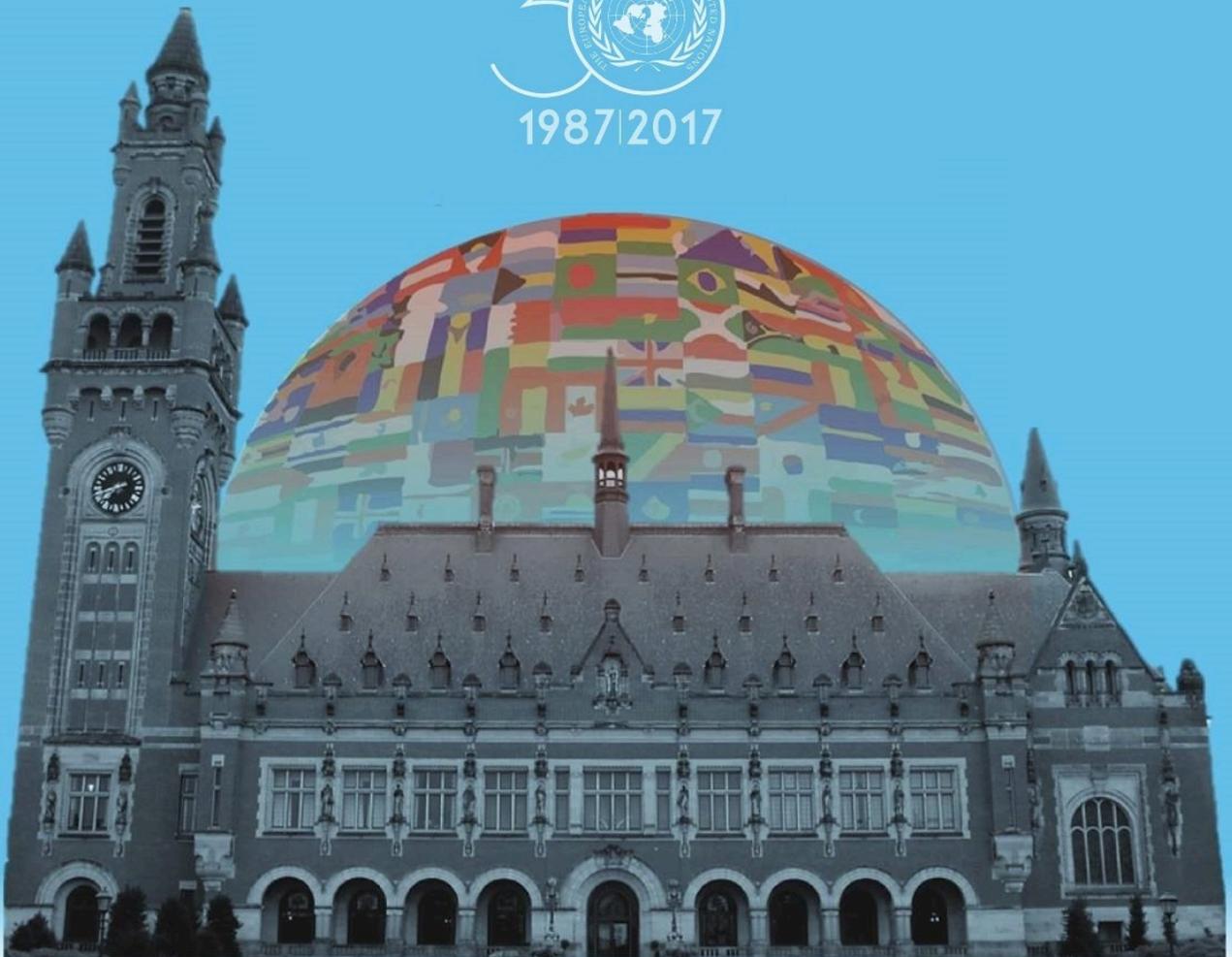


TEIMUN

THE EUROPEAN INTERNATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS

EUROPEAN COUNCIL

REASSESSING EU-IRAN RELATIONS



Welcome letter

Distinguished delegates,

As The European International Model United Nations (TEIMUN) conference swiftly approaches, we would like to bid you a fair welcome to The Hague. At TEIMUN it does not matter if you are an experienced delegate or first time MUN'er, you will leave the conference with new friends, fun memories and a better understanding of how the United Nations operates.

