Iran

I. Background

Over the past decade, Iran was suspected of continuing its nuclear programs, despite international backlash and sanctions imposed in part by the UN. Since Iran was not being transparent with the IAEA various countries such as the US, Germany, and Great Britain enforced economic sanctions in tandem with those applied by the UN. Sanctions imposed by the United States have been used to isolate Iran from the international finance system, hinder oil exports, prohibit trade, freeze assets, impose travel bans, and slow weapon development. Furthermore, UN sanctions have placed embargoes on nuclear material, blocked financial assistance, and the mandate of cargo inspection which could possibly contain prohibited materials. The UN’s fourth round of sanctions followed a similar path as US sanctions as it targeted oil exports and its banking/financial sector. EU sanctions also followed in the US footsteps in freezing assets and culminating in banning oil imports from Iran. The sanctions took a severe toll on the Iranian economy, especially due to the sanctions placed onto oil imports and exports. It was estimated that Iran lost $160 billion strictly in oil revenue, leading U.S. Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew to estimate that Iran’s economy is 15-20% smaller than it would have been had sanctions and embargoes not been in place. One of the largest issues Iran faces is the unemployment rates, especially in among the youth. Following the sanctions unemployment rates within Iran spiked to an all time high of 14.7% and inflations rates jumped nearly 40% over the course of 5 years following the 2010 sanctions.

In 2015 the US, EU, Russia, China, and Iran signed the Joint Commission Plan of Action where Iran agreed to limit its nuclear development program in exchange for an end of economic sanctions. The Plan of Action also allowed UN nuclear inspectors extensive and daily access to Iranian nuclear sites, but as the international sanctions lifted Iran’s economy saw a boost as it exported 4 million barrels of oil to Russia, France, and Spain. More specifically, Iran agreed to reduce its 12,000 - kg stockpile of enriched uranium to only 300 kg, and remove around two thirds of its uranium creating centrifuges, which equates to around 10,000 centrifuges. Iran also agreed that for 10 years, they would remain at least one year away from producing nuclear
weapons, and according to the New York Times the deal succeeded in removing 97% of Iran’s unauthorized nuclear material. However, no nuclear deal of sanctions managed to deal with Iran’s behaviour, including the support of terrorism.

This issue is most prevalent in the area surrounding Iran, including Iraq and Israel, but the issue also regards the international community as it involves state-sponsored terrorism and nuclear abilities. Iran poses a great threat to national security, and it is surmised that in the case of Iran reaching nuclear capabilities they could act in five different ways. Iran may use nuclear capabilities as a safeguard behind which to employ aggression in pursuit of achieving preexisting objectives, similar to how Pakistan used its nuclear capabilities as a shield while aggressively pursuing long-standing territorial disputes with India. Without going unchecked, Iran may also use nuclear weapons to expedite expansion, in an international political sense, similar to when the United States established an expansive alliance network spanning the globe following its acquisition of nuclear weapons. As seen in history, Iran could thirdly use nuclear weapons as a catalyst to gain more independence from allies. As of now, China and Russia are Iran’s most constraining allies and as history has shown in the cases of Britain, France, and North Korea, it is highly probable that Iran will behave more independently and make international decisions according to their own agenda. On the other hand, Iran could use their nuclear capabilities to reinforce preexisting relationships through the transferring of nuclear technology, offer military resources, or extended nuclear deterrence. It is not unlikely that Iran would rather strengthen relationships with such nuclear superpowers as China and Russia to promote their international agendas and possibly gain support in regional proxy wars. Iran also remains the world's leader in state-sponsored terrorism, mainly targeting Israel as part of a longstanding proxy war through its backing of terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas. These groups have carried out attacks such as the July 12 attacks, when Hezbollah militants attacked an Israeli military patrol on Israeli territory which resulted in the death of 10 soldiers. According to a US State Department’s report, Iran has intentionally been intensifying conflicts and disrupting foreign governments mainly in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world. Iran has also been linked to numerous fundraising networks in West Africa, Europe, and weapon caches in South America, showing that Iran is operating globally in their terrorist efforts. Furthermore, Iranian authorities, namely the leader of
the Revolutionary Guard Qassem Suleimani, have been discovered to be helping organize Iraqi militias and the militant group ISIS.

