The US Policy on the Iranian Nuclear Program

A Mutual Trust to Reduce the Iranian Nuclear Capacity to 10% of its Current Capacity

Policy Paper

Name:

**Policy Statement:** A policy proposal recommending P5+1, the European Union, and Iran to formulate a mutual trust to facilitate the scaling down of Iranian Nuclear capacity to 10 percent of its current capacity while reducing the economic sanctions by 60 percent of its current capacity with the mutual trust being reviewed and revised after 10 years when involved parties have complied to the initial elements of the mutual trust agreement.

**Executive Summary**

Iran's nuclear program undermines the United States` focus on reducing the chances of a nuclear weapon detonating within its territory and other countries in the civil world. The current nuclear deal was signed in 2015 creating a framework to stop Iran from engaging in nuclear enhancement activities. The JCPOA nuclear deal targeted to reduce Iran`s nuclear program to a level if it reverted, it would need one year to develop another nuclear weapon allowing the rest of the world to respond. The other objective of JCPOA was to have Iran reduce its gas centrifuge by two-thirds and reduce medium and low-uranium enrichment activities to a great extent. In return, Iran was to get sanctions imposed on it lifted.

The JCPOA deal cannot address the current nuclear challenges involving Iran as the US pulled out of the deal. Pulling out of the JCPOA created challenges in terms of implementation and Iran got another opportunity to continue with its nuclear program. Another reason necessitating the requirement to change the policy is the different administrations in both the US and Iran. The different administrations have different approaches to dealing with the crisis calling for the need for a new policy.

Various policy alternatives can be advanced to mitigate the Iran nuclear activities and the tensions it creates in the US and the rest of the world. The Iranian nuclear program is a problem to the US and the countries neighboring it like Israel and Saudi Arabia. The first option is for the US, Iran, the P5+1, and European Union to identify an effective approach to implementing the JCPOA nuclear deal agreement. The agreement has important clauses which can terminate the Iranian uranium advancement and enrichment activities. Importantly, the agreement has support from various UN countries with a great influence in the international community. The other policy option is for the involved countries to negotiate and adopt the Mutual Trust Agreement. Some of the elements of this policy include the need for Iran to reduce its nuclear activities to ten percent of its current capacity. In return, Iran will have the business sanctions lifted. Lastly, the US and other involved countries can advance the sanctions on Iran and reduce its participation in international trade and other commitments.

The Mutual Trust Agreement is the recommended course of action in the current situation. The agreement will see Iran reduce its uranium enhancement for the next 15 years, reduce its gas centrifuge to below 4000, and have the international community monitor and evaluate Iran's nuclear activities every 3 months. Multiple reasons influenced the recommendation of the Mutual Trust Agreement. It is grounded on liberalism international relations theory which emphasizes cooperation and diplomacy in solving international relations issues. This reduces the chances for conflicts with countries supporting Iran and those supporting the US in nuclear issues. Also, the Mutual Trust Agreement advances peace and cooperation by eliminating chances for aggression, military action, and deceit to advance country interests. Thus, these reasons increase the chances for the successful adoption and implementation of the policy to diffuse the Iran nuclear deals.

**Background and Context**

The US and other leading superior countries in the world have had a long-standing struggle to limit the capacity of Iran in producing nuclear weapons. Primarily, the point of contortion has remained limiting Iran`s capacity to advance its centrifuge capacity, enrichment activity, and uranium research (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2021). Drawing on the devastating impacts of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bombings, the world has remained steadfast in preventing such occurrences from reoccurring (Miyazaki, 2021). The US a superpower, considered civilized and the leader in the current world of diplomacy and respect of human dignity has remained keen to scuttle efforts by countries such as Iran in their capacity to produce nuclear weapons.

Allowing Iran to continue advancing its centrifuge capacity, enrichment activity, and uranium research put the US efforts to lead the world against the possibility of another nuclear bombing in jeopardy. The US works with other like-minded countries in efforts to ensure Iran does not get the opportunity to develop nuclear weapons it can use to put in danger the US citizens both on US soil and overseas. Importantly, the US leads the rest of the world to promote international peace, respect for the human race, and maintain the world social order devoid of the threat of nuclear attacks. Synonymous with the liberalism international relations theory which emphasizes international cooperation as a means of furthering each nation’s respective interests (Norwich University, 2017), the US pursues policies meant to neutralize this threat.

