

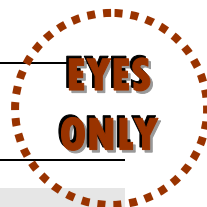


# Vereniging voor de Verenigde Naties

Model United Nations - Flanders, 15<sup>th</sup> Edition

SIMULATION EXERCISE

5 - 8 December 2019



## Iran versus Saudi Arabia. Geopolitical struggle in the Middle East.

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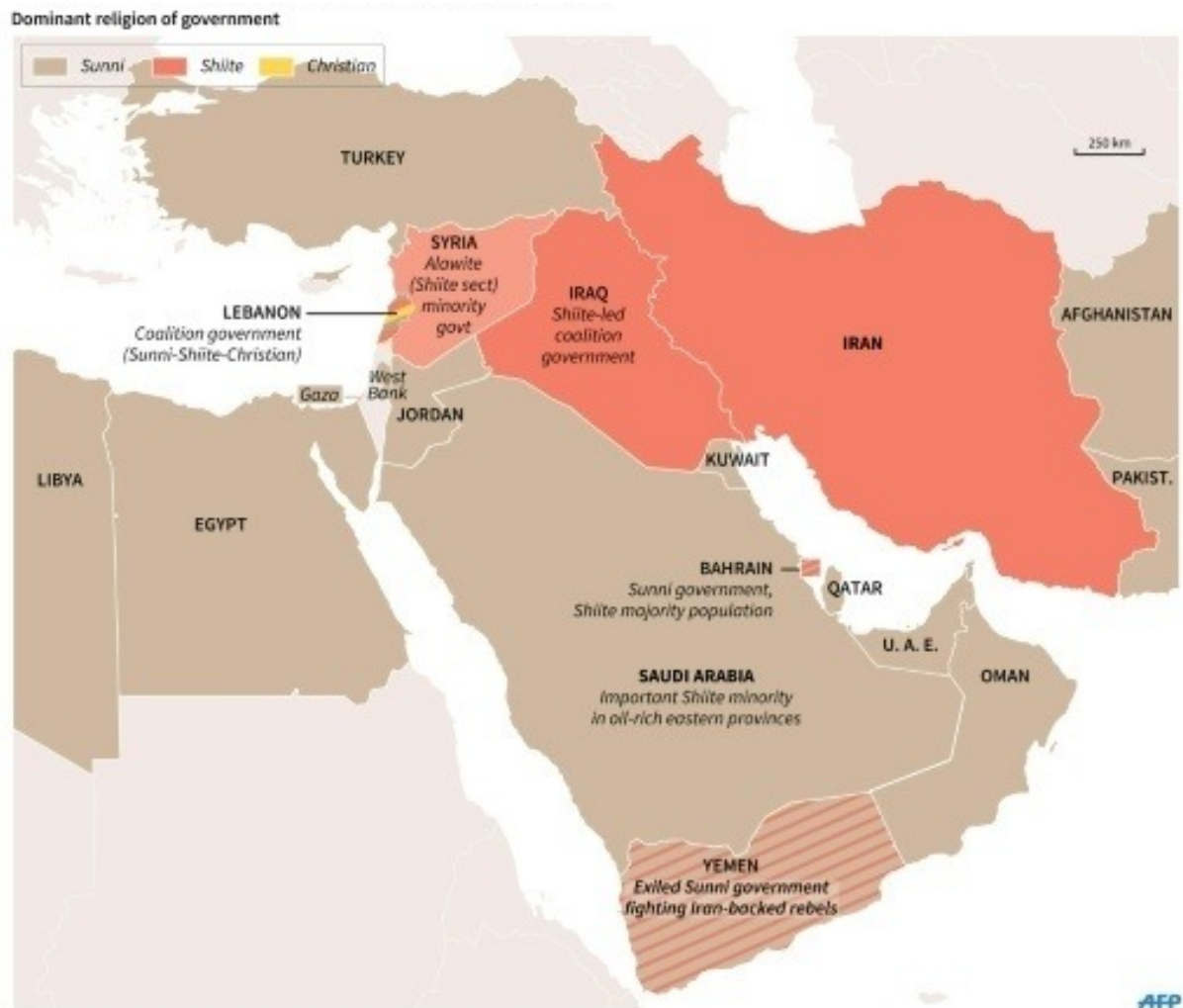
### Introduction



In the Middle East, a 'shadow war' is currently raging between two regional powers; the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The fight is bitter. It is waged on many fronts; in Syria, in Yemen, in Iraq, across the strategically important Strait of Hormuz since June 2019, but recently also directly. On 15 September 2019, an oil refinery of Saudi

Arabia was hit by more than twenty allegedly Iranian drones. The situation has become tense and the conflict potential is so high that a direct conflict between both nations cannot be ruled out. But if this were to happen the ramifications for the whole region would be dire. The geopolitical struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran can be seen through many looking glasses; the regional component of Shia versus Sunni, the political component of a kingdom against a theocratic republic, the energy dimension of an oil economy at the summit of its power or in potential decline versus a country endowed with natural gas – a probable 'bridge fuel' towards a renewable energy future, the regional aspirations of both countries in the region, the question of the potential usage of the nuclear program of Iran for military, non-civilian purposes and the havoc this would create in terms of skewed power balances and a potential tsunami of new nuclear weapon states, the security destabilization since twenty years in the region – which has led to both countries supporting their proxies (in)directly in regional wars, the humanitarian and civilian cost which the proxy conflict between both powers have caused in such countries as Iraq, Syria and Yemen, etc. The complexity of this shadow war is so dense that it is difficult to disentangle. As a member of the UN Security Council you are asked to analyze several dimensions of this ongoing conflict, and to come with proposals carried by the international community to contain or even 'solve' the current regional conflict. Given the very real dangers for a severe escalation of this crisis in the upcoming weeks and months, the stakes could not have been any higher.

