Iran in its Struggle against the US

July 14 marked the 5-year anniversary of the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) or the Iran nuclear deal, an agreement that the international community pinned many of its hopes on as it longed for a substantial improvement of the situation in the entire Middle Eastern region.

The expectation was that Tehran’s compliance with all of its obligations in this seminal document would, to a certain extent, lower the artificially stoked confrontation between Sunni-led nations, headed by Saudi Arabia, and Iran with its predominantly Shia population. However, in reality, the implementation of JCPOA provisions is currently taking place in a very discouraging and gloomy climate. In the future, when historians talk about the events of this period, they will probably refer to the beginning of the end of JCPOA as the start of the decline in multipolarity, and as a serious blow to Europe’s goal of an integrated foreign policy. By unilaterally and unlawfully withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal, US President Donald Trump, with his heavy-handed actions, has completely dashed the hopes felt by the international community.

It is worth highlighting that owing to the JCPOA, Europe was able to accomplish a feat that seemed completely out of reach earlier, since many have questioned and continue to question its status as an entity united by common foreign policy goals. Hence, the Iran nuclear deal served to promote multipolarity in general, and from EU’s perspective, the agreement was a pivotal turning point for diplomatic efforts to ensure non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, the signing of the JCPOA marked the start of an equally arduous process to successfully implement the deal’s recommendations. And Europeans took on the role of coordinators and
It is worth mentioning that for the EU saving the Iran nuclear deal is equivalent to abiding by its key foreign policy principles, outlined in the EU charter and reflected in its security and non-proliferation strategy. On the 5th anniversary of the signing of the JCPOA and perhaps the last, it is time to revisit the role the European Union has been playing within the Iran nuclear deal and to discuss how it will develop. It is well-known that trans-Atlantic ties are historically an integral part of Europe’s policy. At the beginning of 2000s, disagreements that arose due to the formation of the coalition of the willing, and the rift between Europeans and Americans that occurred over the war in Iraq all led to an unprecedented lack of unity within the “Western camp”. In such a climate, Europeans then managed to take on a role of moderator during the negotiations, which began in 2006, to seek a mutually acceptable and multilateral resolution of the so-called Iran nuclear crisis.

At the time, European media outlets reported that by being a part of the talks on the nuclear deal, the EU was striving to promote its common security interests with the aim of positioning itself as a key player in the world of foreign politics, and of strengthening the France-Germany-Great Britain “triad”, whose standing had been weakened because of disagreements over the Iraq War (which started in 2003). In such a context, cooperation between the two sides of the Atlantic was essential to the supporting of EU’s diplomatic efforts in negotiations with Iran. The stance taken by the European Union on the JCPOA especially nowadays, in the current climate, will determine the fate of its efforts towards an integrated foreign policy in the nearest future, and will define, once and for all, what sort of a player it strives to be on the international arena.

The signing of the JCPOA truly became an impressive accomplishment for proponents of multipolarity, and served to promote diplomacy and a peaceful means of resolving disputes. Hence, the manner in which the EU has been responding to provocative behavior of the United States, which is intent on destroying the JCPOA and, in the end, on demonstrating that Europe is nothing without the US, acts as a marker that shows just how independent EU’s foreign policy is, and as an indicator of its future role in supporting multipolarity and global security.

After all, it is the United States that is responsible for the current state of affairs when it comes to the implementation of JCPOA’s provisions. The mounting unlawful pressure applied on Iran, which has, throughout the year, shown a great deal of patience in the hopes of continuing with the JCPOA-related work, in order to find a solution will not benefit anyone. Taking additional measures, which fall outside the purview of the JCPOA, will also not help save the nuclear deal. After all, Tehran has clearly stipulated its conditions for salvaging the agreement. The only alternative is to listen to the voice of reason, to preserve multipolarity and to counter extreme actions taken by the Trump administration.

At present, a confrontation is brewing over the possibility of lifting the UN arms embargo on Iran. It is worth reminding our readers that under United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2231 endorsing the JCPOA, signed in 2015 by global powers and Tehran, the arms embargo on Iran is set to expire in October of this year. The United States has called on the UN Security Council to extend it indefinitely. The Trump administration has argued that Iran violated the embargo by, for instance, supplying weapons to Houthis in Yemen and the militant group Hezbollah. In fact, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has claimed that Iran will “be free to become a rogue weapons dealer” if the embargo is lifted. In truth, both the United States and Great Britain have been supplying ever increasing amounts of modern weaponry to Saudi Arabia, which has repeatedly taken advantage of Yemen’s military weakness by destroying towns, villages and settlements in this impoverished nation. As a result, its civilian population has been suffering greatly, a fact that Western media outlets avoid focusing on. In fact, UN’s International Court of Justice ought to launch an investigation into the inhumane air strikes, carried out by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition with modern Western weapons, and then ensure that those responsible are held accountable for their actions. The Nuremberg trials are a relevant example from our history, as they helped bring instigators of World War II to justice. However, the United States, having taken advantage of its role as a “global policeman”, is currently doing everything in its power to ensure that neither its followers nor the US itself are held to account by the international judicial system by adhering to the principle: the laws that exist are not meant for the US.

