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# The Iranian Nuclear Issue

## Between Confrontation and Settlement

### **Introduction:**

*In the early 21st century, the Iranian nuclear crisis escalated when the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) revealed Iran's suspicious nuclear activities, which raised concerns about the possibility of Iran developing nuclear weapons, posing a threat to regional stability and global security. Since then, international relations have been affected and have witnessed ongoing tensions between Iran and Western countries, especially the United States and the European Union <sup>(1)</sup>.*

The Iranian nuclear issue goes beyond the framework of nuclear security, as its geopolitical and economic implications are also vital. On the geopolitical level, the superpowers and regional countries are negotiating about escalating tensions and taking punitive measures against Iran, such as imposing economic sanctions and international isolation. At the same time, Iran has expressed the possibility of escalating the crisis and withdrawing from international agreements related to its nuclear program <sup>(2)</sup>.

Despite these arguments, the Iranian nuclear issue remains a complex international challenge that requires cooperation and joint efforts from all concerned parties. The priority becomes to achieve regional and international stability and to preserve the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, while seeking to find a peaceful solution that guarantees the safety and security of all <sup>(3)</sup>.

### **The Main Goal of the Study**

The main goal of the study is to understand and analyze the Iranian nuclear issue and to study the available options for dealing with it, whether through confrontation or settlement, as well as to assess the scale of the Iranian nuclear threat and what this program represents as a confirmed threat to regional and international security.

### **Methodology of the Study**

This research will focus on the descriptive analytical research methodology, where the Iranian nuclear issue is analyzed by studying the available options for dealing with it and analyzing the regional and international implications of the crisis. Multiple and diverse sources will be used to collect data and information, including previous studies, reports, books, and scientific journals.



### ***Contents of the Study***

- 1- Introduction
- 2- Conceptual Framework of the Study
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### ***First: The Conceptual Framework of the Study***

*The study distinguishes between several concepts, as follows:*

#### ***1- Nuclear Security***

It is defined as a set of measures and procedures taken by governments, organizations, and institutions concerned with nuclear energy to preserve safety and security in the use of nuclear energy, nuclear materials, and nuclear weapons <sup>(4)</sup>. These measures and procedures include the following<sup>(5)</sup>:

- A- Ensuring the safety of nuclear reactors, processing facilities, storage facilities, and transportation of nuclear materials.
- B- Reducing the threats of nuclear terrorism and preventing the acquisition of nuclear materials or nuclear weapons by terrorist groups or irresponsible states.
- C- Strengthening the control of nuclear exports and imports and implementing the necessary measures to prevent the proliferation of sensitive nuclear technologies.
- D- Maintaining the regulatory and legal framework for dealing with nuclear materials and nuclear weapons and ensuring compliance with relevant international agreements.
- E- Training and raising awareness of nuclear workers and increasing public awareness of the dangers of radiation and how to deal with it.

F- Nuclear security aims to protect human life, the environment, ensure nuclear energy's safe and responsible use. Nuclear security is a set of policies and procedures that aim to protect nuclear materials and nuclear technologies from any illegal or accidental use. This includes <sup>(6)</sup>:

- Preventing unauthorized access to raw materials, radioactive nuclear materials, and nuclear devices.
- Protecting nuclear facilities from acts of sabotage or terrorism.
- Ensuring the safety of the transportation, storage, and disposal of nuclear waste.
- Implementing security measures on nuclear industry workers to ensure their loyalty and professionalism.
- Detecting any activity or attempt to acquire nuclear weapons illegally.
- Ensuring that nuclear technology is not used for non-peaceful purposes.

In general, nuclear security includes all the necessary measures to protect nuclear materials and prevent their use or proliferation in a way that poses a threat to national security or public safety.

#### ***2- Nuclear Safety***

Nuclear safety is concerned with the procedures, systems, and technologies used to prevent nuclear power accidents, such as those that occurred at Chernobyl and Fukushima. The goal of nuclear safety is to keep workers at nuclear facilities, the public, and the environment safe from radiation and other harm caused by nuclear accidents. It also refers to a set of procedures and standards designed to ensure that nuclear facilities operate safely and to minimize the risk of nuclear accidents and radiation contamination. Nuclear safety includes the systems and procedures put in place to prevent accidents, the close monitoring of nuclear facilities, and emergency planning in the event of an accident <sup>(8)</sup>.

