Siemens.

⁷ The Bushehr plant eventually started adding electricity to the national grid in 2011, over 10 years later than originally declared.

⁸ IAEA report GOV/203/40 dated 6 June 2003.

later that year to address concerns about Iran's nuclear programme. They negotiated with Iran the Tehran Declaration in October 2003 and the Paris Agreement in November 2004,⁹ but both failed to take hold owing to US rejection. In February 2006 the IAEA Board of Governors reported Iran's nuclear non-compliance to the UN Security Council.¹⁰ On 11 April 2006, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced that Iran had "joined countries with nuclear technology" by successfully enriching low-level uranium.¹¹ On 31 July 2006, the Security Council adopted resolution 1696 demanding that Iran "shall suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development."¹² Several other resolutions would subsequently be adopted to impose sanctions on Iranian entities and individuals related to Iran's nuclear programme, escalating the nuclear issue into an international crisis. Iran has insisted that its programme is for peaceful purposes only.

Over the following 10 years, the international community, mainly through the P5+1,¹³ attempted to resolve the Iranian nuclear crisis through a dual-track approach: using the stick (e.g. sanctions) on the one hand and offering the carrot (e.g. economic incentives) on the other hand. The crisis reached an explosive point when the US and Europe imposed crippling sanctions on Iran in late 2011 and early 2012, which included an unprecedented oil embargo and exclusion of Iran from the international financial markets. These heightened sanctions followed the 8 November 2011 IAEA report which disclosed "credible" information regarding Iran's potential efforts to develop nuclear warheads.¹⁴ A breakthrough came only after the US told Iran sometime in 2012/13 that it would not insist on zero-enrichment by Iran. The nuclear talks gained further traction after the May 2013 election of President Hassan Rouhani, who was Iran's chief nuclear negotiator with the EU3 between 2003 and 2005.

On 14 July 2015 (known as Finalization Day), following two years of intense talks, the P5+1 and Iran reached the JCPOA as a blueprint for a diplomatic resolution to the nuclear crisis. Iran agreed to significantly limit its nuclear activities and accept intrusive international monitoring in exchange for recognition of its right to nuclear technology under the NPT and the lifting of nuclear-related sanctions. On 20 July 2015, the Security Council adopted resolution 2231 endorsing the JCPOA. On 18 October 2015 (known as Adoption Day), the JCPOA officially entered into force. On 15 December 2015, the IAEA adopted resolution GPV/2015/72, closing its investigation into the potential military dimensions (PMD) of Iran's past nuclear activities. On 16 January 2016, Implementation Day occurred after the IAEA released a report verifying Iran's compliance with its previously agreed nuclear obligations.¹⁵ That same day, all nuclear-related sanctions on Iran by the UN, US and EU were lifted and previous Security

⁹ For the full text of the Tehran Declaration, see a BBC report on 21 October 2003 entitled "Full text: Iran declaration"; and for the full text of the Paris Agreement, see IAEA document INFCIRC/637 dated 26 November 2004.

¹⁰ A main driving force for Iran to engage the EU3 between 2013 and 2015 was to avoid the IAEA report of the Iran file to the Security Council. See Mousavian, "The Iranian nuclear crisis."

¹¹ CNN, "Iran says it joins countries with nuclear technology."

¹² Security Council resolution 1696 of 31 July 2006.

¹³ The group consists of the five permanent members of the Security Council (China, France, Russia, UK and US) and Germany. The foreign policy chief of the European Union (EU) plays the role of facilitator of the group.

¹⁴ IAEA Board of Governors report GOV/2011/65.

¹⁵ IAEA Board Governors report GOV/INF/2016/1.

Council resolutions on Iran, namely 1696 (2006), 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008), 1835 (2008), 1929 (2010) and 2224 (2015), were terminated.

Dilemmas and responses: four main players' views and reactions to the crisis

The Iranian nuclear issue has significantly increased tensions in the region (e.g. between Iran and Israel, and between Iran and its Gulf neighbours) and beyond (e.g. between Iran and the US/the West) in the last two decades. In addition to the usual rhetoric, the situation was on the verge of spiraling into an open military conflict on several occasions.¹⁶ Efforts to resolve the issue have proved extremely difficult because several separate but often intertwined processes have taken place at the national, regional and international levels, as well as within each level. At the national level, there were processes relating to domestic politics in Iran and the US (e.g. pro-talks moderates vs. anti-talks hardliners); at the regional level, there were problems between Iran on the one hand and Israel and the GCC countries on the other hand; and at the international level, there were negotiations within the P5+1 (the US/EU3 vs. Russia and China), talks between Iran and the P5+1 (as displayed by the often long and frustrating meetings in Geneva and Vienna), and interactions between the P5+1 and the rest of the world (particularly between the US and Israel/Saudi Arabia). Overall, the nuclear issue constituted a dilemma for all major players who had at varying times had to make difficult choices and take tough decisions based on the best available – but usually imperfect – information due to the lack of understanding of each other's intentions and calculations. The next section focuses on the dilemmas of and responses by four key players, namely Iran, the US, Israel and Saudi Arabia, as their moves and countermoves have had the most significant impacts on the nuclear issue itself and regional security.

Iran

A main dilemma for Iran is whether to maintain the costly nuclear programme. Iran has invested billions of dollars in the programme and tens of thousands of people have been working on it. Instead of generating economic benefits and political clout associated with a normal nuclear programme, Iran's programme has instead caused enormous damage, including political isolation and economic sanctions. For many, both inside and outside of Iran, these costs do not make sense if the programme is for peaceful purposes only – as Iran has insisted – since the country would have been much better off economically and politically if it simply stopped enrichment on its soil and bought nuclear materials from the international markets. However, Iran's leaders apparently decided that all the costs would be worthwhile should Iran achieve a latent nuclear capability. To that end, Iran appeared to pursue the nuclear hedging strategy: it does not intend to seek nuclear weapons per se as these weapons would make Iran less secure by inviting possible Israeli/US military attacks, but it would work with perseverance to become very close to having such weapons (at least perceived so by others).¹⁷ Such a strategy was mainly due to Iran's sense of increasing insecurity – first posed by Saddam until 2003 and then by the US (threats of regime change) and Israel (threats of military attacks). A risk with

¹⁶ For instance, the 2011-2012 crisis following Iran's threat to close the Strait of Hormuz.

¹⁷ Bowen and Moran, "Living with nuclear hedging."

nuclear hedging, however, is that Iran's opponents may take preemptive steps at their disposal to get rid of the perceived threat before it becomes real.

In hindsight, the Islamic Republic could have ceased the nuclear programme altogether shortly after the Islamic Revolution when the new regime was preoccupied with consolidating power and running a country that was in chaos. The Ayatollahs, who lacked governing experiences, found it impossible to sustain the ambitious and expensive nuclear programme. In addition, the programme was deemed essentially "western" – as it was introduced by the West, based solely on Western technology and built largely by Western contractors – therefore completely contrary to the ethos of the Islamic Revolution. The programme was believed to be suspended within months of the ayatollahs coming to power. When it was "reinstated" in mid-1980s¹⁸ and expanded gradually during the Iran-Iraq war, Iranian officials tried to justify the reversal by highlighting nuclear power's potential to mitigate Iran's electricity shortage and to meet future energy needs for a rapidly growing population. The prestige and international standing associated with a nuclear programme – particularly if it is based on native expertise – was also mentioned. However, a publicly unsaid and perhaps more telling reason was the horrors inflicted on Iran by Iraq in their eight-year war.

There was no question that Iraq had started the war by invading Iran on 22 September 1980. To Iran's surprise, however, the majority of the world had been on the side of the aggressor in the following years.¹⁹ For sure, the hostage crisis that began on 4 November 1979 and saw 52 American diplomats detained in Tehran for 444 days contributed greatly to a worldwide outrage against Iran. Furthermore, many countries, including Saudi Arabia, the US and the Soviet Union, were so worried about the consequences of an outright Iranian victory that they chose to support Saddam's Iraq, even though they did not trust Saddam personally.²⁰ Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were among the largest financial supporters to Iraq; the Soviet Union and France were main suppliers of advanced weapons to Iraq; and the US military intervention in 1987-88, in the name of protecting reflagged Kuwaiti tankers, decisively turned the tide of the war in Iraq's favour. Lagging far behind in weapons and international support, Iran had to rely on the "human wave" strategy in the initial years of the war. It was particularly shocked by the international community's inaction with regard to the atrocities caused by Iraq's repeated chemical

¹⁸ According to the CIA report entitled "Middle East –South Asia: Nuclear Handbook" of May 1988, Iran restarted the nuclear programme in 1982. However, other sources believed that the decision was made years later.

¹⁹ Among the Arab states, only Syria and to a lesser extent, Libya had publicly supported Iran. Syria provided much-needed arms to Iran and closed an important Iraqi pipeline through Syria, forcing Iraq to export oils via Saudi Arabia instead.