John Bruton once said that: "the European Union is the world's most successful invention for advancing peace." From the initial establishment of the EU and its institutions, the organization has been unique in the world and has developed, grown, and changed. This is a continuous process. The European Union has been a trailblazer in human rights, development and economic prosperity. This year within the European Council we will be discussing two topics. These are "Strengthening the EU's External Borders" and "Reassessing EU-Iran Relations". As your chairs, we are looking forward to heated debates, productive sessions and a conference filled with fun. Throughout this week, we hope that you will seize this unique opportunity to open your mind to new friends, new ideas and new experiences. At TEIMUN we all become one big family and that is only possible if you come with open minds and open hearts to The Hague.

If you have any issues concerning the topics or the rules of procedure, or perhaps you simply wish to have a chat with us, please feel free to contact us at any time. We are looking forward to meeting you soon, and wish you a warm welcome to TEIMUN 2017!

Your chairs,

Laurens van der Sluijs and Stephan Naumann
EC@teimun.org

Introduction

Iran's historic predecessor, Persia, was already of central importance to the ancient Greeks, being one of the main trading partners as well as threats to the Greek city states. Persia was also one of the few countries in Asia that resisted colonization in modern times. The line of succession between these two points in history is marked by changing dynasties, all of which had today's Iran as the center of their empires, the respective capitals switching between Tehran and Esfahan.

Having resisted formal colonization, Iran's twentieth century history is nonetheless intrinsically linked with foreign powers permeating its sovereignty and the geopolitical circumstances. Iran itself changed the geopolitical landscape with the 1979 Islamic Revolution against the Western-backed Shah. This led to a shift in the balance of power in the Middle East, where Iran has since claimed to be the safeguard of Shia Muslims.

The delicate situation only worsened when the Iran nuclear program caused international condemnation for not complying with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). However, the recently signed Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, often referred to as the Iran Deal, has helped resolve differences created by the Iranian nuclear program, and EU-Iran relations, heavily strained in the 2000s, may be set for a new chapter. The precise nature of this new chapter is still developing, and the European Council has an important voice in this regard, being able to streamline a European position on further cooperation with Iran and the conditions of such cooperation.

Historical Background of Iran

Historically, Persia was the common name for what is now known as Iran and is home to one of the oldest continuous major civilizations, "with historical and urban settlements dating back to 7000 BC".¹ Persia and its history in turn, are closely related to the history of a larger region: Greater Persia, which extends throughout Central Asia to current Pakistan in the East and the Caucasus in the West. These areas were under Persian rule during several Persian monarchies, the most relevant being the Safavid dynasty.² The lasting impact of the Safavid rule (1501-1736) was the introduction of Twelver Shiism as the official state

¹ Dodd, G. (2007). *New evidence: modern civilization began in Iran*. Retrieved from: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-08/10/content_6508609.htm

² G. Bingham Powell Jr., Russel J. Dalten, Kaare W. Strom, *Comparative Politics Today*, 11th ed., Boston: Pearson, 2014, 560.

religion, a defining feature of Iran still today.³

In spite of never being formally colonized, Iranian history in the 20th century is inescapably linked with the behavior of great powers towards it. From 1907 English and Russian interests coincided and together they dominated the economic life in the country. This was particularly clear through the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, over which the Iranians had no say. The weakened standing of the ruling Qajar dynasty led to its subsequent overthrow by Reza Khan, who maintained power over the newly renamed Iran through dictatorial means until Allied occupation in 1941.⁴ In the 1950s, his successor and son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, was confronted with a rising tide of anti-colonialist sentiment within his government, eventually leading to demands to nationalize the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, and forcing him into temporary exile. These demands and the fear among Western powers that Iran could fall into the Soviet sphere of influence resulted in a British-planned CIA-backed coup, which placed Mohammad Reza Pahlavi back in power.⁵

