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The Iran Nuclear Deal

A Geopolitical Perspective

Estudiante: Juan Carbajo Pérez

Director: Hután Hejazi

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Abstract

The Iran Nuclear Deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, signed in 2015 and subjected to a critical juncture in 2018, is one of the relevant issues concerning global geopolitics in recent years. This undergraduate thesis attempts to assess its importance and implications according to expert's perspectives as well as some of the main actors involved in order to further about the various policies, trends, and shifts which have shaped this landmark agreement in international relations.

Keywords

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Iran Nuclear Deal, nuclear proliferation, economic sanctions, uranium enrichment, International Atomic Energy Organization.

Resumen

El Acuerdo Nuclear de Irán, oficialmente conocido como el Plan de Acción Conjunto y Completo, firmado en 2015 y sometido a una coyuntura crítica en 2018, es una de las cuestiones más relevantes de la geopolítica mundial en los últimos años. Este trabajo de fin de grado intenta determinar su importancia e implicaciones de acuerdo con las perspectivas de los principales actores involucrados y expertos, para así comparar las diferentes políticas, tendencias y cambios que han jalonado un pacto histórico en las relaciones internacionales.

Palabras clave

Plan de Acción Conjunto y Completo, acuerdo nuclear de Irán, proliferación nuclear, sanciones económicas, enriquecimiento de uranio, Organización Internacional de la Energía Atómica.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEOI: Atomic Energy Organization of Iran

DOD: U.S. Department of Defence

EU: European Union

GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council

HEU: Highly enriched uranium

IAEA: International Atomic Energy Agency

IMF: International Monetary Fund

INARA: Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015

ISA: Iran's Sanctions Act

JCPOA: Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

JPA: Joint Plan of Action

LEU: Low-enriched uranium

MAEC: *Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación*; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (Spain)

NPT: Non-Proliferation Treaty

P5+1: UN Security Council's five permanent members (the United States, Russia, China, France, the United Kingdom) plus Germany

SNSC: Iran's Supreme National Security Council

TRR: Tehran Research Reactor

UN: United Nations

UNSC: United Nations Security Council

WMD: Weapons of Mass Destruction

WTO: World Trade Organization

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Methodological and Theoretical Framework	5
1.1. Introduction.....	5
1.2. State of the issue	7
1.3. Purposes and Objectives	14
1.4. Research Questions.....	14
1.5. Time and Geographical Frameworks.....	16
1.6. Theoretical framework.....	16
2. Geopolitical Analysis of the JCPOA through its main experts and actors	17
2.1. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).....	17
2.2. The JCPOA as prism of the nuclear issue: ins and outs of the agreement.....	20
2.3. US Administration	25
2.3.1. <i>Barack Obama</i>	25
2.3.2. <i>John Kerry</i>	28
2.4. Iran’s Administration	29
2.4.1. <i>Hassan Rouhani</i>	29
2.4.2. <i>Ayatollah Khamenei</i>	32
2.4.3. <i>Mohammad Javad Zarif</i>	34
2.5. Donald Trump: the deal-breaker.....	36
3. Conclusions	39
4. Bibliography	41

1. Methodological and Theoretical Framework

1.1. Introduction

The Islamic Republic of Iran has been in the spotlight over the recent years due to its major role in most of the issues that have affected the Middle East. The pinnacle of Iran's implication towards the international community has been the lifting of sanctions derived from the agreements held by P5+1 and the country itself between 2013 and 2015, that culminated in the creation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly referred as the Iran Nuclear Deal. The relevance of this agreement –aimed to reduce and redesign Iran's nuclear program– has stressed the need to make the Islamic Republic an integrated actor within the international political framework.

Indeed, Iran has acted historically as a catalyst in the Middle East; its millennia-long history –the Persian Empire–, its cultural and geographical uniqueness¹ –sitting at the crossroads of the Islamic world, linking the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central and South Asia–, added to its religious idiosyncrasy, make Iran an incomparable and coveted country in the region. Iran hosts the largest Shia community in the world, the Twelver Shia, hence Islam is enshrined in the Constitution as the official religion of the country. Likewise, its tremendous potential as a nation, both economic and intellectual, places Iran as the perfect geopolitical and religious antagonist for Saudi Arabia, which is the other great power in the Middle East, hosting a large majority of Sunni Muslims. For that matter, Iran's main source of revenue comes from oil exports, which clearly ties up with the economic nature of Saudi Arabia, which is the largest oil producer and exporter in the world, accounting for 20% of the world crude oil reserves (MAEC, 2017).

Secondly, it could be argued that Iran's history has been under a constant drive between religion and secularization, tradition and modernity. The Islamic Republic has maintained troubled relations with Western nations, especially with the United States, with whom it cut off diplomatic relations as a result of the 1979-81 US Embassy hostage crisis (BBC, 2014). Before the 1979 Revolution, Iran lived its last monarchic stage under Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, who was previously brought to power in a coup d'état

¹ Iran is located in that part of the continent which Nicholas Spykman, one of the founding fathers of geopolitics, depicted as "Rimland" whose control, according to him, would have assured Eurasia's control (1939, pp. 405-406)

orchestrated by the US and British Administrations. The political transformation arising from the Revolution spearheaded by the charismatic Ayatollah Khomeini, who wrote up the *Velayat-e faqih* in 1970, also known as the Islamic Government², set the –theocratic– foundations of the modern Islamic Republic of Iran. As case in point, the successor of Khomeini, Ali Khamenei, is still the current Supreme Leader of Iran since its designation in 1989, and by having strengthened strong ties with the Revolutionary Guard and the clerical leadership, has become the most powerful person in the country in the eyes of many³, regardless of the country’s presidency. More likely, especially regarding matters such as Iran’s foreign policy, the situation is expected to remain much the same as long as the structure of power that supports the Supreme Leader remains unchanged (Ganji, 2008).

The 21st century has witnessed a series of events, such as the direction of Bush administration sweeping away Saddam Hussein and the Taliban government from the political chessboard⁴, that have led to the surge of Iran as a regional power. In fact, the main driving force of Iranian foreign policy throughout this period has been to regain the pre-eminence in the region that the Shah once held and that both monarchical and Islamic Iran have believed they should enjoy mindful of Iran’s geopolitical weight (Parsi, 2006, pp. 11-17). The attempt exerted by the reformist President Mohammad Khatami (1997 – 2005) to rebuild relations with the US (BBC, 2014) was ravished when the latter included Iran in the so-called “Axis of evil”. Consequently, the controversial mandate of the hard-line president Ahmadineyad (2005 – 2013) worsened Iran’s relation with the Western world, especially in the wake of its questionable 2009 re-election. The repression carried out by Ahmadineyad and the aggravation of the situation regarding the nuclear issue, arose the political movement named as the Iranian Green Movement or Persian Awakening (Human Rights Watch, 2008), in which massive protests were organized chanting “where is my vote?”, reflecting the frustration of the rigged elections and the

² To see more: Khomeini, I. & Algar, H. (1981) *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*. pp. 60-125. Mizan Press, Berkeley.

³ “In Iran, the pattern of nuclear decision-making remains unclear, even if the office of the supreme leader remains the most important locus of nuclear thinking”. Retrieved from: Nader Entesar (2009) *Iran’s Nuclear Decision-Making Calculus*, Middle East Policy (Vol.16, N°2, pp.31-34).

⁴ As Trita Parsi notes, “contrary to common perception, the US did not assemble a coalition against the Taliban; Washington joined an existing coalition led by Iran” (2006, p. 12).

fraudulent political system. The arrival to the presidency of Hassan Rouhani in August 2013, signified the beginning of a new stage for Iran. The political agenda of the new President has focused on the negotiation of an agreement with the international community on the Iranian nuclear program to cease international sanctions and allow the reintegration of Iran into the international community (MAEC, 2018).

1.2. State of the issue

Iran's nuclear background

The roots of the Iranian nuclear program date back to the 1950s, when Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi became motivated to develop nuclear technology in Iran for a number of reasons. One of these was generally to **develop Iranian independence and strength**. As with many countries in the Middle East, Iran viewed itself as having been historically exploited by stronger Western powers, particularly with regard to its natural oil wealth (Joyner, 2016, p.29). In line with the Shah's perspective, the opportunity to develop nuclear technology signified a rupture from the long-standing history of exploitation that marked Iran's history, and a bargain to modernise the country within a Western-oriented world. The year 1957 was crucial for Iran's nuclear history since it signed a bilateral agreement with the US called "Cooperation Concerning Civil Uses of Atoms", in which the latter provided the Persian country with technical assistance, the lease of US origin uranium, and the delivery of a light-water search reactor, Joyner notes (2016). The synergy between the two countries is such that in 1967 Iran gets its first nuclear reactor, the Tehran Research Reactor (TRR), thanks to the American aid, which supplied 93% enriched uranium. In February 1970, The Iranian parliament ratifies the nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and in 1974, the Shah establishes the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) (Davenport, 2018). The adherence of Iran's to the NPT signified that the country could pursue the production of nuclear material but only for peaceful purposes.