²⁰ For instance, in its 24 November 1986 article entitled "Support Iraq not Iran," Washington Post cited William Colby, a former CIA director, as saying that "it is in the interest of the United States, the Western world and even the Soviet Union that Iraq successfully withstand the Iranian assault. The US better make direct efforts to strengthen Iraq against Iran." In the November 1987 report to the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, entitled "War in the Persian Gulf: The U.S. Takes Sides", it was noted that "US policy makers express near universal agreement that incalculable harm would be done to Western interest in the event of an outright Iranian victory over Iraq. Such an outcome would inevitably renew the radical fervor of the Iranian revolution and almost surely place at risk the moderate government in the smaller Gulf states." For its part, the Soviet Union was bogged down in Afghanistan in the early 1980s and worried that an Iranian win could lead to the emergence of an Iran-centric Islamic order. That could have disastrous policy implications for the Soviet position in Afghanistan (as Iran had criticized the Soviet invasion and supported the Mujahideen there) and the security of Muslim Republics of Soviet Central Asia.

weapons attacks against Iranian troops and civilians and missile attacks against urban areas in Iran.²¹ Upon accepting Security Council resolution 598 which effectively ended the war, Iran's then Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati said that "for the liberation of their territories and to bring justice to the aggressor, the Muslim people of Iran could count only on their own efforts and sacrifices and not on the international organization allegedly entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security."²²

It was broadly believed that the horrors of the war, particularly related to Iraq's indiscriminate ballistic-missile attacks on cities and frequent use of chemical weapons, changed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini's thinking about the weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) which he had previously denounced as un-Islamic.²³ Rafsanjani, then Speaker of Iran's parliament and command-in-chief of Iran's armed forces, noted that "the world does not respect its own resolutions and closes its eyes to the violations and all the aggressions which are committed in the battlefields. We should fully equip ourselves both in the offensive and defensive use of chemical, bacteriological and radiological weapons."²⁴ Some experts argued that a major lesson Iran had learned from the war was that "the Islamic Republic's survival and independence depended ultimately on its own power, both military and spiritual."²⁵ It was therefore likely that Iran might have considered obtaining nuclear weapons as an ultimate deterrent at some point after it restarted the nuclear programme, particularly given that its conventional forces were much weakened in the Iran-Iraq war.²⁶ Furthermore, Iran was shocked to know that Iraq was close to have nuclear weapons and wanted to be prepared for the worst-case scenario of being targeted by an Iraqi nuclear warhead, given Saddam's readiness to use chemical weapons. However, due to its lack of know-how (most Iranian nuclear scientists had left the country after the Islamic Revolution) and nuclear materials, Iran might have, at best, toyed with some preliminary ideas of working on a nuclear warhead at that time.²⁷

Tehran's need for nuclear weapons as a deterrent was further reinforced by subsequent international developments that increased its sense of insecurity and siege mentality.²⁸ Two historic events stood out in that regard. The first was the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. On the one hand, it was good news as the newly independent Central Asian and Transcaucasia countries created a buffer zone on Iran's northern border for the

²¹ See Annex I for Iranian targets in the War of the Cities between 1984 and 1987.

²² Patrikarakos, "Nuclear Iran," pages 129-130. It should however be noted that beside resolution 598, the Security Council adopted several other resolutions regarding the war, including resolution 479 of 28 September 1980, resolution 514 of 12 July 1982, resolution 522 of 4 October 1982, resolution 540 of 31 October 1983, resolution 552 of 1 June 1984, resolution 582 of 24 February 1986 and resolution 588 of 8 October 1986. Within this context, Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar actively mediated between the parties to put an end to the war. On the role of the Secretary-General, see "The UN Secretary-General: Attitudes and Latitudes" in Rajaei "The Iran-Iraq War."

²³ See Mousavian, "The Iranian Nuclear Crisis" pages 52-53; Melman and Javedanfar, "The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran" page 97, and Cordesman, "Iran's Military Forces in Transition" page 3.

²⁴ Patrikarakos, "Nuclear Iran," page 130

²⁵ James A. Bill, "Morale vs. technology: the power of Iran in the Persian Gulf War", in Rajaei "The Iran-Iraq War", page 208.

²⁶ As Iran's nuclear programme expanded in the 1970s, the Shah noted on a number of occasions the need to build nuclear weapons. For instance, after India did its first nuclear test in 1974, the Shah reportedly said that "if other nations in the region acquire nuclear weapons, then perhaps the national interest of any [other] country will demand the same." See "the Iranian Nuclear Crisis", page 50.

²⁷ Conversations with SIPA professors.

²⁸ For an in-depth analysis, see Khan, "Iran and Nuclear Weapons."

first time in over two centuries. On the other hand, the collapse of the Soviet Union left the US as the sole global superpower. With the communist threat gone, the Clinton Administration quickly focused on the threats posed by such rogue states as Iran.²⁹ Iran was considered to be the foremost State Sponsor of international terrorism, but its secret nuclear activities were unknown to the West in the 1990s yet.

The second was the defeat of the Saddam regime in the first Gulf War in 1991. Though Iran was pleased with the almost total destruction of Iraq's elite army by the US-led Coalition, it was in awe by the quick victory and America's military might. The presence of dozens of US military bases across the Gulf States following Operation Desert Storm had substantial US troops on Iran's doorstep for the first time since World War II. After the US occupied Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, Iran was effectively encircled by US troops.³⁰ Such sense of worsening security situation could have given Tehran an extra motivation to obtain additional unconventional capabilities in preparation for an asymmetric war with the US.

Iran might have felt relieved a bit when its foremost threat – Iraq's Saddam regime – was removed in early 2003, ironically by the US. But it soon found itself in an emerging crisis which it believed was set up by the US: the IAEA adopted a resolution on 12 September 2003 requesting Iran to “suspend all further uranium enrichment-related activities” by 31 October 2003 and to “promptly and unconditionally sign, ratify and fully implement the additional protocol.”³¹ Led by reformist President Mohammad Khatami, Iran did not want a direct confrontation with the West; rather, it engaged the EU3 in negotiations between 2003 and 2005. Two agreements were achieved, but the US rejected both based on its policy of zero tolerance for any Iranian enrichment. By that time, among the “axis of evil” as labelled by President Bush in 2002, Iraq's Saddam was long gone and North Korea was somewhat immune to attacks because of its perceived nuclear weapons. And among the rogue states, Libya's Muammar Qaddafi announced in December 2003 that Libya would voluntarily eliminate all materials, equipment and programmes that could lead to internationally proscribed weapons. As a result, Iran became the only possible target for regime change by the US.³² Such fears pushed the hardliners in Teheran, led by firebrand President Ahmadinejad, to accelerate enrichment in the late 2000s, sharply intensifying Iran's tensions with the West.

After it was referred to the Security Council in 2006, Iran's nuclear programme turned into a top international crisis which wreaked havoc on Iran in the subsequent years. Economically, international sanctions, particularly those since 2012, were considered a main factor that helped precipitate Iran into a rare recession in 2012/13 featuring both

²⁹ Miles, “US Foreign Policy and the Rogue State Doctrine.” The other four rogue states were Iraq, North Korea, Libya and Cuba.

³⁰ See Annex II: US troops encircling Iran.

³¹ See IAEA resolution GOV/2003/69.

³² Ambassador Mousavian, who was the head of the Foreign Relations Committee of Iran's Supreme National Security Council between 1997 and 2005, noted that “[f]rom the US point of view, the emergence of Iran as a hostile regional power had long been considered one of the most important threats to the vital interests of the United States in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East” and that “[i]n Tehran, the US strategy was seen as a multipronged approach to bring about regime change in Iran.” See Mousavian, “The Iranian Nuclear Crisis,” pages 88-89.

high inflation and high unemployment.³³ Politically, Iran was further isolated in the region and across the world.³⁴ Militarily, Iranians became increasingly worried about possible attacks by Israel and/or the US. Despite these adverse effects, Iran's leaders appeared to conclude that the sacrifices were worthwhile in order for Iran to become a threshold nuclear power. That status could serve Iran's two important goals: in the near term, the nuclear latency, though short of actual nuclear weapons, can deter potential attacks and/or invasions against Iran while increasing its leverage in regional and international affairs; and in the longer-term, it can be used as a bargaining chip in its seemingly inevitable negotiations with the US (as the case of North Korea has demonstrated).

In a sense, the JCPOA was an acknowledgement of Iran's nuclear capacity and a long overdue pay-off for Tehran's strategic bet on the nuclear programme. The deal was achieved, the Iranians argued, mainly due to the substantial advances Iran had made in the nuclear programme: with tens of thousands of centrifuges operating at various locations, the programme could no longer simply be ignored.³⁵ By contrast, when Iran proposed, through the then Swiss Ambassador in Tehran, a grand bargain to the Bush Administration in May 2003 to address all mutual concerns, it was categorically rejected as Iran had little to offer at that time.³⁶ The failure of the 2004 Paris Agreement between Iran and the EU3 could also be attributed to the fact that Iran, with only a few hundred centrifuges up and running then, did not have a serious nuclear capacity to leverage on.