Iran may also pose a nuclear threat, which can be inferred from their past actions and inability to cooperate with past restrictions. As tensions rise internationally peace is put at stake making this a global issue requiring attention.

II. UN Involvement

The first resolution passed by the UN regarding Iran was S/RES/1696 which was adopted on 31 July 2006. The resolution called for Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment program by August 31 of that year, or they would face economic and diplomatic sanctions. The resolutions was brought into discussion following the IAEA’s inability to provide assurances of Iran’s unauthorized nuclear material program and production. Resolution 1696 also called for Iran to take the steps required by the IAEA Board of Governors as outlined in GOV/2006/14 to ensure Iran’s nuclear program was for exclusively peaceful purposes. Iran’s representative claimed the resolution was unwarranted, and explained that Iran’s nuclear program posed no threat to international peace. After the ultimatum date passed Iran had failed to abide by the resolution and suspend its nuclear program.

Following Iran’s failure to comply with the UN’s deadline three resolutions were passed placing sanctions and embargoes on Iran, beginning with Resolution 1747 which was unanimously adopted in March of 2007. The first round of sanctions placed by the UN banned Iran’s arms exports, froze assets, and restricted traveling of personal associated with Iran’s nuclear program. Together, the embargoes heavily weakened Iran’s economy ultimately placing it in a recession. The UN highly encouraged Iran to halt its nuclear activities, including research and development, which would be verified by the IAEA. The second resolution passed was S/RES/1803 which was adopted on 3 March 2008 to strengthen and tighten sanctions on Iran. The resolution expanded the travel ban and frozen assets, broadening the scope of imposed embargoes. Resolution 1803 also authorized states to inspect Iranian cargoes coming in and out or Iran for suspicious or prohibited materials. After continuous years of friction and conflict, the UN Security Council imposed a fourth round of sanctions regarding Iran’s nuclear program in S/RES/1929 passed June of 2010. Resolution 1929 in particular banned Iran from carrying out
nuclear-capable ballistic missile tests and placed an embargo on major weapon systems from going to Iran. Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad reacted to the resolution by threatening to stop negotiations with the UN when the resolution was adopted, impacting the issue by closing the gap of possibility compromise.

Later on, the UNSC passed Resolution 2231 in July of 2015 which implemented the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). As an effect of Resolution 2231, the US, the UK, France, and Germany used its ties to gain international backing when accusing Iran of conducting missile tests and it required punitive action as a result. However, the UN fell short of any action as the claims failed to prove the test’s nuclear capabilities which were needed for the UN to take any action as outlined in Resolution 2231. Additionally, the resolution emphasizes cooperation from Iran and promotes the idea of lifting the sanctions should Iran meet all the requirements offered by the IAEA. The resolution also explains that under the JCPOA the IAEA will be allowed to carry out routine inspections of Iran’s ongoing nuclear activities and programs. The implementation of the JCPOA drastically increased surveillance on Iran’s nuclear activities, leading to a 90% increase of surveillance imaging, giving the UN and IAEA vital information on how to proceed in the future.

UN actions have garnered varying results but have maintained international backing from member states. The UN has failed in halting Iran’s nuclear programs and activities as it was found in 2015 that Iran’s nuclear capabilities were much more advanced than previously expected, and Iran was likely months away from producing a nuclear weapon. Furthermore, the UN’s JCPOA program is set to expire 10 years after its adoption, which means the UN may lose crucial insight into Iran’s nuclear activities. This expiration could also lead to Iran’s advancement of nuclear power by going unchecked by IAEA officials. However, the UN has seen great success in its application of sanctions and embargoes, as well as gaining international backing. The sanctions and embargoes placed on Iran have seen a strong success and led to the deterioration of Iran’s economy, prompting Iran to agree with the UN’s requirements and slowing down of their nuclear practices. Additionally, the UN has gained global backing for its actions and respect for implementing the JCPOA.
III. Questions to Consider

1. Has your country placed sanctions on Iran and how does that affect international relations or the ability to work with Iran’s feeble economy?

2. How can your country work around Iran’s tendency to falsify and mislead attempts to uncover aspects of their nuclear program?

3. Does your country have nuclear capabilities? How will this play into international affairs and discussions?

4. Has your country been involved with Iran’s situation? If so, what tactics were successful? Unsuccessful?

5. Has your country aided the UN in any way with Iran? What have been done and was it successful?
Works Cited


