

**Journal of Religion & Society (JR&S)**

Available Online:

<https://islamicreligious.com/index.php/Journal/index>

Print ISSN: 3006-1296 Online ISSN: 3006-130X

Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)

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**THE ROLE OF JCPOA ON US-IRAN RELATIONS: A STUDY OF  
DIPLOMACY AND DISTRUST**

**Dr. Ramzan Shahid**

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science and International  
Relations, University of Gujrat

**Noor ul Ain**

M. Phil Scholar, Department of Political Science and International  
Relations, University of Gujrat

**ABSTRACT**

*This article investigates how the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) affects the complicated and frequently combative relationship between the United States & the Islamic Republic of Iran. Signed in 2015, the JCPOA was a historic deal intended at limiting Iran's nuclear program in return for sanctions relief, and it briefly created a way to communicate between the two long-standing adversaries. While the agreement was first viewed as a significant step toward de-escalation and nonproliferation, its execution showed strong mutual skepticism and political divisiveness in both countries. The Trump administration's unilateral departure from the accord in 2018 represented a turning point, reversing diplomatic gains and reigniting tensions. This article argues that, while the JCPOA did not fundamentally change US-Iran relations, it did highlight the potential and vulnerability of nuclear diplomacy in a context marked by mistrust along with competing geopolitical interests.*

**Keywords:** JCPOA, US-Iran Relations, Nuclear Diplomacy, Sanctions Relief, Nonproliferation, Foreign Policy, Vulnerability, Geopolitical Interests.

**Introduction**

The relationship between the US and Iran has been strained since the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the ensuing hostage crisis. Covert hostility, sanctions, and ideological disputes have characterized their dealings over the past four decades. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), agreed in 2015 by Iran and the P5+1 (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and Germany), was welcomed as a diplomatic breakthrough. It aimed to limit Iran's nuclear capabilities in exchange for sanctions relief. However, the accord revealed the complicated and sometimes fragile nature of US-Iran ties, which are riddled with historical

disagreements, mistrust, and competing geopolitical aspirations. While the JCPOA provided a framework for engagement and de-escalation, its eventual breakdown, particularly after the US exit in 2018, revealed the limits of diplomacy in the absence of strategic confidence. This analysis looks at the JCPOA's dual significance as a diplomatic milestone and a cause of increased conflict between the US and Iran.

The 2015 JCPOA momentarily altered this tendency by providing an example for conflict settlement via diplomacy. While the deal's design was centered on Iran's nuclear program, its larger ramifications for bilateral confidence, regional alliances, and international standards were significant. This article contends that, while the JCPOA established a diplomatic channel, the continuation of distrust on both sides, along with altering domestic politics, hampered its transformational potential. Prior to the JCPOA, US-Iran relations were characterized by deep enmity. Understanding the implications of the JCPOA necessitates a quick review of US-Iran ties throughout the twentieth century. The 1953 CIA-backed coup against Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, which reinstalled the monarchical rule of the Shah, marked the start of strong Iranian anger of American intervention. This event became a cornerstone of the revolutionary narrative, symbolizing American willingness to subvert Iranian sovereignty for its own geopolitical and economic interests (Kinzer, 2008). The subsequent 25 years of close US support for the Shah's often-brutal regime cemented this perception.

The 1979 Islamic Revolution and the ensuing 444-day hostage crisis at the US embassy in Tehran then exacerbated and reversed this bitter relationship (Hudson, 1989). Since then, the United States has considered Iran as a primary threat to regional security and a state sponsor of terrorism, whilst Iran's leadership has consistently portrayed the United States as an imperialist aggressor, the "Great Satan." (Beeman, 2008). The nuclear problem gained prominence in the early 2000s, when discoveries regarding Iran's undeclared nuclear facilities at Natanz and Arak stirred global alarm. Under President George W. Bush, the United States designated Iran as part of the "Axis of Evil," further isolating the country diplomatically and intensifying the standoff (Shah et al., 2024). This period was marked by a dangerous escalatory cycle of sanctions, defiant nuclear advancement by Iran, and covert actions, including the Stuxnet cyberattack which targeted Iran's enrichment centrifuges. Years of sanctions, talks, and near-conflict

occurred before the Obama administration embraced a dual-track policy: ratcheting up unprecedented international sanctions to create leverage while simultaneously pursuing direct engagement.