## A region in disarray: the Sunni-Shia Divide in the Middle East



When one analyzes the broader region of the Middle East, one is struck by the deep divisions that currently exist there. Roughly speaking there seem to be two main camps; the Sunni-Shia divide. This geopolitical rift goes back to a religious one over who should succeed the Islamic Prophet Mohammed. However, one might also argue that religion over time has become instrumentalized by many as a tool to direct mass public opinion towards the actual geopolitical goals of the respective countries and the families that are in power in the region. Religion should thus be seen in conjunction to other potential explanatory variables.

*First*, there are those countries that belong to the Shia camp. As the Shia are in the minority, the list of countries that encompasses them is much smaller. Next to Iran a country such as Iraq should be mentioned. The majority of its population living in the south are Shia. The American intervention in March 2003 in Iraq actually made the Shia much stronger in the country (63% Shia). As a result, Iraq's foreign policy has gradually over time evolved towards a more pro-Iranian stance, although the picture remains fuzzy. Another Shia country is Syria, but there the Shia are in a minority under the leadership of Bashar al-Assad (13% Shia). The Syrian war since 2011 has been an opportunity for Iran to further strengthen its geopolitical reach in the region. Yet another important group to mention in this framework is Hezbollah in Lebanon (36% Shia), who also strengthened their position over the past years.



However, in countries such as Bahrain, Libya, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, a Sunni majority rules a Shia minority. Moreover, the picture is not that binary if one digs deeper; a country such as Turkey under president Erdogan does not fully support the regional leader Saudi Arabia, but rather develops its own foreign policy. Over time, Turkey has become much more of a ‘wild card’, and an aspiring independent geopolitical pole. Qatar was in the past accused by Saudi Arabia to come too close to Iranian influence, as a result of which Riyadh imposed sanctions on the country. That may have produced a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby Qatar may actually have drifted off more towards Tehran. Negotiators wishing to gain a deeper understanding of this region and its changing coalitions thus need to dig deeper to try and understand what is going on here.

## Historical background of Iran’s nuclear and missile program

Iran is a non-nuclear weapon party to the multilateral Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT, see Annex 2). The NPT prohibits such parties from developing or acquiring nuclear weapons, but it permits them an ‘inalienable right’ to develop nuclear energy facilities for peaceful purposes, subject to safeguards administered by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). However, according to some, Iran has also been building a top secret *nuclear program* since the beginning of the 1980s. Key underground facilities were kept hidden from the international community (e.g. the nuclear enrichment plant ‘Natanz’, the now dismantled site with unknown purpose ‘Lavizan’ & the ‘Esfahan’-site with its undeclared, secret ‘tunnel’ beneath – according to Tehran simply a ‘storage facility’, etc.). Iran says these installations have been developed for the purpose of creating a ‘civilian nuclear energy capacity’, but Western countries feared in the past that this technology could also be used to develop nuclear weapons. In 2010, the US and Israel worked successfully together to cripple a part of the Iranian nuclear program; their uranium enrichment centrifuges. An Iranian double agent working for Israel used a standard thumb drive. This infected the computers of

Iran's Natanz nuclear facility with the highly destructive Stuxnet computer worm virus. Hence the Iranian centrifuges broke down. By this action in combination with severe sanctions from the international community, Iran chose the route of diplomacy – until recently (see *infra*).

Furthermore, the regime in Tehran has been developing a state-of-the-art *missile program*. The website of 'Iran Watch' of the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control (see: <https://www.iranwatch.org/weapon-programs/missile> ) offers negotiators some accurate recent information. According to this group, Iran's missiles are "*inherently capable of carrying a nuclear payload*". Since the exit of the United States from the so-called 'Iran Deal' or Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in May 2018 (see *infra*), Iran Watch identifies some landmark events in terms of new developments since then (check website for more):

- **December 2018:** Iran tested a medium-range ballistic missile, which is reportedly a Khorramshahr with a range of 2,000 km.
- **December 2018-February 2019:** Iran tested a series of missiles, including one Shahab-3 medium-range ballistic missile, one Qiam short-range ballistic missile, one Scud short-range ballistic missile, and one Zolfaghar (Zulfiqar) short-range ballistic missile, according to a U.N. report.
- **February 2019:** Iran unveils the Hoveizeh cruise missile, which has a range of at least 1,200 km, as part of the 40th anniversary celebrations of the Iranian Revolution. The missile is reportedly similar to the nuclear-capable Soviet Kh-55 missile. At the same event, Iran displays the updated Khorramshahr 2 medium-range ballistic missile, which reportedly has a range of 2,000 km.
- **February 2019:** Iran unveiled the Dezful medium-range ballistic missile, which has a range of 1,000 km and is an upgrade of the older Zolfaghar (Zulfiqar) model.
- **February 2019:** Iran tested a submarine-launched cruise missile for the first time as part of its "Velayat 97" wargame exercises in the Strait of Hormuz.
- **July 2019:** Iran reportedly tested a Shahab-3 medium-range ballistic missile. The missile, which is based on the North Korean No-Dong, flies approximately 1,100 km.
- **August 2019:** Iran unveiled three new precision-guided air-to-air missiles: the Yasin, the Balaban, and an updated variant of the Qaem. The missiles are developed by the Iranian Defense Ministry and Iran Electronics Industries (IEI).
- **September 2019:** Iran is, according to the US and Saudi governments, implicated in a cruise missile and drone attack on Saudi Arabian oil facilities. In response, the Treasury Department sanctions the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), the National Development Fund of Iran (NDF), and Etemad Tejarate Pars Co., pursuant to Executive Order 13224, for financially supporting the IRGC-Quds Force and the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics (MODAFL) (see *infra* for more context and information).

