



Iranian Nuclear Deal and Middle East Politics: Unveiling the Implications

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Abstract

This paper assessed the implications of Iranian nuclear deal on the politics of Middle East from the realist theoretical perspective. Data for the paper were generated from secondary sources such as books, journals, newspapers/magazines, and online materials among others. The contents of these secondary data were qualitatively analyzed. The results of this analytical discourse reveal that the deal means more of co-operation is likely to take place in the Middle East even though Iran is still perceived as a potential threat. Also, the eventual deal means the emergence of a more empowered Iran capable of dominating the region and pursuing her interests at the expense of other states. It further showed that the tendency of Iran pursuing regional hegemony is very high. The paper concludes that Iranian nuclear crisis is an indication that the intention for nuclear armament is not yet over. Based on these findings and conclusion drawn, the paper recommended that the security balance of the Middle East must be maintained in order not to experience a sudden collapse of peace and stability in the region. States in the region must be made to realize the dangers of taking measures that could lead to a race for arms, especially nuclear armament.

Keywords: Iran; Nuclear Deal; Middle East; Politics

Citation of article: Mohammed, S. D. et al (2023). Iranian Nuclear Deal and Middle East Politics: Unveiling the Implications. *African Journal of Politics and Administrative Studies AJPAS*, 16 (1):267-284

Date Submitted:04/05/2023 **Date Accepted:**19/05/2023 **Date Published:** June, 2023



Introduction

The Iranian nuclear programme has exacerbated the threats posed by nuclear programmes globally in recent times. Several countries at one time or the other attempted to pursue nuclear programme, namely India, South Africa, Brazil, Argentina, Syria and Libya among others, but none has attracted intense disputation with the international nuclear regime like the case of Iran. It was believed to be part of the greatest proliferation dangers to global security (Fitzpatrick, 2006). Owing to revelations between 2002 and 2003, it became public knowledge that Iran was likely developing weapons of mass destruction (Chubin&Litwak, 2003; Ogilvie – White, 2007; Orlov&Vinnikov, 2005). The notion of Iran constituting an axis of terror (Roshandel and Lean, 2011) heightened the criticality of the U.S over her nuclear programme. It was obvious that the U.S did not want a replay of the September 11 attacks. Both States have been at odds for decades. Thus, a nuclear – armed Iran seemed a major threat to global peace. However, coming to terms with the right approach by the international community was not easy as the certainty if Iran’s nuclear armament was largely speculative. All the same, the nuclear non- proliferation regime was set on her toes. O’Connell and Alevras – Chen (2007, p.97) put it thus:

Throughout 2005-2006, the world’s major powers engaged in difficult negotiations over the best way to respond to Iran’s nuclear ambitions. Part of their difficulty stemmed over uncertainty over basic facts. They have also been uncertain about the implications various response strategies.

The approach to Iran’s nuclear issue finally settled for an international galvanized cooperation between the United States (US), the European Union (EU), and Russian (Chubin&Litwak, 2003) with firm backing by the United Nations (UN) to unleash pressure and sanctions on Iran’s long journey towards nuclear capability seemed to have fallen under the US led weight of sanctions and international pressure, resulting in the historic Iranian nuclear deal of 2015. Against this backdrop therefore, this paper assesses the implications of Iran nuclear deal on the politics of Middle East using the Realist theoretical perspective as an analytical framework.

Realist Theoretical Perspective as a Framework of Analysis

The brains behind the Realist Perspective are Thucydides, Thomas Hobbes, and Niccolò Machiavelli (Goldstein, 1999; Rourke, 2005). This perspective is founded on the notion



that man is by nature self-interested and rationally self-centered. From this philosophical standpoint comes a broader interpretation that international relations are basically reflective of man's natural tendencies. Thus, states are largely motivated by the drive for self-survival and the attainment of their national interests. These state actors however differ in their pursuit of their national interests in the international panorama.

Basic Assumptions of Realist Theoretical Perspective

The following are the basic assumptions of the Realist Theoretical Perspective:

a. *The Realist Theoretical Perspective is largely state-centric.* Its basic focus is not individuals or non-state actors like international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Transnational Corporations (TCs). The state is often seen as the sole political actor with the configuration and capability of controlling other actors. Even when other actors are examined, some bearing with the state must be established for any realist analysis that possess the legal and political wherewithal to interact with one another in a system that is structured by their interrelations.

b. *Power is critical to realist analysis in International Relations (IR).* Power is considered as the capability of a state to influence the actions(s) or behavior(s) of other states or actors on the international stage. Thus, it is what gives states the impetus to chart strategic courses of action and even respond to issues around them. This is why the status of states in the international system is relative to their power base. Political Realists attach a lot of importance to power and often opine that the intent of international politics is the quest to possess, maintain, or dispense power (James, 2018).