This led to a series of secret bilateral talks with Iran, facilitated by Oman, which ultimately paved the way for the formal P5+1 negotiations (Parsi, 2017). The electoral victory of the more moderate President Hassan Rouhani in 2013, who campaigned on a promise to resolve the nuclear issue and improve the economy, provided the necessary political opening in Tehran to bring these talks to fruition. The resulting JCPOA was a masterclass in technical diplomacy, deliberately "ring-fencing" the nuclear file from the host of other contentious issues between the US and Iran. Its core logic was transactional: Iran agreed to verifiably roll back its nuclear program in exchange for comprehensive sanctions relief. The agreement placed stringent, long-term limits on Iran's nuclear activities.

It capped uranium enrichment at 3.67%, limited the stockpile of low-enriched uranium to 300 kg, decommissioned thousands of centrifuges, and mandated the redesign of the Arak heavy-water reactor to prevent the production of weapons-grade plutonium (al-Harby, 2022). Critically, this entire framework was subject to the most intrusive verification regime ever negotiated, granting the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) expansive access under the Additional Protocol (Nephew, 2018). For its part, Iran was to receive relief from US, EU, and UN nuclear-related sanctions, unfreezing billions in assets and allowing its reintegration into the global economy. However, the very design that made the deal possible also contained the seeds of its undoing. The narrow focus on the nuclear issue left unresolved the deep-seated anxieties of US regional allies, particularly Israel and Saudi Arabia, who argued the deal provided Iran with a financial windfall to expand its ballistic missile program and support for proxy groups across the Middle East. Within the United States, the JCPOA faced immediate and relentless political opposition, largely framed as a partisan issue. Opponents criticized the "sunset clauses" the eventual expiration of key restrictions and argued it did not permanently dismantle Iran's nuclear potential (Gärtner, 2019). In Iran, the accord was met with similar suspicion from hardline factions, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), who viewed it as a capitulation to Western pressure.

They contended that the promised economic benefits were slow to materialize, as many international banks and companies remained

hesitant to re-engage with Iran for fear of falling afoul of remaining US primary sanctions related to terrorism and human rights. This mutual and deeply entrenched domestic opposition created a fragile political foundation for the agreement. The 2018 unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA by the Trump administration, and the subsequent reimposition of sanctions under a "maximum pressure" campaign, was the culmination of these pressures. This act not only shattered the diplomatic breakthrough but also validated the arguments of Iranian hardliners that the United States could never be a trustworthy negotiating partner.

In response, Tehran began to systematically and incrementally exceed the nuclear limits set by the accord, effectively unraveling the core non-proliferation benefits of the deal. Meaning by, the JCPOA stands as a paradoxical chapter in US-Iran relations. It was a remarkable diplomatic achievement that successfully neutralized an imminent proliferation crisis through negotiation rather than force. It demonstrated that even the most entrenched adversaries could find narrow grounds for agreement based on transactional interests. Yet, its collapse underscores a more sobering reality: a technical solution cannot, on its own, resolve a conflict rooted in decades of historical grievance, ideological animosity, and competing regional ambitions. The deep-seated mistrust, amplified by polarized domestic politics in both nations, proved more powerful than the meticulously crafted diplomatic framework. The legacy of the JCPOA is therefore a cautionary tale about the limits of diplomacy in the absence of a broader strategy for political reconciliation and trust-building.

