



## **Iran's Nuclear Deal (P5+1) and Global Peace: Interrogating the U.S. Withdrawal from Iran's Nuclear Deal**

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## Abstract

This paper seeks to interrogate the United States' withdrawal from the Iran's nuclear deal and its implications on global peace and security. It brings into perspective, Iran's antecedents, hegemonic drives and strategic activities, as against those of the United States, within the Middle East region. The study becomes necessary given the withdrawal of the United States Government from the 'P5+1' Iranian nuclear deal, an action that has continued to generate debate within the international community. The study tried to interrogate the fears expressed by the United States Government with a view to establishing its veracity. The study adopts documentary research method which implies that emphasis is placed on secondary sources of data collection in sourcing data for the research. The researcher used qualitative approach to data analysis. Using Game theory as the theoretical framework of analysis, this work concluded that actions of states at the international system are informed by the goals the states are set to achieve.

**Keywords:** Nuclear Deal; Hegemony; Global Peace, P5+1, Uranium Enrichment

## 1. Introduction

Iran launched her nuclear programme way back in the 1950s with the tacit cooperation of the United States and the Western European Governments (Olli; 2014). The 1979 Iranian revolution that toppled the regime of the last Shah of Iran changed the dynamics. As a result of the revolution, most of the international nuclear cooperation with Iran was withdrawn. However, between 1980 and 1990, the Iranian government opened negotiations with France and Argentina on the development of Iran's nuclear technology. In the 1990s, Russia formed a research team with Iran, providing Iran with Russian nuclear experts (Kessler; 1987). It was from the year 2000 that the international community began to express apprehension that Iran's nuclear programme might be intended for non-peaceful uses.

In the year 2003, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) launched an investigation into the Iranian nuclear programme but concluded that Iran's nuclear programme poses no threat to any country (Alder; 2003). Consequently, Iran was aided to pursue their nuclear programme, leading to the completion of the first Iranian nuclear power plant known as 'the Bushehr' in 2011 with Russia playing a major role. Iran thereafter announced her desire to work on a new 360-megawatt Darkhovin Nuclear Power Plant and also seek more medium sized nuclear power plants and uranium mines in the future. The Iranian zest for the development of nuclear technology at this point attracted a number of sanctions from the big players in the international arena, especially Europe and United States of America.

In Jan. 2016, all nuclear related sanctions on Iran were lifted following the agreement Iran reached with the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council together with Germany (P5+1). This notwithstanding, the United States government has continued to express worry over Iran's nuclear programme. The United State government under Trump has maintained that Iran is the greatest threat to the global peace (The White House; 2018). The United States has therefore withdrawn from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), an agreement of the P5+1, the European Union and Iran on the Iranian nuclear programme. This has generated new criticisms and debate concerning the United States position on the Iranian nuclear deal. The United States continued opposing stance and antagonism to Iran's nuclear programme in an era the world is advocating a more environmentally friendly energy consist the main thrust of this work. This paper therefore examines Iran's nuclear programme and U. S's withdrawal from the Iran's nuclear deal as struggle for hegemony in the Middle

East region.

## Relevance of Nuclear Energy

Nuclear energy serve very crucial role in the developmental needs of countries and global safety. Studies have shown that nuclear energy has the lowest impact on the ecosystem. Nuclear energy is reputed as the world's largest source of emission-free energy. Nuclear power plants produce no controlled air pollutants, such as sulfur and particulates, or greenhouse gasses (Akyuz, 2017). According to International Nuclear Society Council (2002), there is no industry in the world that can present the same excellent record of safety performance as the nuclear industry despite the Chernobyl accident. According to the council, Nuclear power is the only technology used for electricity generation that, from the very beginning of its development, took the environmental impact into consideration.