In general, nuclear safety is concerned with the methods used to ensure that nuclear energy and nuclear weapons are used safely and do not cause harm to people or the environment. It is also the regulatory and technical protection from the risks and health and environmental hazards arising from nuclear activities, materials, and nuclear facilities <sup>(9)</sup>. It includes protecting workers and the public from the potential risks involved in these activities. Nuclear safety also includes ensuring that the amount of radiation emitted from nuclear facilities is within acceptable levels and that there are effective controls in place to prevent accidents<sup>(10)</sup>.

### **3- Nuclear Protection**

Nuclear protection refers to the taking of all necessary measures to ensure the safety and security of the use, storage, transport, and disposal of nuclear materials, nuclear reactors, and nuclear weapons, and to protect people and the environment from the harmful effects of nuclear radiation. Nuclear protection includes the design and operation of nuclear reactors and related facilities to ensure their safety and security, preventive and protective measures for nuclear industry workers and the public living near nuclear facilities, and measures to respond to potential accidents and terrorist acts. Nuclear protection is achieved through a range of technical, administrative, and legal measures that include countering intrusion, theft, and terrorism, providing training and education for nuclear industry workers, and establishing effective systems for monitoring nuclear activity. Nuclear protection is based on standards and principles established by international and national organizations, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

### **4- Nuclear Safeguards**

Nuclear safeguards are measures and controls aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and ensuring that peaceful nuclear programs are not used for unauthorized purposes. These

measures are taken by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to verify compliance with nuclear non-proliferation treaties, through inspection, monitoring, and surveillance to ensure that nuclear materials and technologies are used for peaceful purposes only <sup>(11)</sup>.

As defined, the term “*nuclear safeguards*” refer to a set of measures and procedures aimed at ensuring that nuclear materials, reactors, and weapons are not used in an unauthorized manner, smuggled, or leaked to unauthorized parties. Nuclear safeguards include physical protection, monitoring, training, identity verification, background checks, and detection of unauthorized activities. These measures are based on specific standards and principles established by international and national organizations and atomic and nuclear energy agencies <sup>(12)</sup>.

***The technical definition of nuclear safeguards:*** Nuclear safeguards are a set of legal and technical measures that allow for international monitoring of nuclear activities to ensure that they are not used for military purposes. These measures include <sup>(13)</sup>:

- A- Monitoring uranium enrichment and nuclear fuel reprocessing activities to pre-vent the production of materials for military purposes.
- B- Monitoring nuclear stockpiles and their associated transactions to prevent the proliferation of unauthorized nuclear technology.
- C- The regular inspection of civilian nuclear facilities to ensure their use for authorized purposes only.

The ‘*Nuclear Safeguards*’ system is a combination of measures and arrangements implemented to ensure the peaceful use of nuclear activities and prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons or the illicit use of nuclear materials<sup>(14)</sup>. “*The main objective of nuclear*



*safeguards is to guarantee the safety and security of peaceful nuclear energy use through the control and monitoring of nuclear materials and related equipment and to verify countries' compliance with international agreements and national laws related to nuclear safeguards<sup>(15)</sup>.*

Moreover, nuclear safeguards are implemented by international organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which acts as an independent and reliable monitor of nuclear activities worldwide. Routine safeguards procedures include inspections of nuclear facilities, monitoring of the production, storage, and transport of nuclear materials, analysis of samples taken from nuclear facilities, and verification of the accuracy of reports and data submitted by states using nuclear energy. The usual regulatory measures include inspecting nuclear facilities, monitoring the production, storage, and transportation of nuclear materials, analyzing samples taken from nuclear facilities, and verifying the accuracy of reports and data provided by countries using nuclear energy <sup>(16)</sup>.

***The differences between Nuclear Security, Nuclear Safety, and Nuclear Safeguards can be distinguished as follows:***

'Nuclear Security' focuses on protecting nuclear materials and facilities from external threats, such as theft, terrorism, or unauthorized use of nuclear materials. It aims to ensure that nuclear activities do not fall into the hands of unqualified individuals and to mitigate the risks associated with the theft or illicit use of nuclear materials. Nuclear security measures include controlling access to nuclear facilities and materials, securing them, and protecting them from external threats <sup>(17)</sup>.

On the other hand, 'Nuclear Safety' focuses on protecting individuals and the environment from the risks associated with nuclear activities. These risks include nuclear leaks, radiation exposure, and accidents such as nuclear

meltdown or explosion. Nuclear Safety aims to ensure that nuclear reactors and facilities are designed and operated in a manner that protects people and the environment from these risks. Nuclear safety measures include good engineering design, regular testing and inspections, safety training for staff, and the safe management of nuclear waste.