US

A primary dilemma for the US was whether to allow Iran to have certain enrichment capacity under the NPT. Until 2012/13, the official US position had been zero-tolerance for any Iranian enrichment. However, by 2013, as reported by the IAEA, Iran's nuclear programme, with about 10,000 centrifuges up and running, had become so substantial that it must be accommodated somehow. This dilemma was the result of the apparent failure by Washington to develop a coherent and workable strategy towards Iran since 1979. It is believed that the various US administrations have oscillated from friendly overtures to hostile moves vis-à-vis Iran, though they had kept widening sanctions against Iran for its support for terrorist groups, its opposition to the Middle East peace process and its expanding nuclear programme.³⁷

Iran and the US became arch-foes almost overnight after the Islamic Revolution. Iran labelled the US as "the Great Satan" and the hostage crisis in 1979-1981 was particularly damaging for the bilateral relations from the US perspective. The Reagan Administration

³³ Habibi, "Iran's Economic Nightmare." It should be noted that many, including some high-level Iranian officials, have argued that mismanagement and corruption are more responsible for Iran's economic hardship.

³⁴ For instance, when the United Nations Secretary-General was invited to attend the Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Tehran in August 2012, he faced great pressure from a number of powerful countries and groups urging him not to go, given the nuclear crisis and Iran's bad human rights records, among other things.

³⁵ Press TV, "Enemies capitulated to Iran's nuclear might: Ayatollah Khamenei."

³⁶ For an outline of the proposal, see Mousavian, "the Iranian Nuclear Crisis," pages 63-65.

³⁷ For a comprehensive treatment, see Pollack, "The Iranian puzzle." Such indecisive and inconsistent US policy was believed to facilitate Iran's reemergence as a regional power after the Iran-Iraq war and contributed to a heightened Israeli desire for unilateralism.

generally supported Saddam's war efforts against Iran, but it also had "unorthodox diplomatic contacts" with Tehran, including by secretly selling weapons to Iran through Israel which later became known as part of the Iran-Contra scandal.³⁸ To mitigate the adverse consequences of the scandal which almost destroyed the Reagan presidency, Washington accepted Kuwait's request to reflag Kuwaiti tankers in 1987 and directly got involved in fighting Iran's Navy.³⁹ In his inaugural address in January 1989, President George H.W. Bush (Bush senior), after mentioning American hostages held in foreign lands and in an apparent reference to Iran, noted that "[a]ssistance can be shown here and will be long remembered. Good will begets good will."⁴⁰ But such good will was squandered due to "Iran's failure or inability to bring about the release of the American hostages held in Lebanon until mid-1991 (and its continuing support for acts of terrorism)."⁴¹ As a result, the relationship with Iran under Bush senior was largely "stagnant" with little contact and less progress.⁴²

The Clinton Administration introduced the "Dual Containment" policy towards Iraq and Iran in 1993. While the policy had generally failed to produce the intended results, it succeeded in portraying Iran as a pariah state.⁴³ When the moderate cleric Khatami surprisingly won the elections and became Iran's president in 1997, he proposed "Dialogue among Civilizations"⁴⁴ and reached out to the US in a January 1998 interview with CNN. In response, the Clinton Administration offered "on several occasions, via different interlocutors, to set up a direct dialogue without conditions, but Iran refused."⁴⁵ Then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright publicly extended the hands of friendship to Iran.⁴⁶ When President George W. Bush (Bush junior) announced that Iran, Iraq and North Korea formed "the axis of evil" in 2002, which came after Iran had provided crucial assistance in defeating the Taliban and forming a new Afghan government, the US-Iranian relations plunged to the lowest level.⁴⁷ During his first two years in office, President Barack Obama reportedly twice wrote to Iran's Supreme Leader and Iranian President Ahmadinejad also wrote to Obama twice.⁴⁸ But the alleged fraud in Iran's presidential elections in June 2009 and the subsequent bloody crackdown on the peaceful demonstrations in Tehran made any further US engagement impossible. The Obama Administration nevertheless engaged Iran secretly during the end of Ahmadinejad's presidency and the start of Rouhani's presidency, culminating in the unprecedented phone call between President Obama and President Rouhani on 28 September 2013 and the conclusion of the JCPOA on 14 July 2015.

³⁸ Kemp, "The Iran Primer: The Reagan Administration."

³⁹ Dr. Gary Sick noted in one of his classes during the spring semester 2016 that the Iran-contra was a "turning point" in the US policy toward the Persian Gulf. Prior to it, the US tried to avoid direct involvement in the region and supported both side of the Iran-Iraq war. But in the light of the Arab anger over the scandal, the US finally decided to militarily intervene in the Persian Gulf.

⁴⁰ Inaugural Address by George H.W. Bush on 20 January 1989.

⁴¹ Haass, "The Iran Primer: The George H. W. Bush Administration."

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Tarock, "Iran's foreign policy since 1990", page 41.

⁴⁴ Speaking to the parliament at his swearing-in on August 4, 1997, President Khatami declared that "We are in favor of a dialogue between civilizations and a détente in our relations with the outside world."

⁴⁵ Riedel, "The Iran Primer: The Clinton Administration."

⁴⁶ Albright, "American-Iranian relations."

⁴⁷ Harley, "The Iran Primer: The George W. Bush Administration."

⁴⁸ Limbert, "The Iran Primer: The Obama Administration."

Specifically regarding Iran's nuclear programme, the US started to suspect that Iran might be covertly working on a nuclear warhead as early as in the mid-1980s.⁴⁹ The secrecy shrouded around the programme, including the apparent military involvement and its expedited expansion, only increased such suspicions.⁵⁰ Though no hard evidence has to date been found to ascertain that Iran was developing nuclear weapons, the US still had ample reason to worry about Iran's nuclear programme and a strong interest in preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear bombs. As noted above, the Islamic Republic's animosity with the US runs deep and Tehran viewed Washington as the most dangerous enemy. The thousands of US troops currently stationed across the region are an asset in containing Iran, but they are a liability as well since they could be attacked by Iran's conventional weapons, particularly its increasingly sophisticated missiles. Plus, due to various bilateral agreements, the US is obliged to provide a security umbrella to its allies in the region and to ensure freedom of navigation in the Persian Gulf. Nevertheless, the status quo in favour of the US and its allies in the region could be changed with one thing – if Iran obtains nuclear weapons.

It should be noted that Iran's nuclear programme was not a top US concern in the 1990s when Washington focused on securing nuclear materials in the former Soviet Republics immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and on dealing with the North Korean nuclear crisis. After its secret nuclear activities were revealed in 2002/3, Iran, already considered a top State Sponsor of Terrorism by the US, suddenly became one of the most pressing threats to the US and its allies.⁵¹ In 2004, the US rejected the Paris Agreement that Iran signed with the EU3. In 2006, it convinced Russia and China to endorse sanctions against Iran. In late 2011 and early 2012, it worked with the EU and other allies to enforce the most stringent sanctions on Iran. The US has also consistently said that “all options” are on the table in dealing with Iran's nuclear programme.

The coercive measures by the West generally failed to achieve the desired outcomes. Instead of being stopped or slowed, Iran's nuclear programme had grown exponentially: in the early 2000s, Iran had only hundreds of centrifuges which could enrich uranium up to 5 per cent. By 2013, it had some 20,000 centrifuges (half of them operational) and the advanced ones of them were producing 20 per cent enriched uranium. No longer doubting Iran's mastery of nuclear know-how, the Obama Administration had to decide on whether to continue the policy of zero tolerance for enrichment by Iran or allow Iran to have limited enrichment under enhanced supervision. It opened secret channels through Oman to engage Iran informally. In their several closed-door meetings in 2012 and 2013 in Muscat, US officials reportedly told their Iranian counterparts that Iran could keep certain nuclear capability, among other things.⁵² This turn-about in the US stance had proved crucial for the separate P5+1/Iran nuclear talks to move ahead. The Geneva

⁴⁹ A September 1985 US National Intelligence Council report, entitled “The Dynamic of Nuclear Proliferation: Balance of Power and Constraints,” stated that Iran was “interested in developing facilities that ... could eventually produce fissile material that could be used in a [nuclear] weapon.”

⁵⁰ Crial, “IAEA Lays Out Iran Weapons Suspicions.”

⁵¹ Conversations with SIPA professors.

⁵² See Lee, Klapper and Pace, “How a series of secret meetings between U.S. and Iran led to historic agreement” and Rozen, “Inside the secret US-Iran diplomacy that sealed nuke deal.”

interim agreement, formally known as the Joint Plan of Action Plan (JPOA), was soon sealed on 24 November 2013.