Nuclear power is among the most prominent sources of electricity. Its advantages over other sources mark it out as the most environmental friendly source of electricity. Coal which contributes the most in global electricity generation discharges combustion gases, a major source of atmospheric pollution. It also produces large amounts of ash and other waste like sulfur, nitrogen oxides, toxic metals etc all of which pose threat to the environment and the lives of living organisms, including humans.

On the contrary, the International Nuclear Society Council (2002) posits as follows with regards to the strength of Nuclear Energy:

- i. Nuclear energy is a form of energy that does not emit any green house gas (carbondioxied, methane, nitrous oxide), and other gas causing acid rain or photochemical air pollution (sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides). It does not emit any carcinogenic, teratogenic, or mutagenic metals.
- ii. That the utilization of nuclear energy also does not release gasses or particles that cause urban smog or depletion of the ozone layer. It contends that Nuclear power is the only energy technology that treats, manages, and contains its wastes in a way that is complete and segregated from the public and the environment.

The rapid negative changes in the environment occasioned largely by emissions arising from other sources of energy impose an urgent need for the world to embrace nuclear technology. Hence, the International Nuclear Society Council (2002) maintains that "in the entire world, increasing efforts are being devoted to the task of developing greenhouse responsive global energy systems. Nuclear energy technology provides the alternative in this direction.

Nuclear energy has also been endorsed for the attainment of sustainable development. According to the United Nations Report (2018), "sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Nuclear energy apparently offers a level of intergenerational security such that the reliance on that does not jeopardize the satisfaction of the needs of future generations. Categorically speaking, Trajano (2016) noted that "apart from its role in mitigation climate change, nuclear power can also help address energy supply concerns"

This concern is bourn of the volatile nature of fossil fuel prices and challenges occasioned by supply difficulties from troubled regions. These concerns naturally inform diversification drives by countries from fossil fuels to renewable and nuclear energy sources. Trajano (2016) pointed out that "even fossil fuel- rich Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates are already looking to commission their first nuclear reactors within the next 10 years as domestic demand for electricity is rising." The scholar therefore argues that tapping nuclear power, whose cost is more stable than fossil fuels, may result in electricity and aggregate price stability, leading to a more positive macroeconomic setting for economic growth.

## Global Skepticism on Nuclear Energy

Public skepticism and opposition had forced some countries to phase out their nuclear programmes. The opposition and skepticism arose from the fear of the dangers, high risks associated with nuclear accidents, radiation risks, possibility of misuse and even some misconceptions. The Fukushima disaster alongside that of Chermobyl exacerbated public skepticisms concerning the safety of nuclear power. Critics argue that the nuclear industry lack the capacity to permanently dispose high level radioactive waste which poses severe environmental and public health risks. These anti-nuclear power forces succeeded in goading some European countries into phasing out their nuclear energy programmes. Examples of such countries include Germany, Switzerland, and Belgium.

There are fears that a nuclear power plant could accidentally release radiation into the environment or be targeted for a terrorist attack. Skeptics raise concerns over what to do with the radioactive wastes associated with nuclear energy (Bosselman; 2009). More importantly, critics point out that the biggest concern associated with a nuclear power accident is the negative effects that exposure to radiation can have on human body.

Beyond these, skeptics argue that the inextricable link between nuclear energy and nuclear weapons is arguably the greatest danger of nuclear power (Akyuz; 2017). Critics point out that the same process used to manufacture low enriched uranium for nuclear fuel also can be employed for the production of highly enriched uranium for nuclear weapons. It is believed that a civil nuclear programme could easily be used to develop nuclear weapons clandestinely.

### Game Theory

Game theory has its history traceable to the 1928 parlour games analysis of John Von Neumann. In his book, "Theory of Games and Economic behaviour" published with Oskar Morgenstern in 1944, they tried to explain economic problems using Game Theory (Correa; 2001). John Von Neumann applied his methods to politics and warfare, deducing possibly from his favourite chess game. He used the Game Theory to analyze the cold war interaction between the U.S and the USSR, referring the two as players in a zero-sum game.