Whereas, '**Nuclear Safeguards**' focus on monitoring and controlling the use of nuclear materials to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the illicit use of nuclear materials. Nuclear safeguards are implemented through measures such as field inspections of nuclear facilities, monitoring of nuclear accounts and reports, and analysis of samples taken from nuclear materials. The main objective of nuclear safeguards is to achieve integrity and confidence in the use of nuclear energy and to prevent the proliferation of nuclear technology in unqualified countries <sup>(18)</sup>.

Although these concepts are all related to nuclear activity, they focus on different aspects and aim to achieve different goals about nuclear safety, security, and safeguards.

### ***Part Two: The Historical Development of the Iranian Nuclear Problem***

- 1- In 1957, during the era of the Shah, Iran received nuclear assistance from the United States to build a nuclear reactor for peaceful purposes, as a part of the "**Atoms for Peace**" program.
- 2- In the 1980s: After the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the relationship between Iran and the western countries changed, relations with the United States and European countries deteriorated, Iran's nuclear cooperation with western countries was suspended, and this led to international tensions over Iran's nuclear program.
3. In the 1990s, concerns were raised about Iran's nuclear program and issues of



compliance with international agreements. Several attempts to negotiate a peaceful solution were thwarted, and international tensions over Iran's nuclear program escalated<sup>(19)</sup>.

- 4-In 2002, Iran declared the existence of two secret nuclear facilities in Isfahan and Natanz. This was followed by a series of negotiations and international sanctions imposed on Iran to ensure compliance with international agreements.
5. In 2015, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was reached between Iran and the P5+1 (the United States, Russia, China, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany). The JCPOA is known as the **"Iran nuclear deal"** and aims to ensure the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program and to lift international sanctions imposed on Iran<sup>(20)</sup>.
- 6- In 2018, the United States withdrew from the nuclear deal and re-imposed sanctions on Iran. Tensions continued and concerns about Iran's nuclear development escalated, especially after Iran announced in 2019 that it would no longer comply with some of its commitments under the nuclear deal. Since the early 2000s, reports by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have pointed to suspicious nuclear activities in Iran, including enriching uranium beyond the permitted limits and exceeding some of the restrictions imposed on the country<sup>(21)</sup>.
- 7- Tensions between Iran and the United States escalated significantly in 2020, following the killing of Iranian General. Qasem Soleimani in a US airstrike in Iraq. In the following months, Iran announced that it would no longer abide by any of the restrictions on its nuclear program under the Iran nuclear deal, and that it would abandon the remaining restrictions imposed on it under the deal, including the restrictions on

the number of centrifuges it could operate to enrich uranium<sup>(22)</sup>.

- 8- In 2021, talks began between Iran and other major powers to try to bring the United States back into the nuclear deal and get Iran to fully comply with the terms of the deal, but no final agreement has been reached<sup>(23)</sup>.
- 9- In February 2022, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) asked Iran for explanations about the presence of uranium traces at three previously undeclared sites. Iran refused to provide explanations, and in March 2022, Iran disabled surveillance cameras at the Natanz nuclear facility<sup>(24)</sup>. This resulted in the IAEA losing oversight of Iran's nuclear activities there. In April 2022, Iran began producing advanced centrifuge parts at a parts factory near Natanz. In August of the same year, the US Senate voted unanimously to impose additional sanctions on Iran for its nuclear program. In October 2022, the IAEA warned that Iran is now very far from returning to compliance with the terms of the nuclear deal<sup>(25)</sup>.
- 10- In January 2023, Iran announced that it had begun producing uranium enriched to 60% at the Fordow facility, in a blatant challenge to the international community. In March 2023, the UN Security Council passed a resolution condemning Iran's nuclear program and imposing additional sanctions on it. In June 2023, Iran announced that it would begin enriching uranium to 90%, a level suitable for nuclear weapons. In July 2023, Iran threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz in response to the sanctions, raising fears of a war<sup>(26)</sup>.

### ***Third: The Current Nuclear Situation in Iran and Future Prospects:***

#### ***1-The Current State of Nuclear Arms Control in Iran:***

Despite signing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Iran has faced



numerous restrictions and sanctions due to its nuclear program.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was reached in 2015, as previously mentioned, but the United States withdrew from it in 2018 and reimposed sanctions. Since then, Iran has begun to exceed the restrictions imposed by the agreement<sup>(27)</sup>.