Mohammad Reza's subsequent autocratic regime and continued willingness to cooperate and deal with western powers set the stage for the 1979 Iranian revolution. While he enjoyed support from Western powers on both sides of the Atlantic, his introduction of the "White Revolution", a set of reforms to westernize Iran, caused him to lose the support of the powerful clergy, the ulema.⁶ The Iranian Revolution transformed Iran profoundly, from a constitutional monarchy (which was, de facto, an authoritarian regime) into a parliamentary theocracy - basing the entire political and legal order on religious texts. In spite of many different motives being present in the revolt, the ulema under leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini managed to secure the support of key players and saw theocracy accepted in a 1979 plebiscite.⁷ It also transformed Iran into an international pariah state, exemplified by the Tehran Hostage Crisis, where Iranian youth held US diplomats hostage for over 400 days.⁸ Since the

³ Marcinkowski, C., *Shi'ite Identities: Community and Culture in Changing Social Contexts*, Münster: LIT Verlag, 2010, 83.

⁴ Bingham Powell et. al., *op. cit.*, 563.

Iran Chamber Society. (n.d.). *When Persia became Iran*. Retrieved from: http://www.iranchamber.com/geography/articles/persia_became_iran.php

⁵ Bingham Powell et. al., *op. cit.*, 564.

⁶ Iran Chamber Society. (n.d.). *Islamic Revolution of 1979*. Retrieved from: http://www.iranchamber.com/history/islamic_revolution/islamic_revolution.php

⁷ Abrahamian, E., *A History of Modern Iran*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

⁸ N/A, Iran-U.S. Hostage Crisis, retrieved from http://www.historyguy.com/iran-us_hostage_crisis.html.

Islamic Revolution, Iran has sought to maintain a hegemonic position as defender of the Shiite minorities in other countries, a position it holds until today.

Partly due to this reinforced Shiite politicization, the government of Iraq under Saddam Hussein declared war on Iran in 1980. The Hussein regime was backed by the major Western powers as well as the Soviet Union, as post-revolution Iran had become an unknown international quantity and political powers around the world worked to restore the previous status quo.⁹ Iraqi progress halted after two years, and Iran managed to regain the previously lost territories. The war thus ended without territorial change in 1988, when both parties accepted a UN-brokered ceasefire.¹⁰ The end of the Iraq-Iran war represents another shift in Iran's position in the international arena. In 1991, Iraq was identified as the aggressor of the war, who had used chemical weapons in the conflict.¹¹ The death of the leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, in 1989 increased international discussion within Iran again, and clear camps concerning foreign policy developed: a hawkish side, aiming to "export the revolution", and a dovish side, which sought international recognition for the Islamic regime.¹² Likely the central feature of discussion, both within Iran as well as about Iran, was the Iranian nuclear program, which has been at the center of diplomatic relations between European states and Iran ever since the end of the Iran-Iraq War, and particularly more so since the turn of the millennium.

Relations after the Islamic Revolution

Whereas the United States have issued sanctions on Iran since the Tehran Hostage Crisis, European countries have been more open towards trade relations with Iran. While they also supported Iraq during the Iraq-Iran War, they

⁹ Anthony Best, Jussi M. Hanhimäki, Joseph A. Maiolo and Kirsten E. Schulze, *International History of the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, 2nd ed., London and New York: Routledge Publishers, 2008, 465-466.

¹⁰ Molavi, A, *The Soul of Iran: A Nation's Journey to Freedom*, England: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005, 152.

¹¹ Tarock, A., *The superpowers' involvement in the Iran – Iraq War*, New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1998, 208.

In fact, many scholars argue that the international community willingly closed its eyes to the Iraqi use of chemical weapons. See, for instance, Hiltermann, J., *America didn't seem to mind poison gas*, Global Policy Forum (website), 2003, retrieved from:

<https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/169/36403.html>; or

King, J., *Arming Iraq and the Path to War*, U.N. Observer and International Report (website),

2003, retrieved from: http://www.iranchamber.com/history/articles/arming_iraq.php

¹² Anthony Best et. al., *op. cit.*, 466.

