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Issue:	Addressing Iran's Development of Weapons of Mass Destruction
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Introduction

Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are fairly young in comparison to the variety of tools used by humanity to cause harm and death, having only been introduced into the battlefield in the early 20th century. However over this short period of time, they have already been responsible for some of the most inhumane forms of war to have ever been deployed. Chemical weapons were among the first to be used, most notably during WWI in both trenches and concentration camps. Though not necessarily as destructive as other forms of warfare, the fear-factor and internal damage brought about by the introduction of chemical weapons left a horrifying mark on the international community. WMDs continued to cause immense destruction throughout WWII, such as the first nuclear bombs to devastate the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the time span of approximately 30 years, WMDs had caused irreparable damage and would forever change the course of international relations, warfare, and human history. This legacy continues to shape international security, particularly in nations with strong military ambitions such as Iran.

As tensions between Iran and a number of both international and regional nations continue to grow, the concern of its development of WMD pose a greater threat to the world than what was expected during the first establishment of their nuclear program for peaceful purposes. Their activities in uranium enrichment, biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries, as well as ballistic missiles have raised fear over potential instability and conflict within the region. Though they assert that their developments in such areas of research are for purely peaceful purposes, many within the international community have raised concerns behind their potentially destructive intentions. These tensions have led to many efforts that aim to subdue the possibility of proliferation developments in Iran, including sanctions, negotiations, and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Overall, this issue pertains to the preservation of international peace and stability, ensuring that nations who are capable of causing immense devastation with WMDs are held accountable and in line with international code.



Definition of Key Terms

Ballistic Missiles

A missile that follows a ballistic trajectory to be able to deliver a payload often carrying nuclear, chemical, or biological munitions to a specified target.

Enrichment

The process in which the level of a particular isotope is increased to result in increased power or explosive capability.

Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU)

Uranium that has been enriched to a minimum of 20% of uranium-235 so that it has a higher concentration than that which naturally occurs in uranium ore, allowing for it to be used in nuclear reactors or weapons.

Iran-Iraq War

The prolonged conflict between Iran and Iraq through the years 1980-1988 following the Islamic Revolution as a result of political tensions and territorial disputes. Both nations endured enormous casualties, with the war coming to an end in a stalemate.

Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD)

A principle of military deterrence on the basis that if one world power were to initiate a nuclear attack, they would be met with one themselves ending in the destruction of both nations.

Non-Proliferation

Efforts to prevent the rapid increase of nuclear weapon possession in either particular nations or the international community as a whole, as well as promoting nuclear disarmament, and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Sanctions

Measures of economic or political relevance that are imposed upon a nation or state in order to influence their actions or policies.



The Islamic (Iranian) Revolution

A nation-wide uprising in Iran through the years 1978-1979 that resulted in the Shah of the Pahlavi dynasty being overthrown, and the establishment of an Islamic Republic under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)

An international agreement that was signed in 2015 by Iran and the P5+1 (United States, United Kingdom, France, China, Russia, and Germany) that relieved sanctions on Iran in exchange for restrictions to be placed on Iran's nuclear program.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

An international treaty that aimed to prevent the rapid spread of nuclear weapons, promoting non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament, and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)

Weapons used to cause destruction and death to people or property on a massive scale, to the point where their existence itself can be seen as a threat on a global level. They are often divided into nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

General Overview

The issue concerning the development of WMDs by Iran has been of central concern since they had been suspected of developing nuclear facilities for purposes outside of energy. Taking into account their strenuous relations with nations such as the United States, their presence in the global nuclear landscape has been said to pose a significant threat in efforts to work towards international peace and cooperation.

Development of WMDs before the Iran-Iraq war

Iran's development of WMDs began with their nuclear program in the 1950s, supported by the United States under the "Atoms for Peace" program designed to aid developing nations pursue nuclear power for peaceful purposes. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, they continued development alongside its first reactor known as the Tehran Research Reactor (TRR) supplied by the United States. However



following the events of the Islamic Revolution, nuclear cooperations between Iran and Western nations were suspended before being effectively ceased.

Development of WMDs after the Iran-Iraq war

The Iran-Iraq war marks the beginning in Iran's shift towards proliferation concerning the development of WMDs, particularly due to Iraq's usage of chemical weapons against Iranian forces. Despite receiving no further aid from Western nations, Iran reactivated its nuclear programs as well as beginning to develop its chemical and biological weapons programs during the war. Though they deny any claims of weaponising chemical and biological weapons, their advanced industries in biotechnology and pharmaceuticals have been flagged by several world powers as a cause for concern. However, their development of nuclear programs had continued in growth, with 3 secret underground nuclear facilities in Natanz, Arak, and Fordo being exposed from 2002-2009. With the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), otherwise known as the Iran Nuclear Deal, significant restrictions were placed on the nation's nuclear program in exchange for lifting sanctions.