With regards to self-restraint in arms control:

The Iranian leadership has repeatedly declared that it does not seek nuclear weapons and that their use is religiously prohibited. However, Iran's clandestine nuclear activities and its continued development of a ballistic missile program have raised doubts about these claims<sup>(28)</sup>.

## **2- Future Prospects for Nuclear Arms Control in Iran:**

### **A. The Iranian Leadership's Position on Nuclear Weapons:**

The Iranian leadership maintains that its nuclear program is based on its legitimate rights under the NPT, which Iran is a party to and abides by. Iran asserts that it has the full right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, including electricity generation and the development of nuclear research and technology<sup>(29)</sup>.

However, statements from the Iranian leadership have repeatedly emphasized that Iran will not seek to acquire nuclear weapons, that nuclear weapons are unethical and contrary to Islam's law, and that they threaten regional and international security.

Overall, it can be said that the Iranian leadership's position on the Iranian nuclear program is to defend it as part of national sovereignty, while emphasizing that its goals are peaceful and that it is willing to negotiate with other countries on issues related to the program<sup>(30)</sup>.

### **B. The Iranian Domestic Position:**

Iranian public opinion on the nuclear issue is diverse and complex. Some in Iran see the

right to develop nuclear technology - whether for peaceful or other purposes - as a matter of sovereignty and national pride. Others worry about the international isolation and economic sanctions that result from the nuclear program.

The Iranian nuclear program has become a symbol of national resistance against external pressure, especially from the United States and its allies. However, concerns about the economic and social impacts of international sanctions have led to some internal tensions<sup>(31)</sup>.

On the other hand, some believe that the Iranian nuclear program poses a threat to regional and global security, putting Iran in a defensive position and weakening its international standing. The Iranian domestic position on the nuclear issue reflects a delicate balance between nationalism and realism and is influenced by domestic and foreign policies, as well as economic and social challenges.

### **Regarding the dimensions of the current nuclear negotiations between Tel Aviv and Washington in the strategic dialogue:**

The current Israeli government finds itself in a dual political battle: on the one hand, it is trying to undermine the chances of reviving the nuclear deal or to empty it of its content by imposing its conditions on it through Washington. On the other hand, it is constrained by electoral calculations that force it to take into account "*Israeli public opinion*" in its assessment of any option it may choose.

Accordingly, the current Israeli government may find itself facing three options in dealing with the Iranian nuclear deal, as follows<sup>(32)</sup>:

### **1- Diplomatic pressures with a different approach than Netanyahu:**

Israel is intensifying its diplomatic efforts to prevent the United States from reviving the nuclear agreement or imposing its conditions on it. This was evident from statements by Israeli officials, such as Lapid, commenting on the

European Union draft, where he said, ***“Israel is fighting on multiple diplomatic fronts to prevent the signing of a new nuclear agreement.”***

This comes in conjunction with the visit of Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz and Israeli National Security Advisor Eyal Hulata to Washington in the last week of August 2022, which focused on the anticipated nuclear agreement and the commitment of the United States to ensure that Iran does not acquire a nuclear weapon.

The strategy adopted by the Israeli government in its pressure on Washington seems to be different from Netanyahu’s previous strategy. Israel is no longer focusing on highlighting the dangers of the Iranian nuclear bomb, but rather on the side effects of the agreement, which could have catastrophic results. Israeli propaganda focuses on the estimates of the ***“Foundation for Defense of Democracies”*** (FDD), which indicate that if the nuclear agreement is signed and Iran opens up to the global economy, nearly a trillion dollars will flow into the Iranian economy by 2030. This means that the agreement will give Iran \$100 billion annually to use to destabilize the Middle East by funding the activities of the Revolutionary Guard, the Basij forces, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and other militias in the region<sup>(33)</sup>.

## ***2- Adherence to the military option:***

In June 2022, leaks emerged regarding what was called the ***“Octopus Strategy,”*** a military strategy developed by the government of Naftali Bennett in 2021, to directly strike Iran (the head of the octopus) and not just its proxies and arms in the region. The strategy aims to target Iran’s nuclear program and sabotage it, as well as target Tehran’s military programs, which may undermine the entire regime<sup>(34)</sup>.