Combining the nuclear dimension with its missile program, Iran could pose a threat to the region. According to Tehran, the 'West' is denying this Shia Muslim country the means to develop itself – it is the 'West' itself that is exerting a “destabilizing” force for geopolitical reasons. During the last two decades, Iran has been under scrutiny from the IAEA. The Iranian government asserts that its program is for peaceful purposes only. Iran has entered into a Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA and did not interfere with IAEA-surveillance of its *declared* nuclear facilities. However, Iran's past conduct in connection with *undeclared* nuclear activities led Western governments to be highly suspicious of Tehran's 'real' intent. Let us go back into history to sketch some of main developments over the past fifteen years.

## Earlier history of the tensions around Iran's nuclear program

During the year 2004, the crisis around Iran's nuclear program ignited as a result of tip-offs from Iranian opposition groups abroad. A number of secret facilities in Iran were revealed. This caused the United States of America under the leadership of president **George W. Bush** to openly lobby for military intervention. Three European countries –the UK, France and Germany– took the lead in a diplomatic effort to avert military confrontation. The so-called 'EU-3' wanted Iran to suspend activities on its entire nuclear program, e.g. in return for



'financial incentives'. Iran however maintained its position that the 'West' would not be able to 'halt Iranian progress' indefinitely, although it engaged in the negotiations so that certain trade agreements could perhaps be realized. In November 2004, Iran agreed to suspend its nuclear program in Vienna in the margins of a Board Meeting of the IAEA, but stated clearly that this would only be temporary. During the first half of 2005, the relations between Iran and the international community worsened. Mid-2005, a new 'hard line'-president,

**Mahmoud Ahmadinejad**, was elected. He soon threatened that Iran would restart its nuclear program. In August 2005, Iran resumed a process of converting yellowcake uranium that could eventually lead either to the production of energy for peaceful purposes or to the production of nuclear weapons. This action ended in effect two years of diplomacy. In August 2005, Iran accused the EU of hypocrisy in an escalating war of words following Tehran's decision to resume its nuclear fuel program earlier that month.

On 24 September 2005, a majority of the Board of Governors of the IAEA backed an EU-sponsored resolution to refer Iran to the Security Council for failing to comply with nuclear non-proliferation rules, but stopped short of setting a date for referral. In a compromise aimed at overcoming opposition from Russia, China, and others, the EU delayed referral, at least until the next Board meeting of the IAEA, expected at the end of November. At the beginning of October 2005, the Ambassador of the Russian Federation Vladimir Chizhov said that “if Iran crossed certain ‘red lines’ (e.g. withdrawal from the NPT) it would face referral to the United Nations Security Council”. The EU-3 were asking for ‘objective guarantees’ from Iran that it was not using its nuclear material for non-civilian purposes. The US Government was even tougher; it demanded the immediate and complete dismantlement of the Iranian nuclear weapons program. President George W. Bush stated on a number of occasions that “all options are on the table” should Iran decide not to comply.

The crisis became highly volatile. The UN Security Council had imposed mandatory economic sanctions on several countries in the past (research the UNSC's online archive to learn more), but not all member states fully complied with them. The sanctions normally involve embargoes on selected goods and services other than items of a humanitarian nature. To impose sanctions, the five permanent Security Council members – China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States – would have to vote for the sanctions or at least abstain from voting against them. Some analysts claimed sanctions were 'not the way to go'; gaining consensus on substantial bars on trade and investment would prove difficult. Iran from its side threatened to withdraw from the NPT if it was subjected to UN sanctions. Furthermore, some specialists fear that full-blown sanctions could result in a Tehran-government that would abandon diplomacy altogether, much like is the case today. Perhaps Tehran would then also step up its support of 'international terrorism'. On the other hand, doing nothing might even prove equally difficult. At the beginning of October 2005, the British government accused Iran of promoting insurgencies in Iraq via Hezbollah from Lebanon. At the same time however, the US & Israel refused to rule out military intervention to stop Iran from developing an atomic bomb. Similar patterns can be seen today.

In April 2006, Tehran announced that uranium enrichment had resumed at Natanz. In May 2006, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced that the United States would join the EU-3's talks with Iran once Tehran suspended all enrichment-related activities. The next month, the so-called P5+1 offered additional incentives. (The P5+1 included the five permanent U.N. Security Council members—Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States—plus Germany.) Then EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana launched a series of meetings with Iranian nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani. But whenever they seemed to be making progress, Ahmadinejad publicly attacked the process. In 2007, Larijani resigned in frustration. The George W. Bush administration and its European allies gained international support for separate UN Security Council resolutions: 1737, 1747, 1803 and 1835. In it, sanctions were developed against Iranian missile and nuclear-related entities and persons, imposed asset freezes and travel bans, and required international vigilance regarding arms sales to Iran. Separately, the United States unilaterally sanctioned the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Iranian state-owned banks (Hadley, s.d.). Iran was put inside a box, and entered a period of isolation. The Iranian people started feeling the consequences.



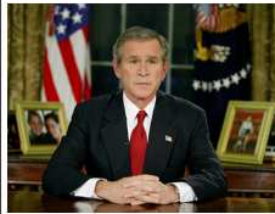
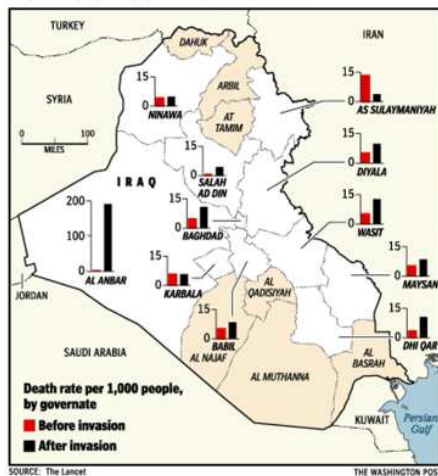
In August 2013, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad lost the elections, over allegations of corruption and the harsh stance he had developed against the international community. The religious Supreme Leader ayatollah Khamenei seemed to favor a new political voice, who won the elections; the new president **Hassan Rohani**. By that time the Iranian economy had suffered so much that it needed urgent relief. Rohani promised a foreign policy that would enable the international community to lift sanctions and ease tensions. Mohammad Javad Zarif became the new Minister of Foreign Affairs of the country. He would play a pivotal role in trying to create a new 'Iran Deal', which would be realized in July 2015. However, by that time the geopolitical power balance in the

region had shifted in favor of Iran as a result of several developments (see *infra*). This in itself caused Iran's regional rival, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to respond covertly, but later also militarily and politically.