The Obama Administration faced another dilemma in the ensuing negotiations towards a comprehensive deal: should the talks be limited to the nuclear issue only, or should other non-nuclear issues be also discussed? It was revealed after the JCPOA was reached that the parties focused only on various aspects of the nuclear issue in formal negotiations, but that such issues as regional conflicts, anti-terrorism and American prisoners in Iran were taken up informally and bilaterally.⁵³ This approach was based on three considerations: First, the nuclear issue was very complicated in itself and there were many technical details requiring extensive work. Second, the P5+1 had been divided on regional issues. Bringing Syria to the table would have only caused disunity among the grouping and strengthened Iran's hand. And third, the Supreme Leader of Iran had publicly said that the nuclear talks should only deal with the nuclear issue.⁵⁴ However, precisely because only the nuclear concerns were formally addressed, the JCPOA generated fears among its critics that it could end up giving Iran more sources to pursue regional adventures and further destabilize the region.

Israel

Before the Islamic Revolution, Israel and Iran had maintained close ties based on shared geographic interests. While Iran considered Israel as a counterbalance to unfriendly Arab countries, particularly Iraq, Israel viewed Iran as an important element of its peripheral diplomacy.⁵⁵ The two countries worked together to help the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq in the 1960s and early 1970s. When the oil-producing Arab states imposed an oil embargo following the 1973 War, Iran continued to export oil to Israel and the West. But soon after the Islamic Revolution, Tehran condemned Israel as the "Little Satan" for being an agent of the US. It immediately closed down the Israeli Embassy in Tehran and handed the building over to representatives of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Iran and Israel were subsequently in a cold peace in the 1980s and 1990s. Israel kept selling arms to Iran during the Iran-Iraq war with a view to holding onto its relations with Tehran. Iran apparently attempted to ease its tensions with Israel under the presidencies of Rafsanjani (1989-1997) and Khatami (1997-2005), but these efforts were ignored by Israel due to Iran's nuclear programme, support to Hezbollah and Hamas, and objection to the Oslo process.

Israel's security establishment did not consider Iran as a predominant security challenge until late 1990s or early 2000s. Their main concern had always been the struggle against the Palestinians, particularly posed by the rapid growth of the Palestinian population in

⁵³ According to a UN colleague who had conversations with experts in various think tanks in Washington D.C., to secure the nuclear deal, the US was believed to back off from its demand that Assad must step down. In return, it tacitly supported the Saudi-led airstrikes in Yemen. However, other scholars, including Dr. Gary Sick, were very skeptical about the assertion that the US altered its Syria policy as a payoff to Iran in order to get the JCPOA.

⁵⁴ Several red lines set by the Supreme Leader, such as sanctions to be lifted upon signing the nuclear deal, were indeed crossed by the parties. See the Iran Primer, "Khamenei: Red Lines on Nuclear Deal."

⁵⁵ Turkey and Ethiopia were the other two elements of this doctrine.

both Israel and the occupied territories.⁵⁶ Israel began to consider Iran to be an “existential threat” after the latter significantly accelerated its nuclear programme under hardline President Ahmadinejad who had repeatedly denied the Holocaust and threatened to wipe the Jewish state off the map. Israel’s war with Iran-supported Hezbollah in the summer of 2006 exacerbated its fears about the perceived Iranian threats: a nuclear-armed Iran would not only challenge Israel’s monopoly of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, but could also embolden its proxies in Lebanon and Palestine to attack the homeland of Israel.⁵⁷

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has been among the most vocal voices against Iran having any nuclear capability. To seek international support to his unequivocal but often lonely denouncement of Iran’s nuclear programme, he stressed that a nuclear-armed Iran was a threat not only to Israel but also to the region and the entire world, and that the threat was much graver than terrorism. When it comes to policy, however, Israel faced a dilemma: should it count on the P5+1 to diplomatically resolve the issue or should it attack Iran’s nuclear facilities? If it picked the latter, should it pursue that alone or act in cooperation with the US? And who should initiate these preemptive attacks?

In line with the Begin Doctrine, Israel had successfully bombed Iraq’s Osirak nuclear reactor in 1981 and Syria’s nuclear site in 2007, but it had been hesitant to attack Iran. There were a number of reasons for this inaction.⁵⁸ Firstly, the intelligence community, including Israel’s own, was not certain whether Iran had made the political decision to go nuclear and how far away Iran was to get a nuclear weapon. In light of this, any attack on Iran would likely push Tehran further down the nuclear path and rally the world, particularly Muslim countries, behind it. Secondly, Iran’s nuclear facilities are intentionally scattered across the country, some close to population centres including Tehran and others underground (such as Fordow).⁵⁹ Israel could not destroy many of these facilities by surprise airstrikes only.⁶⁰ If attacked, Iran would surely retaliate, including through its allies in Lebanon (where Hezbollah had proved to be a tough enemy for Israel) and in Palestine (where Hamas and other pro-Iran militias could target Israeli interests).⁶¹ That could cause a regional war involving not only Israel but the Gulf states. Lastly but perhaps most importantly, the world powers, including the Obama Administration, appeared determined to resolve the issue by diplomatic means. Russia and China, while supporting sanctions against Iran, had made it clear that they opposed any military actions against Iran. An Israeli attack before diplomacy ran its course could therefore lead to an international crisis that Israel could not readily afford, particularly

⁵⁶ Cook, “Israel and the Clash of Civilizations”, page 36.

⁵⁷ For a comprehensive treatment on Iran-Israel relations, see Kaye, Nader and Roshan, “Israel and Iran: a dangerous rivalry” and Kumaraswamy, “Israel Confronts Iran.”

⁵⁸ Keck, “Five Reasons Israel Won’t Attack Iran”, DePetrus, “Iran’s Master Plan to Retaliate If Israel Strikes” and IntelligenceonIran.com, “Analysis on possible strike.”

⁵⁹ See Annex III: Iran’s nuclear facilities.

⁶⁰ It is believed that only the US super “bunker buster” bomb can destroy Iran’s Fordow nuclear site which is hidden deep under a mountain.

⁶¹ Israel is fully aware of these scenarios. For instance, a classified report drafted by four senior Israeli defence officials and presented to Prime Minister Sharon in 2004 called on Israel to develop a multi-layered ballistic missile defence system, while specifically noting that a strike on Iranian nuclear facilities could provoke a “ferocious response” that might involve rocket attacks on northern Israel by Hezbollah.

given that it had already faced increasing pressure due to its expanding settlement activities.

In reality, the Israeli government had reluctantly embraced the nuclear talks between the P5+1 and Iran, but allegedly carried out clandestine operations to sabotage Iran's nuclear programme.⁶² As the talks progressed, especially when it became known that the US agreed to allow Iran to retain a residual nuclear capacity, Israel made every effort to derail the negotiations, but to no avail.⁶³ Immediately after the JCPOA was announced on 14 July 2015, Prime Minister Netanyahu dismissed it as “a historic mistake for the world,” adding that Israel was “not bound by this agreement” and would “not allow Iran to have any military nuclear capability.”⁶⁴ It was worth noting that he qualified “nuclear capability” with “military.” On 29 August 2015, during a trip to Italy, Mr. Netanyahu noted again that Israel was not opposed to an Iranian programme that was “civilian in nature.”⁶⁵ However, it remains unclear whether Israel has formally retreated from its previous position that Iran must end enrichment.

Saudi Arabia

Iran and Saudi Arabia had not been easy neighbours in history due to their religious, cultural and ideological differences, as well as national rivalry for dominance in the Gulf region, the Muslim world and the international energy markets. As much as Iran opposed outside powers' participation in regional security, Saudi Arabia worried about Iranian domination of the region. Still, they managed to maintain fairly good relations between the 1950s and 1970s when both were strategic allies of the US and while Saudi Arabia reluctantly played the role of Iran's junior partner. After the Shah was overthrown in 1979, the Saudi leadership became frightened by Ayatollah Khomeini's denunciation of the Sunni monarchies as antithetical to Islam and his ambition to export the revolution to the Muslim world. In response, Saudi Arabia enthusiastically supported Iraq's invasion of Iran in 1980 in hopes that the revolutionary regime in Tehran would not survive. Iraq would remain a bulwark against perceived Iranian expansionism until Saddam was toppled by the US-led Coalition in 2003. Riyadh also persuaded the smaller Gulf monarchies to form the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), creating a regional Arab alliance against Iran.