Since the beginning of 2022, several military attacks have been attributed to Israel against Iran. In February 2022, reports indicated the

destruction of a fleet of Iranian drones stationed at an airbase near Kermanshah in western Iran, carried out by six Israeli drones launched from Iraqi Kurdistan. Additionally, there have been operations to capture Israeli agents inside Iran, with the latest one occurring in July 2022.

In addition to the mentioned incidents, it appears that the military option is being upheld by all Israeli parties, despite their differing perspectives, in the face of the nuclear agreement. The Chief of Staff of the Israeli Army, Aviv Kochavi, mentioned in a speech on July 17, 2022, that the Israeli army is preparing for a military campaign against Iran, whether in the case of the failure to reach an agreement and the continuation of Iran’s nuclear program expansion or in the case of reaching a bad agreement. Even Lapid, who emphasizes the importance of the diplomatic option, made it clear to the Israeli Cabinet that negotiations with Iranians should be based on a credible Israeli military threat.

The hypothesis that the Lapid government will not abandon the military option, even in the midst of its negotiations with Washington, has been reinforced by leaks that emerged in August 2022. These leaks revealed that advanced fifth-generation fighter jets belonging to the Israeli Air Force, the “F-35” model, had penetrated Iranian airspace multiple times during July and August 2022. This appeared to be Israeli preparation and a warning for a scenario of striking Iranian nuclear facilities using “F-35” aircraft, especially as Israel recently conducted extensive aerial refueling exercises over the Mediterranean Sea and added a new one-ton bomb to the “F-35” aircraft<sup>(35)</sup>.

## ***3-Attempting to Postpone the Agreement until after the US Midterm Elections:***

In parallel with the previous options, it will be in Israel’s interest to pressure the United States to postpone signing the agreement with Iran and



delay the start of the 165-day plan until after the US midterm elections. This is because signing the agreement during this period means that the current Congress will not be able to obstruct it. According to the “Inara” law, obstructing the agreement by both houses of Congress requires a two-thirds majority, which is currently not available to opponents of the agreement, who are mainly from the Republican Party.

Therefore, Israel may push to postpone the signing of the nuclear agreement in the hope that the US midterm elections will produce results in favor of the Republican Party and opponents of the agreement. Perhaps then both houses of Congress will be able to muster the two-thirds majority needed to undermine the nuclear agreement altogether.

***The nuclear negotiations between Israel and the United States regarding Iran’s nuclear program are currently witnessing important developments. The most prominent of these can be summarized in the following points <sup>(36)</sup>:***

- Israel has repeatedly affirmed its total rejection of Iran’s possession of nuclear weapons and has threatened to launch a unilateral military strike against Iran’s nuclear facilities.
- The United States prefers a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear file through negotiations and economic sanctions.
- Washington has asked Tel Aviv to exercise restraint and not to launch any unilateral attacks against Iran without coordinating with it.
- Israel is demanding that clear red lines be set for escalation against Iran in the event of the failure of the nuclear negotiations.
- The two sides have agreed to strengthen intelligence and military coordination to counter the Iranian nuclear threat.

- Israeli pressure is expected to continue for tougher options against Iran amid concerns about the progress of its nuclear program.

***Points of Agreement Between Israel and the United States on the Iranian Nuclear File:<sup>(37)</sup>***

- Agreement that Iran’s possession of nuclear weapons is unacceptable and poses a significant threat to regional security.
- The necessity to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear bomb through all possible means.
- Preference for diplomatic and political solutions to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue.
- Adoption of a unified regional and international policy towards Iran led by the United States.
- Imposition of strict economic sanctions on Iran to exert pressure for a change in its behavior.
- Enhancement of intelligence and military coordination between the two countries to monitor the Iranian nuclear situation.
- The necessity to maintain Israel’s qualitative military edge over Iran.

***C- Capabilities Related to the Nuclear Dimension:***

According to a 2020 report by the RAND Corporation, Iran is estimated to have a large stockpile of ballistic missiles in the Middle East, with approximately 1,000 medium and long-range missiles.<sup>(38)</sup> These include missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads. Iran also appears to have the ability to develop new ballistic missiles and improve their accuracy and range <sup>(39)</sup>.