Theoretical Application of Realist Perspective on Iranian Nuclear Deal

Iran and the international nuclear regime are poised as two opposing sides in a somewhat traditional sense of power relations. The international regime itself is arguably represented by the superpowers especially the United States of America (USA). Also, it is a product of a power-driven structure that has been built over the years. Furthermore, the interest of the USA in its dealings with Iran has long been identified as strategically and economically driven in which the USA has strived to limit Russia's influence on Iran thereby enhancing the flow of oil (Woodyard, 1993).



According to Walter (2009), the posture of the USA and Israel towards Iran's nuclear programme is first a product of their respective foreign policies. This therefore forms part of their domestic affairs and national interests as antagonistic policy positions are projected. Security concerns have obviously influenced the actions of both Iran and the USA, and this remains critical to their respective national interests. The USA has had to pursue a firm security outlook towards Iran considering the terrorist attacks it has been exposed to in the recent past. The 9/11 attacks on the USA have greatly spurred its proactive policy towards states perceived to be a threat to its interest in the international political system. The dynamics of power politics still define their interests and policies of Iran and the USA to a very large extent. Right from the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution of 1979, relations between the two have not really been the same again. Even though the root of their strained relations goes beyond the 1979 era, this period opened up a more radical form of interaction between them. The nuclear issue was therefore established on an already established turbulent foundation.

The realist perspective is suitable for the analysis the discourse on Iranian nuclear deal. Even the unleashing of sanctions upon Iran depicts a typical realist strategy of international politics. In the same vein, Iran's outlook towards the USA in particular and the West in general is an indication of a classical clash of divergent national interests in the international community. It is obvious that both states insist on their policy positions due to strategic security concerns and the need to maximize their domestic policy interests. While the USA continued to pour out sanctions on Iran and even engineer international collaboration towards this goal, Iran continued to maintain a harsh position towards the USA. Iran also rejected the biddings of the non-proliferation regime until an eventual deal was struck.

Nevertheless, the prominence and suitability of realist theoretical perspective does not provide an all-inclusive explanation to the Iranian nuclear issue. The notion that realism seems to project about politics as an immoral, mean and inhumane process did not really prove true in the case of Iran. There is a speculation that religious considerations might have influenced Iran's slow pursuit of uranium enrichment. Politics most often is a consideration of too many variables that cannot all be identified in a single instance. Iran's nuclear programme was most likely shaped by normative interests too. The culmination of the nuclear tussle into a deal also



suggests some elements of cooperation. However, the place of power even in the context of cooperation can sometimes not be jettisoned.

Methodology

The study is purely qualitative in nature and it focuses on assessing the implications of Iranian nuclear deal on Middle East politics from the Realist perspective. Given the nature of this study, data were collected from secondary sources such as books, journal articles, documents, newspapers/magazines and online materials among others. The contents of these data were qualitatively analysed in line with the research objectives.

Iranian Nuclear Programme and Its Attendant Responses

The Iranian nuclear challenge received responses from different quarters. Being a sensitive issue of international concern, it no doubt generated a lot of responses. Notable among the leading countries that responded was the United States of America (USA) and some of her allies. The U.S is obviously at the heart of global efforts in combating the spread of nuclear weapons (CRS, 2006). These responses would be discussed under two broad sub-themes, namely (a) international response and (b) US response.

(a) International Responses

The journey of Iran's nuclear capability had existed for a long time. Scholars have over the years offered different insights on how the threat could be contained. Some scholars like Inbar (2006) and Singh (2012) have called for the use of threat and force while the likes of Huntley (2006, p.742) among others have opted for what they describe as "progressive political remedies as well as rigorous technical mechanism. A multifaceted focus was adopted by Bowed and Kidd (2004), who examined the position of Iran in refusing to comply by the safeguards requirement of the IAEA and also the positions of the international community, the U.S, and the EU toward Iran. They concluded with the notion that the way forward on Iran depended greatly on how far the U.S-EU synergy could go. This was because they considered the delay over the issue a result of the divergence of US-EU non-proliferation strategies that undermined "international consensus on Iran" (Bowed & Kidd, 2004, p.276). The scholars presented their position as though some divergence in U.S-EU strategy has slowed the pace of international efforts at combating the crisis. The US-EU strategy however proved to be one of



the most effective approaches towards the crisis. Sanctions against Iran were released from both sides. Perhaps there was no ambiguity in the drive they mustered toward Iran.