For its part, while scrambling to fight Iraq, Iran took pains not to make an enemy of Saudi Arabia simultaneously. It avoided attacking Saudi tankers in the Persian Gulf, though it repeatedly targeted Kuwaiti tankers. The hajj incident in Mecca in 1987, killing over 400 Shia pilgrims (mostly Iranian), caused Saudi Arabia to cut diplomatic ties with Iran. Their bilateral relations were resumed in 1991 in the wake of Iraq's invasion of

⁶² Iran has accused Israel of launching the Stuxnet cyber-attacks on its centrifuges and assassinating at least five Iranian nuclear scientists. Israel has refused to comment on such allegations. According to an article on 1 March 2014 by Dan Raviv of CBS News, the US had pressured Israel to stop carrying out assassinations inside Iran. Israel was also blamed for a “mysterious” explosion in an Iranian missile base in November 2011 which reportedly killed 17 people including a senior commander.

⁶³ Among the most dramatic moves were Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech to the United Nations General Assembly on 27 September 2012 and his speech to the joint session of the US Congress on 3 March 2015.

⁶⁴ Mullen and Robertson, “Landmark deal reached on Iran nuclear programme.”

⁶⁵ The Jerusalem Post, “Israel not opposed to Iranian civilian nuclear programme, Netanyahu tells Italian PM.”

Kuwait and improved gradually in the next decade. Saudi Arabia was upset by the US removal of the Saddam regime which led to the transformation of Iraq from a Sunni- to a Shia-controlled country and fundamentally tilted the balance of power in the region in favour of Iran. Saudi Arabia largely refrained from confronting Iran despite its increasing fears for the so-called Shia Crescent led by Iran. But the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011, particularly the removal of Egyptian President Mubarak and the subsequent start of the Syrian conflict, finally pitted Saudi Arabia against Iran directly and also through proxies.

Within the above context, a major dilemma for Saudi Arabia was whether to view the Iranian nuclear issue as an opportunity or a challenge. On the one hand, Iran had been politically and economically weakened by the sanctions and isolation due to the nuclear issue. A prolongation of the crisis would thus appear in the interest of Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia and other Arab States worried about the strategic edge a nuclear capability would give Iran, even though they reasonably believed that Iran's nuclear weapons, if any, would more likely target Israeli and US interests. Further, possible nuclear accidents in Iran were deemed as a realistic risk.⁶⁶ As a reflection of this dilemma, Arab leaders, while publicly supporting Iran's right to nuclear energy under the NPT and voicing disapproval of a US and/or Israeli strike, had privately advocated military means to take out Iran's nuclear programme – even though they knew Iran would certainly retaliate by attacking targets in the Gulf region.

According to WikiLeaks, a 2008 cable quoted then Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud as exhorting the US to “cut off the head of the snake” by attacking Iran and putting an end to its nuclear programme.⁶⁷ In a 2009 cable, the President of the Jordanian Senate, Zeid Rifai, warned a visiting US official to “bomb Iran, or live with an Iranian bomb” while saying that “[s]anctions, carrots, incentives won't work.”⁶⁸ The same year, King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa of Bahrain argued “forcefully for taking action to terminate the programme, by whatever means necessary.”⁶⁹ Similarly, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Muhammad bin Zayed al Nahyan reportedly viewed “a near term conventional war with Iran as clearly preferable to the long term consequence of a nuclear armed Iran.”⁷⁰

As the P5+1 and Iran were making strides in diplomatically resolving the nuclear issue, Saudi Arabia resented both the process (as GCC was not a party so they feared a grand bargain between the US and Iran at their expense) and the outcome (as the JCPOA lifts sanctions against Iran and provides it a way to be a normal country). It took unprecedented steps to vent its anger, such as renouncing its long-sought seat on the Security Council in October 2013 and by King Salman's non-participation in the US-

⁶⁶ Many of Iran's existing and planned nuclear facilities are located in areas prone to earthquake and based on Russian technology that is deemed as unsafe. See Tabatabaia, “Safety – the overlooked crucial issue in Iranian nuclear negotiations.”

⁶⁷ WikiLeaks, “Saudi King Abdullah and Senior Princes on Saudi Policy toward Iraq”, page 3.

⁶⁸ Mousavian, “The Iranian Nuclear Crisis”, pages 6-7.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

GCC summit held in David Camp in May 2015.⁷¹ It reportedly spent millions of dollars lobbying US Congress against the nuclear talks while advertising in the mass media in the US against the JCPOA. The airstrikes by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition against Yemen's Houthis in March 2015 – less than four months before the expected conclusion of the JCPOA – and the execution of Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, a Saudi Shia cleric, in January 2016 – two weeks before the expected Implementation Day of the JCPOA – were regarded by many as Riyadh's last-minute efforts to derail the nuclear deal.⁷²

Saudi Arabia has traditionally relied on the US to provide security protection in exchange for free flows of crude oils. But the nuclear deal, the US inaction vis-à-vis the conflicts in Syria and Ukraine, and the perceived US retreat from the Middle East have forced Riyadh to reconsider its dependence on the US. Saudi Arabia and many Arab States particularly feared that the lifting of sanctions would grant Iran access to billions of dollars which could be used to buy many advanced conventional arms, some of which could be transferred to Iran's allies in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon. If Iran had felt isolated and surrounded by enemies before the nuclear deal, it appears now that "Saudi Arabia talks and acts as if it were isolated and left alone to face wolves from across the Gulf in Tehran."⁷³ As a result, Riyadh, with a younger generation at the helm, has opted to become more independent in foreign affairs by taking matters into its own hands. Its military intervention in Yemen, strategic use of its influence over the Syrian opposition in the peace talks, and the forming of a 34-nation anti-terrorism Muslim coalition are examples in this regard. While it is unclear if the Saudi policy shift is long-term, the newly-found assertiveness in Riyadh, already generating lots of uncertainties in Saudi Arabia itself and the region, does not auger well for Saudi-Iranian relations. Coupled with other factors on both sides, particularly the persistent mutual distrust, it is likely that Iranian-Saudi relations could become more difficult and dangerous in the years to come, dampening any hopes for the restoration of peace and stability to the region.

The future: A regional security framework

It was hoped that a diplomatic resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue, such as through the JCPOA, would usher in an era of greater cooperation between Iran and the West, as well as among the countries in the region. Cooperation and dialogue between Iran and the West has indeed increased since the JCPOA was reached.⁷⁴ However, fears appear to be intensifying in some quarters that the deal, by addressing the nuclear proliferation concerns only but not dealing with other concerns about Iran, may well increase regional tensions in the near-to-medium term. A regional security framework that takes into account both the nuclear and non-nuclear concerns of all players is therefore urgently required for a sustainable resolution of the nuclear issue itself and a lasting peace in the region. The Six-Party talks on the North Korean nuclear issue have proved that

⁷¹ The US refusal to intervene in the Syrian crisis was another factor behind such moves.

⁷² According to Professor Guang Pan, a top Chinese scholar on the Middle East, China decided to postpone President Xi Jinping's planned visit to Saudi Arabia in April 2015 to avoid that visit being interpreted as Chinese support for Saudi Arabia's airstrikes against Yemen.

⁷³ Sez nec, "Intra-regional energy cooperation."

⁷⁴ See Annex IV: Consequences with and without the JCPOA.

addressing the nuclear issue alone is not sufficient for a sustained solution to nuclear proliferation concerns.

Uncertainties about JCPOA implementation

The JCPOA was based on hard-negotiated mutual compromises. Given the long-term commitments the parties have made, some up to 15-20 years, it is not surprising that going forward there are many uncertainties around its implementation. Among them, four stand out.

First, the parties could have technical problems in carrying out their obligations under the JCPOA. In fact, the 159-page text contains quite a few “gray areas” which can be interpreted differently. What makes things more complicated is that SCR 2231, while endorsing the JCPOA, introduced some restrictive measures which have little to do with the JCPOA. As such, disputes could emerge over each side’s compliance with the JCPOA at any time.⁷⁵ Two recent examples were changes in the US visa waiver programme and Iran’s missile tests.⁷⁶ Iran accused the US of violating the JCPOA by introducing the changes, but the US responded that they were necessary to fight terrorism and promised to take executive measures to mitigate any resultant negative effects.⁷⁷ After Iran launched missile tests in March 2016,⁷⁸ the US raised the matter in the Security Council and proposed sanctions on Iran. But Russia blocked further moves by noting that the missile tests did not violate SCR 2231.⁷⁹

For their part, Iranian leaders said that the missile programme was essential to Iran’s defense capabilities and was not “negotiable.” They added that the US should stop selling arms to Saudi Arabia and Israel if it was serious about defensive issues in the Middle East.⁸⁰ Furthermore, Iran complained that sanctions relief had thus far failed to bring about tangible economic benefits because foreign banks/companies, worried about remaining non-nuclear US sanctions on Iran, were reluctant to do business with Iran.⁸¹ In

⁷⁵ Conversations with the Permanent Missions of China, Russia, Germany and Iran to the United Nations as well as former members of the Panel of Experts for Iran sanctions.

