



## Reviving the Iran Nuclear Deal

### What is the issue?

U.S. is facing the great challenge of reviving the Iran Nuclear Deal after Trump unilaterally decided to discard it.

### What is the history behind the Iran Nuclear Deal?

- Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA or Iran nuclear deal) is the result of prolonged negotiations between Iran and P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, UK, USA and EU) Nations.
- It was quietly brokered by Oman in an attempt to repair its mistrust with Iran since the 1979 Islamic revolution.
- The deal obliged Iran to limit its uranium enrichment programme which will be verified by an intrusive inspection regime.
- In return, US agreed to partially lift its economic sanctions on Iran.
- However this was not ratified in US Senate and was implemented through periodic executive orders to keep sanction waivers going.
- Later, Trump administration pulled out from the deal in May 2018 and exerted maximum pressure on Iran to renegotiate through its sanctions.

### How did Iran respond to this?

- For the 1<sup>st</sup> year after the U.S. withdrawal, Iran's response was silent as E-3 (France, Germany, U.K.) and EU promised to find ways to mitigate the U.S. decision.
- When E-3/EU plan failed to materialise, Iran shifted to a strategy of maximum resistance by shedding its strategic patience.
- It began to move away from JCPOA's constraints incrementally- exceeding the ceilings of enriching uranium, stepping up R&D on advanced centrifuges etc.
- After the US strike on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps commander, Iran said that it would not commit to JCPOA's restraints but it will maintain cooperation with IAEA.

## **What was the response from USA?**

- U.S. pushed ahead with its unilateral sanctions by widening the scope.
- It covered all Iranian banks which was connected to the global financial system, industries related to metallurgy, energy and shipping, senior political leaders etc.
- By end-2020, U.S. had imposed nearly 80 rounds of sanctions targeting close to 1,500 individuals and entities in Iran.

## **What were the repercussions of these events?**

- U.S. decision was criticised by all other parties to the JCPOA as Iran was in compliance with its IAEA obligations.
- Trump's policy comforted only Israel and Saudi Arabia but failed to bring Iran back to the negotiating table.
- COVID-19 affected Iran badly & Iran's economy contracted by 7% in 2019 and another 6% in 2020.
- Iran was also shaken by a series of unexplained fires and blasts at a number of sensitive sites- Natanz nuclear facility, Khojir- missile fuel fabrication unit.
- E-3's promised relief Instrument -INSTEX- did not work well & EU-Iran trade got dropped in the following years.
- Hence Iranian Parliament passed a bill- seeking to increase nuclear enrichment by 20%, suspending the implementation of some inspection provisions for 2 months if sanctions relief is not given.

## **What is the road ahead for USA?**

- If U.S. waits for Iran to fully comply before lifting its sanctions, it can only lead to the collapse of the JCPOA & Iran will go nuclear like North Korea.
- But the Biden administration has made a good start by appointing Robert Malley as the U.S. Special Envoy for Iran & positive steps are further required to create a conducive atmosphere.
- US can help in clearing the Iran's applications to IMF for COVID-19 relief and for the supply of vaccines under the international COVAX facility.
- Iran can release of European and American nationals who are currently in its custody.
- All U.S. sanctions cannot be lifted instantly, it is possible to remove the sanctions on Iranian political leaders which would send a positive signal.
- IAEA and E-3/EU should work together to reverse the steps taken by Iran to ensure full compliance with the JCPOA.
- Brussels now has the opportunity to take a lead role as an independent foreign policy actor.

**Source: The Hindu**



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