Notable Iranian nuclear facilities

Nuclear facilities in Iran include the Tehran Research Centre, the Tehran Research Reactor, the Arak site, the TESA Karaj Workshop, the Esfahan complex, the Bushehr Reactor, the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Facility, the Pilot Fuel Enrichment Plan, the Fuel Enrichment plant, and the Natanz facility. Each of these sites facilitate different research activities, such as uranium enrichment, manufacturing centrifuge components, and producing medical isotopes. However the operational status of many facilities are currently under review due to recent strikes from Israel and the United States in mid-2025.

Provision of missiles and delivery systems

Iran has had a number of incidents in which they had been suspected of or have been reported to supply other nations with ballistic missiles and special artillery shells. Though not WMDs in and of themselves, these delivery systems can be considered as such when equipped with nuclear, chemical, or biological munitions. Notable instances include accusations from the United States of Iranian involvement during the discovery of special artillery shells used for chemical weapons found in Libya in late 2011. They have further been reported to be supplying allied partners and proxy groups within nations such as Yemen, Iraq, and Lebanon with rockets and missiles that may be used in the development of WMDs.



Regional impacts

Within the region, Iran's development of WMD brought many nations to develop concern over stability. As a result of these heightened political tensions caused by the existential threat Iran claims to pose on national and regional security, many neighbouring nations have begun to develop their own nuclear programs, triggering an arms race particularly in nations such as Israel or Saudi Arabia. Such efforts have also increased difficulty in maintaining disarmament and non-proliferation ideologies, diminishing the influence of treaties and agreements. Furthermore, the provision of missiles and delivery systems by Iran to other proxy groups operating in other nations (such as Lebanese Hezbollah) have continued to escalate tensions in the region.

Major Parties Involved

The Islamic Republic of Iran

The nation maintains that their nuclear programs and development in industries that may aid chemical and biological weapons programs are strictly intended for peaceful use. However, their activities in uranium enrichment, development of missiles and possible cooperations in supplying allied partners with delivery systems have raised concerns internationally pertaining to potential military advancements.

United States of America

One of Iran's strongest oppositions regarding its development in nuclear technologies and WMDs development. They strongly advocate for stricter measures to be taken to prevent proliferation development such as sanctions and close monitoring by international organisations including the IAEA. As of 2018, they have withdrawn from the JCPOA, however still maintain their position as a key actor in negotiations and non-proliferation efforts.

Israel

Israel strongly opposes the development of Iran's nuclear and missile-related programs, including the JCPOA, under the belief that they pose an existential threat to the nation's security as well as Iran's increasing regional status. Recently, in coordination with the United States, they carried out strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities including Natanz and Fordo.



The Russian Federation

The Russian Federation is a strong ally to Iran, supporting their right to develop nuclear energy and having cooperated in the construction of various facilities including the Bushehr reactor, their first and only civilian nuclear reactor. Multiple agreements between the two nations have been put in place, such as a recent USD\$25bn agreement to construct four nuclear reactors in southern Iran.

The European Union (EU)

The EU has been involved in the development, negotiation, and implementation of the JCPOA and remains a central diplomatic party in the issue of addressing Iran's development of WMD. They have also acted as a mediatory body in negotiations between Iran and major European nations, and prefer diplomatic dialogue over more coercive actions.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is another regional rival of Iran, who express concerns regarding the nation's potential of nuclear militarisation. They view the acquisition of WMD by Iran as a threat to the security within the Persian Gulf, and have expressed that they may consider pursuing their own nuclear programs if Iran should obtain nuclear weapons.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The IAEA is an international organisation independent of the UN that was first birthed during Former US President Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" address. It stands as the central intergovernmental forum regarding cooperation in the field of nuclear research, with the aim of safe and secure usage of nuclear technology.

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

The implementing body for the CWC who aims to support nations in protecting themselves from the possibility of attacks involving chemical weapons. Their vision includes an international world that is free of the threat of chemical weapons and uses chemistry for peaceful purposes.

Timeline of Key Events



Date	Description of event
December 8 th , 1953	Eisenhower addresses the General Assembly with his “Atoms for Peace” speech
November 1967	The United States supplies Iran with the Tehran Research Reactor
July 1 st , 1968	The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is signed
April 10 th , 1972	The Biological Weapons Convention opened for signatures
February 11 th 1979	The Islamic Revolution
September 22 nd , 1980	Start of the Iran-Iraq War
August 20 th , 1988	End of the Iran-Iraq War
January 13 th , 1993	The Chemical Weapons Convention opened for signatures
September 21 st , 2009	Obama reveals the existence of a secret underground nuclear facility in Fordo
July 14 th , 2015	The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is signed
May 8 th , 2018	Trump withdraws the US from the JCPOA
June 21 st - 22 nd , 2025	The United States and Israel coordinate strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)
- Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)
- Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)
- Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)
- Resolution 1696 (2006), July 31st 2006
- Resolution 1737 (2006), December 23rd 2006

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Many of the previous attempts to resolve the issue at hand included negotiations with the goal of non-proliferation of WMDs, as well as sanctions imposed on the nation. They have generally proved to be successful, as Iran has not reported any nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons in their possession though the possibility of future developments remains.