⁷⁶ See Annex V: Ranges of Iran’s ballistic missiles. As Iran is the only country to develop a 2,000-km missile without first having a nuclear weapons capability, many experts questioned Iran’s arguments of having long-range missiles for defense only. Continuing missile tests by Iran could be a major challenge for the JCPOA. For more on this, see Cook, “The Real Danger: What If the Iran Deal Actually Works?”

⁷⁷ Schachtel, “Iran says US violated nuclear deal with Visa Waiver Law.” The dispute was settled after the US assured Iran that the changes would not adversely affect people doing business with Iran. In this case, a domestic US law apparently overrode the JCPOA.

⁷⁸ One of the missiles reportedly had a message written in Hebrew which reads “must destroy Israel.” The tests, coming shortly after the moderates’ victory in the parliamentary elections in February 2016, were considered as efforts by the hardliners to sabotage the JCPOA implementation.

⁷⁹ Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), which endorsed the JCPOA and provided for lifting sanctions on Iran, “calls upon” Iran not to build or test nuclear-capable missiles for eight years. Explaining Russia’s objection to the US proposed sanctions, Russian Permanent Representative Vitaly Churkin said that “a call is different from a ban so legally you cannot violate a call.” In this case, different interpretation of SCR 2231 prevented the Council from taking action, a scenario against which the opponents to the JCPOA have long warned.

⁸⁰ Sharafedin, “Khamenei says missiles, not just talks, key to Iran’s future,” and Karimi, “Iran says missile programme is not negotiable.”

⁸¹ Solomon, “US moves to give Iran limited access to dollars” and Danilova, “Iran official accuses US, EU of not honoring nuclear deal.”

response, the US said that it was not against foreign banks/companies dealing with Iran.⁸² Also, while the P5+1 claim that the JCPOA, if fully implemented, will effectively block Iran's four pathways to a nuclear weapon,⁸³ it is technically impossible to detect all of Iran's covert nuclear activities in a timely manner.

Second, throughout the talks leading up to the JCPOA, as well as after it was concluded, the deal faced and continues to face strong objection in both Iran and the US. Without tacit support by the Supreme Leader, the hardliners in Iran could have scuttled the deal. Iran's parliamentary and Assembly of Experts elections on 26 February 2016 were widely seen as a referendum on the nuclear deal.⁸⁴ The competition took place mainly between those supporting and opposing the deal. While virtually all the prominent critics of the deal were defeated, the hardliners retained many key leadership positions which are appointed by the Supreme Leader (e.g. judicial, military, the Guardian Council and media). They will likely continue to use all means to derail the implementation of nuclear deal, particularly in the context of Iran's presidential elections in 2017 when President Rouhani is expected to seek re-election. Rumors on Ayatollah Khamenei's health raise the lingering question of whether his successor would support the nuclear deal as he had. Iranians also remain worried that the US might not live up to its side of the bargain and the rhetoric in the ongoing US presidential election has significantly enhanced such fears.⁸⁵ Ayatollah Khamenei warned that if the next US president were to tear up the nuclear deal, Iran would "light it on fire."⁸⁶

For the US, it is obvious that the JCPOA would have not been possible without President Obama's personal commitment to a diplomatic resolution, including by threatening to veto any Congress bill opposing a solid deal.⁸⁷ With his term ending in January 2017, many reasonably worry about the prospects for the implementation of the JCPOA by the US. While it is too early to tell how the next US President may deal with Iran, the Democratic and Republican presidential nominees have expressed grave concerns about the deal.⁸⁸ Hillary Clinton is expected to follow Obama's foreign policy in general, but she could be much tougher on Iran.⁸⁹ She had called for new sanctions on Iran in response to Iran's ballistic missile tests. Donald Trump reiterated that his "number one priority is to dismantle the disastrous deal with Iran. ... [T]his deal is catastrophic - for America, for Israel, and for the whole Middle East."⁹⁰ Many experts believe that a

⁸² Clark, "US insists European banks can now deal with Iran" and Slavin, "Why big European banks are reluctant to return to Iran." A former Iran sanction expert noted in a workshop held at SIPA on 22 April 2016 that other reasons, including "deficiency" in Iranian banks, also contributed to foreign banks' hesitance to do business with Iran.

⁸³ They are the path through plutonium production at the Arak reactor, two paths to a uranium weapon through the Natanz and Fordow enrichment facilities, and the path of covert activity. See Annex VI: Iran's paths to nuclear weapons blocked.

⁸⁴ Erdbrink, "Iranian President and Moderates Make Strong Gains in Elections".

⁸⁵ Wilkin, "Khamenei says all US presidential candidates hostile to Iran".

⁸⁶ AP, "Iran vows to burn nuclear agreement if US scraps it."

⁸⁷ US Congress has traditionally been tougher than the White House in sanctioning Iran.

⁸⁸ Among the main candidates, only Bernie Sanders strongly supported the nuclear deal. He said on 21 March 2016 that the deal was the "best hope" to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. Before he dropped out of the race, Ted Cruz repeatedly said that he would cancel the US agreement to the JCPOA day one in the White House.

⁸⁹ See Hilary Clinton's speech to AIPAC on 21 March 2016. Given that Ms. Clinton was the Secretary of State when the US and Iran started secret talks in 2012 and that 1-2 of her assistants personally played a key role in those talks, she is unlikely to cancel the JCPOA as US President.

⁹⁰ See Donald Trump's speech to AIPAC on 21 March 2016.

candidate will likely change his/her position on Iran after assuming the presidency, because any US unilateral move could reignite the nuclear crisis in which other signatories to the JCPOA will unlikely support the US.

A third major uncertainty is whether Israel will take unilateral action. Despite what was discussed above on the restrictions that have prevented Israel from attacking Iran, Israel has never ruled out military options.

A fourth major uncertainty is whether other countries in the region (i.e. Saudi Arabia,⁹¹ Egypt, Turkey and even Jordan and the UAE) will seek the same nuclear status as Iran. A nuclear arms race in the region could force all players to reconsider the value of the JCPOA, a key objective of which is to strengthen the international non-proliferation regime. Certainly Israel will not tolerate so many neighbours having nuclear capacity. Saudi Arabia could be most unpredictable as it is embracing a power transition from the older generation to the younger one and pursuing a more assertive foreign policy.

Moving forward: regional security framework

For its proponents in the West, the JCPOA removed the perceived Iranian nuclear threat, opening the possibility of cooperation with Iran on a range of other security issues. But reactions by its critics, particularly in Israel and Saudi Arabia, appear to indicate that what they worry about most is actually not Iran's nuclear programme, but Iran's involvement in the region. In other words, the nuclear issue has been a cover for Iran's regional foes to contain Iran. At present, Israel's top concern appears to be Hezbollah and Hamas⁹² while Saudi Arabia's main worries are Yemen, Syria and ISIL⁹³. A regional security structure seems the way forward to bring about a lasting peace that the JCPOA alone cannot generate. Iran and its opponents might have divergent views on non-nuclear issues, but addressing them together in a certain framework through negotiations and cooperation is in the interest of all. Several ideas to that effect have been floated since the early 1990s. Two of the widely-discussed were (1) the expansion of the GCC and (2) establishment of an OSCE-type architecture, both aimed at establishing a regional balance among the Iran-Iraq-Saudi Arabia triangle.⁹⁴

1. Expanding the GCC to include Iran and Iraq (and perhaps Jordan, Morocco and Yemen to mitigate the Gulf States' concern about potential Iranian dominance).⁹⁵

⁹¹ Saudi Arabia already had plans to build two nuclear reactors by 2020 and 14 more by 2030. In addition, there had long been reports that Saudi Arabia might buy nuclear weapons from Pakistan.

⁹² Goldberg, "What Israel's Chief of Staff is worried about – No, it's not Iran."

⁹³ Riedel, "Saudi Arabia's mounting security challenges."

⁹⁴ See Pollack, "Security in the Persian Gulf," Hunter, "Building security in the Gulf," Robins, "The future of the Gulf," Chubin and Tripp, "Iran-Saudi Arabia relations and regional order," and Sadeghinia, "Security arrangements in the Persian Gulf."