welcomed the election of Akbar Rafsanjani as Iranian president in 1989. As Iran's domestic and foreign policy stabilised, the EU intensified relations with Iran.¹³ However, this rapprochement did not follow the usual path of trade and operation, as the EU was concerned with the human rights violations in Iran. The critical dialogue, adopted in 1992 and led by Germany, France and the UK, served as a specific forum for negotiations to address the most worrisome issues, e.g. human rights practices, support for terrorism, opposition to the Middle East and, issues of nuclear proliferation.¹⁴ The dialogue was also criticized, particularly from the United States and Israel, for being a cover to intensify trade relations.¹⁵

1997 constituted a volatile year in the development of EU-Iran relations. A verdict by a German court stated Iran's complicity in terror attacks, and called the ongoing dialogue and extension of trade relations into question.¹⁶ The same year, however, saw the surprise election of reformist candidate Mohammad Khatami, who sought better relations with the West in general and Europe in particular. The new President changed the Iranian political climate both at home and with the outside world.¹⁷ The critical dialogue was soon replaced by a "comprehensive dialogue" with more frequent meeting and a generally more positive climate in which human rights and nuclear proliferation were once more the central issues of contention.¹⁸ This trend of intensified relations continued after Khatami's reelection in 2001 and "EU-Iran relations flourished at all levels – economic, social, academic and cultural."¹⁹ However, the seemingly improved relations, seeing Iran as major trade partner, decreased dramatically after Iran's nuclear program was criticized by the IAEA. From this moment onwards, Iran's controversial Nuclear Programme took priority over all other policy issues.

¹³ Esfandiari, H., Bakhsh, S., *The Long Career of Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.*, 2017, retrieved from: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/01/rafsanjani-iran-khamenei-khomeini/512507/>.

Kenneth Timmermann, *The Death Lobby: How the West armed Iraq*, London: Fourth Estate, 1992.

¹⁴ Washington Institute, *Europe's Critical Dialogue with Iran*, 1997, retrieved from: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/europes-critical-dialogue-with-iran-pressure-for-change>.

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ N/A, "German court implicates Iran leaders in '92 killings," CNN (website), retrieved from http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/9704/10/germany.iran/index.html?_s=PM:WORLD.

¹⁷ Clawson, P., Eisenstadt, M., Kanovsky, E., Menashri, D. (1998). *Iran under Khatami*. Retrieved from: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iran-under-khatami-a-political-economic-and-military-assessment>.

¹⁸ Walter Posch, "Iran and the European Union," United States Institute for Peace (website), 2016, retrieved from <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/iran-and-european-union>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

EU-Iran relations during the nuclear crisis

Iran's nuclear program started in 1953 under the leadership of Western-backed Mohammad Reza Khan, and was part of the US policy of "Atoms for Peace". Iran's nuclear program was then embedded in the international atomic regime when Iran became a founding member of the NPT, which entered into force in 1970 and made the Iranian nuclear program subject to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).²⁰ The NPT is an international treaty, whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving "nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament."²¹ Under this international regime, Iran expanded its nuclear activities and cooperation with European companies throughout the 1970s.²² However, the investment prospects turned dark with the Islamic Revolution; and existing facilities in Iran were damaged heavily during the Iraq-Iran war.²³

In the aftermath of the war, Iran's nuclear program slowly recovered, supported by a 1992 IAEA report stating that all facilities seemed to be intended for civil use.²⁴ Iran saw itself profiting from a change in the regional balance of powers, with non-Western powers, Russia, China and Pakistan, supporting Iran against the Saudi Arabian coalition with the US.²⁵ Throughout this period, the United States followed a policy of containment with regards to Iran's economic and nuclear capabilities.²⁶ The U.S. concerns were elevated to a matter of

²⁰ Akbar, E., *Iran. A European Non-Proliferation Policy*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, 207.

²¹ United Nations Office For Disarmament Affairs. (n.d.). *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*. Retrieved from: <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/>.

²² N/A, "Iran - Nuclear Chronology (website), n.d., retrieved from https://web.archive.org/web/20100910142612/http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/1825_1826.html.

²³ Iran Watch. (2016). *A History of Iran's Nuclear Program*. Retrieved from: <http://www.iranwatch.org/our-publications/weapon-program-background-report/history-irans-nuclear-program>.

