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Taking stock of the 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal

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Since the protests in Iran over the New Year period have abated it is now time to take stock of another matter. And in doing so have a good laugh since it is winter and it appears that the cold and wet have got into the brains of leaders. You see but they don't that an agreement only works when people agree! And if they don't agree then there isn't an agreement. So let's see if they agree...

Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council – the United States, France, Britain, Russia and China – plus Germany signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on July 14, 2015 and started implementing it on January 16, 2016. The agreement was endorsed under United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231. Under the JCPOA, Iran undertook to put limits on its nuclear program in exchange for the removal of nuclear-related sanctions imposed against Tehran.

A few days ago on Friday, the American President Donald Trump extended waivers of economic sanctions on Iran for another 120 days but said he was doing so for the last time. Trump said he wanted Congress to pass a bill requiring timely, sufficient, and immediate inspections at all sites by inspectors of IAEA, and the indefinite extension of limits on Iran's uranium enrichment and other nuclear activities.

Trump called on European allies and Congress to work with him to fix the disastrous flaws in the nuclear agreement or face a US exit. However the European Union along with three European signatories to the deal, including France, Britain and Germany have reaffirmed their strong determination to preserve the agreement.

European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini even praised the effectiveness of the Iran nuclear deal saying that the deal is working, it is delivering on its main goal which means keeping the Iranian nuclear program in check and a very close surveillance. British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson added that those who criticize the JCPOA should come up with a better alternative instead of simply opposing the program.

Following Trump's announcement, Iran's Foreign Ministry announced that the country will commit to no obligation beyond those it has already agreed to under the international

nuclear deal. Of course the important emphasis must be on the fact that inspections of military sites are not part of the deal.

The spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Kamalvandi stated categorically that no one in Iran will permit the IAEA access to military sites, such access is not part of the nuclear deal, the additional protocol or its safeguard agreement. Furthermore he said that inspections were not necessary because no nuclear activities are being carried out in his country's military sites, but also reiterated Tehran's stance that the country's defensive capabilities are non-negotiable.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said that Trump has failed in its attempts to kill the 2015 multilateral nuclear deal; claiming that this is a victory for the Iranian nation, the rule of law, international commitments and law against dictatorship.

Iranian deputy foreign minister Abbas Araqchi went further that Tehran has successfully foiled the US president's attempts to undermine the 2015 multinational nuclear deal. He said that Washington stands fully isolated on the diplomatic stage due to its belligerent stance on the landmark agreement and that the deal is an international achievement and the document is non-negotiable and should be kept intact.

Iran's Parliament speaker Ali Larijani noted that the Iranian parliament will in no way accept changes to the structure of the nuclear agreement, and the amendments the US president mentioned in his latest remarks amount to the destruction of the whole deal.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif claimed that Trump's stance amounts to desperate attempts to undermine a solid multilateral agreement. His Ministry added that Tehran would commit to no obligation beyond those it has already agreed to under the JCPOA.

So I am a bit confused. The United States says it is not working but the EU says it is working. Iran and the United States don't see eye to eye so they are not in agreement. Perhaps I am wrong in what I am reading but I think that some of the signatories to the JCPOA are not agreeing with each other so where are going on this issue of whether or not there is an agreement or not?

I have turned to the other two signatories, China and Russia, to help me. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has urged all signatories to the agreement to continue its implementation. Perhaps he knows more than we do because he said that the implementation of the accord had not been derailed but would face some new complicating factors.

However Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov states that Russia is gradually coming to the conclusion that an internal decision by the US to leave the (Joint

Comprehensive Plan of Action) has already been made or is close to being made.

Should Iran prepare for a military strike against it in 2018?

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