On the other hand, according to reports and assessments issued by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), available information indicates that Iran has developed and tested multiple-range ballistic missiles, including missiles such as Shahab, Ghadir, Sejil, and



Kiamaran<sup>(40)</sup>. These missiles possess potential threat capabilities to the region, as they can reach countries in the Middle East and Europe, as follows:

- The most advanced missile is the Shahab-3 missile, with a range of up to 2,000 km, and capable of carrying conventional or nuclear warheads<sup>(41)</sup>.
- According to the International Atomic Energy Agency's estimates in 2021, Iran is estimated to have a stockpile of around 3,500 kg of low-enriched uranium<sup>(42)</sup>.
- Iran possesses more than 10,000 centrifuges for uranium enrichment, including around 5,000 advanced next-generation centrifuges<sup>(43)</sup>.
- Iran has nuclear reactors for the production of plutonium used in nuclear warheads.

***D - The impact of Iran joining the BRICS group on its nuclear situation can be seen in the following points:***

- Membership in BRICS would provide Iran with greater political cover against western pressure regarding its nuclear program.
- Iran would receive support from Russia and China within the United Nations Security Council in case of further sanctions imposed on it.
- Joining BRICS would provide Iran with opportunities for accessing technology and investments from member countries to develop its nuclear program.
- BRICS membership might encourage Iran to adhere more to its nuclear rights and not compromise on certain aspects of its program.
- Membership would lend credibility to Iran's position that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only.
- On the other hand, the United States, Israel, and the West may refuse to recognize Iran's membership and continue exerting pressure.

- Overall, it is expected that Iran's membership in BRICS would strengthen its position in nuclear negotiations and provide it with greater regional and international political cover.

Regarding Iran's nuclear program, Iran's membership in BRICS could have multiple effects. Firstly, it may help alleviate economic pressures on Iran, reducing its need to use its nuclear program as a means of international leverage. Secondly, BRICS could provide a space for negotiation and dialogue between Iran and European powers, contributing to a peaceful resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue.<sup>(44)</sup>

#### ***Fourth: Study Results***

##### ***Expected Scenarios:***

***There are three possible scenarios that the researcher has identified through the previous analysis, as follows:***

##### ***A- Scenario One: Maintaining the Current Situation***

In this scenario, the current conditions may continue, with ongoing economic sanctions and Iranian nuclear efforts. This scenario could lead to continued tension and uncertainty in the region, with the relevant countries deciding to coexist with the current situation as Iran continues to develop its nuclear program. It also requires ensuring that Iran will not use nuclear technology for military purposes, which may be difficult to verify. This scenario is also based on the fact that if a solution to the Iranian nuclear issue is not reached, it could lead to increased regional and international tensions.

It may also incentivize other countries in the region to seek nuclear capabilities, leading to a nuclear armament race and escalated regional conflicts. Internationally, the failure to reach a settlement for the Iranian nuclear crisis could undermine the non-proliferation regime and increase the risk of nuclear weapon proliferation. These developments



could destabilize global stability and increase tensions among major powers <sup>(45)</sup>.

### ***B- Scenario Two: Settlement***

This scenario involves a diplomatic resolution to the Iranian nuclear issue. It may be based on negotiating a new agreement that prohibits Iran from developing nuclear weapons in exchange for lifting economic sanctions. This scenario requires cooperation and trust among the involved parties, but it represents the best opportunity for achieving stability and lasting peace in the region.

This scenario also involves using diplomatic negotiations through dialogue and negotiation as a tool to resolve the Iranian nuclear crisis. Direct talks can be organized between Iran and the other relevant countries, such as the United States, the European Union, Russia, and China, with the aim of reaching an agreement that ensures the peaceful use of Iran's nuclear program and enhances trust among the involved parties <sup>(46)</sup>.

This scenario aims to enhance bilateral dialogue with Iran to resolve the crisis. It emphasizes the need for direct communication and detailed discussions on hot issues and potential disagreements between the parties, with the goal of reaching an acceptable settlement for all. <sup>(47)</sup> This approach may involve appointing a neutral external party or a group of countries to mediate in resolving the Iranian nuclear crisis. This mediator can facilitate talks and help reach an agreement that satisfies all parties <sup>(48)</sup>.

One possible outcome of this scenario is the achievement of a new nuclear agreement to replace the one from which the United States withdrew from in 2018. This new agreement may include stricter conditions regarding Iran's nuclear program and possibly additional measures to ensure compliance with the terms.