²⁴ Michael Z. Wise, "Atomic Team Reports on Iran Probe; No Weapons Research Found by Inspectors," *Washington Post*, February 15, 1992, retrieved from <https://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-990775.html>.

²⁵ Iran Watch. (1995). *Protocol of Negotiations Between Iran and Russia, Signed by Mikhailov and Amrollakhi*. Retrieved from: <http://www.iranwatch.org/library/government/russia/russia-protocol-negotiation-between-iran-and-russia>

²⁶ Steve Coll, "U.S. Halted Nuclear Bid By Iran; China, Argentina Agreed to Cancel Technology Transfers," *Washington Post*, November 17, 1992, retrieved from <https://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-1035214.html>.

international crisis when the IAEA reported in 2003 that Iran's plans to expand their nuclear power capabilities were intransparent and allowed for suspicion.²⁷ Iran had failed to report to the IAEA concerning "the importation of nuclear material, the subsequent processing and use of that material and the declaration of facilities where the material was stored and processed".²⁸

From this moment on, nonproliferation played an ever more central part in the diplomatic relations between the EU and Iran. The EU therefore became the key player in diplomatic attempts to resolve the furor surrounding Iran's noncompliance with IAEA rules. In 2003, Germany, France and the UK (the EU-3) launched an initiative to solve the nuclear crisis. Its goal was to have Iran agree to follow IAEA rules and to sign the IAEA Additional Protocol, which gives the IAEA more oversight rights.²⁹ The EU-3 initiative at first seemed to be successful. In 2004, the Paris Agreement was signed between the EU-3 and Iran, in which Iran agreed to stop the enrichment of uranium and the import of a uranium-enrichment infrastructure.³⁰ The Paris Agreement, however, shifted opinion in Iranian political circles, which feared Iranian security with the presence of the U.S. in neighbouring Iraq and Afghanistan. This change in political climate resulted in the 2005 election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a political hardliner and foreign policy hawk.

Under Ahmadinejad, EU-Iran relations deteriorated markedly. Diametrically opposed to what the Paris Agreements aimed for, the new government announced plans to enrich uranium – the most crucial element for a nuclear weapons program.³¹ In 2006, Iran was then referred to the United Nations Security Council due to its failure to provide information to the IAEA.³² The UNSC decided to impose sanctions on Iran, for which a total of six resolutions would follow in the years of 2006 until 2010, erecting an expanded arms embargo and tightened restrictions on Iran's financial and shipping sectors

²⁷ IAEA, "Implementation of the NPT safeguards agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran," retrieved from <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gov2003-40.pdf>.

²⁸ Ibid., 7.

²⁹ Walter Posch, *op. cit.*

³⁰ Satyabrata Sinha, "The Paris Agreement and Iranian Nuclear Case," *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies* (website), January 4, 2005, retrieved from <http://ipcs.org/article/nuclear/the-paris-agreement-and-iranian-nuclear-case-1606.html>.

³¹ Erdbrink, T., Sheridan, M. B. (2009). *Ahmadinejad Claims Progress In Iranian Nuclear Program*. Retrieved from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/09/AR2009040904220.html>.

³² Walter Posch, *op. cit.*

related to proliferation-sensitive activities.³³ During this time, Iran continuously fell short on its obligations under the NPT.³⁴

In spite of this development, the EU-3 kept pressing for a diplomatic solution to the crisis. In 2006 and 2008, the EU-3 offered Tehran a deal with diplomatic and economic incentives in turn for full disclosure of the program and signature of the Additional Protocol to the IAEA statute. Both offers were supported by both the U.S. and the UNSC, but were rejected by Iran, resulting in new sanctions by the U.S. and the United Nations.³⁵ Iran's status as an international pariah was further cemented with a 2008 IAEA report which stated that Iran had pursued works connected to the development of nuclear weapon capabilities.³⁶ After another deal failed in 2009, diplomatic relations further deteriorated; a development which was reinforced by the reelection of hardliner Ahmadinejad in what many saw as a fraudulent election.³⁷ Accordingly, the EU's policies increasingly converged with the sanctions policy of the United States and the United Nations. From 2010 on, the EU imposed several rounds of sanctions, summarized in the table below:³⁸

July 26, 2010	The EU imposes sanctions on Iran that surpass UNSC resolutions. According to a press release of the Council of the European Union (2010), the sanctions provide a "comprehensive and robust package of measures in the areas of trade, financial services, energy, transport as well as additional designations for visa ban and asset freeze, in particular for Iranian banks, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL)."
May 23, 2011	More than 100 new entities are added to a list of sanctioned entities and individuals by the EU.