In 1979, the Iranian Revolution and the subsequent hostage crisis, which lasted until 1981, resulted in the breakdown of the relations between Iran and the US, and hence with a substantial part of the West world. As Davenport indicates (2018), in the 1980s the

U.S. Department of State added Iran to its list of state sponsors of terrorism, effectively sweeping sanctions on Tehran. In this way, Iran, which until then had counted on the collusion and aid of the US to develop its nuclear program⁵, becomes a state demonized by American policy and subjected to economic sanctions under the pretext of financing terrorism. The Revolution also implied a shift on the dynamics in the Middle East and forced the US to seek another ally in the region, which was found in Saddam Hussein in Iraq (Joyner, 2016). The US gave a tacit green light to Saddam to invade Iran, and when the Iran-Iraq War began in 1980, Iran faced not only a military threat but also decreasing oil revenues and increased domestic energy demand, as Joyner indicates (2016). As the war progressed, the US connivance to the Iraq attacks became more evident and pronounced⁶, what finally settled a markedly anti-American character to Iranian policy and *ethos* in the years to come. Another remarkable point about the Iran-Iraq War is that Iran's supreme authorities proclaimed that nuclear and other WMD were forbidden by Islam⁷, and despite there was an estimated 100,000 deaths from Iraqi nerve gas attacks, Tehran decline to develop its own chemical weapons capability during the conflict (Chas, 2014).

Sanctions imposed by the US became more tangible as the Iran-Iraq Arms Non-proliferation Act of 1992 is passed by the Congress, prohibiting the transfer of controlled good or technology that might contribute “knowingly and materially” to Iran's proliferation of advanced conventional weapons; as well as the 1996 Iran-Libya Sanctions Act –also known as Iran Sanctions Act–, which penalized foreign and US investment exceeding \$20 million in Iran's energy sector in one year (Davenport, 2018). These events obliged Iran to perform a geostrategic shift in its policy, turning to collaborate with China and Russia in terms of nuclear cooperation, such as the agreement with the latter for the conclusion of the Bushehr light-water reactors, which were significantly damaged during the Iran-Iraq War (Sahimi, 2013). Joyner explains that, during the decade of the 90s, as

⁵ David Patrikarakos, author of *Nuclear Iran: The Birth of An Atomic State* (2012, p.16), synthesized the US major role over the Iranian nuclear program as follows: “Nuclear power was born in Iran; the USA was its midwife”.

⁶ To see more: Shane Harris & Matthew M. Aid, *Exclusive: CIA Files Prove America Helped Saddam as He Gassed Iran* (2013), Foreign Policy.

⁷ Iranian authorities asserted that Iran was morally barred from building the bomb. Retrieved from: Chas W. & Freeman, Jr. (2014) *The Geopolitics of the Iran Nuclear Negotiations*. Norwegian Institute of International Affairs.

Iran faced opposition from many states –mainly the US pressure– to its efforts to develop its nuclear energy program further, it turned to more covert means of development⁸ (2016). In the aftermath of 9/11 and, as previously mentioned in the introduction, the US joined an Iranian coalition to confront the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which concluded on the signing of the momentous Bonn Agreement. For the Iranians, this was a moment of triumph. Not only had a major enemy –the Taliban– been defeated, Iran had also undeniably demonstrated that it could help stabilize the region and that America could benefit from a better relationship with Tehran (Parsi , 2006). Despite the positive prospects emanated from the cooperation of both countries, the subsequent inclusion of Iran into the ‘Axis of evil’ alongside North Korea and Iraq by the Bush administration, labelling it as a *rogue state*, renewed the tension of the relations between the two parties, and ultimately, solidified the message that “You can’t trust America” amongst Iranian officials and people.

As of 2002, it is generally accepted as the critical moment for international anxiety and nuclear fears; indeed, the term “**Iran nuclear deal**”, refers to the process of negotiations spanning from this year until 2015 (Rocca, 2017). It was discovered that Iran was secretly constructing two nuclear facilities at Natanz and Arak (Joyner, 2016). The disclosure of such facilities was carried out in a press conference by the National Council of Resistance on Iran, opposition group and the political wing of the terrorist organization Mujahideen-e Khalq (MeK), notes Davenport (2018). Natanz is designed to hold some 25,000 centrifuges, some of which are of the latest design, and, at the time of the start of the negotiations, the unit had produced about 11,000 kilograms of hex enriched up to 5 percent (Bernstein, 2015, p.189), whereas Arak is a type of reactor that produces spent fuel containing plutonium, better-suited for the production of nuclear weapons (Katzman & Kerr, 2017). Despite the doubts emanated from the IAEA, Aghazadeh, head of the AEOI, claimed that the centrifuge program at Natanz was entirely indigenous and that no nuclear material had been used in this site or at any other Iranian sites (Joyner, 2016, p.48). The US accusations towards Iran due to the nuclear proliferation for potential aggressive purposes did not hesitate, and the following years are marked by a series of

⁸ This perspective is also pointed out by Mohammad Zarif, who asserted that “Iran was left with no option but to be discreet in its peaceful activities”. Retrieved from: Javad Zarif, M. (2007) *Tackling the Iran - U.S. Crisis: The Need for a Paradigm Shift*, 60, Journal of International Affairs.

multilateral negotiations aiming to shut down the Iranian clandestine nuclear facilities, placing the UN as the watchdog.

In September 2003, the IAEA Board of Governors adopts a resolution calling for Iran to suspend all enrichment and reprocessing activities (Davenport, 2018) and, the next month, Iran concludes an agreement with the EU-3 (France, Germany and the UK) in order to temporarily suspend aspects of its nuclear program, including enrichment of uranium, and signed an Additional Protocol to its IAEA safeguards agreement, which had been in force since 1974 (Katzman & Kerr, 2017). Iran reasserts its right to develop nuclear technology, justified by the pretension of controlling the whole fuel cycle, and hence aiming to break its energetic dependence on Russia and Western countries. These provisions were furthered by the signature between EU-3 and Iran of the Paris Agreement in June 2014, reaffirming the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program and certain guarantees and commitments regarding nuclear, technological and security issues (Sahimi, 2013). However, the EU-3 negotiations would ultimately fail because Iran and the EU-3 were unable to come to an agreement on long-term arrangements. (Joyner, 2016, pp. 56-57). The discrepancies focused on Iran's pretensions to resume some of its uranium enrichment activities under close monitoring; this point was formalized in a proposal which was responded vaguely by European authorities, who did not guarantee that Iran would not be attacked as well as demanded the closure of its entire nuclear facilities (ElBaradei, 2011, p.135). This latter EU-3 response was rejected in turn by Iranian officials.

The same year, Iran offered the US the so-called "Great Bargain" in order to put an end to the rest of the diplomatic and economic sanctions that were isolating the country and putting under stress its economy (Rocca, 2017). It was a bargain in which Tehran put all the *hot topics* on the table: Hezbollah, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including Hamas and the Islamic Jihad; and, ultimately, Iran's nuclear program (Parsi, 2006). According to Parsi, American officials received the file with astonishment, especially the section in which Tehran shared its concerns derived from the possession of WMD and the sponsor of terrorism⁹, thus a negotiation was sought by the Persian country (2006). According to

⁹ The then former Senior Director for Middle East Affairs at the Security Council Flynn Leverett, stated that the proposal was surprising since "the Iranians acknowledge that weapons of mass destruction and

the proposal, Iran was willing to stop providing aid to Hamas, support the disbarment of Hezbollah and to submit its nuclear program to intrusive international inspections and, most surprisingly, it accepted the Beirut Declaration of the Arab League, recognizing a two-state solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as Parsi notes (2016). In return, Iran asked the US for “a dialogue with mutual respect” with the “recognition of Iran’s legitimate security interests in the region with according defence capacity” and “acceptance of Iranian access to WTO full membership negotiations”, Rocca indicates. However, the rejection by hardliners in Washington provoked, according to Parsi, the weakness of the moderate approach in Tehran towards nuclear policy (2006). Washington’s reaction could be explained by at least, three factors: (1) at that time the American Administration was submerged into the hawk narrative as Vice President Dick Cheney assumed the bargain as a sign of weakness; (2) Iran’s vulnerability was evident because Tehran had not begun enriching uranium nor was it yet flush with oil revenues from soaring energy demand, Parsi states, (3) conciliatory policies exerted by the Iranian president, the reformist Khatami, were seen futile since Washington perceived that the one who actually pulled the strings was Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Eventually, and because there was never an official response to the bargain, this was understood as an offence by Iranian diplomats.

In 2005, Iran tried again to end the sanctions regime through negotiations with representatives of European countries which, at that time, had joined the US (Rocca, 2017) but the offer was rejected once again. The US was still the driving force in the negotiations, and the European chief negotiators deemed its role as the main obstacle for reaching an agreement¹⁰. As a matter of fact, the 2005 proposal was quite similar to the one reached later on in 2015. Nonetheless, other authors support the idea that the actual nuclear crisis in Iran arising global shock was initiated on January 2006, when it broke the seals that IAEA inspectors had placed on two nuclear plants –the Uranium Conversion

support for terror were serious causes of concern for us [the US Administration] and they were willing to negotiate”; Retrieved from Parsi (2006, p.13).

¹⁰ Michael Axworthy (2013, p.384) points out in *Revolutionary Iran: A History of the Islamic Republic*, that the US was the main culprit for provoking the direct refusal of the proposal by Germany, France and the UK. By the same token, former British Minister of Foreign Affairs Jack Straw, who was involved in the negotiations, stated that “had it not been for major problems within the US Administration under President Bush, we could have actually settled the whole Iran nuclear dossier back in 2005”; Retrieved from report by Morrison, D. & Osborne, P. (2013), OpenDemocracy.

