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COMMITTEE: Security Council

TOPIC: The Question of Iran

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INTRODUCTION

The question of Iran has been one of the most common subjects addressed in the General Assembly since a few months. It is nowadays matter of economic and political instability at international level and develops as the major world powers discuss on how to tackle the discrepancies.

On July 14, 2015 the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – referred to as the Iran Nuclear Deal - was signed by the United States' former president Barack Obama, alongside the United Kingdom, Russia, France, Germany and the European Union. The Deal aims at suspending Iran's uranium enrichment, preventing the Country from utilising nuclear power for war means.

The destabilising fact came on May 8, 2018 when the United States withdrew from the deal. According to Trump's speeches, Iran would have used the funds received under the JCPOA to build nuclear-capable missiles, fund terrorism, and fuel conflict across the Middle East and beyond. The United States eventually imposed a wide range of sanctions – both to force Iran to renegotiate the deal and to halt its supposed threats in the Middle East.

As reported by Iran, United States' sanctions are illegitimate and go against international interest. The re-imposition of sanctions is viewed as illegal by the international community. Which is why the EU, China and Russia have shown "*regret and concern*" in Trump's decision and keep collaborating under the JCPOA.

The ongoing situation sees world powers divided into two. On the one hand, the United States threatens companies that keep doing business with Iran and is supported by Israel; on the other hand NATO Powers have detached with serious and effective measures.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

JCPOA: The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action specifically provides for halting Iran's nuclear program in change of lifting of sanctions (*), which have exacerbated the Country's economy and population for several years. Iran, that must be subjected to UN periodic inspections, would be isolated and subjected to international sanctions if not respecting the deal.

Uranium enrichment: sensitive technology used in nuclear power reactors that enriches uranium in the U-235 isotope. The process involves gaseous uranium in centrifuges. It is subjected to tight international control. Under the JCPOA, Iran can build centrifuges parts, but these cannot be used for a decade – which ensures that the Country utilises programs only destined to energy production and medical uses. Iran's uranium stockpile has been reduced by 98% to 300kg (660lbs) – an amount that must not be exceeded until 2031 - and the stockpile's level of enrichment must be kept at 3.67%

NATO: International alliance that guarantees the freedom and the security of its members through political and military means. It includes the JCPOA signatory Countries of the European Union and the United States. The alliance is therefore commonly mentioned in global news.

Teheran: How the Iran regime is most of time called – referring to Iran’s capital city.

Embargo: official suspension of import and/or export of a good for political or economic reasons. It isolates the Country and creates significant difficulties to it (see paragraph “Deeper Explanation of the topic”).

IAEA: International Atomic Energy Agency. It promotes nuclear energy to be used by peaceful means.

NPT: Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It aims to prevent the spread of the nuclear weapons, to foster its use by peaceful means and to further the goal of disarmament. The Treaty has a safeguard system, under the responsibility of the IAEA.

ICJ: International Court of Justice. It is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations and has its seat in The Hague.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- **Iran and U.S.A. tension over oil control**

Deep political and economic tension between Iran and the U.S. has been going on since the beginning of the twentieth century because of their control over oil.

Since its discovery in Iran, British and American corporations have been controlling most of it. However, in 1951, **Iran’s Prime Minister Muhammad Mossadegh** - European-educated nationalist – decided to nationalise its oil. Since he went against Western interests, American **C.I.A.** and British Intelligence service to secretly overthrow him.

- **The Treaty of Amity**

The U.S.-Iranian Treaty of Amity was signed by the two countries in 1955. It aimed at emphasizing friendly relations and encouraging mutual trade and investments.

- **The Shah’s regime**

In 1953, the new leader **Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi** was proclaimed – the **Shah’s regime** was anti-communist and pro-Western. The Shah turned out to be a brutal, arbitrary dictator, whose people were under socio-political repression. Although Pahlavi returned 80% of oil to the U.S.A. and the U.K., getting tens of millions of dollars in foreign aid, the economy was threatened by high rates of inflation and a lowering of Iranians’ buying power and standard of living.

- **The Iranian Revolution of 1978/1979**

Many secular intellectuals wanted to overthrow the Shah’s regime, supported by the fact that previous experiments with parliamentary democracy and communist politics had failed; thus, they started following the populist, anti-American and radical cleric **Ayatollah Ruhollah**

Khomeini. He kept preaching against the Pahlavi regime, accusing it of irreligion and subservience to foreign powers.