## A changing power balance between Iran & Saudi Arabia since 2003

### Civilian Toll

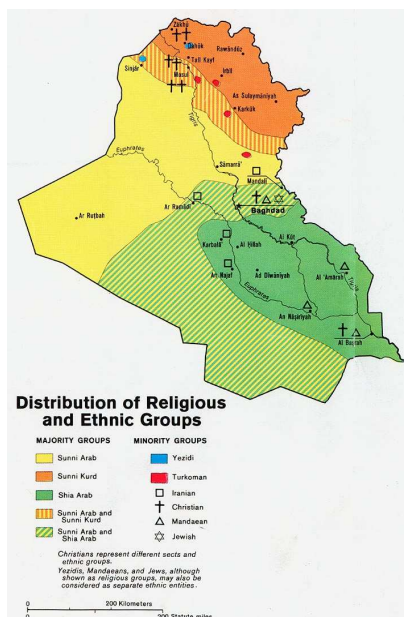
A survey published yesterday in the journal *Lancet* said death rates in Iraq rose significantly after the U.S.-led invasion.



In order to understand the current complexities in the tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran, one needs to analyze the changing power balance in the region.

In March 2003, the American president **George W. Bush** decided to invade Iraq to, in his words, save the US and the world “from grave danger”. Bush junior was convinced that the country’s authoritarian leader, Saddam Hussein, possessed Weapons of

Mass Destruction (WMD). Saddam also was considered a danger to the region. In this new doctrine of pre-emptive strike, the American neoconservative government hoped to change the country and the region for the better. On 8 November 2002, the UN Security Council unanimously had adopted 1441, offering Iraq under Saddam Hussein “a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations”. The problem however was that there was no second resolution of the UN Security Council to support such an American intervention. Critics stated the “US had placed itself outside the Charter of the United Nations”, it constituted a “grave undermining of that UN system”. The belief in Washington was that a top down military intervention could create a new momentum for the region. Later on, especially when the WMD were not found, the US government changed its discourse stating that this could ignite a “domino effect”, bringing democracy to the region. The US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had advised the president that this military operation could be realized with only 150.000 US troops (compare with 500.000 during the 1991 Gulf war, when the father of Bush as US president had ousted Saddam Hussein from Kuwait).



Iraq was “freed”. On 1 May 2003 Bush jr. gave his so-called ‘Mission Accomplished’-speech on board of the American aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln. The US wanted to bring democracy to Iraq, but without too much ‘checks and balances’. If democracy was defined as the majority plus one, then the Shia people living in the south of Iraq would automatically hold the real power. They had been suppressed by the Sunni of Saddam Hussein for many decades. Perhaps even some revenge was in order. It is not a surprise that the first uprisings against the Americans in Iraq started in Sunni cities west of the capital Baghdad; Fallujah, Ramadi, etc. The country entered in civil war, which gave rise to Sunni radicalism and terrorism, with elements of Saddam’s former army joining them; the later ISIS or Daesh was born. As a result of Sunni radicalism, Iran sent elite troops into Iraq to fight together with Shia Iraqi

troops against the Sunni. Iran's regional power grew. In 2008, American president George W. Bush signed the *"U.S.–Iraq Status of Forces Agreement"*. By the deadline of 31 December 2011 all the United States Forces would withdraw from all Iraqi territory. De facto Iran had become the real regional winner of the American intervention in Iraq. This now started to worry Sunni countries, and more in particular the *House of Saud* in Saudi Arabia. Soon an opportunity came which Riyadh took to "correct the power balance", but it misfired greatly.

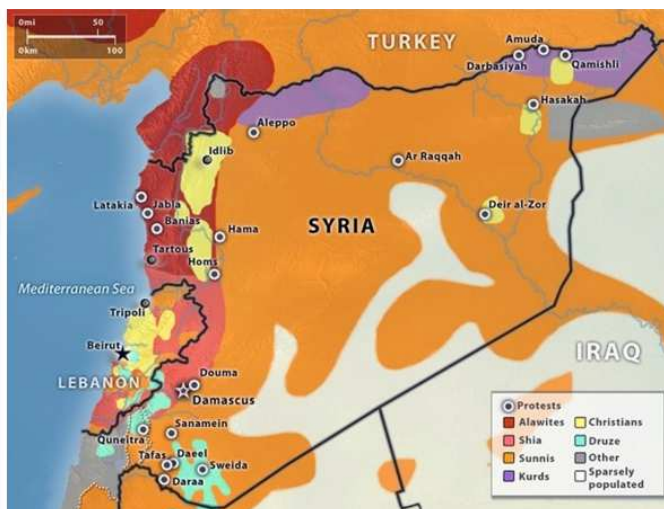
## The Obama administration and the Middle East

### Arab Spring... (2011)



Early in January 2011, a remarkable set of events unfolded in North Africa and the Middle East. It all started with a shopkeeper Mohammad Bouazizi who had set himself on fire on 17 December 2010 to protest against the dictatorial regime in Tunisia. Soon thereafter similar developments unfolded in countries such as Libya, Egypt and Syria. Saudi Arabia responded to the crisis via spending more money internally, but externally Riyadh later

saw an opportunity to reshape the region more in a favourable fashion to their geopolitical goals. In 2015, the Saudi government for instance supported efforts coming from the Egyptian army to oust the new government of Mohammed Morsi, who had himself replaced Mubarak. Riyadh also funded the new regime of the new Egyptian president Abdul Fatah al-Sisi. However, since the Shia are rather thinly present in the country (estimates widely range from 50,000 to one million), this did not really provoke a response from Iran.