³³ United Nations. (2010). *Security Council Imposes Additional Sanctions on Iran, Voting 12 in Favour to 2 Against, with 1 Abstention*. Retrieved from: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2010/sc9948.doc.htm>.

³⁴ All IAEA reports in this time document shortfalls on part of Iran. They are accessible at <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/iran/iaea-and-iran-iaea-reports>.

³⁵ Ibidem.

³⁶ IAEA, Report by the Director General on the Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008) and 1835 (2008) in the Islamic Republic of Iran, retrieved from <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gov2008-59.pdf>.

³⁷ Abbas Milani, "The Green Movement," *United States Institute of Peace* (website), retrieved from <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/green-movement>.

³⁸ Walter Posch, *op. cit.*

December 1, 2011	Another series of sanctions is imposed on 180 Iranian officials and companies. These sanctions are primarily targeted at Iran's financial system, transport sector, and energy sector.
January 23, 2012	The EU imposes a ban on Iranian oil imports, and prohibits EU regulated insurers from covering any ship transporting Iranian oil or petrochemicals.
October 15, 2012	Another 34 entities are added to the aforementioned sanction list.
December 21, 2012	18 more entities are added, allegedly, due to their involvement in nuclear activities.

Despite the imposition of sanctions, negotiations continued behind closed doors, where the EU-3 channel has served as a mediator between Iran and the United States since 2009. In November 2013, with the election of centrist-reformist Hassan Rouhani, the negotiations "EU-3+3", based on the involvement of the United States, Russia and China and led by EU VP/HR Catherine Ashton, culminated in a first interim agreement. This resulted in Iran halting sensitive parts of its atomic program in exchange for a moderate ease of the sanctions regime.³⁹

Diplomatic negotiations continued, with the EU remaining a pivotal mediator between the Iran and the United States. The EU's efforts were successful, and on July 14, 2015, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was reached as a final deal. This deal exchanged a gradual removal of the sanctions for Iran's commitment to reduce its nuclear program, respond to open questions concerning it, and to be generally more transparent about nuclear activities.⁴⁰ Iran has, *inter alia*, gradually dismantled thousands of uranium-enriching centrifuges. In addition, Iran promised not to expand its capability beyond its present limit for at least ten years.⁴¹ A separate accord allowed for the IAEA to receive multiple environmental samples from Iranian military bases, which served to check for nuclear weapon experimentation. Derived from the collected data, a final report in December 2015 concluded that Iran's nuclear weapon program was active until 2003, and that some weapon-

³⁹ Walter Posch, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ European External Action Service. (2015). *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action*. Retrieved from: https://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/docs/iran_agreement/iran_joint-comprehensive-plan-of-action_en.pdf.

related activities continued through 2009.⁴² In accordance with the finding of the December 2015 report, the Agency’s investigation on Iran’s Nuclear Programme was closed on 15 December 2015.⁴³ After a period of compliance, the IAEA confirmed Iran’s commitment to the agreement on January 2016, meaning that the Nuclear Deal went into the implementation phase. As a result of lifting the sanctions, “Iran regained access to the international finance system and billions of dollars in frozen assets abroad. It also returned to the oil market”.⁴⁴

Overall, the nuclear diplomacy overshadowed prior economic and social relations between European Union member countries and Iran, particularly with regards to the sanctions regime. Moreover, it prevented the EU from focussing on other areas such as the improvement of human rights or regional issues.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the sanctions regime had great effects on European trade with Iran; the EU having been the biggest trade partner of Iran up until 2009.⁴⁶ The JCPOA therefore represents a chance for the European Union to develop a new relationship with Iran.