### **JCPOA Structure and Objectives**

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) represents a pivotal, albeit contentious, moment in modern nuclear diplomacy. Its fundamental objective was narrowly defined yet profoundly significant: to verifiably block all of Iran's potential pathways to a nuclear weapon. The agreement was not a treaty of friendship or a comprehensive political settlement; rather, it was a technical, transaction-based arrangement designed to address a singular, urgent security threat through peaceful means. At its core, the JCPOA was a meticulously structured 'grand bargain'.

The P5+1 nations (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and the European Union offered Iran a route out of economic isolation in exchange for severe, long-term, and verifiable constraints on its nuclear program. This trade-off formed the central pillar of the accord. For Iran, the primary

incentive was the phased lifting of debilitating international sanctions that had crippled its economy, particularly those targeting its crucial oil and banking sectors. The unfreezing of billions of dollars in overseas assets and the ability to re-enter global energy markets were powerful motivators for compliance (Nephew, 2019). In return for this economic relief, Iran accepted a multi-layered set of restrictions. The agreement capped Iran's uranium enrichment at 3.67%, a level suitable for civilian power generation but far below the 90% threshold considered weapons-grade.

It also dramatically reduced Iran's centrifuge capacity by approximately two-thirds and limited its stockpile of low-enriched uranium to 300 kilograms for 15 years, effectively extending its "breakout time" the period needed to produce enough fissile material for one weapon to at least one year (Fitzpatrick, 2017). Furthermore, the agreement directly addressed the plutonium pathway to a weapon by requiring the redesign of the Arak heavy-water reactor, making it incapable of producing significant quantities of weapons-grade plutonium (Albright & Heinonen, 2014). This entire framework was underpinned by what was arguably the most intrusive verification and monitoring regime ever negotiated. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was granted unprecedented access not only to declared nuclear sites but to the entire nuclear supply chain, from uranium mines to centrifuge production facilities. This "cradle-to-grave" oversight, operating under the Additional Protocol, was designed to detect any covert diversion of materials or undeclared nuclear activities, providing a powerful deterrent against cheating. From a diplomatic standpoint, the JCPOA's narrow focus was both its greatest strength and its most significant vulnerability. Negotiators deliberately ring-fenced the nuclear issue from Iran's ballistic missile program and its regional activities to make a deal achievable (Esfandiary, 2017).

While this pragmatism secured an agreement and averted a potential military conflict, it also created significant geopolitical friction. The accord lacked broader trust-building mechanisms and did not assuage the security concerns of regional rivals, who viewed the sanctions relief as empowering Iran's conventional military and its support for proxy forces. This intentional omission, coupled with the time-limited nature of certain nuclear restrictions, failed to build a foundation of regional trust, ultimately leaving the agreement politically fragile and susceptible to the domestic political shifts that later challenged its existence.

The JCPOA's principal goal was to keep Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. In exchange for the removal of economic sanctions, Iran committed to reduce its stockpile of enriched uranium, limit enrichment levels, and agree to thorough checks by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Key stipulations included reducing Iran's centrifuge count by two-thirds. Limiting uranium enrichment to 3.67% for 15 years and granting IAEA access to all nuclear plants. Repurposing the Arak heavy-water reactor and Phasing out US, EU, and UN sanctions were the major objectives of JCPOA. From a diplomatic perspective, the JCPOA was a pragmatic solution that averted conflict while addressing proliferation concerns. However, the accord lacked larger trust-building procedures and did not address regional concerns like Iran's missile development or backing for proxy organizations.

### **Negotiation and Formation of the JCPOA**

The JCPOA was signed in July 2015 by Iran and the P5+1 (the United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and Germany) (Jovan, 2020). Iran agreed to major constraints on its nuclear program, including a 98% reduction in its uranium stockpile, the destruction of two-thirds of its centrifuges, and comprehensive IAEA inspections, in exchange for relief from economic sanctions. President Barack Obama hailed the agreement as a diplomatic victory, underlining that it would block Iran from developing a nuclear bomb for at least 10-15 years (Djuyandi et al., 2021). Iranian officials presented the agreement as a defense of national rights versus a concession. Despite strong resistance from both nations, the JCPOA was implemented in January 2016.