Therefore, allowing Iran to persist with its nuclear assembling capacity and enrichment of its uranium affects the following interests of the US in international relations:

* Prevention of a possible nuclear bomb on US soil.
* Protecting the US citizens both at home and those overseas
* De-escalate the tensions and conflicts between Iran and its rivals like Israel and Saudi Arabia.
* Reducing the chances of the events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki ever happening again puts the human race at risk of the devastating impacts of nuclear attack.

**Objectives of the US Policy**

In order to ensure that Iran does not gain the capacity to attack the US with a nuclear bomb or other countries of the world, the US outlines the following objectives in its policy:

* To reduce the capacity of Iran in producing sophisticated nuclear bombs.
* To limit the capacity of Iran in developing nuclear bombs with a high traveling range.
* To neutralize Iran`s advancement of its centrifuge capacity, enrichment activity, and uranium research.
* To create a mutual trust with Iran, China, France, Russia, the UK, the US and Germany (P5+1), and the European Union in reducing the Iranian capacity of nuclear development to 10 percent of its current capacity.
* To work on agreeable terms to lift the business sanctions put on Iran subject to compliance to terms of the Mutual Trust Agreement.

**Current Situation**

In 2015, Iran and several world powers including the US signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), an accord meant to regulate the Iranian nuclear capacity. The Council of Foreign Relations (2021) reported that the agreement required Iran to dismantle its nuclear programs and allow the international community to evaluate its facilities substantively. In return, Iran was supposed to get the various sanctions imposed on it on international trade lifted. The agreement was fast-tracked as a response to the US military intelligence that Iran had reached the capacity to produce a nuclear weapon within a short time and this situation needed to be neutralized. Other significant activities included the consistent attack of Israel on Iran acting on the intelligence that the country was on a high gear with its nuclear program. Israel launched attacks on Iran and Syria with a suspicion that Iran was running its nuclear activities in the two countries.

 Importantly, Saudi Arabia, a long-standing rival to Iran had indicated that if Iran had made use of its threats to denote a nuclear weapon, Saudi Arabia would respond by acquiring a nuclear bomb with the same magnitude (Council on Foreign Relations, 2021). These events escalated the possibility of a nuclear attack with Iran believed to be in a position to detonate one within a few months. These events threatened international peace relations with countries supporting Iran and those in opposition like the US thrown into increased tensions. With the world`s 30 percent of crude oil and 40 percent of oil reserves coming from the Middle East, the situation heightened the risk of disruption of the Persian Gulf supply chain for these products (Olawuyi, 2019).

The subsequent signing of the JCPOA reduced the tension with Iran showing a great commitment to reducing its nuclear program activities. Maklad (2021) indicated that the May 2018 decision of the US to pull out of the JCPOA agreement jeopardized the efforts made to reduce the capacity of Iran to spearhead its nuclear program. Recent reports indicate that the country is possibly working on its nuclear projects (CSIS, 2021). The situation increases the tension that was diffuse when the JCPOA was operationalized in 2016. While the US under the presidency of Joe Biden has indicated that the door to returning to the negation table to uphold the elements of JCPOA is open, the current Iranian president indicates a strong stance on nuclear negotiations than his predecessors (CSIS, 2021).

**Brief Description of Current Policy**

The JCPOA is the current agreement with US vested interests in limiting Iran`s nuclear program capacity. The goals of the agreement are as follows:

* Reducing the Iran nuclear capacity to a point if they wanted to revive it, would take the country up to a year giving the rest of the countries enough time to respond.
* Iran to reduce its stockpile of medium-enriched uranium
* Unwind its low-medium enriched uranium by 98 percent.
* In 13 years, Iran should reduce two-thirds of its gas centrifuges
* In 15 years, Iran could enrich its uranium to 3.67 percent.
* Iran could get sanctions relief amounting to billions of dollars and be allowed to increase its oil production in the international market (Mousavian and Mousavian, 2018).

**Factors and Considerations Making the New Approach Necessary**

Advancing the Mutual Trust Agreement between Iran, P5+1, and the European Union is informed by the current stalemate characterized by the United States` decision to pull out of the JCPOA agreement. Once the US pulled out, implementing the agreement was stalled giving room for Iran to continue with its nuclear program. Another reason is the change of leadership in both the US and Iran. Unlike the previous US administration, US President Joe Biden has shown interest in revising the agreement (Devenport, 2020). However, the current Iranian president, Ebrahim Raisi, has pronounced a staunch approach to nuclear deal agreements (CSIS, 2021). Therefore, these developments have made the JCPOA inadmissible in the current situation.