A notable response also came in from the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The position adopted by some NAM member states in 2006 where some of her members voted to refer Iran before the Security Council of the United Nations was examined by Ogilvie-White (2007). Ogilvie-White observed that the Iranian issue (and several other challenges confronting the nuclear non-proliferation regime) manifested deep ideological differences between members of the NAM especially between the global north and the south. The scholar identified the fact that, though largely reflective of the position of members of the global south, NAM proved otherwise, especially between 2005 and 2006 with regards to aligning with a fellow global south state. Some NAM members voted in the United Nations (UN) for Iran to be summoned before the Security Council for further action; some even voted for the imposition of sanctions on Iran by the UN. This was in response to Iran's defiance to IAEA expectations.

The coercive posture of the European Union towards Iran was also examined. According to Sauer (2007), the coercive diplomatic posture of the EU was more of a failure. Considering that despite the fact that the EU took the lead in addressing the issue, she had been unable to remedy the situation after years of engagement with Iran. The scholar further identified the chances of Iran's abandoning the path toward nuclear armament were very slim. The scholar noted further that, "the Iranian case supports the theoretical evidence that making threats does not always help. Coercive diplomacy in practice is more complicated than it seems" (Sauer, 2007, pp.630-31). The outcome of the Iranian deal however leaves traces of the fact that the role played by the EU after all cannot be undermined. It is very much clear that the coercive posture of the EU perhaps paid off in no small measure.

The strategic position of the EU was considered the best in terms of any actor gaining Iran's accommodation (Huntley, 2006). This was largely a result of Iran's long standing political and economic ties with Europe; by contrast US-Iran relations has a history fraught with animosity; resolving the crisis was however needful of American's intervention (Huntley, 2006). Huntley therefore offers a broad approach that integrates efforts from relevant strategic frontiers and partnership (possibly involving the U.S, the EU and Israel). Political remedies that were progressive, alongside a "rigorous technical mechanism" (Huntley, 2006, p.742) are considered vital in Huntley's submission. It was clear that addressing the Iranian issue



required a multilateral approach. This was because any outcome whatsoever of the crisis was going to have implications for not just Iran but her immediate neighbors as well.

The force option was not left off the table of approaches suggested in confronting Iran. Inbar (2006) expressed concern over the persistence of the crisis despite the diplomatic efforts expended. He noted that, “with each day, Iran grows closer to acquiring nuclear weapons”, and that, “use of force – seem the only viable preventive measures” (Inbar, 2006, p.85). Inbar argued that approaches relying on mere talks and diplomatic procrastinations only encouraged Iran’s defiance noting that Iran was taking dressing from North Korea-how that these measures failed in its case. Furthermore, Inbar was of the opinion that Iran’s possession of nuclear arms would prove to be the greatest strategic mistake to be tolerated in the Middle East – that it could stir a wave of uncontrolled proliferations. He concludes that, “diplomacy is doomed to fail and economic sanctions are usually ineffective, leaving only the threat to use force and the actual use of force as viable options to delay the completion of the Iranian nuclear program” (Inbar, 2006; p.100).

A similar posture was adopted by Singh (2012), who believed that to keep the peace with Iran, the threat factor should be exploited. Also skeptical of the place of sanctions, Singh argued that it was not merely the toughness of sanctions or the sincerity of U.S overtures that would determine the eventual stoppage of Iran on the nuclear path. Therefore, he submits that” the current U.S strategy is therefore incomplete. To achieve its goals, “the United States must clearly articulate what its red lines are in terms of Iranian behavior and credibly threaten Iran with military action should it cross those lines” (Singh, 2012, p.56).