### **Initial Impact on Bilateral Relations**

The initial post-JCPOA period saw a tentative improvement in US-Iran ties. Direct contact routes between the two nations have grown. The effective execution of major JCPOA clauses resulted in partial sanctions removal, allowing Iran to re-enter the global oil and capital markets. Initial impact on US-Iran relations. Initially, the JCPOA caused a cautious melting. The Obama administration regarded the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action as a landmark achievement in advancing global nonproliferation diplomacy, while Iranian President Hassan Rouhani viewed it as an opportunity to restore his country's economy and reintegrate Iran into the international community. The accord represented a rare moment of cooperation between Washington and Tehran, two long-standing adversaries whose relations had been characterized

by decades of hostility and mistrust. During its early years of implementation, the agreement produced tangible results. Diplomatic contact between the two governments increased, signaling a cautious willingness to engage on areas of mutual concern. The International Atomic Energy Agency consistently verified Iran's compliance with the nuclear restrictions outlined in the deal, lending credibility to the agreement and easing global fears of a potential nuclear escalation (Kerr, 2021). Economically, Iran benefited significantly from sanctions relief. Its oil exports increased, generating much-needed revenue, while renewed international investment began to flow into sectors such as energy and infrastructure. For a time, these developments suggested that the JCPOA could pave the way toward a more stable and cooperative U.S.-Iran relationship. However, the sustainability of such progress depended heavily on mutual trust and continued political will, both of which proved fragile.

Nonetheless, mutual distrust remained. In the United States, critics (particularly Republicans and Israel) saw the agreement as overly mild. Iran's hardliners accused Rouhani of undermining sovereignty. The JCPOA was never institutionalized by Congressional acceptance or anchored inside a larger strategic trust, rendering it susceptible to political upheavals. Diplomatic communication expanded beyond nuclear problems. In January 2016, Iran freed numerous American inmates, while the United States recovered some of Iran's blocked assets, both of which were viewed as goodwill gestures. However, these were overwhelmed by a pervasive distrust. Iranian hardliners condemned Rouhani's administration of caving to Western pressure, while Republicans in the United States saw the agreement as facilitating Iranian aggression. Despite Iran's official compliance, the two countries continued to disagree on regional policy, particularly in Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon, where Iran's backing for non-state actors threatened US interests and friends (Seeberg, 2016).

### **US Withdrawal and the Return to Hostility**

The most decisive setback to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action came in May 2018, when President Donald Trump announced the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the agreement, branding it "the worst deal ever." (Khan, 2024). This move marked a turning point in US-Iran relations, as it signaled a shift away from the diplomacy that had culminated in the accord and toward a strategy of pressure and confrontation. The reimposition of sweeping economic sanctions under the

“maximum pressure” campaign quickly eroded Iran’s fragile economic stability, leading to severe declines in oil exports, currency value, and overall financial health (Huang, 2025). These measures also undermined public confidence within Iran, triggering widespread discontent and protests over rising inflation and unemployment. In response, Tehran began gradually stepping back from its commitments under the JCPOA. It resumed uranium enrichment beyond the agreed limits and expanded its nuclear activities, reducing the time required to achieve weapons-grade capability (Cordesman, 2021). This escalation not only heightened regional anxieties but also deepened mistrust between Washington and Tehran, making the prospect of renewed diplomacy increasingly remote. The withdrawal further strained transatlantic relations, as European partners who remained committed to the agreement struggled unsuccessfully to preserve its framework without US participation. The breakdown of the accord fostered a climate of confrontation rather than cooperation. By focusing criticism on Iran’s ballistic missile program, regional interventions, and domestic repression, Washington shifted the agenda from nuclear negotiations to broader strategic rivalry. This approach pushed both countries toward brinksmanship, where incidents of sabotage, targeted killings, and retaliatory strikes became defining features of their interaction. Ultimately, the US withdrawal not only reversed years of diplomatic progress but also entrenched a cycle of hostility, leaving the path back to meaningful negotiation fraught with obstacles.