This situation was much different in the case of the Syrian civil war, which also started in the wake of the Arab Spring of 2011. The Alawites of president Bashar al-Assad are there closely related to the Shia religion in Islam. However, they have always been the minority in the country. The power base of the al-Assad family rested on a carefully molded minority power position that, thanks to an alliance with other minorities and forms of repression, could rule the

Sunni majority. While the country had experienced several droughts, mostly Sunni people went to the streets during the Arab Spring – hoping for more democratic reforms in the country. Bashar al-Assad had lived for many years in London as an eye surgeon. The population thought that his familiarity with Western ideas would actually make him into a reformer. Assad however reacted harshly to the Sunni protests, which led to bloodshed among the Sunni. This proved to be a crucial turnaround; Saudi Arabia felt it could not stand

idly by as self proclaimed protector of Sunni people in the region. Today there are several clear indications that Saudi Arabia indirectly started to support, initially in secret via its own intelligence services, all kinds of radical Sunni groups in Syria. Money and weapons were transferred to the country, which soon reshaped the Syrian war from a civil war into a regional one. At the same time, Assad started to receive support; also money, goods and military elite troops from Iran. Shia fighters from Hezbollah also crossed the mountains into Syria, to support Assad. By 2013, Iran and Saudi Arabia had turned the country into a proxy war, later even drawing in the United States of America and the Russian Federation.



The cartoon seen on this page comes originally from the Iranian FARS new agency. It criticizes Saudi Arabia's activities in supporting radical Sunni and Salafist groups in the region, not only in Syria, but also in Iraq. From this breeding pond, radical groups such as Islamic State (ISIS or Daesh) or Al Nusra (an Al Qaeda affiliate in Syria) would gradually materialize. Although Iran certainly also does not go free in terms of fueling the Syrian conflict, Western countries later

were mostly confronted by the indirect results of Sunni radicalism; the wave of ISIS / Daesh which also started hitting European capitals. One may remember for instance on 21 August 2015 the Thalys train attack in Oignies (France), the coordinated ISIS attacks of 13–14 November 2015 in Paris and Saint-Denis (France), the coordinated ISIS attacks of 22 March 2016 in Brussels and Zaventem, Belgium, etc. These forms of radicalism were, among others, indirect consequences of the financing activities of Saudi Arabia, although this could not always be said in the open, even by European and American politicians.



However, an alternative geopolitical explanation of the so-called 'Iran Deal' of July 2015 states that the then **American president Barack Obama** was well aware of the link between Sunni radicalism and Saudi Arabia's previous activities in the year before. Obama wanted to 'correct' the perceived geopolitical imbalance in the Middle East without having to deploy American troops all the time, since he had promised in his campaign to end

George W. Bush's foreign wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and "bring American troops home". In the apparent geopolitical analysis of Barack Obama, it was necessary to bring Iran back into the geopolitical game in the Middle East, so that Riyadh and Tehran could balance each other in the future (Crikemans, 2018). The plan had however one important other

geopolitical consequence; it vastly alienated diplomatic and overall relations between the US and Israel. Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, was one of the fiercest critics of the 'Iran Deal' since he saw the religious autocracy in Tehran as a direct opponent; for numerous decades Iranian officials had threatened to “*wipe Israel of the face of the Middle East’s map*”. Obama seemed to be willing to live with the geopolitical fall out coming from Israel, which started to fuel the Republican party election base from 2015 onwards.



The website of the *Arms Control Association* offers us a good comprehensive overview of some of the most important moments that led up to the so-called ‘Iran deal’ or Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) of July 2015, seen here in this picture (Davenport, 2019). On 31 December 2011, as part of the fiscal year 2012

*National Defense Authorization Act*, US Congress passed legislation that allowed the United States to sanction foreign banks if they continued to process transactions with the Central Bank of Iran. In January 2012, the European Union passed a decision that banned all member countries from importing Iranian oil beginning of July 2012. Other provisions of the decision prevented member countries from providing the necessary protection and indemnity insurance for tankers carrying Iranian oil. This new sanction regime seemed to produce results. On 14 April 2012, Iran met with representatives of the permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany (P5+1) in Istanbul. Both sides stated these had been “positive.” A framework of continuing negotiations was agreed upon with a step-by-step process and reciprocal actions. A second set of talks was conducted on 23-24 May 2012 in Baghdad, followed by a third round on 18-19 June 2012 in Moscow (Davenport, 2019).



However, on 27 September 2012, the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave a speech before the UN General Assembly. In it, he drew a red-line for an Israeli attack on Iran; if Tehran would amass enough uranium enriched to 20 percent (approximately 250 kilograms), which, when further enriched, would be enough for *one bomb*. Netanyahu referred to a spring or summer 2013 time frame for Iran to complete

the next stage of uranium enrichment. According to an August 2013 report by the UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Iran had stockpiled 91.4 kg (201.5 pounds) of the 20 percent material. Some experts at the time stated that Iran would need 200 to 250 kg (440 to 550 pounds) of such material for a weapon. Other experts suggested less could also be feasible. Iran could potentially reach that threshold soon by producing roughly 15 kg (33 pounds) a month, a rate that could be speeded up if it activated its new enrichment centrifuges. According to the IAEA, around 25 kg (55.1 pounds) of uranium enriched to a 90 percent purity level would be needed for a single nuclear weapon (Heller, 2012).