In this context **the first relations between U.S.A. and Israel** started; Israel had hostilities with the overwhelming Muslim Arab States.

In July 1979 **Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini** led the population's revolution on overthrowing the Shah. The repression of the government actually fuelled the violence of the Shiites, according to whom martyrdom was fundamental in religious expression.

On April 1, 1979 Khomeini officially declared Iran as an Islamic republic, which returned to conservative social values. The regime, that suppressed any Western cultural influence, became even more violent and brutal than the previous one.

- **The Iranian Hostage Crisis**

Knowing the history behind the **Iranian Hostage Crisis** helps understanding the difficult relationship that nowadays persists between Iran and the U.S.A. On October 22, 1979, the shah arrived in New York – the monarch needed to get a cancer treatment in the United States. On November 4, a group of pro-Ayatollah Iranian students took in hostage over 60 Americans. The release of the hostages entailed significant consequences. The Iranian foreign minister Abolhasan Bani-Sadr asked the United States to stop interfering in Iran's affairs, in change of putting on trial the Shah in New York and of declaring as stolen property all the assets in the possession of the Shah. **Since then, the U.S.A. started a diplomatic campaign against Iran and stopped purchasing Iranian oil** – which means many Iranian assets were kept in the U.S.A. On December 4 and 31 it condemned Iran's actions in **two Security Council resolutions** and on November 29 filed suit against the Iranian government in the **International Court of Justice**. The international community kept endorsing United States' policy.

Moreover, during the 1970s a controversial Iranian resistance group has spread, known as the **People's Mujahedeen of Iran (MEK)**; it was listed as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) by the United States for its alleged killing of U.S. personnel during the Iran Hostage Crisis, but in 2012 it was delisted after the group's recognition of rejection of violence.

(*) In 2002 the **National Council of Resistance of Iran** - a political coalition and organisation founded in 1981 - found out Iran had two secret nuclear sites and **IAEA** indeed demonstrated the Country was not respecting the **NPT**, sending dossiers to the United Nations. **Since then, the Security Council plus Germany have imposed sanctions on Iran.**

- **Relevant alliances during the Mideast conflict**

The Sunni Muslim **Saudi Arabia** – one of the major U.S. allies - and the Shia Muslim **Iran** have been engaged in conflict for power in the Middle East for decades. One of Iran's closest allies is **Syria** because of their common foes – on one hand **Iraq**, seen from both as a threat to their security, on the other **Israel**, whose ideology goes against the one of Iran; moreover, Syria parted with Israel since the humiliating defeat of 1967 war. Iran has been gaining support from **Yemen**, whose position is evidently strategic and whose government is still weak. Actions from **Houthi** - a Shiite armed group of **Yemen** - against Saudi Arabia have caused the affected Country to create a coalition of 9 Sunni Arab States and to start bombing Yemen in 2015.

In 2009, the **National Security Archive** published documents revealing dispute on Iran's nuclear program between the U.S.A. and Iran. The negotiations between the two Countries over the selling of nuclear reactors in 1974 were actually preceded by the engagement of the **U.S.A., France and The Federal Republic of Germany** in implementing Iran's nuclear capabilities.

The creation of the JCPOA was brought on by the **rise of concerns from the U.S.A.** on many aspects – in particular, India testing its first nuclear bomb meant that it could proliferate it in the region and Shah announced it would use it for defence means.

DEEPER EXPLANATION OF THE TOPIC

By withdrawing from the Deal, the **United States** parted with European Allies. Trump signed an executive order imposing sanctions on foreign companies that kept economic ties with Iran. A second round of sanctions on Iran is planned for November. The U.S. strategy is therefore to levy “*maximum economic pressure*” on the Country.

The historic influence of **MEK** still has to do with the sphere of international relations. Since it was once used by the U.S.A. and Israel, it might be a means of opposing Iran. There are speculations that MEK has been involved in many terrorist attacks in France. Notably, **the U.S. openly sympathize with MEK's efforts to overthrow Iran's regime.** Trump explicitly addressed to the UN general assembly global cooperation in favour of a “*doctrine of patriotism*”; by doing so, he deliberated a high-risk campaign to intimidate Tehran. U.S.A.'s republican consultant and activist John Bolton said to seek to regime change in Iran, as well as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Hence, Trump's sanctions are used to force behaviour change on the Iran regime, too.