***Several diplomatic efforts have been made in international relations to reach agreements***

***with Iran regarding its nuclear program. Here are some key efforts:***

- The U.S. - Iran bilateral talks: In 2013, the United States initiated direct bilateral talks with Iran regarding its nuclear program. These talks ultimately led to the start of negotiations between the P5+1 group (***the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany***) and Iran, which resulted in the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) <sup>(49)</sup>
- Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA): This agreement was reached in 2015 between Iran and the P5+1 group, with the sponsorship of the European Union. Iran signed the agreement to restrict its nuclear program and allow international oversight in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. However, the United States withdrew from the agreement in 2018 <sup>(50)</sup>.

In the years between 2018 and 2022, several agreements and major attempts were made to find a solution to the Iranian nuclear file, considering the current developments in the negotiations and their potential phased evolution:

### ***1- President Trump's withdrawal from the nuclear agreement (May 2018):***

In May 2018, the former U.S. President Donald Trump decided to withdraw the United States from the nuclear agreement signed between Iran and the P5+1 group (***also known as the Vienna Agreement***). This decision created significant tension in international relations and led to the reimposition of the U.S. sanctions on Iran <sup>(51)</sup>.

### ***2- Iran's resumption of Uranium enrichment (2019):***

In response to the U.S. withdrawal, Iran increased its Uranium enrichment levels beyond the limits set by the nuclear agreement. This move raised significant international concerns

about Iran's potential to develop nuclear weapons.

### ***3- Iranian Parliament's law (December 2019):***

In December 2019, the Iranian Parliament passed a law that canceled some of Iran's commitments under the nuclear agreement. This law included increasing Uranium enrichment and restricting international inspections <sup>(52)</sup>.

### ***4- INSTEX mechanism (since 2019):***

Since 2019, European countries have been working on establishing a mechanism called INSTEX to bypass U.S. sanctions on Iran and enhance trade with it. However, this mechanism has not achieved tangible results so far.

### ***5- International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors' resolutions (since 2020):***

Since 2020, the IAEA's Board of Governors has issued statements and resolutions calling on Iran to fully cooperate with the agency and achieve complete transparency regarding its nuclear program.

### ***6- Election of Joe Biden and his promise to return to the nuclear agreement (early 2021):***

In early 2021, Joe Biden was elected President of the United States, and he announced his intention to return to the nuclear agreement with Iran and lift some of the sanctions imposed on Iran. An American working team was formed to conduct talks with Iran and the other parties to the nuclear agreement to resume negotiations <sup>(53)</sup>.

### ***7- Negotiations in Vienna (2021):***

In 2021, negotiations took place in Vienna between Iran and the remaining parties to the nuclear agreement (*China, France, Germany, Russia, and the United Kingdom*) facilitated by the European Union. The goal was to revive the agreement and address Iran's nuclear program concerns <sup>(54)</sup>.

### ***8- Current developments:***

Conversations were suspended in June 2021 for internal consultations among participating countries, and the talks have remained suspended until now without reaching a final agreement. Resolving the Iranian nuclear crisis requires intense international efforts and continuous negotiations. It is important to work towards finding a peaceful solution that ensures the safety of the region and enhances confidence among the parties involved. The ongoing talks in Vienna may be the first step towards achieving this goal, and it is important to monitor the developments and international efforts in this regard <sup>(55)</sup>.

In August 2022, Iran presented its response to the European proposal to revive the nuclear agreement with some modifications. In September 2022, Iran confirmed its readiness to exchange views with the International Atomic Energy Agency on outstanding issues. In October 2022, Iran warned of resuming high-level enrichment activities if the negotiations fail, and the United States announced new sanctions on Iranian companies associated with the nuclear program in October 2022. There is still disagreement regarding the lifting of sanctions and ensuring Iran's compliance with the agreement. It is likely that the negotiations will continue in the next phase with slow progress <sup>(56)</sup>.

### ***C- Scenario Three: Confrontation between Iran on one side and Israel with American assistance on the other side***

In this scenario, tensions may escalate between Iran and other concerned countries, such as the United States and European nations, leading to military or political escalation. This scenario relies on the direct use of military force to confront the potential nuclear threat from Iran and exacerbate conflicts in the region.



This scenario also involves diplomatic and economic sanctions imposed on Iran to pressure it to change its behavior <sup>(57)</sup>. Such sanctions may include asset freezes, trade embargos, and investment restrictions. The aim of this option is to restrict Iran's economic capabilities and deter suspected nuclear actions <sup>(58)</sup>. However, this scenario is less preferred due to its high cost and potential for significant escalation and danger. It is preferable to avoid it as much as possible <sup>(59)</sup>.