**Policy Options**

In responding to the current situation, the US and its allies can adopt one of the following policy alternatives:

1. Returning the involved parties to the table to renegotiate upholding the elements of the current policy.
2. Deliberating and adopting elements of the current proposed policy.
3. Formulating a policy requiring the international community to heighten economic sanctions on Iran to reduce its capacity to create the required wealth to develop its nuclear capacity.

 **Upholding the JCPOA Iran Nuclear Deal**

The US and other United Nations, and the European Union can reconsider upholding the JCPOA agreement which was signed in 2015 and operationalized in 2016. Continuing the current policy will mean that Iran will be compelled to uphold the initial agreements. The elements of the policy which make the policy relevant to the current situation include the agreement by the member states to compel Iran to unwind its nuclear capacity.

**Pros of the JCPOA Nuclear Deal**

* The JCPOA agreement can compel Iran to unwind its nuclear capacity to a level where if it starts to enhance uranium again, it will take it one year. This is enough time for the other countries to respond.
* The agreement has the support of other UN countries in the P5+1 who influence various international relation policies.
* JCPOA resonates with the US interests in reducing the Iranian nuclear program capacity.
* Full implementation of the agreement reduces the tensions in the Middle East which can affect the Persian Gulf for oil transportation.

**Cons of the JCPOA Nuclear Deal**

* The change of administration in both the US and Iran makes its implementation difficult as both leaders have new perceptions of the agreement.
* Iran has not shown interest in upholding the JCPOA after the US pulled out.
* The agreement was made with crucial players like Saudi Arabia and Israel left out of the negotiations.
* US sanctions on Iran have not been factored into the agreement making it non-binding.

**Deliberating and adopting elements of the current proposed policy.**

The proposed policy has various clauses which can help reduce the tension between the US and Iran regarding the threat of nuclear weapons. From the onset, the policy recognizes Iran has capabilities of developing and detonating a nuclear weapon. The US stake and interests are evaluated and incorporated in the policy. In the development of the Mutual Trust agreement, Iran will be required to suspend its nuclear activities before coming into the negation table. The intended purpose of this clause is to reduce the tension between Iraq and its neighbors like Saudi Arabia and Israel. Suspending the nuclear program before the negotiations allows all the involved parties to deliberate on all the components of the proposal. The involved parties include the US, P5+1, and the European Union. Importantly, Saudi Arabia and Israel will be involved in the process as interested parties to ensure inclusivity and taking into considerations.

The current theory is founded on liberalism which recognizes that the current global system is capable of destroying peaceful co-existence (Ikenberry, Parmar, and Stokes, 2018). Thus, the theory holds that to avoid endangering the world order, a direct force like the military should be avoided and advance international collaboration. Based on the premise of this theory, the following proposals are articulated in the theory:

* Iran to unwind its nuclear enhancement program to ten percent of its current capacity.
* The country should reduce the uranium centrifuges to below 4000 from the current 13000.
* Iran should open its borders to international agencies for monitoring and evaluation of its nuclear program every 3 months for the next 15 years.
* Iran should not exceed 3.5 percent of uranium enrichment in the next 15 years.
* Iran is to be allowed to increase its oil and gas to the world market by 15 percent which should be done progressively for the next 3 years.
* Subject to review and compliance of the elements of this Mutual Agreement Trust, Iran will have other sanctions lifted.

**Pros of the Proposed Policy**

* The policy encompasses the US foreign policy interests in safeguarding its territory and its people from a nuclear bomb attack.
* The policy reflects the interests of the US allies promoting the possibility of better transition from the current situation and adequate implementation.
* Domestic opposition is minimal to the Mutual Trust Agreement as it serves and addresses all the important elements of the US engagements in foreign policy.
* The inclusion of Israel and Saudi Arabia as interested parties eliminates the opposing fronted by these countries when JCPOA was signed.
* Lastly, to a large extent, the policy does not affect, interfere, or jeopardize other US foreign objectives or goals and if anything, it enhances them.

**Cons of the Proposed Policy**

* The Mutual Agreement Trust does not extend to Iran`s nuclear operations in Yemen where it is believed the country has other nuclear research centers.
* Also, the policy does not reduce Iran`s nuclear threats in the future should the involved parties fail to uphold the terms spelled therein.