On 26 February 2013, Iran and the P5+1 resumed negotiations in Almaty. The P5+1 offered Iran an updated proposal based largely on the so-called "2012 package". On 14 June 2013, Hassan Rouhani was elected president of Iran. As a former nuclear negotiator, he asserted that Iran would maintain its nuclear program, but he was willing to further negotiate in an open and transparent fashion. On 26 September 2013, the P5+1 foreign ministers met with Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting in New York. Zarif presented the P5+1 with a new proposal that U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry described as "very different in the vision" of possibilities for the future. Zarif and Kerry met for a bilateral exchange after the larger group meeting. Zarif later stated he and Kerry



agreed "first, on the parameters of the end game." One day later, on 27 September 2013, President Barack Obama called Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, the first highest level contact between the U.S. and Iran since 1979. While President Obama said that there would be significant obstacles to overcome, he believed a comprehensive resolution was in reach. On 15-16 October 2013, Iran and the P5+1 met in

Geneva to resume negotiations. At the end of the talks, the parties released a joint statement describing the meetings as "substantive and forward looking." (Davenport, 2019).

On 20-24 November 2013, Iran and the P5+1 met again in Geneva to continue negotiations. On the last day, Iranian Minister Javad Zarif and EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, leader of the P5+1 negotiating team, signed an agreement called the '*Joint Plan of Action*'. It laid out specific steps for each side in a six-month, first-phase agreement, and the broad framework to guide negotiations for a comprehensive solution. The first phase paused further developments in Iran's nuclear program, rolled back significant elements such as the stockpile of 20 percent enriched uranium, and required more extensive IAEA monitoring and access to nuclear sites. In return, Iran received limited sanctions relief, repatriation of limited assets frozen abroad, and a commitment that no new nuclear-related sanctions will be imposed on Iran for the duration of the agreement. The plan established a '*Joint Commission*' to monitor the agreement and work with the IAEA. The six month period could be extended by mutual consent of both parties (Davenport, 2019). Iran and the P5+1 countries engaged in negotiations for the next 20 months and in April 2015 agreed on a framework for the final agreement. In July 2015, Iran and the P5+1 confirmed agreement on the plan along with the "*Roadmap Agreement*" between Iran and the IAEA. On 14 July 2015, the Islamic Republic of Iran promised to limit its nuclear program to civilian purposes in exchange for the lifting of sanctions, new trade agreements, and direct foreign investments. The then US president Barack Obama was a key proponent of the nuclear talks. The European Union acted as chief negotiator. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council, as well as Germany and the EU, were all party to the agreement. The full international community backed the deal. This produced the 'Iran Deal', better known as the "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action" (JCPOA). On 13 October 2015, Iran's parliament approved a detailed bill supporting the Iran deal.

On 21 October 2015, the United States raised Iran's ballistic missile test as a possible violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1929 at a meeting of the Security Council. On 21 November 2015, Iran tested another medium-range ballistic missile (research further UNSC S/RES/1929 (2010)). On 28 December 2015, Iran announced that it shipped 8.5 tonnes of low-enriched uranium, including the 20 percent enriched material in scrap and waste, out of the country to Russia – in accordance with provisions in the JCPOA. In return, Iran received 140 tonnes of uranium yellowcake. On 11 January 2016, Iranian officials announced that the Arak reactor core was being disabled. On 16 January 2016, the IAEA verified that Iran met its nuclear related commitments. Based on the IAEA report, Zarif and Mogherini announced implementation day, triggering the lifting of sanctions. UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which the Council passed in July to endorse the deal and trigger the lifting of UN sanctions, came into effect. Prior resolutions on Iran's nuclear program were henceforth terminated.



However, on 9 March 2016, Iran test launched two different variations of the Qadr medium-range ballistic missile. On 14 March 2016, U.S. Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power said she raised Iran's ballistic missile tests at a Security Council meeting, saying that the tests were inconsistent with UN Security Council Resolution 2231. On 15 March 2016, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif defended Iran's missile launches saying that the missiles are permissible under UNSC 2231 because the missiles are not designed to be capable of

carrying nuclear warheads (research further UNSC S/RES/2231 (2015)). On 22 September 2016, Iran and the P5+1 met in New York to review progress on JCPOA implementation and the pace of sanctions relief. The meeting marked the first ministerial-level meeting since the announcement of the deal's implementation in January. Speaking to the UN General Assembly, Iranian President Rouhani expressed concern over the slow pace of sanctions relief and claimed the United States of America has been in lack of compliance.

On 8 November 2016, **Donald J. Trump** was elected as the 45th President of the United States. During the presidential campaign, Trump referred to the JCPOA as the “worst deal ever” negotiated and pledged to renegotiate it. European allies in the P5+1 previously signaled they would resist efforts to renegotiate the deal. On 13 December 2016, President Rouhani announced Iran would respond to Washington's extension of the ‘Iran Sanctions Act’ by researching and developing nuclear propulsion for marine vessels. Trump came to power on 20 January 2017. The situation started to deteriorate rapidly.