Martin Shubnik, Oscar Morgenstern and Karl Deutsch highlighted the importance of game theory in analyzing international politics. For them, it is a method of selecting the best course of action by players in the international arena. "It is a body of thought dealing with rational decisions, strategies in situations of conflict and competition, when each participant or player seeks to maximize his gains and minimize losses" (Chandra; 2004:26). The theorists therefore opine that actions and inactions of actors in the international arena are informed by conscious rational and strategic decisions intended to achieve set goals.

The Game theory is based on the following assumptions. There is a competition or conflict involving two or more players. That each of the players adopt strategies based on their calculations to maximize gains and minimize losses. That each of the players tries to gather information (intelligence) about the opponent which informs rationally calculated actions or inactions on its part. Nonetheless, Game theory has been criticized for its assumption that decision makers are perfectly rational and amoral in their decisions. Allan and Dupont (1999) also argue that the theory has also been attacked for assuming that players have perfect information or intelligence about their opponent. The critics point out that it fails to explain surprise attacks, atomic blackmail, massive retaliation and the problem of limited war. Thomas Schelling argues that Game theory fails to tell us why states as actors sometimes behave quite irrationally (Chandra; 2004).

However, these criticisms notwithstanding, Game theory is still very useful in explaining actions and inactions of state actors in the international arena. Evidently, foreign policies of states are anchored on their national interests. In other words, conducts of states within the international community are informed by deliberate decisions pursuant to the interests of the state. Actions and inactions of the state actors in the international system are more often than not geared towards the actualization of set goals of the state. These goals may be economic, political, sociological or even strategic. Moves by state actors within the international community elicit different reactionary moves from other actors depending on how each perceives the moves. Perceived friends/allies react differently from the positions of the perceived enemies as each interpret actions and inactions of the other with regards to its national interest and the behavioral pattern of the other.

### Application of Game Theory

Iran and the United States have had no diplomatic relations since 1980. On the other hand, even though formal diplomatic relations between Iran and China is relatively new, trade and social relations between the peoples of Iran and China existed since 200BC. Over time, China and Iran have developed a friendly economic and strategic partnership. Iran, an Islamic state and China, a communist state had a common foe, the United States of America. According to Dorraj (2016), the growing Sino- Iranian relationship has drawn the ire of the United States because the US – Iranian relations have been on hostile terms ever since the 1979 Iranian revolution. The scholar further observed that shortly following the Iranian revolution was the United States led Isolation and containment policy against Iran in the hopes that the strains imposed on it (i.e economic sanctions) would result in a break up and gradual mellowing of its government.

One of the main pillars of the Chinese – Iranian relationship is oil and gas. Approximately 80% of China total imports from Iran are oil and the rest are mineral and chemical products. The China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) was granted an \$85 million contract to drill 19 wells in the natural gas fields in Southern Iran. Iran and China have gone into several bilateral trade and infrastructural development treaties within the past twenty years. Even the Iranian exploits in military technological advancement is linked to Chinese assistance. China has aided Iran in the development of advanced conventional weapons including surface-to-air missiles, combat aircraft, radar systems and fast-attack missile vessels (George; 2010). In 1980, China refused to support the UN arms embargo against Iran and abstained from voting on US initiated sanctions against Iran (Dorraj and Currier; 2008).

Beyond the Iranian Chinese relations, Iran has deepened relations with Russia, the age long U.S rival. Iran and Russia are strategic allies and from an axis in the Caucasus alongside Armenia (Strategic Studies Institute; 2014). Militarily, Iran is the only country in Western Asia that was invited to join the Collective Security Treaty Organization in response to the American led NATO. Given these Iranian affinity to countries opposed to US hegemony, it becomes clearly understandable why US is opposed to Iranian nuclear development programmes.

#### United States' Opposition to Iran's Nuclear Programme

The US will not be held hostage to nuclear blackmail or allow a regime that chants 'Death to America' to gain nuclear weapons. The administration intends to reinstate severe sanction against the Islamic Republic (The Independent Newspaper, 9th May, 2018).