Facility in Isfahan and Natanz– and restarted its nuclear program (Hitchcock, 2006). Indeed, Iranian scientists successfully restarted four centrifuges necessary to produce weapons-grade uranium, and Iranian officials blocked access to international inspectors and disabled security and surveillance cameras put in place by the IAEA thirteen years ago when Iran first admitted to violating the NPT, Hitchcock remarks (2006, p.28). As Davenport clarifies too, on April 2006, Iran announces that it has enriched uranium for the first time. At that moment, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was testing the P-2 centrifuge, aiming to create fuel for power plants or atomic weapons. Hitchcock indicates that Tehran appeared to be developing missiles capable of developing atomic warheads, accompanied by the Shabab-3 missiles (2006). On top of that, the same author emphasizes the anti-Semitic profile of Ahmadinejad¹¹, aspect that escalated the suspicions and accusations from Israel, which is another of the countries wielding weapons of mass destruction that could potentially attack Iran. As a result of this opposition to previous agreements, the UNSC sanctions are imposed on Iran in light of negative prospects for dismantling its nuclear facilities and the “many failures and breaches of its obligations to comply with its NPT Safeguards Agreement, as detailed in resolution GOV/2003/75” (Joyner, 2016). This latter author adds that this was the Board of Governors’ first formal finding that Iran was in noncompliance with its obligations with its obligations under its safeguards agreement with the IAEA (2016).

The subsequent years were marked by failed negotiation processes and weak diplomatic options driven out by European nations. From 2003 to 2013, the U.N. Security Council issued six resolutions applying an increasingly severe multilateral economic and financial sanctions regime against Iran. Unilateral U.S. and E.U. sanctions have additionally targeted Iran’s energy and banking sectors in an attempt to isolate Iran financially and pressure it to cease its uranium enrichment program (Joyner, 2016). As a consequence, since 2008, American institutions were not allowed to conduct transactions in behalf of Iranian companies, and Iran could not carry out transactions in the U.S. currency, what, according to Joyner, is particularly detrimental since is the common currency of international oil markets.

¹¹ As BBC notes (2014), the presidency of Ahmadinejad was certainly controversial, specially concerning Israel. The former Iranian president was characterized by a populist rhetoric aligned with the questioning of the Holocaust. Indeed, his presidency worsened relations with the West.

The IAEA investigation of Iranian nuclear facilities was still on track. On top of that, in 2009, the former vice president for atomic energy, Gholam Reza Aghazadeh, made reference to the Natanz and the activity carried out there, but he omitted to say that the Iranians did everything they could to keep this facility secret. Into the bargain, that same year, main Western leaders announce the discovery of the second uranium-enrichment facility in Iran, Fordow, located near the holy city of Qom, notes Davenport (2018). In 2010, the UNSC adopted –amongst other ones– Resolution 1929. This resolution, besides expanding the existent sanctions, required Iran to cooperate fully with an ongoing IAEA of its nuclear activities, suspend its uranium enrichment program, suspend its construction of a water heavy reactor and related projects, and ratify the Additional Protocol, which required Iran to refrain from “any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons” and to comply with a modified provision (code 3.1) of Iran’s subsidiary arrangement to its IAEA safeguards agreement, previously contained in the NPT (Katzman & Kerr, 2017). The tug-of-war is tightened as the US Congress adopts the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act, oriented towards Iran’s investment on the energy sector (Davenport, 2018). New attempts of negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran took place in Geneva in 2011; Iran demands transparency procedures in the IAEA inspections and, most importantly, the recognition to enrich uranium for technology and scientific purposes.

In 2013, there was a new dissident claim of a concealed site; this emphasizes the point that large centrifuge plants, unlike reactors, can be concealed (Bernstein, 2014, pp. 186-187). In this line, the U.S. Department of Defence (DOD) stated that with the Shabab-3 or Meteor-3 medium range liquid-fuelled ballistic missile (estimated range of 800-1200 miles and 760-110 kg payload) Iran is able to target Israel, Turkey and Saudi Arabia (Davis & Pfaltzgraff Jr., 2013, pp.185-186). Thus, these assertions served as the perfect discredit for Iran and the opportune justification for the sanctions imposed by the US and the UN. At that point, Israel asseverated that Iran could reach the point of no-return, where it has enough fissile material to build a bomb as early as spring 2013 (Iran Intelligence, 2018). On June 2013, Hassan Rouhani, a former nuclear negotiator, is elected as the new president of Iran and, after few months of long and tense negotiations, an interim nuclear accord is agreed under the name of the Joint Plan of Action (JPA); this framework laid the foundations for the future JCPOA.

1.3. Purposes and Objectives

The Iran Nuclear Deal holds the keys to understand the political and economic evolution of the Persian country, as well as its complex relationship with its neighbours in the Middle East and the Western countries. It is a historic and *sui generis* agreement given that it lays the foundations for the denuclearization of the country and the lifting of foreign sanctions, leading to the economic openness of Iran and, therefore, a change in the dynamics in the most unstable region of the planet. In this way, the agreement responds to the urgent need to pacify and stabilize an extremely complex country, with many edges and where history and religion are relevant components of the equation. Despite the fact that there is plenty literature on the subject, this undergraduate thesis will humbly try to clarify the different trends and approaches carried out by the main actors involved in the creation of the agreement until the present 2018 scenario, as well as shedding light into the technical and geopolitical analysis of the deal by experts on the issue. By contrasting the different perspectives over the deal and going through the individual perspective of these actors, the ultimate aim of my project would be to find the main virtues and flaws of the agreement throughout the recent years, and if it has proven effective to achieve the much needed normalization of the Iranian relations with the world.

1.4. Research Questions

The main underlying question of this paper is how and why the nuclear deal had been subjected to such a myriad of interpretations and diplomatic efforts as well as how the shift of direction of the American administration has affected the nuclear agreement, and thus how it has reverberated over the Iranian counterpart. Likewise, and despite the fact that just a few years have passed since the signature of the agreement, it would be also relevant to raise the question of what, if any, have been its results and consequences, and ultimately, if it has achieved the objectives set out in the JCPOA. Deepening into the technical and geopolitical analysis of the deal added to the individual analysis of the actors, chronologically and politically unravelling their actions and approaches, more specific questions will arise that will be answered to the best of my ability. Similarly, Iran's intricate interrelation with its Middle Eastern neighbours and its high degree of involvement in various –proxy– conflicts will probably raise a series of secondary questions concerning its well-known enmity and rivalry with Saudi Arabia and Israel,

both US traditional partners, as well as its involvement in Yemen backing the Houthi minorities, or in Syria, where they have been ambiguous at the time to support Al-Assad as the head of the government.

These questions have been formulated, in the first instance, as follows:

- How has the US Administration changed its official approach towards the deal since 2015? Why? How has the Iranian Administration reacted to these political shifts?
- What have been the official positions of Iranian actors towards the deal? Has Iran complied with the terms of the agreement? What are the implications of Iran possible withdrawal? What are the prospects or implications of the deal in the near future for Iran?
- Has the agreement achieved its stated objectives: the denuclearization of Iran and the thawing of its economic relations with the West and the rest of the countries? Main strengths and weaknesses.
- Does the JCPOA establish a fair play for all the parties involved? Does the nuclear deal imply a win-win situation? In this sense, what are the reasons given by its supporters and detractors? Who are the latter and why do they defend their respective points of view?
- What have been the position of people of both countries? Have they changed over these years?
- What would be the implications if Trump's administration abrogates the JCPOA?
- According to the latest events, what are the drivers of Trump's dropout of JCPOA? How is this justified from his Administration? How has Iran reacted? Are the European signatories going to stand firm to the deal? What are the risks of the latter?

Sub-questions:

- Are there any overall –economic, social, etc.– improvements or deteriorations caused by the JCPOA in Iran?
- Is the JCPOA reshaping Iran's geopolitical role in the Middle East? What have been the positions of Saudi Arabia and Israel towards the deal? Why?
- Are there any relations between the deal and the recent demonstrations (end-2017 December until 2018 January)? JCPOA's Implications regarding the complex nature of the country.

1.5. Time and Geographical Frameworks

The time framework for this paper will be restricted to approximately **5 years, spanning from 2013-2015 until May 2018**. Although the ‘State of the Question’ section will refer to previous nuclear background of Iran, the analytical part of the essay will be devoted to examine the ins and outs of the agreement based on expert’s perspectives as well as the individual perspectives of the US and Iran Administrations during the lifetime of the Nuclear Deal, eventually formalized in 2015 and subjected to a critical juncture in May 2018 when Trump’s Administration announced the dropout of the agreement.

1.6. Theoretical framework

This dissertation will be based, in first place, upon **academic publications** (academic essays, journals, and dissertations), and secondly, upon **institutional publications** (official reports and assessments) in order to explain the Iran Nuclear Deal (2015), its nuclear background and its relation regarding Iran’s geopolitical role. Secondly, due to the extreme newness of the events that have marked out the agreement, the construction of the individual perspectives will be based on the aforementioned academic sources as well as on the declarations and official statements of the main actors who have been involved in the deal from both countries (Iran and the United States). That is to say: Barack Obama, John Kerry, Hassan Rouhani, Ali Khamenei and Javad Zarif, and lastly, Donald Trump.