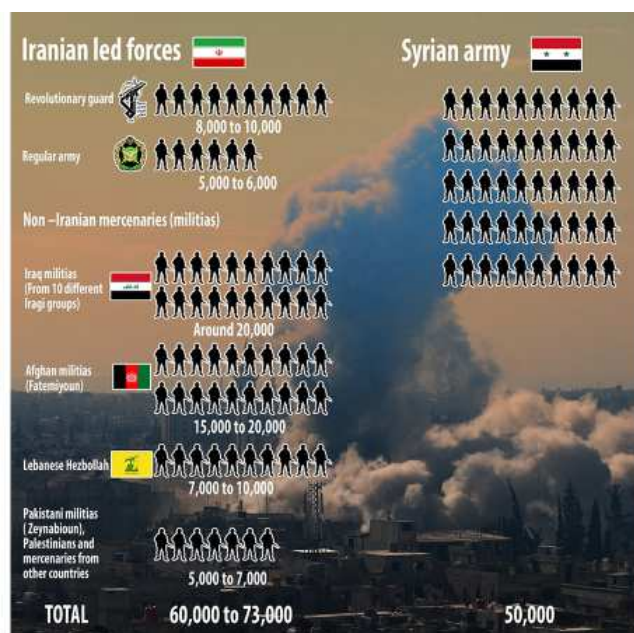


## Iran expands sphere of influence



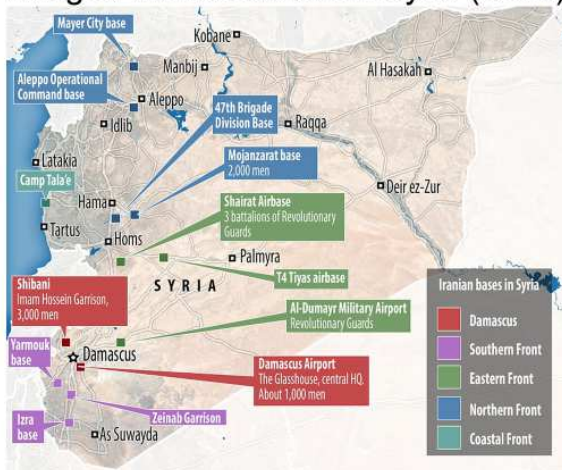
Meanwhile, in the region Iran had 'made use' of the Syrian war to further extend its sphere of influence. Via routes in the south of Shia Iraq, Iranian elite forces had entered Syria and supported the regime of Bashar al-Assad. In this way, they could also strengthen their support to the Shia Hezbollah in Lebanon. By doing so, the Shia axis in the region became physically connected, and strengthened itself.

On 1 October 2015, hundreds of Iranian troops had arrived in Syria over the previous 10 days to join Syrian government forces and their Lebanese Hezbollah allies in a major ground offensive backed by Russian air strikes that started on 30 September 2015. At the end of October 2015, Iran agreed to take part in the Syria peace talks in Vienna. The talks for the first time brought Iran to the negotiating table with Saudi Arabia, which were by then both fully engaged in a *proxy war* in Syria. The talks however were promptly followed by an exchange of sharp rebukes between Iran's and Saudi Arabia's top officials. Assad however, could not have survived without the support of Iran and the Russian federation since then.



Pictures : Daily Mail, 30 August 2016 / 16 May 2018: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3718583/>

## Alleged Iranian bases in Syria (2018)



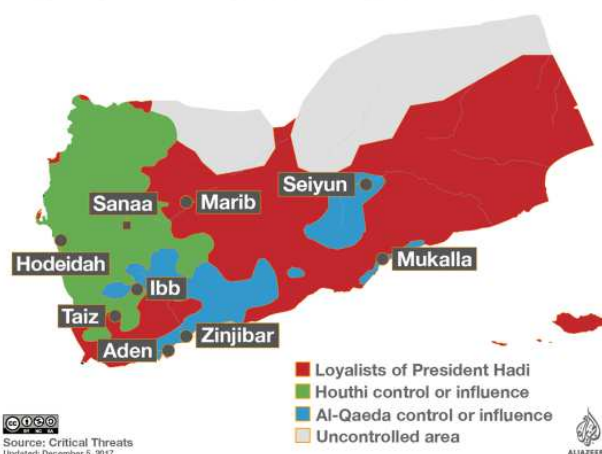
In May 2018, Iranian Quds forces based in Syria launched a 20 rockets attack on Israel. None of the rockets hit any targets and Israeli aircraft responded by extensively hitting both Syrian and Iranian military sites in Syria. In January 2019, Israeli Defense Forces carried out strikes against Iranian military targets in Syria several hours after a rocket was intercepted over the Golan Heights. Israel claimed targeted Quds Force positions, a warning to the Syrian military against "attempting to harm Israeli forces or territory." Syria became a proxy war front.



Meanwhile in Saudi Arabia, the **Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS)** rose to power. In June 2017, he became Crown Prince following King Salman's decision to remove Muhammad bin Nayef from all positions, making Mohammed bin Salman heir-designate to the throne. 'MbS' became both Minister of National Defense & Economy. He seemed to understand the country was in trouble, and needed a new business model soon. His plan was to partly privatize *Saudi Aramco*, the

national oil company, and use that new money to diversify the Saudi economy. Social reforms, including the possibility for women to drive, were actually meant to prepare society for a more diverse working force. Also VAT was introduced, and an attempt was made to stimulate the tourist sector. This was all part of his so-called "*Vision 2030 program*" aimed at diversifying the Saudi economy through investments in non-oil sectors including technology and tourism. Despite these social and economic liberalization policies, the human rights record of the country was rather dire. Critique could be heard regarding detentions and alleged torture of human rights activists. In 2015, Saudi Arabia created a coalition of nine Sunni countries from West Asia and Africa, in response to calls from the internationally recognized pro-Saudi Yemeni president Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi for military support after he was ousted by the Shia Houthi movement due to economic and political grievances, and fled to Saudi Arabia. This Saudi "*Operation Decisive Storm*" was legitimated to be in compliance with Article 2(4) of the UN Charter by the international community, but is highly controversial. Frequent bombing campaigns can be seen with severe numbers of civilian casualties. Hunger is used as a political weapon as result of a naval blockade and ground forces were deployed into Yemen, who plundered parts of the local population. Meanwhile, the Houthi have been rumored to get support from Iran, but it is difficult to find any evidence of that before 2015. However, on 16 January 2018, the UN panel of experts assessing implementation of sanctions on Yemen found Iran to be in noncompliance with its obligations under the arms embargo established by Resolution 2216. The report notes that Iran did not take "*necessary measures to prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale, or transfer*" of short-range ballistic missiles and other equipment. Iran disputes the report and argues that the evidence is fabricated (Davenport, 2019). It almost seems as if the Saudi intervention over an alleged Iranian influence has become rather a self-fulfilling prophecy, with Tehran now indeed offering at least *some* support. Meanwhile, the Houthi have sought to 'internationalize' the conflict, using drone attacks (developed with Iranian support?). First they started attacking Saudi oil pipelines, and in mid-September 2019 a major Saudi oil refinery. Was this Iranian punishment for the 'Saudi-promoted' US retreat from the Iran deal and the subsequent crash of the Iranian economy? Relatively 'cheap' drones had now wrecked the MbS-plan for a 'high evaluation' of *Saudi Aramco* (MbS hoped for 2 trillion) on the stock market. A form of asymmetric and economic warfare is being waged, under the eyes of international investors. Meanwhile, the real winners of these proxy wars in the region have been **radical groups and radicalization**; al-Qaeda, al-Nusra, ISIS, Hezbollah, etc.