The positions of Inbar (2006) and Singh (2012) obviously reflected their frustration with the persistence of the Iranian nuclear crisis. This appears to have prompted their perception that the options of diplomacy and sanctions were ineffective. Now a nuclear deal has been consummated without any bomb released on Iran. Could it be that other measures thought to be ineffective actually did go a long way to calming the situation thus far? The U.S is by no means a strategic “infant” not to mean she knows it all though. Some of the most stringent measures must have been exploited in her multilateral and sanctions based regime against Iran. President Obama clearly noted that preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons was of immense national concern (Fitzpatrick, 2014).



The position of Russia is also worth interrogating at this juncture. There has been some doubts over Russia's standpoint especially with regards to her support for Iran. The US, according to Einhorn and Samore (2002), is skeptical of Russian's continued support for Iran's missile and nuclear programmes. Russian is noted to have persisted in her supportive posture towards Iran, even when it was going to be detrimental to the national security of both the U.S and Russia. The U.S perceives Russia's support for Iran is been driven by economic and geopolitical (maintain strong ties with Iran) reasons. She however rejected the notion that she was supportive of Iran's journey toward nuclear armament, that "she has traditionally been wary, if not suspicious, of Iran's nuclear intentions" (Orlov&Vinnikov, 2005, p.51); that she supports Iran only so long as she (Iran) operates within her sphere of jurisdiction. This implies that she considers Iran a rational actor, acting within the limits of her legal right to enrich uranium but not build nuclear weapons.

Russian's position was said to be based on "a set of policy maneuvers in a two-track diplomatic game" (Aras &Ozbay, 2006, p.144). In this wise, Russian is reflected as trying to exploit a shrewd path to harnessing economic dividends from Iran. Russia postures herself as acting as a rational actor toward Iran too. Aras and Ozbay (2006, p.145) captured Russia's perceived approach graphically thus: Russia benefits from its multiple identities in foreign policy, employing dynamic bilateral, regional and international strategies for pursuing its nuclear agenda. Moscow has proved successfully in balancing and reconciling many divergent and conflicting interests in a multi-actor context of states, international organizations and regimes. In its "dances with wolves", Russia has succeeded in not getting bitten so far. Russia's position seems to be hinged on a deliberately ambiguous and unclear strategy that is economically, politically, and geo-strategically driven. Although this may appear smart; it reveals the international risk that superpower dynamics could put the world in when self-interest overrides a common global concern.

(b) The U.S Policy towards Iran

The Iranian nuclear programme generated responses from the U.S in different ways. In fact, several policy measures were not only exploited but also suggested in tacking the issue. They all together offer us some insight into the posture of the U.S towards Iran during the Iranian nuclear tussle that assumed serious international dimension. The various approaches adopted by the U.S basically fall within the 'hard' or coercive measures (Dunn, 2007; Joshi, 2012;



Sherman, 2013) and the ‘soft’ or diplomatic path (Mousavian, 2012; Singh, 2013; Zarif, 2005). These measures were adopted by both administrations of former President Bush and President Obama. Both administrations did not restrict themselves to only a set of the approaches but the two consecutively.

The response of the Bush Administration was considered (initially) inclined along the lines of pre-emption. Dunn (2007, p.20) argues that even though this might have been the stated intention, “Washington remained committed to the controversial strategy adopted after 9/11 in both its rhetoric and final policy”. Dunn argued that despite the failure of the pre-emptive doctrine of the U.S on Iraq, it has continued to assume that posture in her campaign against nuclear weapons. However, aside from the hard- liner posture of the Bush administration, it was able to realize that “the diplomatic solution was the preferred option” (Dunn, 2007, p.20). The Bush approach was nevertheless less inclined to direct talks with Iran favouring more of third- party talks.

The coming on board of President Obama in 2009 did not ease the challenge of confronting the nuclear problem. The precise policy step to take was also a big issue. Nevertheless, President Obama built on the foundation laid by the Bush administration. In the same direction, both coercive and diplomatic options were experimented. However, things did not just dramatically change. “Severe sanctions regime” and “economic strangulation” (Joshi, 2012, p.53) imposed on Iran were not immediately snapped off. In fact, a more progressive multilateral path was used by the Obama administration. Joshi (2012, p.53) further confirmed that, “Western policy makers intensified pressure on Iran in great measure out of fear that Israel will launch a premature or counterproductive military strike against Iranian nuclear facilities”.