2. Geopolitical Analysis of the JCPOA through its main experts and actors

2.1. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA): On the path towards stabilization

The JPA conclusion was accompanied with a joint statement signed by Iran and the IAEA including a “Framework for Cooperation to strengthen their cooperation and dialogue aimed at ensuring exclusively peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear program through the resolution of all outstanding issues that have not already been resolved by the IAEA” (IAEA, 2013). Therefore, the JPA was considered to be the antechamber of a more formal agreement that finally found expression on **April 2015** under the whole designation of **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)**. In short, the point of departure, which was the JPA, gave birth to a more complex and detailed framework that was agreed in Lausanne, Switzerland, between the P5+1 with the EU High Representative of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Iran, and that finalized on July 14, 2015. With the JPA remaining in effect until the JCPOA entered into implementation, the IAEA certified that Iran had completed its required JCPOA nuclear related-tasks for Implementation Day (Katzman & Kerr, 2017), which finally took place and effect in 2016.

The agreement is an historical milestone on Iran’s nuclear history since it offers a truce to the tussle that had been flagging the relations between Tehran and the Western block. The JCPOA established the cease of the sanctions by the US and UNSC ensuring that Iran’s nuclear program will be exclusively peaceful, and thus contributing to regional and international peace and security (JCPOA, 2015). In addition, the agreement envisions that Iran will never seek, develop or acquire any nuclear weapons (2015). It mainly focuses on Iran’s enrichment program to develop nuclear weapons, and hence its declared nuclear facilities and its heavy water reactor, which would be subjected to a significant external scrutiny by the IAEA.

In a nutshell, Iran had at the moment 3 gas centrifuge enrichment facilities that can produce LEU, which can be used for fuel in nuclear power reactors, and weapons-grade HEU, as indicated by Katzman and Kerr (2017). These are the following:

- **Natanz Commercial-Scale Fuel Enrichment Plant.** This plant comprises first-generation centrifuges, aimed to produce LEU up to 5% uranium-235.
- **Natanz Pilot Fuel Enrichment Plant.** This plant was particularly concerning since Iran was producing LEU enriched to the 20% level, which required approximately 90% of the effort necessary to produce weapons-grade HEU.
- **Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant.** Until the JPA was effective, this plant was producing LEU up to 20% uranium-235, a figure that goes beyond the threshold of technology purposes. In this sense, the JCPOA provides the conversion of the Fordow plant into a nuclear, physics and technology centre (A.6).
- **Arak Heavy Water Reactor.** Despite the construction of this reactor was not concluded, with the synergy of a separate production plant, it could generate sufficient plutonium to create between one and two nuclear weapons per year¹², Katzman indicates. In this sense, the JCPOA would oblige Iran to redesign and modernise the reactor for peaceful nuclear research, medical and industrial purposes (B.8).

Due to the existence of these facilities, the JPOA halted the main aspects of their nuclear development program, determining the following (JCPOA, 2015):

- ❖ Limitations on Iran's specific research and development activities for the first 8 years (A.1) as well as the progressive reduction of its IR-1 centrifuges, subjected to the IAEA continuous monitoring (A.2). Iran will continue to conduct enrichment R&D as long as it does not accumulate enriched uranium (A.3)
- ❖ The JCPOA is a long-term plan spanning for 15 years, in which Tehran would not surpass the level of uranium of 3.67% and its nuclear stockpile under 300 kg up to the same percentage (A.7). In this respect, Iran would neither accumulate heavy water for 15 years (B.10).
- ❖ In terms of transparency, the Iranian President and Majlis (Parliament) would adhere to the previous signed Additional Protocol and fully implement the modified Code 3.1 of the Subsidiary Arrangement to its Safeguards Agreement (C.13).

¹² In the line with Katzman and Kerr (2017), Iran has repeatedly asserted its peaceful purposes contemplated in the NPT. In relation with the Arak Heavy Water Reactor, Iranian authorities confirmed that its aim was oriented towards the production of radioisotopes for medical use.

- ❖ As previously mentioned, Iran will allow the IAEA to monitor the implementation of the voluntary measures for their respective durations, as well as the implementation of the transparency measures (C.17).

In return of these nuclear restrictions, the UNSC would terminate all sanctions comprised in the resolutions 1696 (2006), 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008), 1835 (2008), 1929 (2010) and 2224 (2015), as the agreement states on the ‘Sanctions’ section. The EU and the US would follow the trail, lifting the previously imposed sanctions, and hence opening the Iranian gates to freely conduct investments, exports, access to foreign currency, etc. Furthermore, the envisioned 15-year verification system of the JCPOA will be relied upon a Joint Commission composed by the EU+3 and Iran, plus the IAEA (JCPOA, ix-x, 2015). As Iran had pledged to allow a “long-term IAEA presence in Iran”, the agency increased, on one side, the number of inspectors, who would access to declared and undeclared facilities as well, and, on the other, the verification technologies, such as the Online Enrichment Monitor (Katzman & Kerr, 2017). Finally, on January 2016, Yukiya Amano, the Director General of the IAEA, declared that Iran was complying with all its obligations under the JCPOA and established the Implementation Day, in which the sanctions relief took effect in Iran whereas allowing IAEA inspectors to continue monitoring nuclear facilities (NTI, 2018).

2.2. The JCPOA as prism of the nuclear issue: ins and outs of the agreement

Overall¹³, those authors who advocate for the nuclear deal could be included, to a major extent, under the international relations paradigm of economic liberalism. These theories stress the economic and political benefits of international trade and cooperation, and therefore enhancing the role of institutions to prevent armed conflicts (Nye, 2011). On the contrary, the realist assumptions emphasize the anarchic nature of the international arena, in which each state seeks to preserve their own interests in a zero-sum game. In this sense, Kenneth N. Waltz, who belongs to this school of thought, has defended the idea of the use of nuclear weapons as a deterrent to preserve peace amongst states¹⁴. In addition to the fact that the Iranian nuclear crisis has been over-dimensioned portraying Tehran as an irrational actor, Iran should seek to acquire nuclear weapons since it would bring stabilization to the Middle East –specially regarding to the nuclear monopoly of Israel– and taking into account that there has never been a full-scale war between two nuclear-armed countries (Waltz, 2012). In respect to the agreement, the step made by the Western block to waive sanctions would be positive since the latter primarily harm ordinary Iranians, Waltz states. Other experts maintain that the confrontation between the US and Iran seems inevitable as long as both parties instrumentalised the “Iran nuclear impasse”. Thus, stalemates appear indeed to have been a precise goal for allowing the US and the international community to use coercion against Iran (Rocca, 2017). In this line, political narratives such as the labelling of Iran as a “rogue country” as well as being included into the “Axis of evil” have been partially responsible to force Tehran to seek negotiations once they were internationally isolated. This perspective is also shared by Parsi, who argued that the conflict between the two countries had been a strategic and not an ideological one, as it has indeed been opportunistically framed by both of the players (2017).

¹³ The following author’s perspectives about the JCPOA have been introduced in the interest of a technical and political analysis of the agreement itself and its implications. Therefore, the analysis of the most recent events, including the US dropout, is discussed at a later stage in consideration of the evolving nature of the issue. In this sense, some author’s perspectives might seem outdated in the light of the recent events.

¹⁴ According to Waltz (2011), states become to feel more vulnerable and aware that their nuclear weapons make them a potential target in the eyes of major powers. Such was the case of Maoist China, which became less conflictive after acquiring nuke technology. Following the trail, Iran and Pakistan became more cautious as well.

Remarkably, JCPOA was deliberately built as a legally **nonbinding agreement** among its parties, hence it cannot be considered a “substitute” of the NPT, which contains binding provisions and a formal withdrawal clause. Nonetheless, it does comprise a comprehensive set of political commitments among its parties, additionally inclusive of commitments of action by the European Union and the UNSC, which are designed to resolve the legal and diplomatic crisis concerning Iran’s nuclear program (Joyner, 2016, p.62). It is precisely a point that has caused a lot of controversy since the contracting parties can drop out from the agreement despite the provisions foreseeing that future scenario. Joyner points out that the reasons of this choice might be found on the nature of subjects treated on the agreement, which are extremely politically sensitive, as well as on the ambitious scope and level of detail framed over the deal (2016, pp. 253-254). Nevertheless, the EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, stressed that if any country broke the deal, it would be in violation of the UNSC Resolution 2231, which enshrines the JCPOA in international law and all member states are considered to be bound by its implementation (Westra, 2017).

Also, the JCPOA compliance verification and monitoring is pointed out as incomplete by some experts such as David Albright and Andrea Stricker (Institute for Science and International Security, 2017), who remark that IAEA reports do not explicitly tell that Iran is fully compliant with the JCPOA. In addition, IAEA reports might not indicate if Iran’s past nuclear-related activities are being resumed as long as Tehran complies with the roadmap fixed for the deal (Einhorn, 2015) Rather, the issue of full compliance is rightly the responsibility of the Joint Commission and governments, hence a certain degree of divergence between IAEA and Western block is appreciated (Albright & Stricker, 2017). These authors also remark the exceeded quantity of heavy water inside Iran, which accounts for 135.2 metric tonnes, whilst a reasonable interpretation of the JCPOA is that Iran is limited to a total stock of 130 metric tonnes of heavy water whether the heavy water is in Iran or under its control outside Iran (2017). According to their view, Iran would have exploited a loophole in the agreement to surpass the quantity allowed at least on two occasion. Other inconsistencies found are that the IAEA’s report concedes little attention to the development and research activities of the centrifuges. Likewise, another key issue will be the ratification of the Additional Protocol by Iran, which must be ratified after 8 years of the agreement or if the IAEA reaches to the Broader Conclusions first, which would guarantee that Iran has not conducted any illegal

activities. This seems like a difficult step, given that the Protocol is not subjected to a time limit like the JCPOA, Zunzunegui stresses (2015).

