

Iran Nuclear Deal

What is the background of Iran Nuclear Deal?

- In 1950s, Iran received the help of the United States through the “**US Atoms for Peace Program**” for nuclear proliferation.
- During this time, Iran followed international nuclear standards and the Iranian Parliament ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
- Following the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the relationship between Iran and the United States changed dramatically.
- Beginning in 1987, Iran received nuclear plans and imports, such as centrifuges, from unknown foreign entities.
- It is now known that Iran established its nuclear weapons program, known as **Project Amad**, in the late 1990s/early 2000s.
- The number of uranium-enriching centrifuges assembled by Iran reached about 3,000 from just a few hundred in 2002.
- Its stockpile of low-enriched uranium also grew, giving Tehran the ability to, theoretically, make enough-weapons grade uranium for an atomic bomb.
- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) found that Iran had failed to meet safeguards obligations.
- This prompted the international community to mediate a deal with Iran.

What is the Iran Nuclear Deal about?

- **JCPOA**- Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or Iran nuclear deal is an agreement on the Iranian nuclear program reached in Vienna in 2015 between Iran and P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, UK, USA).
- The European Union also took part.
- **Objectives**
 - **Nuclear restrictions**- The accord limits the numbers and types of centrifuges, the level of enrichment, as well as the size of the stockpile of enriched uranium that Iran can hold on.
 - **Monitoring and verification**- Iran agreed to allow inspectors from IAEA, access to its nuclear facilities and to undeclared sites.
 - **Sanctions relief**- The EU, United Nations, and United States all committed to lifting their nuclear-related sanctions on Iran.
 - **Weapons embargo**- The parties agreed to lift an existing UN ban on Iran’s transfer of conventional weapons and ballistic missiles after 5 years if IAEA certifies that Iran is only engaged in civilian nuclear activity.
- **USA’s pullout**- Later, Trump administration pulled out from the deal in May 2018 and exerted maximum pressure on Iran to renegotiate through its sanctions.

Uranium enriched to 5 % is used in nuclear power plants, and at 20% it can be used in research reactors or for medical purposes. High-enriched uranium, at some 90 %, is

used in nuclear weapons.

What happened aftermath the withdrawal of the U.S. from JCPOA?

- **Iran's response-** 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 (IRGC) commander, Iran said that it would not commit to JCPOA's restraints but it will maintain cooperation with IAEA.
- **USA's side-** U.S. pushed ahead with its unilateral sanctions by widening the scope.
- By end-2020, U.S. had imposed nearly 80 rounds of sanctions targeting close to 1,500 individuals and entities in Iran.
- **Vienna talks-** Started in 2021, the aim of the talks is to produce a road map for the revival of the JCPOA by addressing Iran's nuclear enhanced programme and American sanctions.
- The U.S. wants Iran to end its uranium enrichment and centrifuge development programmes and return to the 2015 agreement but Iran opposed it and sought for more concrete measures from the U.S.
- The talks collapsed as Biden administration refused to remove the terrorist designation of the IRGC, a critical arm of Iran's armed forces.
- **Doha talks-** The indirect talks started in 2022 between US and Iranian officials in Doha, Qatar, aimed at salvaging the Iran nuclear deal ended without any progress.



What is Iran's current nuclear activity?

- In 2020, after the U.S. targeted killing of a top Iranian general, Qasem Soleimani, Iran announced that it would no longer limit its uranium enrichment.
- In response to the assassination of a prominent nuclear scientist, Iran's parliament passed a law that led to a substantial boost in uranium enrichment at Fordow.
- In 2021, Iran announced new restrictions on the IAEA's ability to inspect its facilities, and soon after ended its monitoring agreement with the agency completely.
- There were reporting that Iran was days away from enriching enough uranium for a bomb.

What lies ahead?

- European Union diplomat Josep Borrell had proposed a new draft text to revive the accord under which Iran curbed its nuclear programme in return for relief from economic sanctions.
- If the negotiations were to fail and Iran was confirmed to have violated the deal, all UN sanctions would automatically snap back in place for 10 years, with the possibility of a five-year extension.

References

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