

## Iranian nuclear weapons

### “Impact of Iranian nuclear weapons in the Middle East”

Faten Y. Khalil \*

Atinbaş univesity, Turkey: Fatenyousefkh03@gmail.com

**ABSTRACT:** Iranian nuclear weapons affected the situation in the Middle East because this problem resulted in a conflict between Iran and United States allies in the Middle East. Iran supported groups in the Middle East such as Hezbollah and Houthis to threaten United States interests, so the Middle East became a tension zone. The conflict between Iran and the United States increased when the Western sanctions against Iran increased, which led Iran to increase Uranium enrichment.

**KEYWORDS:** Nuclear weapons, Middle East, Uranium, Conflict, Sanctions, Threat, Agreement..

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#### 1.Introduction

The Iranian nuclear file is a problem that no longer concerns Iran and the major world powers, but rather affects all countries of the Middle East region because the conflict between the United States and Iran over this file has had an impact on the Middle East and the countries of the region have become an arena for this conflict.

The conflict in the Middle East region has turned into a competition for influence between Iran and the United States and has led to wars that have caused the migration of millions of people, the killing and wounding of others, in addition to the downfall of systems and the collapse of institutions in a number of countries in the Middle East.

The American foreign policy witnessed a radical change when former US president Barack Obama took over the American administration whose policy was quieter. Obama tried to restructure American relations with its opponents in a more balanced way and resort to dialogue away from military solutions; this is what actually happened with Iran and Cuba (Branda, 2018).

Obama was aspiring to achieve common strategic interests with Iran, to change the Iranian ideological approach and try to reduce the threat of an Iranian nuclear bomb. So the United States began talks about Iranian nuclear energy until they reached a nuclear agreement in 2015.

US president Donald Trump had a different view. He started with an escalating rhetoric towards Iran from the first day in office and criticized Obama's policy towards Iran, and began accusing Iran of sponsoring and financing terrorism. Trump began planning to stop Iran's missile program and warned of Iran's role in the Middle East until the withdrawal from Iranian nuclear deal (Khalaf, 2020).

#### 1.1. Hypothesis and Research Questions:

The United States has fixed strategies and clear goals that do not change with the change of administrations, but the way to reach these goals differs from one administration to another.

Domination is the main goal that the United States is trying to reach by creating conflicts and fabricating crises. Iran suffers from a serious economic crisis, so it may resort to the negotiating table again Joe Biden is in office.

The papers deals with the US conflict with Iran and the roots of the crisis by answering the following questions:

-What is the impact of the Iranian nuclear weapons on the relations between USA and Iran?

-What are the tools that Iran used in the Middle to put pressure on the United States?

#### 1.2. Research importance

The Middle East region suffers from internal and external conflicts; most of these conflicts are caused by external interference in the affairs of Middle Eastern countries, especially the United States, which made the countries of the region an arena for resolving their differences and reaching their strategic goals.

The conflict between Washington and Tehran has caused a big gap in the Middle East, so it is important to study this conflict and know its repercussions on the region.

#### 1.3.Methodology:

Two types of methodology were used in this paper :

\*The historical method is used in the first part of the research, when dealing with the history of nuclear activity in Iran.

\*The analytical method is used in the second part of the research when analyzing the impact of the US- Iranian dispute on the Middle East region and the repercussions of the tension between the two countries on the countries of the Middle East.

#### 2. Iranian nuclear weapons

\*Corresponding Author: Faten Y. Khalil| Email- Fatenyousefkh03@gmail.com

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## 2.1. Background of Iranian nuclear weapons

Iran's nuclear activity began in the 1950s during the reign of Shah Mohamed Reza Pahlavi. In 1967 the United States provided Tehran with the Iran Nuclear Research Center (TNRC) with a small 5MWt research reactor (TRR) by highly enriched uranium (HEU), the Shah planned in 1973 to install 23,000 MW of nuclear power in Iran by the end of the century, During the five years that followed, Iran signed a number of nuclear technology contracts with foreign suppliers and launched employee professional education and training programs. In 1976 Iran paid about a billion dollars for 10% stake in the Eurodif uranium enrichment plant Tricastin in France, and 15% stake in the RTZ uranium mine in Rossing.

After the end of the war that Tehran waged with Iraq, the Iranian leaders began to refocus on the Iranian nuclear file. In 1990 Iran signed a long-term nuclear agreement with Pakistan and China; the agreement included training Iranian teams in nuclear technology and China agreed to supply Iran with a 27KW miniature neutron source reactor, and two 300 MW Qinshan power reactors. In 1995, Russia announced that it would complete the construction of the Bushehr nuclear reactors. This activity raised the suspicions of the United States and considered it a cover for developing secret weapons. These doubts led Washington to pressure suppliers to limit their cooperation with Iran. As a result, China did not provide Iran with the reactor that had been agreed upon; however, Russia continued to build the nuclear reactor and began to supply Iran with a nuclear reactor and covert research.