According to Joshi (2012), U.S pressures on Iran in were two-fold, namely “compulsion’ and ‘denial’. He notes that the compelling strategies deal with an adversary’s ability to pursue an undesirable policy. The denial strategies however are intended to persuade through punishment to willingly alter policy that is undesirable. Josh notes further that compulsion largely employed sanctions, asset freezes and visa bans against senior Iranian officials. The denial policy on the other hand targeted Iran’s nuclear and missile programmes rather than the broader economy. Similarly, it included: “an aggressive but informal technology-denial regime, sabotage of nuclear and missile related infrastructure and supply chains, and other



forms of covert actions such as the assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists and cyber warfare targeting Iranian centrifuges” (Joshi, 2012, p.59-60). Iran’s missile programme has also been a part of the security concern for the West. Through supports from North Korea and Russia, Iran was able to possess powerful missiles that could safely reach several countries around her neighborhood. This has particularly been of concern to the Israel and the U.S.

President Obama also toed the path of diplomacy. President Obama was able to press for an eventual negotiation with Iran even though it was not entirely a smooth journey. Mouasvian (2012) identified the failure of the Istanbul, Baghdad and Moscow talks held in spring and summer of 2012 as the result of disproportionate bargain with Iran. The talks actually did not metamorphose into a quick remedy. The position of Iran on her legal right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes continuously frustrated attempts at effecting a deal. Success was however recorded with time (Singh, 2013). The talks eventually came through with the 2015 deal as the peak of negotiations with Iran. Alongside the diplomatic path was a regional approach (Zarif, 2009). This approach was largely initiated by the Bush administration and inherited by the Obama administration. It supported arrangements for the building of nuclear plants in the Middle East for peaceful purposes. Countries like the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia were part of this arrangement. The intention was to send out signals that the U.S was against any likely intentions toward the path of nuclear armament but highly supportive of nuclear programmes for peaceful intention.

An Overview of the Iranian Nuclear Deal

Nuclear deal is an agreement, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is a landmark accord reached between Iran and several world powers in July 2015. Iran agreed to dismantle a chunk of its nuclear programme and open its facilities to more extensive international inspections in exchange for billions of dollars’ worth of sanctions relief.

The Iranian nuclear deal of year 2015 marks the eventual deal that was between the USA and her allies on one the hand and Iran on the other. The deal basically puts limit to Iran’s nuclear programme in order to ensure its civilians use. The terms and conditions of the deal are contained in the document of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The deal largely confirms Iran’s acceptance to reduce uranium enrichment or any other tendency that promotes nuclear weaponry in exchange for sanctions relief (Edelman, 2015). What this



suggests is that, “Iran reaffirms that under no circumstances will it ever seek, develop or acquire any nuclear weapons” (JCPOA document, 2015, p.3).

In the deal, Iran agreed to reduce its stockpile of Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) by 98 percent for 15 years; reduce the number of uranium-enriched centrifuges at its main nuclear processing centre in Natanz by two-thirds to 50,060; move the remaining centrifuges to a monitored site; turn its Fordow facility into a research centre; rebuild its Arak heavy water reactor in order to stop the production of weapons-grade plutonium (Edelman, 2015; Peralta 2015).

Also, the nuclear deal provides for constant monitoring by the IAEA to ensure that Iran does not breach the agreement. The White House described this in the following words:

The IAEA will not only be continuously monitoring every element of Iran’s nuclear programme, but they will also be verifying that no missile material is covertly carted off to a secret location to build a bomb. And if IAEA inspectors become aware of a suspicious location, Iran has agreed to implement the Additional Protocol to their IAEA Safeguards Agreement, which will allow inspectors to access and inspect any site they deem suspicious (Peralta, 2015).

In the text of the nuclear deal, Iran’s compliance was to be rewarded with withdrawal of several sanctions imposed by the UN, EU, and the USA. The UN Security Council was to issue out a resolution that will terminate previous sanctions-imposing resolutions: 1696 (2015), 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008), 1833 (2008), 1929 (2010), and 2224 (2015) (JCPOA Document, 2015, p.11).