⁹⁵ In the summit meeting in Qatar in December 1990, held after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the GCC member states touched on the creation of a permanent regional security network but provided no details of the plan. While Iran was not mentioned in the final communique, GCC officials had said that Iran should be included in any future regional security system. In response, Iran stated that it "would be ready to collaborate in all aspects of the Persian Gulf security plan." The momentum was quickly gone after Saddam's Iraq was defeated by the US-led coalition in early 1991. Instead, the GCC countries signed the Damascus Declaration with Syria and Egypt in March 1991 to bring Syrian and Egyptian troops to the Gulf. But the Gulf States worried about Syrian/Egyptian hegemony in

Iran should be interested in this idea as the GCC membership would not only allow it to legitimately play a big role in the region, but also help it avoid the risks of turning a dispute with any Gulf neighbour into one with all Gulf countries. Oman, the friendliest GCC member to Iran, has argued that the GCC should have Iran as a counterweight to Saudi Arabia.⁹⁶ But Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE will most likely oppose Iran's inclusion. Saudi Arabia would worry that Iran could replace it as the dominant power in the expanded GCC; Bahrain would fear further Iranian interference in its internal affairs; and the UAE would never accept Iran's occupation of the three disputed islands in the Persian Gulf. Practically speaking, expansion of GCC has proved difficult to realize – Saudi Arabia had been eager and trying hard to bring Jordan and Morocco in the GCC in the past years, but has thus far failed due to differences among the current members. It should also be recalled that Iran, under both the Shah and the Ayatollahs, was unable to establish a regional security framework.⁹⁷ In the 1970s, Saudi Arabia and Iraq resisted Tehran's efforts to organize a "Gulf security pact" under Iranian leadership. In September 1994, Iran proposed the conclusion of a "defensive security pact" among the littoral states of the Gulf but there had been no follow-up.

2. Forming a new regional architecture modelled after the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Currently, there are three regional/sub-regional organizations respectively in the Persian Gulf (i.e. GCC), the Middle East (i.e. the League of Arab States/LAS) and the Muslim world (i.e. the Organization of Islamic Cooperation/OIC). The problem is that Iran is not a member of the GCC or the LAS, and that the OIC, headquartered in Jeddah, has traditionally been dominated by Saudi Arabia.⁹⁸ Proponents argue that an OSCE-type organization in the Middle East would allow all concerned countries (including powers out of the region such as the US, Russia) to discuss and address all issues of common interest and mutual concern in the same forum. But critics consider the idea as too ambitious, noting that the OSCE's predecessor – CSCE (Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe) – was established on the basis of détente between East and West, and that similar détente between the Sunnis and Shias is exactly what is currently lacking in the Middle East.

Mindful of recent developments, particularly the weakening of Iraq which takes the country out of the Tehran-Baghdad-Riyadh equation, the Arab Spring which upends the traditional power structure in the Arab world, and the nuclear deal, I propose a two-step approach for creating a modestly ambitious regional framework. The first step is to

the Gulf and the Declaration quickly lost its viability. See Tarock, "Iran's Foreign Policy since 1990", pages 22-23, and Chubin and Tripp, "Iran-Saudi Arabia relations and regional order," page 25.

⁹⁶ Al-Mukhani, "Gulf states should form regional bloc with Iran."

⁹⁷ In 1997, then Iranian Defence Minister Ali Shamkhani noted that the Gulf littoral states "should seriously opt for formulation of a stable and coordinated strategy to reach sustainable security without foreign involvement." See Ehteshami and Zweiri, "Iran's Foreign Policy," page 136.

⁹⁸ Iran has accused Saudi Arabia of making it difficult for Iranian officials to attend OIC events at its headquarters in Jeddah for political reasons. In the recent OIC summit held in Istanbul on 14-15 April 2016, in which Iranian President Rouhani participated, Saudi Arabia managed to add to the final communique languages deploring Iran's interference in other countries' internal affairs and support for terrorism. It should be recalled, however, that the visit to Tehran for the OIC summit in 1997 by then Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah's had temporarily opened the door for bilateral engagement.

formulate an informal mechanism – a Group of Friends on the Middle East - which builds on the P5+1/Iran talks and the International Syria Support Group that is addressing the Syrian crisis. Membership to this informal mechanism could include world powers (the P5+1), regional powers (Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt and Israel), countries in conflict (Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Palestine and perhaps Bahrain) and countries having stakes (e.g. Japan, Italy, Qatar, the UAE, and Jordan). As a top priority, the mechanism should work towards a negotiated framework that puts forth the principles for addressing all peace and security issues in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East, while leaving the details to be worked out at a later stage. The issues to be addressed could include, among others, the implementation of the JCPOA and establishment of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East; the crises in Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon and Bahrain; Iran's territorial dispute with the UAE; and cross-cutting issues such as counter-terrorism and natural resources. The Palestinian question could be discussed as well, but it is important to distinguish those issues mainly between Iran and Arab countries (e.g. Syria, Yemen, etc.) from those primarily concerning Iran and Israel (e.g. Lebanon and nuclear).

Following initial progress, the next step will be setting up a more formal structure with a permanent secretariat. Additional members may be invited to join based on consensus. The ultimate objective is a sustainable regional peace. World powers, particularly the US and Russia, can play a crucial role by pushing their allies in the region towards the goal. In an encouraging development, US Secretary of State Kerry recently expressed hope that some form of regional security arrangement could be worked out should Iran choose to cooperate, adding that the Gulf States “would welcome Iran to the table if they want to be part of a genuine security arrangement for the region.”⁹⁹ However, several top Iranian officials responded that Iran refused to negotiate over its defense power.

Some may argue that establishing the proposed framework is a too ambitious goal to achieve in the near future, as it would be very much dependent on the settlement of the Syria/Yemen crisis. But the opposite could be true as well: the establishment of a regional security framework may facilitate the resolution of the Syria/Yemen crisis. History, including the incredible reconciliation between France and Germany after the Second World War as well as between the US and China during the height of the Cold War, and the Iranian nuclear talks between 2013-15, shows that everything is possible as long as the parties concerned have strong political will and commitment for peace and development.

To that end, it is imperative that the players understand each other's concerns and stand ready to compromise. While the bilateral relations between the US and Russia will set the tone, those between the US and Iran, Iran and Saudi Arabia, and Iran and Israel are key to take forward the process by resolving specific crises in the region. An Iran/Saudi Arabia rapprochement, such as that in the 1990s, could help restore peace to Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Lebanon. An Iran/Israel rapprochement could help stabilize the situation in Lebanon and Palestine. And an Iran/US rapprochement could make Iran more confident in dealing with its regional rivals and more prepared to cooperate than confront. As it currently stands, Iran appears keen to improve its relations with Saudi Arabia (but

⁹⁹ Goodenough, “Kerry, in Bahrain, mentions possibility of ‘new agreement’ with Iran.”

Saudi Arabia is reluctant to respond) and may be willing to improve its relations with the US (though the Supreme Leader has vowed no change in US relations). There have been no signs that Iran and Israel are ready to engage, but with Iran not developing nuclear weapons and preoccupied by Syria, there is room for the two to maintain cold peace.

The role of the UN

The Security Council requested in its resolution 598 (1987) “the Secretary-General to examine, in consultation with Iran and with other States of the region, measures to enhance the security and stability of the region.”¹⁰⁰ Nearly thirty years later, such regional arrangements remain elusive. In view of the many challenges in the region, it is high time to materialize that goal. The UN can play an important facilitating role in that regard, with the following as possible priority areas.

Firstly, the UN can assist with the implementation of the JCPOA and SCR 2231 to ensure the nuclear deal works. Should the deal collapse, tensions between Iran and its adversaries could be much worse than before, and the risks for a military confrontation might be significantly greater. That is an undesired scenario that all interested parties must avoid. In addition to providing the secretariat support specifically asked by the Council, the Secretary-General can use his meetings with world leaders to help create conducive conditions for implementing the JCPOA and SCR 2231. As an important confidence-building measure, the UN should do its utmost to take forward the initiative of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East, which has the potential to open doors for regional cooperation and security dialogue.¹⁰¹

Secondly, the UN can play an important role in the peaceful settlement of the wars in Syria and Yemen. Only limited progress has been made thus far, but all players have agreed on the urgency to resolve the conflicts. Regional peace in the Persian Gulf and Middle East is not possible if the fighting continues and problems related to refugees remain. The Secretary-General’s Special Envoys on Syria and Yemen have worked tirelessly to facilitate the peace talks. The Secretary-General might consider getting personally involved in mediation between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The key is to persuade them to put aside their differences and focus instead on their common interests, such as regional peace, anti-terrorism and energy security.

Lastly but not least, the UN can help with the establishment and operationalization of an agreed regional security framework, as discussed above. Past experience shows that for a regional mechanism to be effective, it needs to align its objectives and priorities with those of the UN.

Conclusions and recommendations

When the Islamic Republic of Iran restarted its civilian nuclear programme during the Iran-Iraq war, it might have had nuclear weapons in mind to deter future attacks by Iraq

¹⁰⁰ Security Council resolution 598 of 20 July 1987, operation paragraph 8.

¹⁰¹ Foradori and Malin, “A WMD-free zone in the Middle East: regional perspectives.”

and other enemies. As its sense of insecurity increased over time, Iran could have taken covert steps to realize such a nuclear deterrence. Before the Saddam regime was toppled in 2003, Iraq had been the No. 1 threat to Iran. After 2003, Iran became more worried about regime change by the US and military attacks by Israel. By contrast, Iran apparently has not viewed Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries as a serious threat.