These steps exacerbated the disagreement between Tehran and the International Community, which prompted the Security Council to issue Resolution 1696 demanding Iran to stop its nuclear program, but Iran refused to implement the resolution, which led to the imposition of sanctions on Iran in 2006 based on the UN Security Council resolution.

International concerns about Iran's possession of nuclear activities began to increase, which prompted the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to send its inspectors for the first time in 2009, and ever since the United States and its European partners began drawing up a plan for an agreement restricting Iran's nuclear program. (<https://www.nti.org/learn/countries/iran/nuclear/>).

## 2.2. Iran nuclear deal

In 2015, Iran signed a long-term agreement with world powers (China, Russia, United Kingdom, United States, France and Germany), during the administration of Barack Obama. The aim of the agreement was to limit Iran's nuclear activities and allow international inspectors to enter its nuclear sites in exchange for lifting

the economic sanctions imposed on it. The agreement includes the following items:

### 1-Reducing uranium enrichment:

Using low-enriched uranium at a concentration of 3% or 4% for the production of nuclear plant fuel, Iran had about 20,000 centrifuges, but after the agreement, it only had about 5060 devices with little efficiency, and this level of enrichment continues until 2026.

### 2-Changes in the nuclear program:

Reducing Iran's stockpile of uranium by 98% (300 kilograms), a figure that Iran is not entitled to exceed until 2031, maintaining stockpile enrichment at 3.67% by January 2016, Iran must carry out nuclear research only in the Natanz nuclear reactor until 2013, and converting the underground reactor into a nuclear, physical and technological centre.

### 3-The fate of the Plutonium material:

Near the town of Arak, Iran was building a nuclear facility that works with heavy water that contains Plutonium used to make a nuclear bomb. Iran agreed to stop its operation and not supply it with fuel according to the nuclear agreement, and not to build an additional reactor that works with heavy water until 2031.

(<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33521655>)

American reaction to the nuclear agreement concluded during the administration of US President Barack Obama was divided between supporters and opponents. The Democrats considered the agreement a historic move, and a step to stop Iran's nuclear activity and its ability to build a nuclear bomb threatening world peace. The Republicans opposed the agreement and considered it an opportunity for all countries that aspire to establish a force to develop its nuclear activities and acquire dangerous nuclear weapons; it opens the possibility of a nuclear war in the future.

The nuclear agreement did not last for long, US President Donald Trump began to criticize the agreement during his election campaign until his arrival to the US administration in 2017; Trump considered the agreement the worst in his country's history, so he withdrew from the agreement in the same year he assumed the presidency, and began to impose sanctions on Iran for lack of commitment to the terms of the agreement, and tension began between the two countries.

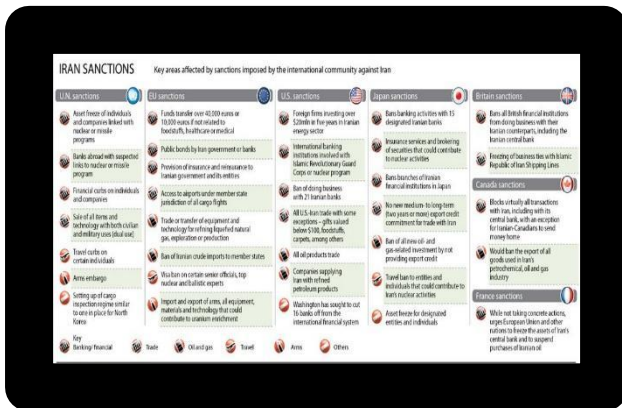
## 3. Conflict between Iran and United States

### 3.1. United States sanctions on Iran

Iran nuclear agreement in 2015 did not satisfy US president Donald Trump, because he considered it lacking in many terms, so Trump withdrew from it and opened negotiations with the Iranians to conclude a new agreement that would be comprehensive and stricter.