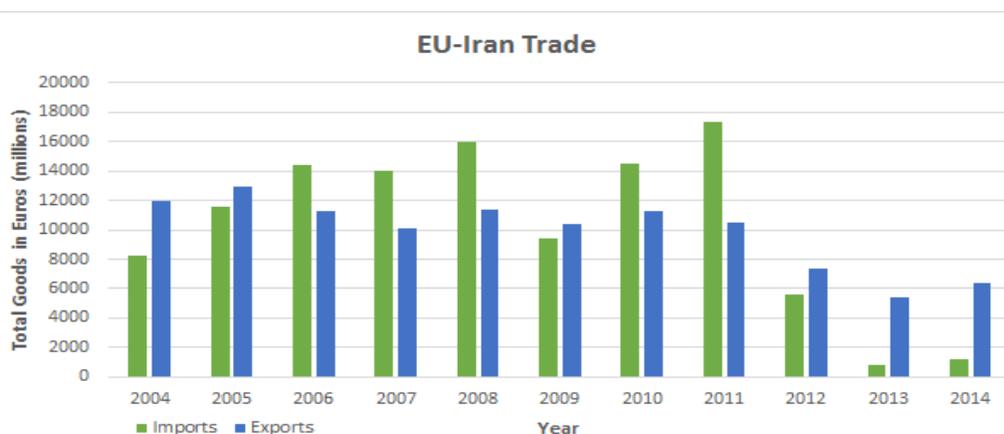


Figure 1: EU-Iran Trade, European Commission. Retrieved from http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113392.pdf.

⁴² International Atomic Energy Agency. (2015). *Final Assessment on Past and Present Outstanding Issues regarding Iran’s Nuclear Programme*. Retrieved from: <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gov-2015-68.pdf>.

⁴³ Iran Watch. (2016). *A History of Iran’s Nuclear Program*. Retrieved from: <http://www.iranwatch.org/our-publications/weapon-program-background-report/history-irans-nuclear-program>.

⁴⁴ Walter Posch, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵ European Parliament. (2016). *An EU Strategy for relations with Iran after the nuclear deal*. Retrieved from: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2016/578005/EXPO_IDA\(2016\)578005_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2016/578005/EXPO_IDA(2016)578005_EN.pdf).

⁴⁶ Walter Posch, *op. cit.*

Current developments after the nuclear deal

With the confirmation of Iran's compliance with the JCPOA by the IAEA in January 2016, EU sanctions were terminated.⁴⁷ This allowed for Iranian oil, historically the biggest import from Iran, to be shipped to the European market again.⁴⁸ European governments are also seeing the nuclear agreement as a chance to expand trade and political relations with Iran. Federica Mogherini, then still head of the EU External Action Service and VP/HR, called for further political cooperation with Iran in order to combat ISIS and stabilize the Middle East in an op-ed in the Guardian in July 2015. In her words, "The Vienna deal tells us that we all have much to earn if we choose cooperation over confrontation. Making the most out of this opportunity is entirely up to us."⁴⁹ Shortly after, the British embassy in Tehran reopened, having been closed since 2011.⁵⁰ EP president Schulz mirrored this positive development in a November 2015 visit, when he said that "the Islamic Republic of Iran is an element of stability in a region full of instability."⁵¹

European businesses were also eager to expand into Iran, with Iran being equally eager to accept them. In 2015 alone, around 140 business delegations from EU member countries visited Iran.⁵² Shortly after "implementation day", Iranian president Rouhani visited Italy and France. In Italy, Rouhani reached an agreement with the Italian government over trade cooperation worth a total of 18.4 billion USD, and both governments agreed to further bilateral cooperation.⁵³ Also in France, cooperation was concluded and formalized in 20 agreements concerning economic, cultural and social cooperation.⁵⁴ An

⁴⁷ Saeed Kamali Dehghan, "Sanctions against Iran lifted after compliance with nuclear deal," *The Guardian* (website), January 16, 2016, retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/16/sanctions-against-iran-to-be-lifted-after-compliance-with-nuclear-deal>.

⁴⁸ Walter Posch, *op. cit.*

⁴⁹ Federica Mogherini, "The Iran agreement is a disaster for Isis," *The Guardian* (website), July 28, 2015, retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jul/28/iran-agreement-isis-vienna-eu>.