Trita Parsi, founder and president of the National Iranian Council, depicts a complex situation in which despite the scenario of zero enrichment is no longer viable, the US should not retreat, and the deal does not properly cover this issue. In addition, Parsi states that there are some signs revealing that the US is not wilful to pursue the agreement due to a loss of faith ascribed to the Iranian part (2018). Lastly, Parsi remarks that human-right violations in Iran over the last couple of years have become absolutely horrific and this situation continues, to a certain extent, precisely because of the high tensions between US and Iran (2018). According to him, the JCPOA had not fully reached its full potential and there is still a long way to go. Other experts assert a more realist perspective; indeed, the agreement establishes very strict and very detailed limits to the nuclear program. However, it allows Iran to maintain its capabilities intact, while reducing its nuclear potential (Zunzunegui, 2015). In this line, the problems of the agreement would be encountered in the alleged secret activities of Iran rather than in the possible diversion of fissile material from its declared program oriented towards illicit purposes. In addition, the General Safeguards agreement would not contain the sufficient legal instruments to enforce its provisions (2015). As a matter of fact, the possibility of a covert program is what raises most concern amongst analysts; the unmanageability of a country such as vast as Iran alongside the deliberate evasion of monitoring and transparency measures, would make the enforcement of the JCPOA a difficult task and would present a great security challenge (Nephew, 2015). However, in the light of the suspicions about the belligerent secretly pretensions of Iran, Parsi made clear that if “[Iranians] truly wanted to go for the bomb, the best thing they could do is to suspend the open program, reduce the tensions, create a better climate in which they then more easily would be able to pursue a covert program and go for *weaponization*” (Sick, Parsi, Takeyh, & Slavin, 2018).

The JCPOA approach is unique and its provisions should not be considered as a precedent for any other state, nor for the principles of international law, nor the rights collected within the NPT. The JCPOA means, for all practical purposes, to accept what is already a fact in exchange for transforming Iran's enrichment program into a true commercial enrichment program that serves Iran's civilian needs. Many opponents of the

agreement, in line with Washington hawks, claim that the agreement would provide Iran with sufficient capacity to acquire nuclear weapons. At this point, Zunzunegui points out that although it may seem paradoxical to help Iran improve its centrifuges, the JCPOA seeks to create the conditions for Iran's enrichment program to match its fuel needs. In this way, the uranium enriched by Iran would be used as a fuel, being unused to create an atomic bomb and hence preventing its accumulation (2015). Anyhow, despite the JCPOA disposes a medium-long term scenario for the commercial aperture of Iran, also opens the door to develop a commercial-scale uranium enrichment program that could rise sharply in the future after the first 10 years of the deal (Iran Watch, 2016). In this line, other authors remain sceptical and believe the agreement will not survive under the administration of Donald Trump, despite the agreement was aimed to assure regional stability in the Middle East (Laipson, 2016).

Roberto Toscano, former ambassador in Iran, stressed that the JCPOA puts on the table the aspiration to be recognized that unites all Iranians, hence the happiness and hope emanated from the Iranian population, who went out to the streets to give thanks to Javad Zarif¹⁵ (2015). On the contrary, the deal faced a significant domestic opposition in the US, and that might be a powerful reason to make European actors take the initiative to fully implement it and create an environment, both regionally in the Middle East and politically, that supports such implementation (Adebahr, 2015). Toscano argues that Iran comprises an extremely hybrid system, in which the actual power is emanated from an oligarchy rather than a personal dictatorship. The agreement could have a beneficial effect in transforming that hybrid nature that characterizes the Iranian political system, diminishing the state role and interference of the Guardian Council (Toscano, 2015). Therefore, the deal is deemed as a victory for diplomacy, a transatlantic success. This perspective is shared by other nuclear experts such as Jeffrey Lewis, Ernest Moniz, Lawrence Korb, Katherine Blakeley or Kingston Reif¹⁶ who argued that although the deal was not perfect, both sides had to make adjustments to their opening positions (...), and

¹⁵ Gordon & Sanger (2015) also remarked that when the JCPOA finally came out, many Iranians expressed hope for buoyant economic times after years in which stagnant sanctions have harshly depressed the value of the rial.

¹⁶ The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (2015) collects the analysis of the most pertinent nuclear experts, and the overall impressions could be synthesized by the S. Hecker's explanation that the nuclear deal was better than any other reasonably achievable alternative. (Retrieved from <https://thebulletin.org/experts-assess-iran-agreement-20158507>)

thus the agreement will be a net plus for non-proliferation and will enhance US and regional security (2015).

Although there are contradictory views on its effects, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) issued a Concluding Statement on October 2016, where its staff observed that the Iranian government was indeed implementing far-reaching ambitious reforms to support a sustained acceleration in growth and that real GDP was projected to grow by at least 4.5 in 2016-2017. Thus, oil production and exports rebounded quickly to pre-sanction level, helping cushion the impact of low global oil prices. It was also noted an increase over non-oil sectors such as the agriculture, auto production, trade and transport services (IMF, 2016). On the other hand, an insufficient growth in the private sector was also contemplated, which connects with capital scarcity, the depreciation of the national currency and the unemployment rate which accounts for 11.9 percent, according to the latest information (World Bank, 2018).

2.3. US Administration

before the breach of the agreement

2.3.1. Barack Obama

President of the United States (2009 – 2017)

Obama was explicitly opposed to the ‘Axis of evil’ narrative, and thus his arrival to the presidency in 2009, marked by the buzzword “mutual respect”¹⁷, signified apparently a break from the Bush administration (Serwell & Eimer, 2009). Even the Iranian President at that time, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, sent his congratulations to Obama, in which he expected for major, fair and real changes, in policies and actions. (ElBaradei, 2011, p. 286). That same year, Obama issued a statement of 3 minutes in which he reasserted his desire to establish diplomacy and constructive ties with Iran (Parsi, 2012, p. 62). Nonetheless, as noted on the ‘State of the Issue’ section, the previous years to the nuclear deal were flagged by a tussle between US and Iran, which resulted in failed negotiations, stalemates and the incapacity –from both nations– to attain a proper diplomacy framework. For instance, one of these failed negotiations between Obama and the Iranian government concerned the Tehran Research Reactor (TRR); Iran wanted to resupply fuel for the reactor, and the US administration offered the fuel needed in exchange of reducing the stockpile of LEU by Tehran, which at the moment represented 80 percent of the existing stockpile (Joyner, 2017). In the wake of the failed TRR fuel swap negotiations, Iran resumed to expand its production of HEU, Joyner remarks (p.49) To this respect, Parsi emphasizes that Obama administration was not able –or willing– to reach an effective diplomacy due to a range of domestic issues¹⁸, which caused his frustration, reflected in his own words as the following declaration (2012, p.76):

We didn’t expect –and I don’t think anybody in the international community or anybody in the Middle East, for that matter– would expect that 30 years of antagonism and suspicion between Iran and the United States would be resolved in four months. So we think it’s very important for us to give this a chance. Now, understand that part of the reason that its so

¹⁷ Retrieved from Obama’s Inaugural Speech (2009); The White House. Available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2009/01/21/president-barack-obamas-inaugural-address>.

¹⁸ At that time, the relations between the US and Russia was not going through its best moment, with tensions arising from the American deployment of a defence missile system in Eastern Europe. Curiously, Obama sent a private letter to the then Russian president, Dimitri Medvedev, asking for help to deter Iran from developing long-range weapons (Baker, 2009). Personal remark: it is some somehow surprising how a “bad” diplomatic relationship would have served to restore another one.

important for us to take a diplomatic approach is that the approach that we've been taking, which is **no diplomacy**, obviously has not worked. Nobody disagrees with that. Hamas and Hezbollah have gotten stronger. Iran has been pursuing its nuclear capabilities undiminished. And so not talking –that clearly hasn't worked. That's what's been tried. And so we're going to do is try something new, which is actually engaging and reaching out to the Iranians.

Likewise, Obama did not want that the talks with the Iranian administration create an impasse regarding the nuclear program of Tehran as well as serving as an excuse for inaction. Eventually, and before the signature of the JCPOA, Obama and Rouhani held a phone call in 2013, which was the first conversation between US and Iranian heads of state for 30 years (BBC, 2014). Obama's new approach to Iran found another tangible expression in a secret letter sent to the Ayatollah Khamenei, oriented to the rapprochement of both states on the basis of confronting common enemies such as the Islamic State militants in Syria and Iraq (Ackerman & Roberts, 2014). The 2 years before the deal were marked by a complex negotiation process that evolved from the JPA to the signature of a 159-page agreement on July 2015, in which Obama faced great Republican opposition in the Congress (Kasperkevic, 2015). Indeed, he made sufficiently clear that he would fight to maintain the agreement from those critics within Congress that were beginning a 60-day review, declaring: "I will veto any legislation that prevents the successful implementation of this deal." (Gordon & Sanger, 2015).