Talking about the JCPOA as a “*horrible, one sided deal*”, Trump urges all Nations to cope with the Iranian regime by either changing its behaviour, integrating it in global economy, or isolating it.

Nowadays, Iran's economy is corrupted and lacks appropriate administration. It is probable that Iran keeps supporting the **Houthi** with military means. Moreover, Iran tries to undermine the Sunni governments of Bahrain and the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.

Israel has praised the U.S.A.'s decision to withdraw. It keeps following Trump's footprints and calls for global cooperation in halting Iran's regional aggression and its ongoing plans to arm itself with nuclear weapons.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani identifies the United States as rulers with their own interest who even resemble a Nazi disposition and refers to extremists, nationalists, racists and xenophobic tendencies - their sanctions “*negate the principles of ethics and international law*”. Iran further confirms its will to act according to the law and the fulfilment of obligations. In case the deal collapses though, Iran stated it has begun to work on increasing its uranium enrichment capacity.

The ICJ has reprimanded U.S.A.'s re-imposition of sanctions, after Tehran's complain that it was **in violation of the Treaty of Amity and of the terms of the nuclear accord endorsed by a UN security council resolution.** The U.S.A. though believe Iran is abusing the ICJ for political and propaganda purposes.

The **United Kingdom** plays a leading role and has prominent power on foreign affairs. In a speech at the United Nations' Security Council, U.K.'s Prime Minister **Theresa May** talked about the preservation of the JCPOA as “*The best means of preventing Iran developing a nuclear weapon*”, further affirming United Kingdom's commitment to preserve the Deal - “*as long as Iran continues*

to abide by its obligations in full.” In fact, critics say the Iran Nuclear Deal remains one of the most effective means to control and limit nuclear weapons all over the world. Many from the U.K. argue that this had “*created a historic opportunity for complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation*” on the Korean peninsula.

Countries will be subjected to United States’ repercussions, especially after the second set of sanctions planned for November 4, 2018, that concerns a global **embargo** on Iran’s crucial oil exports. However, at the end of a recent UN meeting held by Russia, China, Iran and the European Powers Germany, France and U.K., a plan of **concrete financial countermeasures** as opposed to U.S.A.’s sanctions were presented. The **EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini** and the **Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif** have underlined the determination to protect the freedom of their economic operators to pursue legitimate business with Iran, in full accordance with **UN Security Council resolution 2231** (*2).

They will therefore continue the business on oil importation and exportation through a new system of payments called **SPV (Special Purpose Vehicle)**, through which it is possible to keep the trade, accumulating credit to be used then to pay other foreign companies for goods imported into Iran. This plan is likely to rescue Iran’s economy.

ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE UNITED NATIONS

(*2) Leaders Theresa May, Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel said: “*We recall that the JCPOA was unanimously endorsed by the UN Security Council in resolution 2231*”. The present resolution is therefore the legal framework that binds all Countries in solving the problem.

Moreover, the U.S.A. condemned Iran’s actions resulting from the Iran Hostage Crisis in two Security Council resolutions of December 4 and 31, 1979.

CHAIR’S SUGGESTIONS

In order to face this issue, it is of utmost importance to consider the political past of your Country. The historical background provided tackles Iran’s foreign relations with most Countries, though you will need to deepen your research, also by being kept up to date on the situation day by day. Thus, knowledge is key.

The question is complex, but extremely interesting when properly addressed. It has influenced international balances for decades and it will keep playing a leading role in nowadays’ politics.

As mentioned before, Security Council resolutions on the present question are very few, therefore you will need to create clauses according to your Country’s recent policy decision-making and position statements.

You can check the following websites.

- [https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2231\(2015\)](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2231(2015)) – The official document of UN Security Council Resolution n.2231.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqvghou5m3U> - The following video briefly explains the situation of Iran and can help understanding **just** the roots of the question of the Iran Deal.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=971cAcj-eZM> - Federica Mogherini’s speech on behalf of the EU willing to preserve the JCPOA.

- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/iran-nuclear-deal>
<https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/iran-nuclear-deal> The following websites provide comprehensive updated information on the question.

SOURCES

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<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/23/trump-attorney-rudolph-giuliani-us-iran-regime-change>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/26/may-chides-trump-over-decision-to-abandon-iran-nuclear-deal>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKQ09W3gUmA>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/sep/26/trump-idiocy-war-iran-president-midterms>