The EU on the other hand was to terminate its sanctions on Iran that covered such areas as:

- i. Transfer of funds between EU persons and entities, including financial institutions, and Iranian persons and entities, including financial institutions;
- ii. Banking activities including the establishment of new correspondent banking relationships and the opening of new branches and subsidiaries of Iranian banks in the territories of EU member States;
- iii. Provision of insurance and reinsurance;
- iv. Supply of specialized financial messaging services, including SWIFT, for persons and entities set out in attachment 1 Annex II, including the Central Bank of Iran and Iranian financial institutions;



- v. Financial support for trade with Iran (export credit, guarantees or insurance);
- vi. Commitments for grants, financial assistance and concessional loans to the government of Iran.
- vii. Transactions in public-guaranteed bonds;
- viii. Import and transport of Iranian oil, petroleum products, gas and petrochemical products;
- ix. Export of key equipment or technology for the oil, gas and petrochemical sectors;
- x. Investment in the oil, gas and petrochemical sectors;
- xi. Export of key naval equipment and technology;
- xii. Design and construction of cargo vessels and oil tankers;
- xiii. Provision of flagging and classification services;
- xiv. Access to EU airports of Iranian cargo flights;
- xv. Export of gold, precious metals and diamonds;
- xvi. Delivery of Iranian banknotes and coinage;
- xvii. Export of graphite, raw or semi-finished metals such as aluminum and steel; and export of software for integrating industrial processes;
- xviii. Designation of persons, entities, and bodies (asset freeze and visa ban) set out in Attachment 1 Annex II; and
- xix. Associated services for each of the categories above (JCPOA Document, 2015, pp.11-12)

The United State also spelt out areas of sanction-withdrawal in the deal. Such areas are as follows:

- i. Financial and banking transactions with Iranian banks and financial institutions as specified in Annex II, including the Central Bank of Iran and specified individuals and entities identified as government of Iran by the office of Foreign Assets Control on the Specially Designated National and Blocked Persons List (SDN List) as set out in attachment 3 to Annex II (including the opening and maintenance of correspondent and payable-through account at non-U.S financial institutions, foreign exchange transactions and letters of credit);
- ii. Transactions in Iranian Rail;
- iii. Provision of US Bank notes to the government of Iran



- iv. Bilateral trade limitations on Iranian revenues abroad, including limitations on their transfer;
- v. Purchase, subscription go, or facilitation of the issuance of Iranian sovereign debt, including governmental bonds;
- vi. Financial messaging services to the Central Bank of Iran and Iranian financial institutions set out in Attachment 3 to Annex II;
- vii. Underwriting services, insurance or reinsurance;
- viii. Efforts to reduce Iran's crude oil sales;
- ix. Investment, including participating in joint ventures, goods, services, information, information technology, and technical expertise and support for Iran's oil, gas, and petrochemical sectors.
- x. Purchase, acquisition, sale, transportation or marketing of petroleum, petrochemical products and natural gas from Iran;
- xi. Export, sale or provision of refined petroleum products and petrochemical products to Iran;
- xii. Transactions with Iran's energy sector;
- xiii. Transactions with Iran's shipping and shipbuilding sectors and port operations;
- xiv. Trade in gold and other precious metals;
- xv. Trade with Iran in graphic, raw or semi-finished metals such as aluminum and steel, coal, and software for integrating industrial processes;
- xvi. Sale, supply or transfer of goods and services used in connection with Iran's automotive sector;
- xvii. Sanctions on associated services for each of the categories above;
- xviii. Remove individuals and entities set out in Attachment 3 to Annex II from the SDN list, the Foreign Sanctions Evaders List (FSEL); and
- xix. Terminate Executive Orders 13574, 13590, 13622, and section 5-7 and 15 of Executive Order 13628 (JCPOA Document, 2015, pp.12-14).

Sanctions related to Iran's nuclear programme were to be lifted upon her compliance with the agreement/deal. Only sanctions relating to terrorism and other human rights violation were to still be in place. Necessary measures were put in place for the adoption and implementation of the deal. Also, a mechanism for the resolution of any likely dispute was put in place. Quite



notably was the provision for sanctions to be re-imposed if Iran breaches the agreements of the deal.

It should be noted that the deal stipulate restrictions to very sensitive nuclear issues for only a limited time. It seems the U.S and her allies utilized an approach that could buy time for better engagements in the future, more like a struggle to address a very troubling issue as quickly as possible. For instance, some of the measures put in place were encoded within a 15-years' time frame and makes it seems as though the deal was limited in time, for example, “for 15 years Iran will not, and does not intend to thereafter, develop, acquire or build facilities capable of separation of plutonium, uranium, or neptunium from spent fuel or from fissile targets, other than for production of radio-isotopes for medical and peaceful industrial purpose” (JCPOA Document, 2015, p.25).