Iran entered a deal (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) in 2015 with the members of the United Nations Security Council (the US, UK, France, China, Russia) along with Germany, on its nuclear programme which brought to an end, a regime of sanctions imposed on Iran by the big players in the international community. The International Atomic energy Agency (IAEA) monitors Iran's compliance with the terms of the deal and has continued to report that Iran is complying with the terms (IAEA; 2017). The United States of America however pulled out of the deal with the emergence of Trump as the new American President. Efforts of the UK foreign secretary (Boris Johnson) and the French President (Emmanuel Macron) to dissuade President Trump from withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal failed as Trump considers it one of Obama's mistakes as president of United States of America. According to BBC news of 9th May 2018, US President, Donald Trump says he will withdraw the US from an Obama – era nuclear agreement with Iran. Trump described the Iran deal as an embarrassment to him as a US citizen and insisted that his government will re-impose economic sanctions that were waived by US upon signing the deal in 2015. In response, Iran threatened to restart uranium enrichment, key for making both nuclear energy and weapons.

Trump however argues that the Iran deal fails because it does not address Iran's missile development, its regional role and the fact that some of the JCPOA's restrictions on Iran's nuclear activities expire with time (The Guardian, 1st May, 2018). The other five co-signatories which include the remaining four UN Security Council members (i.e UK, France, China, and Russia) along side Germany maintained that of all the options available for ensuring that Iran never gets a nuclear weapon, the pact offers the fewest disadvantages. They argue that even the Israeli accusation of Iran's violation of the deal only reinforced the need to maintain the deal as it allows nuclear inspections in Iran by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The question therefore is, could US be seeing what the other members of the UN Security Council are not seeing? Or is the US opposition to the Iran deal (under President Trump) purely based on US hegemonic drive in the Middle East? Does Iran really pose a threat to global or regional peace?

#### Iran And Peace in The Middle East

The Islamic Republic of Iran, a state actor in the Middle East region, has allies as well as foes in the Middle East. Countries in the Middle East are clearly divided into two blocs who are locked in a regional 'Cold War', reminiscent of the bi-polar Cold War era between the Western bloc led by United States of America and the Eastern bloc led by the defunct Soviet Union (USSR). Accordingly, Leverett and Leverett (2010) observed that on one side of this divide are those states willing to work in various forms of strategic partnership with the United States, with an implied acceptance of American hegemony over the region. This camp according to the scholars includes Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council. On the other side of the divide are those Middle East states and non-state actors that are unwilling to accept American (or Israeli) hegemony in the region. This group is led by the Islamic Republic of Iran, Syria and non-state actors such as Hamas and Hezbollah. The scholars equally noted that Qatar has, in recent times aligned with the latter group.

Obviously, this divide among states in the Middle East informs the US position on all matters with regards to the states in the Middle East and the Iran nuclear deal is not different. Scholars even believe that United States' drive for Middle East hegemony remains a destabilizing factor in the Middle East region. According to Fathollahi-Nejad (2007), the Iran crisis has become a synonym for escalation dangerously tending towards confrontation. Tehran therein is accused by the US led West of developing nuclear weapons. This highlights the tensed history of US – Iranian relations since World War II. The scholar contends that what lies behind the Irano – Western conflict has to be seen in a broader historical and political context. He pointed out that beginning with the 1953 coup d'état against Iran's democratically elected Mossadegh government till recent wars in the Iranian periphery, American interventionist foreign policy in the world economy's most crucial region, the Middle East, proves a great deal of bitter continuity in its push for controlling this part of the world for the sake of global hegemony. For Leverett and Leverett (2010:81), US – Iranian tensions have been a constant source of regional instability and are an increasingly dangerous risk factor for global energy security.

