

Iran Nuclear Deal

The Iran Nuclear Deal, formally known as Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is an agreement on the Iranian nuclear program reached in Vienna on 14 July 2015, between Iran and the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council—China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States—plus Germany).

The Iran Nuclear Deal has often been in the news from time to time, primarily focusing on the frosty relationship between Iran and the United States.

Although the Iran Nuclear Deal was stalled under US President Trump in 2018, the new President Joe Biden has expressed interest in reviving the JCPOA following an announcement in May 2021.

The Iran Nuclear Deal will be a point of discussion, which will be within the context of the Civil Service Exam.

Background of the Iran Nuclear Deal

In the 1970s, Iran received assistance in its nuclear program from the United States as part of the 'Atoms for Peace' program. The Shah of Iran even signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1968 as a non-nuclear weapons state and ratified the NPT in 1970.

It all changed when the Iranian revolution threw the country's nuclear programme into disarray as many talented scientists fled the country. The new regime was openly hostile to the United States and thus ended any hope for assistance from them.

In the late 1980s Iran reinstated its nuclear program, with assistance from Pakistan (which entered into a bilateral agreement with Iran in 1992), China (which did the same in 1990), and Russia (which did the same in 1992 and 1995), and from the A.Q. Khan network.

Although Iran stated that its nuclear programme was for peaceful purposes, Western powers and their allies in the Middle East suspected that this was not the case.

Back and forth negotiations between Iran and the western nations took place throughout the 2000s with little progress. Iran even created plants for heavy water and Uranium enrichment which led to economic sanctions from the United States and the European Union.

It would not be until 15 July 2015 that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action would be created. So far it is the most clear headed and robust nuclear plan formulated so far.

What was the objective of the JCPOA?

The main objective of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was to slow down Iran's nuclear program. If Iran decided to make a nuclear weapon, it would take a year for it to be complete, giving enough time for world powers to respond.

United States intelligence estimates that, in the absence of the JCPOA or a similar agreement. Iran could produce materials for nuclear weapons in a few months. If that came to pass then the entire Middle East would be pushed into a new crisis. Iran's open hostility against Israel is well known.

In the past Israel has taken covert actions against nuclear facilities in Iraq and Syria and there can be no doubt that they will do the same for facilities in Iran. Should that happen Iran will respond through its proxies like the Lebanon-based Hezbollah or will directly interfere with shipping lanes in the Persian Gulf where most of the world's oil passes through.

Added to this mix is Saudi Arabia signaling its willingness to get a nuclear weapon of its own if Iran successfully detonates one.

Prior to the JCPOA, the P5+1 had been negotiating with Iran for years, offering its government various incentives to halt uranium enrichment. After the 2013 election of President Hassan Rouhani, who was viewed as a reformer, the parties came to a preliminary agreement to guide negotiations for a comprehensive deal.

Iran wants to sign the JCPOA so that it can get relief from the sanctions that have crippled its economy in the past year. In 2012-2014 alone Iranian economy sustained a loss to the tune of \$100 billion.

Agreements made in the Iran Nuclear Deal

The following agreements were accepted by Iran and the P5+1:

Agreements accepted by Iran:

- Iran agreed not to produce highly enriched uranium or plutonium, both key components of a nuclear weapon
- It agreed to ensure that its facilities at Fordow, Natanz and Arak would only be used for power generation, medical, industrial research or for any civilian work
- Iran eventually agreed to eventually implement a protocol that would allow inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency unrestricted access to its nuclear facilities. This access can also be applied to undeclared sites.
- A body known as the Joint Commission, which includes representatives of all the negotiating parties, monitors implementation of the agreement and resolves disputes that may arise.

Agreements accepted by the P5+1 and others

- The European Union, the UN and the United States committed lifting sanction on Iran. Bu some US sanctions dating back to 1979 remained in effect
- These sanctions were placed due to Iran's support to terror groups, human rights abuses, and its ballistic missiles program.
- The parties involved also agreed to lift sanctions on a Weapons embargo provided the United Nations confirms through the IAEA that Iran is only engaged in civilian nuclear activities

What was the result of the Iran Nuclear Deal?

The Iran Nuclear Deal got off to a good start when the IAEA reported that in early 2016 Iran had met its preliminary pledges. The EU, United States and the UN responded by repealing their sanctions. The US under President Obama to drop secondary sanctions on oil, allowing Iran to increase its oil exports.

100\$ billion worth of Iranian assets were also unfrozen by the European Union and the United States

But the deal nearly collapsed when President Trump withdrew from the JCPOA and reinstated devastating banking and oil sanctions. He claimed this was in response to Iran's ballistic missiles program and its proxy warfare in the region.

Iran accused the United States of reneging on its commitments, and faulted Europe for submitting to U.S. unilateralism. In a bid to keep the agreement alive, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom launched a barter system, known as INSTEX, to facilitate transactions with Iran outside of the U.S. banking system. However, the system is only meant for food and medicine, which are already exempt from U.S. sanctions.

Iran meanwhile responded by exceeding its greed-upon limits to stockpile low enriched Uranium in 2019. It even began developing enriched uranium at its facilities

In November 2020, in response to the assassination of a prominent nuclear scientist, which it also attributed to Israel, Iran's parliament passed a law that led to a substantial boost in uranium enrichment at Fordow.

In February 2021, Iran announced it will place new restrictions on the IAEA's ability to conduct inspections of its facilities. However, some of the restrictions will not take effect for three months, a window of time that analysts say could be intended as an opening for diplomacy.

Iran Nuclear Deal Impact on India

- Restoration of JCPOA may ease many restrictions over the Iranian regime, which may directly or indirectly help India. This can be reflected in the following examples:
- Boost to Regional Connectivity: Removing sanctions may revive India's interest in the Chabahar port, Bandar Abbas port, and other plans for regional connectivity.
- This would further help India to neutralize the Chinese presence in Gwadar port, Pakistan.
- Apart from Chabahar, India's interest in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which runs through Iran, which will improve connectivity with five Central Asian republics, may also get a boost.