The NPT was the first treaty to have been signed with the goals of non-proliferation in mind, and was the first global milestone in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. As a result, all signatories including Iran were required to declare their nuclear facilities as well as allow inspections by the IAEA. Other notable treaties to have been signed regarding WMD include the CWC and the BWC, each resulting in multiple stockpiles of WMD being destroyed. The JCPOA was another attempt at specifically limiting the nuclear capabilities of Iran, which has had lesser degrees of success in comparison to other treaties. Following the withdrawal of the United States in 2018, the effectiveness of the JCPOA diminished drastically, a trend that had been present due to its reliance on political cooperation. Furthermore, the IAEA has reported on multiple instances that Iran had violated this agreement, such as undeclared uranium enrichment activities and advanced centrifuge models.

The UN had also intervened with sanctions being imposed upon Iran through the UN Security Council with the aim of restricting nuclear technology transfers and other related activities that were a cause for concern. Though they were able to slow Iran's development in nuclear technology, these sanctions were later relieved in the JCPOA, as well as resistance against full compliance from Iran. Negotiations with Iran continued throughout the early 2000s, notably between the P5+1 (United States, United Kingdom, France, China, Russia, and Germany), and the EU-3 (United Kingdom, France, and Germany) which eventually led to the signing of the JCPOA and temporarily restricted enrichment levels and stockpiles of enriched uranium.

Other covert methods have also been deployed by particular nations, specifically the United States and Israel. Cyber operations such as the Stuxnet virus targeted Iran's nuclear facilities, specifically its enrichment centrifuges, temporarily disrupting their nuclear programs, among other methods of halting nuclear technological progress. However, these actions were deemed controversial and counter-productive towards the international goal of peace and cooperation, and therefore faced backlash from the global community.

Possible Solutions

In order to come to a solution pertaining to the development of WMDs in Iran, multi-faceted approaches that foster international cooperation and peace must be taken.

Though somewhat lacking in effectiveness, past treaties such as the JCPOA provide a strong layout of the goals that the UN wishes to achieve. Building upon pre-existing agreements and



strengthening them through relevant exchanges and restrictions may be a possible step in coming to an agreeable solution between all parties. These may include limiting the number of centrifuges or enrichment levels, in exchange for diplomatic agreements that incentivise participation. Multilateral engagement and confidence-building measures are another key component in ensuring compliance that may eventually lead to reduced tensions and building international cooperation.

Shifting Iran towards transparent non-proliferation should be another goal when it comes to devising possible solutions. Simply restricting activity and offering diplomatic benefits may not necessarily be an attractive solution for all parties involved. Offering incentives such as training and technology to pursue peaceful uses of nuclear, biological, and chemical research under supervision of organisations such as the IAEA or the OPCW may be an interesting angle to pursue when it comes to fostering international collaboration with the use of modern-day innovations.

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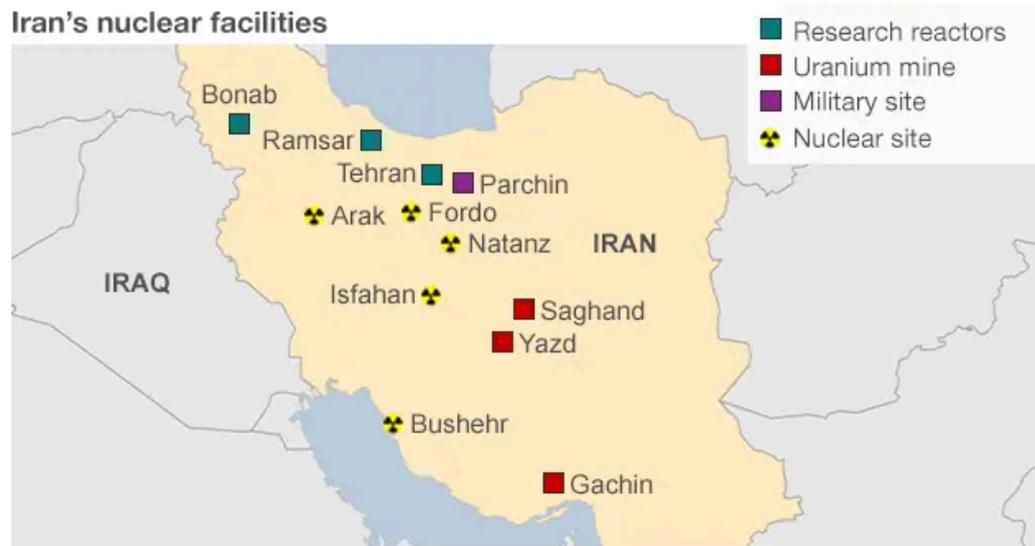
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Appendices



I. Map depiction Iran's Nuclear Facilities:



II. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action official document:

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/joint-comprehensive-plan-action_en

III. Overview, with links to each article, of the Chemical Weapons Convention:

<https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention>

IV. Overview, with links to official document, of the Biological Weapons Convention:

<https://disarmament.unoda.org/en/our-work/weapons-mass-destruction/biological-weapons/biological-weapons-convention>