It is very clear that the Trump administration aims to further undermine the JCPOA so that the next US leader will not be able to easily salvage it. And although the United States withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018, the Trump administration contends “that it still retains all the rights of a participant” under Resolution 2231. This interpretation appears to be contradictory and unlawful in nature even to US allies. Germany, France and Great Britain (E3) have on more than one occasion expressed their commitment to the 2015 deal, but, unfortunately, they have not made sufficient efforts to salvage the agreement, which is on the verge of collapsing.
Undoubtedly, the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA has produced a new crisis around Iran’s nuclear program and the situation in the region. And at present, preventing a nuclear conflict in the Middle East is an especially pressing issue. Tehran has now crossed the so-called “red line”, arbitrarily drawn for it by Donald Trump, and it is openly moving towards the creation of a nuclear weapon, while Israel is intent on stopping this from happening.

The potential total collapse of the JCPOA will return the international community “to an acute crisis around Iran’s nuclear program, one in which it is capable of creating a nuclear weapon in the near future (within a year)”. “Iran continues testing long-range missiles and already possesses several missile systems capable of striking both Israel and the entirety of Europe”. The escalation of tensions and violence in the Middle East has turned into one of the most dangerous regional crises “developing amid a confrontation between the world’s superpowers and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic”.

Participants of the online conference “A New Iranian Crisis: Stopping Escalation”, held by the International Luxembourg Forum on Preventing Nuclear Catastrophe, underscored that “further escalation of the crisis and the nuclear conflict in the Middle East between Iran and Israel, and a larger-scale war, which would most likely involve other powers”, was unacceptable. According to the attendees, “the heads of leading world powers and international organizations must take all necessary steps to reduce tensions and prevent Iran from creating a nuclear weapon”. “As an outcome of the conference, the Luxembourg Forum experts” plan to “issue a final document containing key conclusions and recommendations, to be circulated to heads of state, officials and leaders of the UN Security Council”, the IAEA (the International Atomic Energy Agency) and other international organizations.

It is quite clear that a new stage of the conflict involving the United States, the EU and Iran has started, and for now no one knows when it will end. In turn, at present, Tehran is trying to salvage the deal by calling on its signatories to show more courage and willingness to act independently. Having stated that there was no alternative to the JCPOA, Iran’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs urged the three European nations to abide by the deal and ensure its full support and implementation. In the Statement of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the 5th Anniversary of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the Foreign Ministry has stated that “the international, legal, technical, strategic and political capital of this agreement has been deeply eroded on its fifth anniversary, due to the destructive and illegal actions of the United States. The remaining Participants of the JCPOA are aware of this and by consensus are of the view that the root cause for the current situation is the continuous violations of UNSCR 2231 and the JCPOA, and ultimately the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from an agreement reached after years of hard multilateral negotiations. The US significant non-performance of its obligations under UNSCR 2231, and the lack of will on the part of remaining Participants to restore the lost balance to the JCPOA, have complicated the current situation around JCPOA and effectively impeded the Islamic Republic of Iran to adhere to its undertakings. As a result of this malign policy of the US, Iran cannot benefit from the effects of JCPOA sanctions lifting”. “Unfortunately, not only did the Islamic Republic of Iran not enjoy the economic benefits of the JCPOA sanction lifting, but once again the opponents of the JCPOA actively based on unsubstantiated allegations on past safeguard issues that were supposed, under the JCPOA, to once and for all be closed, have been trying to fully destroy the achievements of the JCPOA,” the statement continued.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has so far had a constructive and extensive cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the statistics on the number and volume of inspections and verifications carried out in the Islamic Republic of Iran attest this fact. Any attempt to misuse the IAEA to put pressure on the Islamic Republic of Iran is inconsistent with the letter and spirit of the JCPOA, and undermining the IAEA’s credibility as the only competent international technical body to monitor States’ nuclear activities; it also could negatively affect the current safeguards implementation.

Furthermore, any companionship of some remaining participants of the JCPOA with US conspiracies against the agreement, particularly to destroy and undermine the very text of the UNSCR 2231, inter alia, lifting of arms restrictions in the fifth year of adoption of the JCPOA in October 2020, is a matter of grave concern, and as has been repeatedly emphasized, the renegotiation of the provisions of JCPOA and amending of the sanctions lifting regime will not be tolerated under any circumstances, and the response of the Islamic Republic of Iran will be firm and decisive”. Since there is no alternative to the JCPOA at the moment, the statement also says:

“The Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to take decisive action against any exaggeration and irresponsible behavior, and strongly urges the E3 to adhere to their commitments, and to preserve and fully implement the UN Security Council instead of moving in the direction of the US maximum pressure policy”. 
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