### **The Trump Administration and US Withdrawal**

In May 2018, President Donald Trump announced the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (Galbraith, 2021), describing it as “the worst deal ever negotiated.” This decision marked a sharp departure from the previous administration’s strategy of diplomatic engagement and ushered in a policy of “maximum pressure.” The reimposition of sweeping economic sanctions sought to compel Iran into accepting a broader agreement that would restrict not only its nuclear program but also its ballistic missile development and regional influence. However, rather than bringing Iran back to the negotiating table on harsher terms, the move further destabilized relations and reignited tensions across the region. In response, Iran resumed enriching uranium beyond the limits agreed under the JCPOA, steadily reducing the time it would need to produce weapons-grade material. This development raised alarm in the international community, particularly in the Gulf, where



heightened tensions threatened regional security. The situation escalated dramatically in January 2020 when a US drone strike killed General Qassem Soleimani, a key commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (Kondoch, 2020). This event pushed the two countries perilously close to direct military conflict, with Iran launching retaliatory missile attacks on American bases in Iraq shortly afterward. European efforts to salvage the agreement proved unsuccessful without US support. While France, Germany, and the United Kingdom sought to preserve the deal's framework, their inability to shield Iran from the renewed sanctions weakened their position.

As Iran's economy suffered a sharp decline under the weight of US measures, widespread domestic unrest further complicated Tehran's calculations. Instead of creating leverage for diplomacy, the maximum pressure campaign deepened mistrust and hardened Iranian resistance. The US withdrawal also strained relations with transatlantic allies. European partners, who had been co-signatories of the JCPOA, viewed Washington's decision as a setback to multilateral diplomacy and international non-proliferation efforts. Meanwhile, American rhetoric increasingly shifted toward condemning Iran's regional activities, missile program, and human rights record, further narrowing the space for diplomatic engagement. Ultimately, the retreat from the JCPOA reversed the progress made since 2015 and replaced dialogue with brinksmanship and clandestine operations. Acts of sabotage, targeted killings, and retaliatory measures created a climate of deep hostility, leaving the possibility of renewed trust between the two governments severely diminished.

### **The Biden Administration and Efforts to Restore Diplomacy**

Joe Biden's electoral victory in 2020 created renewed hopes for reviving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (Baber et al., 2021). His administration signaled a willingness to return to the framework, provided that Iran resumed full compliance with its nuclear obligations. However, the political landscape in both countries had shifted significantly since the agreement's collapse. The election of Ebrahim Raisi in 2021 brought Iranian hardliners to power, altering Tehran's approach to negotiations (BENJAMIN, 2021). Iran insisted on assurances that any future US administration would not withdraw from the agreement again, a demand Washington found difficult to guarantee under its political system. Negotiations in 2021 and 2022 showed intermittent progress but ultimately stalled. The core obstacles centered on disagreements over sequencing, the extent of sanctions

relief, and the handling of Iran's non-nuclear activities, such as its missile program and regional influence. During this period, Iran advanced its nuclear program, significantly reducing its breakout time and enriching uranium to levels close to weapons grade.

These developments heightened international concerns and further complicated the negotiation process. Although both Washington and Tehran continued to affirm support for diplomacy in principle, the atmosphere of mutual suspicion deepened. US allies in the Middle East, particularly Israel and Saudi Arabia, opposed a return to the JCPOA, arguing that it failed to address the broader spectrum of Iranian threats. Their lobbying efforts pushed Washington to adopt a more cautious and firmer stance. In parallel, Iran sought to counterbalance Western pressure by strengthening its strategic partnerships with China and Russia. These alliances offered Tehran alternative economic and political support, reducing the urgency of compromise with the West. Overall, the attempted revival of the JCPOA demonstrated the enduring challenges of reconciling domestic, regional, and global interests in shaping US-Iran relations.