Obama, who played an obviously key role on the negotiations, was clear from the outset about the limited aims of the JCPOA. As Westra indicates, the then US President knew that the deal would not target other dimensions of the Iranian nuclear policy or behaviour, but rather its goal was to cut off all the possible trails for Iran to obtain nuclear weapons (2017). In his own words, **the Iran Deal was not built on trust, but verification** (White House, 2015). (White House, 2015). Obama emphasized the virtues of the deal, cutting off Iran's nuclear capabilities and facilities as well as establishing a detailed monitoring and verification system. He remarked that, if Iran violated the deal, sanctions will snap back into place (White House, 2015). His political discourse did not vary significantly; following the Implementation Day in January 16, 2016, Obama reaffirmed that the nuclear deal will prevent Iran on obtaining nuclear weapons and that "the region, the United States, and the world will be more secure".

Remarkably, it was Obama's acceptance of Iran's redline, consisting on a certain degree of uranium enrichment, what allowed a compromise of Tehran and the

continuation of the deal into the correct path (Parsi, 2018). Because the deal was not agreed upon mutual trust, tension was inevitable. In this sense, Obama administration had argued that the deal's restrictions would prevent the breakout time for Iran, by increasing its period time to develop nuclear weapons to one year or even more. In an interview with National Public Radio¹⁹, Obama affirmed that, by the 13th year of the agreement, the breakout time might be reduced almost to zero, as Iranian centrifuges would be already developed and advanced (Gordon & Sanger, 2015).

Obama left the office in 2017 with one of the highest presidential approval rates in US history²⁰, and as one of the main drivers of the nuclear deal. In a nutshell, it could be argued that he indeed established a diplomatic historic achievement: the re-engagement of Iran into the international scenario, as well as the end of the worldwide speculations that the Iranian rogue regime was secretly building a nuclear weapon (Sterio, 2016, p.84). Into the bargain, Parsi notes that Obama had to restrain Israeli threats to bomb Iran's nuclear facilities, which was a recurring issue since the 1990s and that specially increased as he reached the office (2018, p.150). Although little attention is given to Israel's perspective in this dissertation –or Russia's–, its views are decisively influential in Washington. Chas remarks that the deal would have been not carried out by the US Administration and most other negotiating parties unless the Obama administration have convincingly answered, obviated, rebutted, or rejected Israel's objections, which are sure to be forcefully advocated by its clique in the U.S. Congress (2014). Therefore, Obama's diplomatic success in curbing Netanyahu's pretensions is something significant, due to the fact that Israel was opposed to Iran's possession of any nuclear capacity at all²¹. In short, Obama believed that the stabilization of the Middle East –regarding the common interest on defeating ISIS– would come only by giving Iran a seat at the table, something that he attempted through diplomacy, as Parsi indicates (2018,

¹⁹ The transcript of the interview can be found on NPR's podcast (2015): Interview with President Obama. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/15/world/middleeast/iran-nuclear-deal-is-reached-after-long-negotiations.html>

²⁰ Presidential Approval Ratings: Barack Obama (2016-2017); Gallup. Available at: <http://news.gallup.com/poll/116479/barack-obama-presidential-job-approval.aspx>

²¹ As stated by Israel's former deputy minister of defence, Ephraim Sneh, "We cannot afford a nuclear bomb in the hands of our enemies, period. They don't have to use it; the fact that they have it is enough. (Joyner, 2017, p. 42-43)

p.355). “Put simply, no deal means a greater chance of more war in the Middle East,” Obama asseverated (Gordon & Sanger, 2015).

2.3.2. John Kerry

US Secretary of the State (2013 – 2017)

While President Obama held a telephone conversation with President Rouhani, the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry held a meeting in New York with his Iranian counterpart, Javad Zarif, which signified the broadening of relations between the ministries of both nations. Indeed, John Kerry has maintained a prolonged contact with Zarif, which was also reflected on the past conversations maintained when the incident of a US boat entered into Iranian waters occurred (Parsi, 2018). By 2015, John Kerry led the US negotiations in the last rounds of the JCPOA, thoroughly discussing with Zarif the drafting work of the annexes. Furthermore, one of the last *hot topics* discussed with Zarif was the missile restrictions; they finally agreed that the latter would remain for eight years and that similar prohibition on the acquisition and sale of conventional weapons would be waived in five years (Gordon & Sanger, 2015). As a matter of fact, negotiations eventually satisfied both parts, agreeing that when the IAEA validated that Iranian was fully complying with the deal and its nuclear program had peaceful purposes, those bans would disappear completely.

Throughout the Iran nuclear deal lifetime, Kerry has emphasized the same key points of the agreement; notably, he stressed the IAEA’s right to visit covert installations, the potential snapback of the sanctions as well as the imperative that some provisions of the JCPOA will last for 20 or 25 years whereas others will be permanent (Crichton & Sanger, 2015). On the other hand, some critics point out that Kerry has been seen dubious regarding if it was more urgent to press Iran on the past or get assurances for the future, Crichton and Sanger indicate. In addition of facing several Israeli opposition, Kerry was –foreseeably– in the line of Obama’s perspective, asserting that the limited scope of the JCPOA was, in fact, the key of its potential success. As he later affirmed (2017):

The world was united on one issue alone — Iran’s nuclear capability. We could not have achieved unity or held the sanctions regime together if we added other issues. But we believed it would be easier to deal with other differences with Tehran if we weren’t simultaneously confronting a nuclear regime.

It is somehow curious that the narrow scope of the agreement, defended by Obama and Kerry as its main strength, was also the recurring argument of the critics against the nuclear deal, since it would not go far enough to address Iran's destabilising influence in the region, empowering Tehran as the sanctions are waived (Westra, 2017). Kerry was deeply committed to the JCPOA until the end of his office term; for instance, on December 15, 2016, he reissued sanctions waivers earlier on the same day that the ISA renewal came into effect (Davenport, 2018).

2.4. Iran's Administration

2.4.1. Hassan Rouhani

President of the Islamic Republic of Iran (From 2013 to the present)

Hassan Rouhani had a long trajectory in politics before reaching to the office; remarkably, he served as the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) and as the Chief Nuclear Negotiator of Iran between 2003 and 2005, thus his background on nuclear issues was extensive. His 2013 election as the new president of Iran was contemplated with positive prospects for the nuclear breakthrough since he was deemed as a reformist politician. On the other hand, and despite his campaign slogan was "moderation and prudence", he was still seen as part of the *establishment*, precisely due to his political career, characterized by being very close to the Supreme Leader and the Iranian circles of power since the 1979 Revolution (Naji, 2017). Furthermore, some critics point out that Rouhani has not eased restrictions on the realm of censorship and civil rights. Anyhow, one of his key promises was to terminate with Iran's diplomatic isolation, as Naji points out, and that culminated in a historic phone call with Obama in 2013. After the telephonic rapprochement, Rouhani used his twitter to reveal the diplomatic milestone between the two nations²². When the JCOPA was eventually signed

²² Retrieved from Rouhani's twitter "After historic phone conversation with @BarackObama, President #Rouhani in plane abt to depart for Tehran. #UNGA" (September, 2013). Available at: <https://twitter.com/hassanrouhani/status/383689140174200832?lang=es>

out, Rouhani delivered the following message: ‘I declare to you the Islamic Republic of Iran will not be the first country to violate the agreement, but it will respond decisively and resolutely to its violation by any party’. (Westra, 2017). One of Rouhani’s objectives was to reactivate the sluggish economy of the country, and therefore he welcomed the potential advancements of the JCPOA. He even defended the agreement one day after when the Ayatollah labelled it as “useless” (Donovan, 2016). He remarked the benefits of the deal, specially in terms of the oil exports, and hence he was willing to collaborate with the US in other areas in the light of the positive prospects, Donovan indicates.

However, one key issue that seemed to diminish his moderate initial perspective towards the agreement was the 1996 ISA; as a matter of fact, its sanctions were prolonged by ten years through the US Congress (Zengerle, 2016). According to US officials, the ISA did not contradict the JCPOA; at this point, Rouhani sent a letter to the AEOI head Ali Akbar Salehi, ordering Iran to begin the production of HEU nuclear fuel in retaliation (FARS, 2016). On September 2016, after the 3rd quarterly report of the IAEA, which was relatively optimistic regarding Iran’s abiding of the deal’s requirements (IAEA, 2016), Rouhani makes an speech over the UN General Assembly where he expresses concern about the slow pace of the sanctions relief (Davenport, 2018). Its 2017 re-election meant the continuity of the nuclear deal, for international community and Europe, to which he was specially leaned to collaborate with. Unlike his then political opponent, Ebrahim Raisi, a hard-line cleric who underestimated the achievement of the nuclear deal, Rouhani knew that a single wrong decision could entail war for Iran, hence Rouhani has been initially far-sighted regarding his official declarations (Naji, 2017).

When Donald Trump was elected as the new US president, Rouhani’s shifted towards a more suspicious approach. Rouhani maintained that the JCPOA was made upon the agreement of various countries and administrations, and thus it cannot be changed with the decision of a single state, clearly referring to the US (Lucas, 2016). As Parsi noted Rouhani emphasized that US threats were indeed extremely noxious to Iranian’s nature (2018). On August 12, 2017, he delivered a televised speech at the Parliament’s opening session, where he asserted the following²³:

²³ “Iran can return to pre-JCPOA state if US slaps more sanctions: Rouhani” (PressTv, 2017). Available at: <http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2017/08/15/531846/Iran-nuclear-deal-US>

The new US administration officials should know that the failed experience of threats and sanctions forced their predecessors to come to the negotiating table. If they prefer to return to those times, Iran will definitely return to a situation much more advanced than the start of the [nuclear] negotiations, not within months and weeks, but in a matter of hours and days. ... The JCPOA is not and will not be the only option for the country.”