Iran is aware of the consequences of going nuclear against the concerted non-proliferation efforts by the world powers. As such, it has pursued the nuclear hedging strategy with the aim to be a threshold nuclear country. In that context, it carefully avoided crossing redlines set by Israel and the US and eventually concluded the JCPOA with the P5+1.

Opponents to the JCPOA, particularly those in the US, Israel and Saudi Arabia, remain concerned that Iran's residual nuclear capability under the JCPOA could still produce nuclear weapons someday. They are worried that sanctions relief would give Iran more financial sources to support its proxies¹⁰² and that reintegrating Iran into the international community would embolden Iran to implement its regional ambitions.¹⁰³ These are legitimate concerns that must be adequately addressed. But it is quite clear that the world, including Israel and Saudi Arabia, is much safer today with the JCPOA in place than several years ago when Iran was enriching uranium on a massive scale and was believed to be close to having a nuclear bomb.¹⁰⁴ If Iran were to renew enrichment for whatever reason, many countries would surely have more to worry about.¹⁰⁵

Meanwhile, it should be noted that the nuclear issue, despite all the hype around it for the past two decades, is only part of the many problems that have adversely affected Iran's relations with the West and Arab countries. It is a relatively new problem, compared to long-standing issues related to geopolitics, religion and sectarianism. As much as they want to stop the Iranian nuclear programme, Iran's opponents have benefitted from using the perceived threat to isolate and weaken the Islamic Republic. One may even argue that the main concern of Iran's opponents has always not been the nuclear programme, but non-nuclear issues, particularly Iran's involvements in the region, alleged support for terrorist groups and Shia militias, and its ambition to dominate the Muslim world. A consensus appears to be emerging among Iran experts that the region has reluctantly "moved on from the nuclear deal to other pressing issues, most significantly the conflict in Syria" and that the debate has discernibly "shifted from Iran as a nuclear problem to Iran as a regional problem."¹⁰⁶ Now with the nuclear deal largely taking hold, it is time to address non-nuclear issues in a comprehensive manner.

These non-nuclear issues can all be linked to the Islamic Revolution, which turned Iran from an ally of the West to a menacing enemy to Israel and many Arab countries. As long as Iran's political system remains unchanged, it is not realistic to expect sudden or profound changes in Iran's foreign policy orientation any time soon. However, judging

¹⁰² US House Committee on Foreign Affairs hearing, "Major beneficiaries of the Iran deal: IRGC and Hezbollah."

¹⁰³ Sanger, "John Kerry confronts concerns of Arab States after Iran nuclear deal."

¹⁰⁴ Ben-Chorin, "Netanyahu and IDF are split on the Iran nuclear deal."

¹⁰⁵ Conversations with SIPA professors.

¹⁰⁶ Kaye, "The Iran Deal Is Working: What Now?"

from the experience of other countries, particularly China after which Iran is eager to model, it cannot be ruled out that Tehran might undertake reforms, become less radical and adjust its foreign policy as it deals with mounting domestic challenges. It is also worth noting that Iranian leaders have repeatedly showed that they are not irrational but pragmatic for the sake of regime survival and national interest.¹⁰⁷

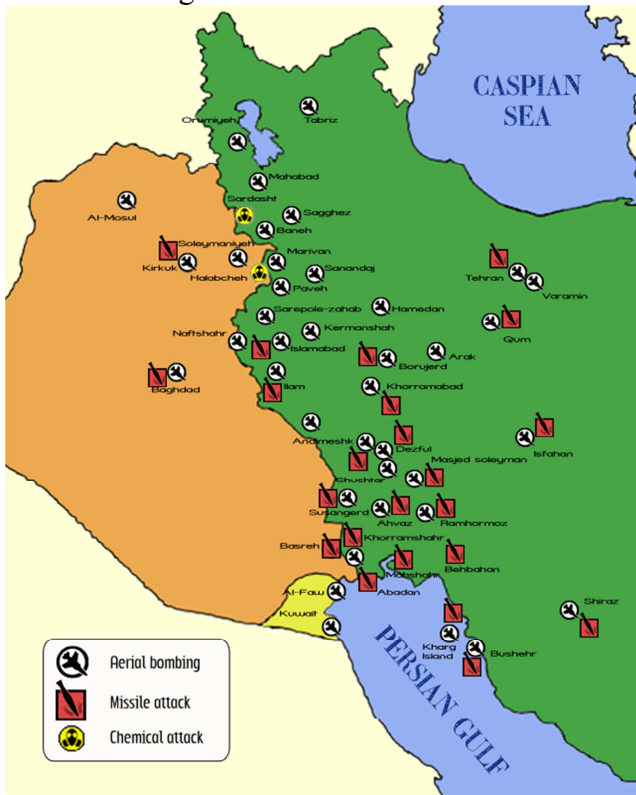
As of this writing the JCPOA implementation has progressed quite well. On 27 May 2016, in its second quarterly assessment since Implementation Day, the IAEA reported that it had been “verifying and monitoring the implementation by Iran of its nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA” and found no violations.¹⁰⁸ The outcomes of Iran’s parliament and Assembly of Experts elections in February 2016 reflected the wide support among the Iranian population for the deal. These are some of the strong signs that Iran will most likely hold up its end of the deal. Should the P5+1 do the same, which is expected, the JCPOA will give the world at least 10 more years to resolve the Iranian nuclear crisis. During this period, a key challenge for the world is to ensure that the implementation of the JCPOA helps build mutual confidence and trust between Iran and its adversaries, rather than intensify their existing tensions and suspicions on other issues.

The JCPOA alone cannot bring about a lasting peace in the Middle East. A regional security framework, building on the success of the JCPOA, is required to address both nuclear and non-nuclear concerns of all interested parties. In the near future, the peaceful resolution of the Syria crisis will contribute greatly to a general sense of peace in the region. In the medium term, the Palestinian question must be addressed. The Arab Spring has distracted the world’s attention from Palestine in the past years, but the Palestinian question remains the core issue in the Middle East. Ultimately, Iran-US relations matters most. If they remain enemies, substantial improvements in international relations in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East are unlikely to take place. Should rapprochement indeed occur between Tehran and Washington, as proponents of the JCPOA have hoped, all countries in the region will need to adapt to the new reality on the ground and adjust their policies accordingly. The UN will need to be more proactive and assertive in supporting efforts aimed at restoring peace and stability to the Middle East, including a possible regional security framework.

¹⁰⁷ In addition to the JCPOA, another telling case was that when it was clear that Iran could not win the war with Iraq, Supreme Leader Khomeini departed from his previous stance that the war had to continue until Iraq’s defeat and accepted a ceasefire with Iraq under Security Council resolution 598. In a radio address to the nation on 20 July 1988, he explained that the move was “truly bitter and tragic” but it was “in the interest of the revolution and of the system.” He added that “death and martyrdom would have been more bearable to me.”

¹⁰⁸ IAEA Board of Governors Report GOV/INF/2016/23.

Annex I: Targets in the War of the Cities in the Iran-Iraq war



Source: Wikipedia

Annex II: US troops encircling Iran



Note: online map, each star representing a US military base

Annex III: Iran's nuclear facilities

Nuclear Iran



Source: online map by AFP.

Annex IV: Consequences with and without the JCPOA

TOP LINE	
WITH P5+1 JCPOA	WITHOUT P5+1 JCPOA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ There will be an extensive and extended roll back (15 years) of Iranian nuclear activities, including reduced uranium enrichment and enriched uranium stockpile, resulting in a considerably extended breakout time. ✓ Iran has committed to permanently adhere to the Additional Protocol, which provides the basis for access to suspicious sites and enables the IAEA to have a fuller picture of a wide range of nuclear activities in Iran, including activities that don't involve uranium or plutonium. ✓ The JCPOA provides for unique and very strong verification of centrifuge manufacturing for 20 years and uranium production for 25 years, effectively blocking a covert enrichment program for a quarter century. In addition, permanent provisions bar Iranian weaponization. ✓ The JCPOA underscores international unity, which was crucial for both sanctions effectiveness and for negotiating a very strong JCPOA. This unity serves as a deterrent to Iranian non-compliance. 	<p>There is a growing Iranian nuclear program now with limited detection and verification capability.</p> <p>The likely unraveling of international sanctions will bring economic relief for Iran without the JCPOA benefits of restricted nuclear activity and strong verification. This loss of JCPOA benefits would be a negative outcome for the U.S. and our allies.</p> <p>There will be a loss of international unity in confronting Iran, thereby diminishing our effectiveness and our authority for a strong response to Iranian non-compliance.</p>

Source: Ernest Moniz, accessible at <https://medium.com/the-iran-deal/science-based-nuclear-security-and-the-iran-agreement-122f7b7c8370#.kb0ze7kto>

Annex V: Ranges of Iran's ballistic missiles



Source: online map by Reuters.

Annex VI: Iran's paths to nuclear weapons blocked



Source: the White House.

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