#### **Analysis on Broader Strategic Implications**

The failure of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) represents not only a setback in addressing nuclear proliferation concerns but also a broader indication of the complexities inherent in modern international diplomacy. While the accord was initially hailed as a breakthrough in easing decades of hostility between the United States and Iran, its eventual unraveling underscores deep-seated mistrust, conflicting strategic priorities, and the fragility of agreements that lack robust institutional safeguards and domestic consensus. Examining the implications of its collapse requires attention to multiple layers, including the long-standing trust deficit, the volatility of US foreign policy, shifting regional dynamics, and the competing demands of domestic politics. Collectively, these elements shed light on the structural barriers to sustainable diplomacy in one of the world's most volatile regions. One of the most significant challenges to the success of the JCPOA was the entrenched trust deficit between Washington and Tehran. For decades, the relationship between the two states has been shaped by hostility, beginning with the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the subsequent hostage crisis, followed by decades of mutual suspicion, covert operations, and rhetorical antagonism. This enduring lack of trust meant that no single accord, regardless of its design, could fully overcome the historical baggage shaping perceptions on both sides.

Iran remained convinced that the United States was committed to undermining its sovereignty, while Washington viewed Tehran's strategic ambitions with deep suspicion. As a result, even during the period of JCPOA implementation, each side questioned the sincerity of the other's commitment, limiting the scope for durable cooperation. Another crucial factor was the volatility of US foreign policy, which undermined the credibility of the agreement. Successive American administrations have often shifted foreign policy directions, especially on issues as contentious as Iran. The withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA highlighted the challenge for adversaries in trusting the continuity of American commitments. For Iran, the agreement's abrupt abandonment by a new administration confirmed longstanding fears that the US political system was incapable of sustaining a consistent diplomatic framework over the long term. This policy unpredictability weakened the agreement's foundation and signaled to Iran and other international actors that American commitments could be reversed with a change in leadership, rendering long-term accords precarious. Regional dynamics further complicated the prospects of the JCPOA. The agreement focused narrowly on nuclear issues, but the US-Iran rivalry is deeply intertwined with broader conflicts in the Middle East. In Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and the Gulf, both nations continue to pursue opposing objectives, often through proxies and competing alliances. These regional tensions made it difficult for either side to fully embrace the JCPOA as a path to rapprochement.

For Washington and its regional allies, Iran's influence across the Middle East was viewed as a direct challenge to security and stability, while for Tehran, its regional posture was seen as essential to deterrence and survival in a hostile neighborhood. By failing to address these wider regional concerns, the agreement remained vulnerable to external shocks and competing strategic calculations. Domestic political dynamics within both countries also played a decisive role in undermining the JCPOA. In the United States, the lack of bipartisan support meant the agreement was politically fragile from the outset. Critics portrayed it as a concession that emboldened Tehran, making it a contentious issue in American domestic politics. Similarly, in Iran, hardline factions framed the deal as evidence of Western duplicity, using the persistence of economic difficulties under sanctions as proof of American unreliability. These domestic pressures created powerful incentives for leaders on both sides to adopt uncompromising positions, ultimately constraining the diplomatic space necessary

for the agreement's survival. The interplay between domestic politics and foreign policy thus revealed how internal dynamics can significantly limit the durability of international accords. The persistence of economic sanctions further weakened the JCPOA's promise. While the agreement formally lifted certain restrictions, in practice, Iran continued to face significant obstacles in accessing international banking systems and attracting foreign investment. For Tehran, this confirmed suspicions that the United States and its allies would never allow Iran to reap the full benefits of compliance.

From Washington's perspective, sanctions remained a vital instrument of leverage, necessary to pressure Iran into broader concessions beyond the nuclear file. This mismatch in expectations not only undermined confidence in the deal but also fueled Iranian skepticism about the value of engaging with the West diplomatically. The continued economic strain reinforced hardline narratives within Iran and made it more difficult for moderates to defend the accord. Another unresolved issue was Iran's missile program and its support for proxy networks across the region. For the United States and its allies, these elements of Iranian strategy were viewed as destabilizing and threatening to regional security. Yet for Tehran, such capabilities were not negotiable, being considered essential for its deterrence strategy and survival in a volatile neighborhood. The JCPOA's failure to address these dimensions of Iran's defense and foreign policy allowed critics to argue that the deal was incomplete and insufficient, further eroding support for its continuation.