An evident **disenchantment** from the nuclear agreement was noted progressively in his political discourse, which adopts a reactive attitude in the light of the unexpected future movements of the American administration. In a meeting with Federica Mogherini, Rouhani also stressed the destructive nature coming from the reiterative breaks of the agreement’s commitments by the US Administration²⁴ and a desire to keep the commercial ties with Europe. Certainly, after Trump’s withdrawal from the deal, Rouhani’s messages obviously acquired a more aggressive tenor, reflected on his twitter account as follows²⁵ (2018):

The White House shows fake sympathy toward Iranian people while confiscating their assets and even preventing their access to medicine for years. They are not fooling anyone.

Overall, his approach to the deal has vary from a tendency to collaborate to a more reactive and dissatisfied bias, in which he blamed the US administration for not having adhered to the JCPOA commitments. In this sense, Iran’s position has converted into a unified block regarding the nuclear stand-off, since both conservatives and reformists – as well as the populace in general– supported the belief that Iran has a right to nuclear technology (Parsi, 2006, 15).

²⁴ Rouhani invoked a ‘unified’ response to the US breaches (2017, AlJazeera). Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/08/inauguration-hassan-rouhani-urges-talks-170805130014403.html>

²⁵ Retrieved from Rouhani’s twitter (February, 2018). Available at: <https://twitter.com/HassanRouhani/status/959013610356912134>

2.4.2. Ayatollah Khamenei

Supreme Leader of Iran (1989 until the present)

The most powerful person in Iran has been to a certain degree suspicious and sometimes explicitly aggressive regarding the nuclear deal, since he firstly gave green light to Rouhani to proceed with it, but also delivered a series of assertions that have blurred the way to a healthy dialogue between both Administrations. For instance, on the seventeenth anniversary of Ayatollah Khomeini's death, he proclaimed that "If the Americans make a wrong move toward Iran, the shipment of energy will definitely face danger, and the Americans would not be able to protect energy supplies in the region"²⁶ (Davis & Pfaltzgraff Jr., 2013). Khamenei's remarks were not welcomed by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who said, "We are going to give diplomacy a little time here, and we are not going to react to everything the Iranian leadership says.", Henderson notes (2006).

To reflect his orientations towards the deal, when Obama was elected, Khamenei expressed a willingness to engage in dialogue with the United States (Joyner, 2017, p. 42). After the American president issued his 2013 statement aiming to restore relations, Khamenei expressed **scepticism** regarding Obama's dispositions, arguing that Iran had long suffered thanks to the US government, including the issue of the sanctions, the American support towards Saddam Hussein during the Iran- Iraq War, and the for Iranian opposition groups (Joyner, 2017; Parsi, 2012). Thus, the political narrative depicting US as the enemy still resonates throughout his discourse as well as contradicting Rouhani's initial trend of moderation and dialogue; indeed, Rouhani seems to incarnate the attempt of the reformist angle of the Iranian policy. On October 18, 2015, the nuclear deal was formally adopted by Iran and the P5+1. Two days later, the Supreme Leader issued a statement, which endorsed the agreement and bill passed by the Iranian parliament (Davenport, 2018). In addition, he gave a speech asserting that "Iran's nuclear rights have been accepted by all", Davenport indicates. Nonetheless, other signs indicated that Khamenei was clearly opposed to the agreement. Khamenei has repeatedly expressed his

²⁶ Quoted in Simon Henderson, *Facing Iran's Challenge: Safeguarding Oil Exports from the Persian Gulf*, Washington Institute for Near East Studies, July 6, 2007. (Retrieved from <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/facing-irans-challenge-safeguarding-oil-exports-from-the-persian-gulf>)

deception towards the deal due to the US obstruction to international trade with Iran, arguing that the bulk of sanctions persisted and hence deterring investment (Khamenei, 2016). Likewise, Khamenei, through his Senior Foreign Policy Advisor, Ali Akbar Velayati, refused the right of the IAEA to inspect Iran's military sites, and thus obstructing to the provisions comprised in the JCPOA (Donovan, 2017).

After Trump's withdrawal of the deal, the Ayatollah dramatically harshened his discourse increasing his distrust over Western nations. Over his personal website, he has delivered a series of speeches reaffirming the idea that the **nuclear issue was a mere pretext**, and that the animosity of the US did not cease despite the nuclear agreement (Khamenei, 2018). Plus, Khamenei made constant references to Iran's political past regarding US interference, reigniting the long-history enmity (2018):

From the initial hours of the Revolution, this enemy revealed its presence and expressed opposition [towards Iran]: this enemy was the government of the United States of America. From the very beginning – of course, I mean after recovering from their initial confusion, following days when they had no clue as to what was going on – they began to oppose us and show their hostility. To this day, while we speak, the Americans have employed numerous plots, methods, and means of deception aimed at striking the Islamic Republic. Indeed, there is no hostile method that they haven't tried against the Islamic Republic!

His political discourse is marked by a rough historical resentment towards the US, that could have been veiled, to a greater or lesser extent, during the lifetime of the JCPOA. Now that Trump's administration has thrown a cloud of uncertainty over the relations between both states, Khamenei seemed to have encountered the appropriate moment to justify the perspective he always defended, and hence ceding more power to the hardliners in Iran. In the aforementioned discourse, Khamenei also offered 7 conditions for European leaders to maintain the deal. These conditions entailing, amongst others, that: European banks “should safeguard trade with the Islamic Republic”, the European leaders would not resume negotiations regarding Iran's ballistic missile programme and interfere on its Middle East activities, Europe also should “fully guarantee Iran's oil sales” and to “stand up against the US sanctions” (Khamenei, 2018). The Ayatollah warned that if European nations did not meet these conditions, Iran would resume its enrichment of uranium.

2.4.3. Mohammad Javad Zarif

Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs (2013 to the present)

Javad Zarif was in charge of the negotiations of the JPA, and he worked alongside Kerry in the technical drafting work of the agreement, Davenport notes. Right on the previous moments to the signature of the JCPOA, the Foreign Minister of Iran sent a letter to his foreign counterparts in which he explained that Iran's goal remained to reach a comprehensive nuclear deal that assures the world its nuclear program is exclusively peaceful (Davenport, 2018). During the negotiations, Zarif remarked the word "respect for Iran's rights"; that is to say, a euphemism for the right to enrich uranium, which is deemed necessary by Tehran to build alternative sources of energy (Wright, 2014). Wright also indicates that a certain sense of victimization emanates Iranian thinking, with Zarif's assertions such as the following: "Every statement that comes out of Washington that is not respectful and is trying to intimidate the Iranian people—is trying to put pressure on the Iranian people—strikes that very, very sensitive chord in the Iranian psyche, and they immediately react" (2014). Later on, Zarif's aspirations gained momentum during the ultimate talks of the P5+1 and Iran in Vienna on March 17-20 2015, when Ali Akbar Salehi, head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, ascertained that, indeed, progress on technical issues of the agreement was done, as Davenport comments (2018).

Zarif has seemed to be committed to the implementation of the JCPOA and international treaties, which are conceived to preserve the stabilization of the Middle East, acknowledging the great risks for nuclear proliferation. Indeed, Zarif further writes that because of its experience with such weapons, an important part of Iran's security doctrine has become "the elimination of WMD, strengthening and universalization of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the establishment of a zone free from such weapons in the Middle East."²⁷ Zarif, alongside Federica Mogherini, announces in January 16, 2016, the implementation day, proceeding to the lifting of sanctions (Davenport 2018).

²⁷ Mohammad Javad Zarif, *Tackling the Iran- U.S. Crisis: The Need for a Paradigm Shift*, 60 J. Int'l Aff. 73, 80, at 75 (2007). (from Joyner, 2018)

However, in the light of the accusations made by U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Samantha Power, regarding the ballistic missile tests –inconsistent with the UNSC Resolution 2231– carried out by Iran, Zarif responded that the missiles are not designed to be capable of carrying nuclear warheads (Davenport, 2018). As Trump comes to the office in 2017, Zarif adopts an approach more in line with Rouhani and Khamenei’s recent declarations. In an interview with Fareed Zakaria, he affirmed that despite Iran was enforcing the JCPOA and abiding its provisions, verified by the IAEA, the US was though violating the deal by discouraging investment on the country (CNN, 2017). Zarif also reiterated Iran’s right to enrichment for peaceful purposes, which is endorsed by the NPT. On April 2018, Zarif indicated that if the Trump Administration abrogates the deal, “[the Iranians] have put a number of options for ourselves and those options are ready, including options that would involve resuming at a much greater speed our nuclear activities” (Hains, 2018). In addition, Zarif stresses that Europe has a great responsibility to enforce the US to comply with the JCPOA, adding that because US diplomats –such as Mike Pompeo- have pronounced severe discourses against Iran the communication channel of mutual respect has been damaged (Hains, 2018). Therefore, it could be noted that diplomatic relations are worsening between the two countries since the arrival of Trump to the Oval Office. As the US dropout, other declarations that show how Zarif has been explicitly opposed to Trump’s administration are noticeable through his tweets²⁸:

Trump has an odd way of showing “such respect” for Iranians: from labeling them a "terrorist nation" & banning them from visiting the US, to petty insults on the name of the Persian Gulf. But best of all, "helping them" by depriving them of the economic dividends from the #JCPOA.