**Formulating a policy requiring the international community to heighten economic sanctions on Iran to reduce its capacity to create the required wealth to develop its nuclear capacity.**

The last policy alternative is for the US, United Nations, and the European Union to advance their current sanctions on Iran. Some of the terms of this policy option include making it clear that should evidence be identified that Iran is involved in nuclear activities, retaliatory advances will be made against the country. Iran will not have the opportunity to sell its oil and gas products to the rest of the world with the Persian Gulf supply corridor kept from being masked from access by Iran. This policy can be advanced by countries with similar interests with the US in the quest to discourage countries with nuclear capability from enhancing them and using them in the future. The policy borrows from the realism in international relations theory founded on the premise that all countries are working to increase their power (Orsi et al., 2019). Countries that can horde power successfully can topple the weak countries without challenges. Realism in international relations recognizes deceit and violence as tools that can be leveraged to push for a country`s preservation (Orsi et al., 2019). A country should continue to advance the approaches which can help it gain power which is socially, economically, and politically imperative.

Therefore, the US, P5+1, and the European Union should agree to uphold the following elements of the proposal:

* Increase military intelligence to gather enough evidence about the Iranian nuclear program.
* Military attacks can be instituted on Iran if it is proved that the country has enhanced nuclear weapons to a great extent.
* Compelling Iran to show its progress in unwinding its nuclear program without expecting the lifting of the existing sanctions as a condition.
* Advancing military intelligence in Yemen to identify and dismantle Iran-owned nuclear plants in the country.
* Considering lifting part of the sanctions imposed on Iran if military intelligence shows that the country is scaling down its nuclear power activities.

**Pros of the Policy**

* The policy puts the US and its allies on the lookout to defend themselves if the need arises due to Iranian nuclear enhancement activities.
* It promotes the military intelligence activity by the adoption of an aggressive approach to safeguarding the US borders and remaining active in getting intelligence regarding the Iranian nuclear program.
* Builds on the existing strong stance by Israel and Saudi Arabia on the Iranian nuclear enhancement activities.

**Cons of the Policy**

* The policy is retrogressive in terms of the strides which were made when the current (JCPOA) policy was signed between member countries.
* Threats of aggression affect existing international relations and can affect the relationship between the US and its competitors like China and Russia further.
* Heightens the tension between Iran and its neighbors in the Middle East like Israel and Saudi Arabia.
* The US allies who prefer cooperation and diplomacy in diffusing the tension in international matters might object to the operationalization of the policy.
* Domestic legal apparatus and other political key players might object to the US advancing aggression against Iran.

**Policy Recommendations**

Inviting Iran, the US, P5+1, Israel, and Saudi Arabia to the negotiation table to sign the Mutual Trust Agreement is the recommended course of action. This policy option is effective in the current world order to reduce the existing tensions and limit the economic and social impacts of aggression. The theory advances cooperation and diplomacy leveraging the concepts of liberalism which envisions cohesion. Unlike the third policy option of advancing the sanctions through the lens of realism theory, military action, violence or deceit will not be used. While some member countries can indicate that the option of advancing the sanctions is a preferred course of action, it will lead to unprecedented outcomes. Taking a strong stance rather than pursuing diplomacy and fostering cooperation will give Iran the required impetus to engage in aggressive nuclear enhancement activities. Michelsen and Tallis (2018) unlike liberalism, realism in international relations promote tension and reduces the chances of reaching a solution that promotes the interests of the involved countries. Therefore, the last policy alternative is not effective in promoting international relations, cohesiveness, and a diplomatic approach to problems. It creates room for the US and its competitors to grow their tension further instead of pursuing common interests.

While the JCPOA nuclear deal agreement provides agreeable terms to Iran, the US, P5+1, and the European Union, the policy cannot hold at the moment. Council on Foreign Relations (2021) indicated that pulling out of the US from the deal disrupted the chances for implementation. Importantly, President Joe Biden has been calling for the renegotiation of the deal (Aljazeera, 2021). The call for negotiations is an indication that the policy no longer offers the required framework for its implementation.

**Strengths of the Mutual Trust Agreement**

* The proposed policy promotes the spirit of liberalism by reducing tensions and aggression by adopting a cooperative and diplomatic approach to solving the Iran nuclear advancement activities.
* Importantly, the Mutual Agreement Trust can reduce the tension between the countries that support Iran and those that side with the US. Creating a framework for co-existence will foster better international correlations for peace and an effective global business environment.
* Increasing global Oil and Gas supply: Iran has enough oil and gas deposits and the continued imposition of sanctions limits their capacity to trade their oil and gas products in the international market. The Mutual Trust Agreement allows the removal of business sanctions imposed on Iran. The country will have the opportunity to produce more oil and gas contributing to global supplies to mitigate shortages.

**Weaknesses of the Recommended Policy**

* Based on the current military intelligence, Yemen serves as another hub with possible Iranian nuclear plants (Nicholas, 2018). The current policy does not consider this threat or possibility and the issue has not been factored into the policy.

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