The inability to expand the scope of negotiations beyond the nuclear file thus left the agreement vulnerable to accusations of inadequacy from both sides. Verification and compliance concerns also played into the erosion of trust surrounding the JCPOA. Despite repeated confirmations from international monitoring bodies that Iran was in compliance, critics within the United States continued to argue that the inspections were insufficiently rigorous. Demands for "anytime, anywhere" inspections highlighted the deep-seated suspicion of Iranian intentions, even when evidence suggested adherence to the accord. This narrative of potential non-compliance, regardless of facts on the ground, shaped public and political perceptions in the United States and provided justification for the withdrawal. The persistence of such doubts illustrates the difficulty of sustaining arms control agreements in the absence of mutual confidence and bipartisan domestic support. Compounding these challenges were ongoing

political upheavals in both countries. In Iran, the influence of hardline elements and the use of foreign policy as a tool for mobilizing domestic support limited the ability of the government to commit fully to the JCPOA.

In the United States, the absence of consensus between political factions created an environment where the agreement was constantly under threat. Together, these domestic dynamics ensured that the JCPOA lacked the stability necessary for long-term success, making its collapse almost inevitable once political winds shifted. Despite these setbacks, the JCPOA remains an important case study in the potential for adversaries with deep-rooted hostility to find common ground through negotiation. It demonstrated that, even amidst decades of enmity, there exists the possibility for diplomatic breakthroughs that serve the interests of both sides. The temporary success of the accord illustrates that negotiation, compromise, and multilateral cooperation can produce tangible results, even in the most challenging circumstances.

However, its failure highlights the need for stronger institutional mechanisms, firmer international guarantees, and a gradual process of confidence-building to ensure that agreements can withstand changes in leadership and domestic politics. Looking forward, the lessons from the JCPOA suggest that sustainable diplomacy requires a broader approach that addresses not only the immediate nuclear question but also the underlying strategic, regional, and domestic factors fueling mistrust. Confidence-building measures, regional security dialogues, and mechanisms to mitigate the impact of domestic political shifts could all contribute to more resilient agreements in the future. Ultimately, the JCPOA's collapse underscores that diplomatic accords cannot succeed in isolation from the larger geopolitical and domestic contexts in which they are embedded. The challenge for future negotiations lies in crafting frameworks that account for these complexities while fostering an environment of gradual trust and mutual benefit.

## **Conclusion**

The JCPOA was a historic attempt to settle a significant worldwide security issue through diplomacy. While it temporarily halted Iran's nuclear programs and created lines of communication, it failed to establish long-term confidence. The United States' departure and subsequent escalation highlighted the deal's vulnerability in the face of domestic and global forces. Nonetheless, the JCPOA remains a focal point in discussions on

nuclear nonproliferation and conflict resolution. Future discussions, whether to renew the JCPOA or create a new framework, must address the underlying concerns that have long hampered US-Iran relations: mistrust, policy contradiction, and regional rivalry. Only by moving beyond transactional diplomacy to strategic understanding can a long-term peace be envisioned. The JCPOA was a historic attempt to end decades of hostility between the United States and Iran. While it momentarily de-escalated nuclear tensions, it failed to fundamentally alter the hostility that underpins bilateral ties. The United States' departure from the accord sent a signal to Iran and the rest of the world because American diplomatic commitments may be overturned with political change, undermining US credibility. Meanwhile, Iran's selective compliance and continued regional actions fueled Western concerns. Moving forward, a return to the JCPOA or a new deal will include not only technical arrangements, but also a larger commitment to partnership and regional stability.

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