

## The Iran Nuclear Deal

In many respects, the Iran nuclear deal can be regarded as a major success for diplomacy between the West and a major Middle Eastern power. Since 2006 the E3+3, also referred to as the P5+1, has been involved in negotiations to reach a diplomatic compromise to limit Iran's nuclear weapon development. The negotiations were stagnant for many years, however a breakthrough interim agreement in 2013 was reached leading to the creation of the historic Joint Comprehensive Programme of Action (JCPOA) signed on 14 July 2015. By 16 January 2016 the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed that Iran suspended its four pathways to build a nuclear bomb, as per the agreement, and all non-military international sanctions were relieved. The IAEA will use a new computer monitoring system that will be able to monitor nuclear activities in Iran to ensure compliance as per the mandate of the JCPOA. If the IAEA observes Iran violating the terms of the deal international sanctions can be reintroduced immediately; however, if after 8 years there are no such incidents, the mandate of the JCPOA will terminate and all remaining sanctions will be lifted.

The deal has been a great success for Iran. On the morning the sanctions were officially lifted, a reformist newspaper in Tehran read "Hello Iran without sanctions: We are released". Iran's president, Hassan Rouhani, has been an incredibly important part of these negotiations. He successfully managed to finalise a deal with the west, without appearing to have capitulated to them and thus has managed to strike the delicate balance between those who want reform in Iran, with the hardliners in the parliament. With Iran set to improve from the sanctions relief, Rouhani will certainly gain important public approval ahead of Iran's presidential elections in 2017.

The deal's fate however is far from sealed. Two tense diplomatic incidents between Iran and the US have already instilled doubt in the stability of the deal. On 12 of January, two US patrol craft illegally entered Iranian waters, and were detained by Iranian authorities. The sailors were quickly released by Iran following a round of efficient negotiations between the two states. On 17 January Iran conducted a ballistic missile test. This did not violate the terms of the deal, however it was seen as provocation by the US who responded by re-implementing sanctions on eleven entities and individuals who had known involvement with the test. Similarly, Obama faced heavy opposition from his Republican Senate to pass the deal. Republican candidates for the upcoming presidential elections in the U.S. have pledge to annul the deal should they be elected into office. Unfortunately, domestic opposition on both sides of the deal who oppose the amelioration of relations will continue to loom as an ominous cloud over the continued success of the deal.

Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, remains fiercely opposed to the deal as he had been throughout the negotiation process, and claims that Iran already is in possession of a nuclear weapon. Israel continues to view Iran as a mortal enemy, and does not believe the deal has signalled success for Iran's non-proliferation. Netanyahu has claimed that Israel will be the "watchdog" over the deal to ensure Iranian compliance. Israel will continue to develop its offensive and defensive systems and its own nuclear capabilities to protect itself from adversaries in the region, including Iran.

Relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran are an important regional consideration over the Iran deal. The religious differences between the two states culminated in December 2015 with the execution

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of a top Shi'a cleric in Saudi, which led to Iranian protestors burning the Saudi embassy in Iran.

Diplomatic relations between the two states were severed weeks before the implementation of the deal. Saudi is concerned with the warming of relations between Iran and the West, and has looked to maintain Iran's hostile international reputation. While the US Secretary of State John Kerry believes Iran will need to prioritise its new revenue towards revamping the economy, the Saudis have not been satisfied with Kerry's response and have criticised the deal as a means of releasing Iranian funds that could be used to continue "nefarious activities" in the region. In an interview with CNN the Saudi foreign minister, Adel al-Jubeir, stated that the Kingdom will do what is necessary to protect itself. Following an established Saudi practice of ambiguity, he refused to comment on Saudi's plans to acquire a nuclear weapon from Pakistan, clearly using such ambiguities as pressure. Though these ambiguous claims have been met with strong disapproval from the State Department, it demonstrates the apparent Saudi disregard for non-proliferation, as well as its concerns over its own security and international stature.

These concerns are not the only problem for Saudi Arabia. It, along with other Gulf States will become concerned with the re-introduction of Iranian oil into the market. Oil prices are already considerably lower than in recent years due to an oversupply of the market, which has already created economic difficulties for these oil-based economies. Iran has considerable oil reserves that will become available after 4 years of sanctions, which will augment to the global supply and will likely cause prices to fall even further.

A stable and successful deal will have positive implications for both Iran and the region. Now that sanctions have been lifted, Iran will begin to see gradual economic growth. China, Italy and France have made substantial multi-billion dollar deals with Iran, which seems to be in the benefit of all parties involved. On a political note, the deal could facilitate Iran's diplomatic involvement in multilateral efforts to stabilise the region's conflicts. Iran has a significant level of influence within conflicts in Syria and Yemen, and their involvement in negotiations would be particularly advantageous.

With these economic and political partnerships, Iran will continue to foster dialogue and trust with other states in the international system. This trust could then provide an alternative to the long-held perception of Iran as one of the world's antagonists.