⁵⁰ N/A, "British embassy in Tehran reopens four years after closure," *BBC* (website), August 23, 2015, retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-34031615>.

⁵¹ N/A, "EU Parliament chief Schulz: Iran-EU relations at 'key stage'," *DW* (website), November 7, 2015, retrieved from <http://www.dw.com/en/eu-parliament-chief-schulz-iran-eu-relations-at-key-stage/a-18834646>.

⁵² Walter Posch, *op. cit.*

⁵³ The governments of Italia and Iran, "Joint Declaration: The road map for bilateral cooperation," *Iranian President* (website), January 27, 2016, retrieved from <http://president.ir/en/91585>.

⁵⁴ N/A, "Rouhani hails 'new chapter' in Iranian-French ties," *BBC* (website), January 28, 2016, retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35427570>.

expansion of this cooperation is likely with continuing Iranian compliance with the JCPOA.

Having said that, there are still several issues concerning EU-Iran relations. The election of Donald Trump, who has on multiple occasions declared his opposition to Iran and the nuclear deal, endangers the carefully crafted JCPOA. This was made explicit in his claims in January 2017 that Iran had failed to “live up to the spirit of the agreements”.⁵⁵ In addition, Iran’s human rights record does not seem to have improved considerably under president Rouhani’s leadership. The Amnesty International 2016/2017 report mentions ongoing torture and ill-treatment of detainees, cruel punishments and a heavy suppression of “the rights to freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly and religious belief” through the arrestment and imprisonment of peaceful critics.⁵⁶

Within Iran, a positive signal has been the re-election of Hassan Rouhani as president, understood as a general litmus test for Rouhani’s policy of rapprochement with regards to Iran’s nuclear program.⁵⁷ The current situation therefore brings for the European Council both opportunities with regards to economic cooperation, but also the challenge to combine this economic relationship with a coherent human rights policy. At the same time, U.S. pressure on the Iran nuclear deal represents another challenge, for which the re-election of Rouhani might prove to be a positive signal.

Conclusion

The European Union and the individual Member States have always entertained economic and social relations with Iran, even after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, which rendered Iran a pariah state from a U.S.-American viewpoint. Consequently, the EU assumed a pivotal role in maintaining negotiations between Iran and Western powers. This position was only reinforced after Iran continuously failed to comply with the IAEA statute, from 2002 onwards in particular. The negotiations with Iran were a successful test for a common EU

⁵⁵ N/A, “Trump criticizes the Iran nuclear deal,” *CNN* (website), January 12, 2017, retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/videos/politics/2017/01/12/trump-tracker-iran-deal.cnn>.

⁵⁶ Amnesty International, “Iran 2016/2017,” *Amnesty International* (website), retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/iran/report-iran/>.

⁵⁷ Mick Krever, Mohammed Tawfeeq, and Joe Sterling, “Iranian President wins reelection in victory for moderates,” *CNN* (website), May 21, 2017, retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/20/middleeast/iran-rouhani-election/index.html>.

external strategy, and the agreements reached from 2013 onwards bare witness to it. Since January 2016, all nuclear-related EU sanctions (those enacted since 2010) have been lifted, opening the opportunity for the EU to reassume its position as Iran's primary trading partner, a potential development that has been confirmed so far by the Italian and French agreements on cooperation with Iran.

Nonetheless, EU-Iran relations are still strained by Iran's human rights record, a topic which the European Council must address. Prospects of further cooperation might provide vehicles for the EU to make progress in this regard. At the same time, the current nuclear agreement is on a problematic footing, with the support of one of the major signatories and starkest Iran critics, the U.S., rhetorically unclear. It is a situation of great opportunity, which however remains fragile and therefore must be treated with careful consideration.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMAs)

1. How does the European Council view the progress made so far between the EU and Iran?
2. How can the EU advance economic relations with Iran, while improving its human rights situation??
3. How can a future escalation surrounding Iran's nuclear program be prevented, especially with regards to the U.S.'s unclear stance towards the nuclear deal?
4. What steps, if any, should be taken in furthering EU-Iran relations?
5. How, if at all, can these steps be implemented?

Additional Readings

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