Implications of Iranian Nuclear Deal on the Politics of the Middle East

The Iranian nuclear deal has definitely opened up a world of possibilities or implied scenarios. The implications of the deal manifest in different dimensions namely domestic, regional, and even international dimensions. The fact remains that the template of nuclear non-proliferation could also be impacted. Aside from the basic fact that the deal means Iran's nuclear programme has been contained by the West, it also implies that the cause of nuclear non-proliferation has somewhat prevailed.

Domestically, the deal has the propensity to change the fortunes of Iran, both politically and economically. The deal could spur the continuity of political moderates like President in power as against hardliners who may not make room for the quick transformation that Iran needs. As moderates continue to hang on to power, the opportunity is afforded President Rouhani to fulfil his several promises including boosting foreign investments and increasing cultural and political interaction with the world (Farhi, 2015).

Economic turn-around would definitely increase the capacity of the Iranian government to take care of her citizens. A more viable economy would definitely mean a lot to Iran. The challenges of unemployment, inflation, and dilapidated social infrastructure could easily be managed under a more buoyant economy than one saturated with sanctions.

On a regional note, the deal has been applauded by several states in the Gulf region as well as the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Turkey, Qatar, Pakistan, Egypt, and Afghanistan



(Redriguen, 2015). On this note, the deal means more of co-operation is likely to take place. This is because the notion of Iran pursuing nuclear armament raised a lot of tension in Iran's immediate neighbourhood. The Middle East is a region of intense political tussle. A sort of arms race was likely to have been sustained; but now that a deal has been struck, the likelihood of peace is hypothetically high. On another hand, a more viable Iran is perceived to be a threat. States like Turkey and Saudi Arabia are sometimes considered rivals to Iran. The eventual deal therefore means a more empowered Iran which will be able to dominate the region and pursue her interests even at the expense of other states. The tendency for Iran to pursue regional hegemony is therefore a likely implication of the deal too.

Internationally, the deal is quite significant as it raises hopes of Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon-at least for now. It also means that an opportunity avails Iran to further integrate into the global frontiers of international interaction and co-operation. Years of sanctions have inflicted some "isolationist status" on Iran. The deal however, opens up Iran to greater acceptability and interaction with the global community. The fear of falling oil prices has also been projected (Zulfqar, 2016). This standpoint considers that Iran's joining the oil market will offset some fall in oil prices even though with Iran gaining due to the revenue she will make any way.

Also, the very framework of nuclear non-proliferation will likely receive a boost as a result of the deal. This means that more multilateral measures and intense diplomatic engagements may be harnessed in future struggles against nuclear proliferation. There is likely going to be more emphasis on multilateral pressure and the use of sanctions in the future fight against nuclear weapons expansionism. The deal no doubt has some implications on the very framework of nuclear non-proliferation. AsLodgaard (2011, p.150) rightly captures it in the following words: "the outcome of the Iran conflict is therefore rich in consequences for the non-proliferation regime-for better or worse". In the end, the document of the JCPOA shows how both sides (Iran and the U.S) did let go of certain things in order to gain some other ones. A military strike probably would have resulted in a different outcome all together.

The deal has therefore become an open door to several outcomes, which could either be positive or negative. These scenarios are largely perceptions of how things may likely turn out to be. The major issue has however been on whether both sides will be faithful or committed



to their terms and conditions of the deal. This is will go a long way in determining the survival or otherwise of the deal.

Concluding Remarks

The paper assessed the implications of Iranian nuclear deal on the politics of the Middle East. The paper deployed the Realist theoretic perspective as a framework of analysis for explaining its subject matter. The result of this analytical discourse showed that, Iranian nuclear deal means more of co-operation is likely to take place in the Middle East even though Iran is still perceived as a potential threat. Also, the eventual deal means the emergence of a more empowered Iran capable of dominating the region and pursuing her interests at the expense of other states. It further showed that the tendency of Iran pursuing regional hegemony is very high. The paper therefore concludes that Iranian nuclear crisis is an indication that states' intention to pursue nuclear armament is not yet over. Based on these findings and conclusion drawn, the paper recommended that the security balance of the Middle East must be maintained in order not to experience a sudden collapse of peace and stability in the region. Also, states in the region must be made to realize the dangers of taking measures that could lead to a race for arms, especially nuclear armament.

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