Regarding the attempt exerted by European nations to maintain the deal alive despite US withdrawal, Zarif stated that “We have started an intensive process [and] the economic benefits inside the JCPOA should be preserved for Iran,” (Reuters, 2018). Although, the diplomatic relations between the US and Iran seem to have experienced a downturn, whatever is going to happen remains uncertain to this day; what it can be asserted regarding Zarif’s individual analysis, is that Iran might be ready to return to the pre-JCPOA situation, which was in line with certain declarations made by Iranian officials, stating that the country could rapidly reconstitute its fissile material production capability

²⁸ Retrieved from Zarif’s twitter (January, 2018). Available at: <https://twitter.com/jzarif/status/948901125847207936?lang=es>

(Katzman & Kerr, 2017). Despite the high degree of uncertainty and the Iranian efforts to build a multilateral response with the other JCPOA contracting parties, it seems that all the diplomatic efforts throughout these years would have been futile.

2.5. Donald Trump: the deal-breaker

President of the United States (From 2017 to the present)

Before being elected, Trump's position regarding the nuclear deal was extremely clear and in accordance with Republican's narrative during the whole process of the nuclear deal. Although US officials have argued during the Obama Administration, that the JCPOA meant a crucial step to disable Iran's potential to build nuclear weapons by enlarging its time to build such weapons to a minimum of one year, the US Congress did not lift all the imposed sanctions and faced a harsh opposition from the Republican party. After all, the JCPOA also meant the rupture of the visceral and bipartisan US policy towards Iran since many years. The opposition was tangible as the Secretary of Defence Ash Carter and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Martin Dempsey testified that American security depended upon "stopping Iran from having an ICBM²⁹ program" (Cheney, 2015, 190). Also, Dempsey argued that "Under no circumstances (...) should we relieve pressure on Iran relative to ballistic missile capabilities and arms trafficking", Cheney points out (2015). John Boehner, speaker of the US House of Representatives and the top Republican in Congress, labelled the agreement as a "bad deal" and added that "it blows my mind that the administration would agree to lift the arms and missile bans, and sanctions on a general who supplied militants with weapons to kill Americans" (Kelly, 2015). Indeed, this perspective that depicts Obama's approach to Iran as failure making Americans choose between passing the agreement or going to war, only furthered Trump's political narrative that contemplates Iran as the "rogue and evil state" pursuing nuclear weapons as the Bush Administration did, and sets distance from reaching a consensus between the two blocks.

²⁹ ICBM stands for Intercontinental Ballistic Missile.

The Republican hardliners in the Congress also relied on the argument regarding the poorly design framework of the agreement; as Samore indicates, the JCPOA language lacks the sufficient explicitness to enhance legislative action regarding the waivering of sanctions, leading to the uncertainty if the US will be able to comply with its promise (2015, 61). Despite Republican's criticism and pressure to dismiss the deal, they would have needed the support of dozens of Democrats to sustain a "resolution of disapproval" that could dismantle the deal, and that did not happen (Spetalnick & Zengerle, 2015). In fact, Congress's ability to derail the agreement is quite limited since the executive branch is the one in charge to waive, suspend or reduce the existing sanctions, and furthermore the President could veto any congressional effort to block implementation if the Congress did not have enough votes, which was precisely the Republican's circumstances (Hanauer, 2015).

On March 2016, Trump remarked to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee that his number one priority was to dismantle the disastrous deal with Iran (Davenport, 2018). Likewise, during his presidential campaign, he asserted that the deal implied that Iran gets everything and loses nothing (Kelly, Where the 2016 Candidates Stand on the Iran Nuclear Deal, 2015). The former Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, certificated that Iran was in compliance with the agreement, as all official reports and statements corroborated this point; nonetheless, Trump argued that he would not issue this certification in the future. (Katzman & Kerr, 2017). These authors also remark that one of Trump's main argument to sweep away the deal was the ambiguous status of Iran regarding the sponsor of terrorism, such as the sale and shipment of weapons to Lebanon and Yemen. As previously stated, the JCPOA does not lift all the sanctions, maintaining those related with sponsor of terrorism. This assumption was seen through the Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (P.L. 115-44) enacted by the US Congress, targeting Iran's human right violations, nuclear proliferation, and support for terrorism, as Katzman and Kerr indicate. On November of that year, Trump is elected as the 45th President of the US. In the initial stage, and despite Trump's current policy regarding the deal, his approach has beene extremely volatile; once he was suggesting about the abrogation of the agreement outright, so he could renegotiate its terms, and at other times

he just emphasized the need for stricter enforcement (Westra, 2017). On January, 2018) Trump's twitter was filled with inflammatory messages³⁰:

Iran is failing at every level despite the terrible deal made with them by the Obama Administration. The great Iranian people have been repressed for many years. They are hungry for food & for freedom. Along with human rights, the wealth of Iran is being looted. TIME FOR CHANGE!

The long-standing opposition of Republicans to the JCPOA has turned in favour of Trump, who kept his word and announced on May 8, 2018, - the US withdrawal of the JCPOA and thus the reimposition of the sanctions to Iran (Sabur & Riley-Smith, 2018). The justification of the US dropout was found on Iran's allegedly non-compliance with the deal, and thus contradicting previous IAEA statements (Laipson, 2016). The portraying of Iran in adversarial terms have reignited the previous JCPOA situation, and entails big risks for regional stability. Furthermore, Trump has showed determination to sweep away Obama's diplomacy efforts during all the nuclear deal as his policy is flagged by uncertainty and an apparent predisposition to not meddle into the Middle East issues, which illustrates a sort of isolationist foreign policy carried out by his administration. Despite the new financial pressure exerted to Iran, Mike Pompeo recently declared that if the US wanted to pursue a new agreement, Iran would have to comply with 12 renewed demands, including the stopping enrichment, the end of proliferation of ballistic missiles and the development of nuclear-capable missile systems, and the total access of the IAEA to all of the country's installations (Davenport, 2018). These new requirements, more or less coherent, would encounter a serious opposition in Iran's political narrative, which is not 100 percent cohesive between Rouhani's and Khamenei's declarations; let's remind that the latter had been opposed to the interference of foreign agencies into Iran's military installations. Into the bargain, the requirement regarding the end of the enrichment would confront a unified opposition from the Iranian counterparts, as this right is deemed necessary by the country's officials and previously assured by NPT provisions.

³⁰ Retrieved from Trump's Twitter (2018). Available at <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/947810806430826496?lang=es>

3. Conclusions

The Iran Nuclear Deal is one of the most complex agreements that has been conducted in the history of diplomacy. The recent years have been marked by the evolution of Iran status as a “pariah” state to player in the greater Eurasian space, as Rocca indicates (2017). Certainly, this thesis is somehow **limited** to cover all the edges and implications of the JCPOA due to its extensive repercussions, the evolving nature of the issue that extends to the present day, and the epistemic limitations derived from the lack of knowledge of any Middle East languages, which also reverberates on the used bibliography, predominantly English. Therefore, its contribution might be quite modest. Regarding the technical analysis of the JCPOA, it could be argued that despite its high degree of detail, many areas are open to debate and thus have been subjected to the interpretation by both administrations. As a matter of fact, the agreement does not allow any of the blocks to conclude the deal, even though any party could stop implementing their commitments under the agreement (Westra, 2017; Congressional Research Service, 2018). Thus, the JCPOA responded to the Obama’s compelling necessity –perhaps too compelling– to engage normal relations as soon as possible with Iran and terminate a 36-year relation of animosity between both countries. The recent US administration has conducted a drastic political shift that swept away all the diplomatic efforts previous to the signature of the agreement, returning to the sanctions situation and thus escalating the tensions. Indeed, both sides have carried out accusations regarding the breaching of the agreement’s provisions, in which some are understood as opposite to UNSC resolutions or even the rights granted by the NPT. On one side, Iran assesses that indeed the JCPOA is working and that it has complied with the provisions halting the pursue of nuclear weapons. Although this view is corroborated by IAEA assessments, the US had been seeking to renegotiate the deal in new terms; presumably, those terms are opposite to Iran’s aspirations regarding nuclear enrichment, and thus Tehran has little incentive to renegotiate since no Iranian leader will be able to support a deal where they get less in return for less (Westra, 2017). On the other side, the current US Administration has depicted the deal as a tremendous failure, enhancing the Iranian’s regime as a rogue state and thus following the past Bush administration trend.

The diplomatic initiative of the JCPOA, supposedly aimed to stabilize and refrain the nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, seems to had been ideologically

instrumentalised by both sides. The current scenario is quite ominous and trust between both nations have been eroded. Even though the deal comprises a multilateral character, the dropout of one of its major players puts in an unclear and ambiguous situation for both the European and the Iranian block. Although Iran is committed to adhere to the deal and engage with Europe to sustain it, the latter would find a tremendous challenge to do it since the US is the driving force within the international trade network, as it has been proved that many companies are now reluctant to conduct economic business with Iran. Flexibility from both sides would be required to attain a proper understanding. Nevertheless, wide discrepancies over the ballistic missile program, the questioned inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities or the overlapping regulatory requirements regarding past nuclear treaties, agreements and UNSC resolutions, obscure the possibilities to achieve the much need normalization of Iran's relation with the world.

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