In addition, achieving international isolation involves isolating Iran through increased international cooperation to restrict political, economic, and trade relations with it. This may include severing diplomatic relations, travel restrictions, and imposing additional sanctions on vital sectors <sup>(60)</sup>. International isolation aims to increase pressure on Iran and achieve a change in its nuclear behavior. Some countries and international organizations have been banned from direct dealings with Iran in certain sectors, and the United States has imposed sanctions on companies and individuals dealing with specific sectors in Iran. Restrictions have been imposed on oil shipments to Iran <sup>(61)</sup>.

The international alliance may continue to exert pressure on Iran by imposing further economic or diplomatic sanctions. The goal of this scenario is to push Iran to return to the nuclear agreement negotiations and reach a solution. A keen observer of events would notice Iran's strong susceptibility to international isolation, as its chances of international cooperation have decreased and it has received less support in international forums <sup>(62)</sup>.

***The obstacles that hinder the achievement of the confrontation scenario and the settlement scenario with Iran regarding its nuclear program are as follows:***

1- ***Trust and transparency:*** One of the main challenges is building trust and achieving transparency between the parties involved.

Historically, there have been doubts and questions about Iran's nuclear program and its actual activities. Therefore, Iran must provide tangible and transparent guarantees to the international community regarding its peaceful nuclear objectives and its non-pursuit of nuclear weapons <sup>(63)</sup>.

2- ***Political, economic, and security factors are as follows:***

a) Political factors: Political tensions and lack of trust between the parties may impact their ability to reach sustainable solutions. For example, political disputes between countries and a lack of willingness to cooperate can hinder the settlement process <sup>(64)</sup>.

b) Economic factors: Economic sanctions may be imposed by countries as a means to pressure Iran to change its nuclear behavior. However, these sanctions may affect the Iranian economy and its ability to negotiate and cooperate regarding the nuclear program.

c) Security factors: Security issues are a major challenge in both confrontation and settlement scenarios. There are security concerns regarding the proliferation of nuclear technology and its potentially negative impact on the stability and safety of the region.

d) Technical difficulties: Technical challenges pose another obstacle to achieving a settlement. These difficulties include achieving a balance between Iran's right to benefit from nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and maintaining international guarantees against its use for military purposes <sup>(65)</sup>.

3- Regional and international influence: The confrontation and settlement processes are influenced by regional and international factors. There are multiple interests and concerns for



the parties involved in the region and beyond, making it difficult to achieve sustainable solutions<sup>(66)</sup>.

The researcher believes that these factors are not independent but rather intertwined and interconnected. For example, political tensions can affect economic and security relations, and economic sanctions can impact Iran's ability to negotiate and achieve a settlement<sup>(67)</sup>.

Therefore, the researcher believes that the third scenario - coexistence with the current situation - is the most likely to be achieved in reality due to the challenges that hinder the confrontation and settlement scenarios. Thus, it becomes evident to the researcher that the third scenario is the closest to being realized on the ground.

### ***Conclusion:***

*In conclusion, the Iranian nuclear issue remains a sensitive and chronic problem due to its multiple dimensions, which increase its complexity. It requires international cooperation and constructive dialogue to reach sustainable solutions. This issue poses a significant challenge in international politics, and it fluctuates between three scenarios: confrontation, settlement, and coexistence with the current situation.*

*The researcher found that the scenario of accepting the current situation is being realized due to the complexity of available options for dealing with the Iranian nuclear issue. It requires a delicate balance between confrontation and settlement. Although confrontation and settlement represent contradictory options, the optimal solution lies in combining the positive elements of both. Moreover, dealing with the Iranian nuclear issue should be done in a coordinated and effective manner, involving the international community and benefiting from relevant expertise and international organizations.*

*To sum up, there is no perfect solution to the Iranian nuclear issue, but through cooperation and constructive dialogue, sustainable solutions can be achieved to ensure security and stability in the region. Therefore, international efforts in this regard should continue, adopting a comprehensive approach that reflects the rights and interests of all parties involved. The engagement of Arab countries and Gulf states, in general, is crucial in the settlement process. The solution lies in seeking a settlement that provides sufficient guarantees to other countries that Iran will not develop nuclear weapons, while allowing Iran to benefit from nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and easing economic sanctions. Dialogue and negotiation, supported by the international community and the United Nations, can pave the way towards this solution.*



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