Trump accused Iran of not adhering to the term of the nuclear agreement, and began imposing successive economic sanctions targeting the Central Bank of Iran and the personalities and companies, which caused the

gradual collapse of its currency until Iran became unable to purchase raw materials for its industries or implement any development projects in the country. Washington's step was not accepted by the allies, who affirmed in a common statement that the Security Council resolution supporting the nuclear agreement is a binding decision. Washington did not pay attention to these attitudes and continued to impose sanctions and insisted on concluding a new agreement and returning to the negotiation, but Iran did not agree to this and began threatening to return to its nuclear activities and uranium (<https://studies.aljazeera.net/ar/node/1584>)



The International Atomic Energy Agency of the United Nations revealed in its reports that Iran continues to store low-enriched uranium and possesses about 12 times the amount permitted according to the nuclear agreement, This stock can be used to manufacture a nuclear weapon, and Iran continues its nuclear research. US President Joe Biden announced his readiness to return to the nuclear agreement concluded in 2015, provided that Iran stops its nuclear activities and agrees to restart negotiations on Iran's nuclear program to draw up a more stringent agreement, but Iran has not agreed to this proposal and is still continuing its nuclear activities (Norman, 2020). The conflict between Washington and Iran has an impact on the allies of two countries in the Middle East since Iran has begun expansionary steps towards Syria, Yemen and Iraq. These countries have become an arena for the US- Iranian conflict, a matter that scared the Gulf countries, allies of the United States.

### 3.2. The Impact of the US-Iranian conflict on the Middle East

The conflict between Washington and Tehran had bloody consequences in the Middle East. Iran supported the Bashar al- Assad regime in Syria during and before war. Mutual interests between the two countries prompted them to unify efforts and preserve their interests. Through supporting Assad, Iran is threatening Israel, putting pressure on the United States and achieving political gains; the Assad regime was seeking to preserve its presence by all means, Iran was also delivering its weapons to the Lebanese Hezbollah through Damascus

airport, which is another way to threaten Israel and its northern border with Lebanon, which is a new pressure Iran used against the United States (Sadjadpour, 2013).

As for Iran's interference in Yemen, its reasons are not much different from the reasons for its intervention in other regions in the Middle East, but the presence of the Shiite Houthis in Yemen gave Iran a new opportunity represented by the ideological domination, and the intellectual struggle it has been waging with Saudi Arabia for decades. This complicated the scene in the Middle East region because Saudi Arabia felt the danger and began a military campaign against the Houthis, which caused a bloody war in Yemen. Iran also sought to put pressure on the United States by threatening its Saudi ally, and thus Iran began threatening the Gulf region and trying to control the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran had a role in Bahrain as well. It mobilized the Shiites there to turn against the government, which caused security breaches, Bahrain resorted to foreign forces to restore security in the country, which increased Iran's danger in the Gulf region and raised these countries' fears of Iranian expansion (Cerioli, 2018).

Iran has great interests in Iraq, which is why Iran has made every effort to control it and expand its influence in it, the Shiites in Iraq are 60% of its population, so Iran took advantage of this to enter Iraq and control it after the removal of Saddam's regime. It was helped in this step by the Iraqi opposition that was outside Iraq and the Iraqis of Iranian origins who were expelled by Saddam from Iraq. They established militias and took control of the political decision in Iraq and even on the economy. The Iranian goods took control of the Iraqi markets and established banks affiliated with them through which they were able to smuggle foreign currency into Iran, especially after increasing the pressure on them due to the sanctions imposed by the United States, The control of the militias affiliated with Iran increased after the participation of these militias in the war against ISIS, which gave them the opportunity to control large areas in Iraq after the removal of ISIS (POLLACK, 2017).

The United States was not satisfied with Iran's role in Iraq, which prompted it to impose sanctions on Iraqi personalities and banks linked to Iran. In addition to warning Iraq against Iranian-affiliated parties taking control of, the US assassinated Quds Forces commander Qassem Soleimani in January 2020 and Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, the leader in the Hashed Al- Shaabi an air raid in Baghdad, which led militias affiliated to Iran to target the American interests in Iraq. This almost caused a diplomatic crisis between Iraq and the United States.

### Conclusion

The conflict between the United States and Iran is continuing due to Iran's resumption of its nuclear activities. Iran is trying to pressure Washington to reduce the economic pressures and sanctions imposed by the

\*Corresponding Author: : Faten Y. Khalil| Email- Fatenyousefkh03@gmail.com

United States, and has used the Middle East region to achieve this goal, especially the countries that it has an influence in such as Iraq, Syria and Yemen. Iran used the territories of these countries to attack the allies of the United States in the region.

The United States increased pressure on Iran through the sanctions which were imposed on Iran and persons supporting it, to force it to sign a new agreement, and supported its allies to strike Iranian interests, such as Saudi Arabia, which attacked the Houthis who support Iran in Yemen, and also applied pressure on the Iraqi government to reduce the role of the Iraqi militias that support Iran in Iraq. Israel the ally of the United States attacked the Iranian sites in Syria. Israel took advantage of the Iranian threat in the region and a number of Gulf states normalized their relations with Tel Aviv to ensure that Israel would protect them from the Iranian. It is a major achievement by Israel, taking advantage of the tension between the United States and its allies on the hand, and Iran on the other hand.

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