Aleksandra (2017), pointed out that “Iran has long been a significant player in the Middle East and the multiple conflicts in the region have enabled the regime to exert its considerable influence over its neighbours’ affairs. The scholar noted that Iran supports Hezbollah in Lebanon and militias in Iraq and has sent forces to support Assad in Syria. Iran is also suspected of supporting the Houthis in Yemen. All of these are anti US strategic positions in the Middle East. According to Aljazeera news of 19th Feb. 2017,” Saudi Arabia demanded at the Munich Security Conference that Iran be punished for propping up the Syrian government, developing ballistic missiles and funding separatists in Yemen”. Adel al-judeir, th Saudi Foreign Minister described Iran as the main sponsor of global terrorism and a destabilizing force in the Middle East.

The issue is that Iran is working very hard to exert a considerable influence on the countries in the Middle East with its policy of Shia empowerment. According to Karagiannis (2016), “the Islamic Republic has been a self-declared defender of Shia causes. It has constantly supported demands for political reforms in Bahrain, an Island with Shia majority and a Sunni monarch. The Iranian government protests the alleged mistreatment of the Shia minority in the oil-rich Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. The execution of the Saudi Shia cleric, Nimr Al-Nimr triggered a diplomatic row between Saudi Arabia and Iran in January 2016. It is also believed that the Iranian government supported the Shia-oriented Houthi movement in Yemen. The Iranian Revolutionary Guards is also accused of providing crucial help to the Assad regime in its battle against the predominantly Sunni armed opposition (Furkan; 2016).

## Conclusion

Actions and inactions of state actors in the international arena are guided by predetermined goals of the state. Domestic needs as well as the dynamics of the international political activities of players within the international system shape the actions and inactions of state actors within the international system. This explains the Iran’s nuclear deal and the US opposition to the deal even when other key actors in the international arena support the deal.

The Iranian nuclear programme posed a real challenge to peace in the Middle East region in particular and the world in general. This threat was clearly seen and interpreted by the five permanent members of United Nations Security Council (UK, US (under Obama), France, China and Russia) alongside Germany. The Iran’s nuclear deal was aimed at curtailing Iran’s nuclear programme such that it is limited to non-military uses. The deal allows close monitoring of Iran’s nuclear activities. The United Nations Security Council put in place mechanisms to continuously monitor Iran’s compliance to the terms of this nuclear deal. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been monitoring Iran and reporting that Iran has been complying with the terms of the agreement which was intended to keep the Iranian nuclear programme within safe limits.

Iran however was accused of violating the terms of the agreement when the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) conducted a series of ballistic missile tests shortly after the deal. The Iranian Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif argued that Iran’s missile and defense capabilities are not open to negotiation. Iran also explained that the missile being tested were conventional, and not designed for nuclear warheads (Feferman; 2016). Iranian President, Hassan Rouhani said that Tehran would press ahead with strengthening its missile capabilities and military defenses. “We will promote our defensive and military power as much as we deem necessary” (CNN; Sept. 23, 2017). Europe (UK and France) maintain that failure of this deal will embolden Iran to even militarize its nuclear programme which poses a real threat to peace in the Middle East region in particular and by extension, a threat to global peace. The United States has insisted on re-imposing sanctions on Iran, arguing that the deal will only delay Iran’s nuclear weapons development, an action the Iranian government maintains is a violation of the Iran’s nuclear deal. Iran has followed up with a threat to enrich its uranium production extensively which gives it leverage to nuclear weapon amassment even in the short term.

Obviously, state actors in the international arena act in accordance with their national interests. Countries enter into treaties as long as such continue to serve their interests. The United States position on the deal is informed of their desire to curtail the rising relevance of Iran (a Chinese ally and a threat to Israel) in the Middle East politics. Iran agreed to limit its nuclear programme to non-military uses to save its economy from the impacts of the sanctions from the big players in the international community. The deals curtailed Iran’s tendencies to threaten peace in the Middle East region in the interim. This pact is in danger now following U.S withdrawal and this leaves the Middle East region in a more precarious position.



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