### Yemen: Who controls what



## The Trump administration and the Middle East



During the American presidential election campaign, Donald Trump stated that he wanted the US to be less involved in wars overseas, in particular in the Middle East. His foreign policy seemed to usher in a period of isolationism, he also wanted “to bring back American troops from the Middle East”. The foreign policy initiatives of the Obama administration, especially the ‘Iran Deal’, were deemed by Trump as being ‘a bad deal’. In his remarks the

new president referred to several problems: (1) the so-called ‘sunset clauses’ of the ‘Iran deal’ of 14 July 2015, via which parts of Iran’s obligations would expire completely by 2025 at the latest (see Annex 1), (2) Iranian attempts at further developing their own missile program were not included in the deal, (3) meanwhile since 2015 Iran had further expanded its sphere of influence, most notably in Syria during the war that had raged in that country since 2011. The Syrian president Bashar al-Assad could not have survived without the economic and military support of Iran and Shia fighters from Hezbollah in Lebanon. It seemed as though Iran was growing as a regional power, and that the ‘Iran Deal’ had hastened this process even further. This was not to the liking of Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who saw in Trump an ally to undo American policies in the Middle East of the Obama administration. Among Trump’s voters are the Jewish diaspora in the US, but also the so-called *evangelicals* who support an enlarged Israel as it is foretold in the Bible. Israel openly labeled Iran a destabilizing force in the region, and referred to the fact that Iranian leaders had not denounced previous statements that “*Israel should be wiped of the map of the Middle East*”. Saudi Arabia became an unexpected ally of the Israeli in the sense that both pursued the same goal; countering Iranian influence in the region.



Saudi Arabia under the de facto leadership of crown prince Mohammed bin Salman understood that the new Trump presidency posed a geopolitical opportunity of major proportions if Riyadh played its cards cleverly. To that end, the Saudi proposed a historical weapons deal with American contractors ranging well beyond 100 billion dollars for

over a longer period. Did Saudi Arabia “buy” American foreign policy? Quite quickly, Trump talked about Saudi Arabia as a close ally and friend of the United States, and also criticized his predecessor Barack Obama in the process. Saudi Arabia also tried to polish its image and pointed the finger to Iran as “the main source of terrorism in the region”.

No one in the American government did not even talk about the past any more. However, Riyadh had sponsored radical Sunni groups in the fight against al-Assad in Syria. Iran was the 'real' villain. To that end, the American president Donald Trump, his Saudi host King Salman and the Egyptian president al-Sisi opened in May 2017 a new state-of-the-art 'Counter Terrorism Center' in Riyadh "to monitor & combat extremism". Saudi Arabia was sure Donald Trump stood 'on their side'.



On 18 April 2017, Trump's then Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, in a letter to speaker of the House Paul Ryan, certified to Congress that "Iran was compliant in meeting its obligations under the JCPOA". On 20 June 2017, the UN Secretary General released the biannual report on UN Security Council Resolution 2231, affirming that "Iran is complying with the JCPOA" but raising concerns about Iran's ballistic missile activity. On 22 September 2017, Iran paraded its new medium-range ballistic missile tested in January, the Khoramshahr, with a range of about 2,000 km, in a military parade (Davenport, 2019) .

On 12 January 2018, the Trump administration announced that it would re-issue waivers on nuclear-related sanctions on Iran to meet U.S. obligations under the agreement. However, Trump said he would not re-issue the waivers again and would withdraw from the deal unless Congress passed legislation addressing what he described as "flaws in the agreement". Trump said his administration was also engaging with European allies on a supplemental agreement of unlimited duration that would impose sanctions "if Iran tested long-range missiles, thwarts inspections, or makes progress toward a nuclear weapon" (Davenport, 2019). Trump also again violently reacted to the so-called "sunset clauses" in the JCPOA, which will annul parts of the agreement at least after 2025 as stated earlier.

On 19 March 2018, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said at a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council that "the EU is not considering new sanctions on Iran's ballistic missile activities", amid reports that the E-3 are developing such measures. On 11 April 2018, political directors from the E-3 (France, Germany, and the UK) and the United States met in Washington, DC to continue talks on Trump's demand for a supplemental agreement that addresses "sunsets", "ballistic missiles", and "inspections". On 24 April 2018, US President Trump hosted the French President Emmanuel Macron for his first state visit. Macron reports having very frank discussions with Trump about the JCPOA and said that he and President Trump had agreed to work on a "new deal" that keeps the JCPOA, but incorporated additional measures, including on Iranian ballistic missiles.

On 8 May 2018, Donald J. Trump did what he had been threatening for over a year; the United States of America formally left the 'Iran Deal' as a signatory, better known as the "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action" (JCPOA) of July 2015. Trump signed a presidential memorandum to institute the "highest level" of economic sanctions on Iran. In a statement, Secretary of the Treasury Steve Mnuchin stated that sanctions would be reimposed subject

to certain 90 day and 180 day "wind-down periods." In an address following Trump's announcement, Iranian President Rouhani announced that Iran would continue negotiations with the other states in the agreement in order to try to continue the deal without the United States. British Prime Minister May, German Chancellor Merkel and French President Macron re-stated their continued commitment to the deal and pledged to work with all parties to make sure its terms are upheld. EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini stated that *"the EU is committed to the JCPOA as long as Iran continues to implement its nuclear related commitments, as it has so far"* (Davenport, 2019).

As stated earlier, on 14 July 2015, the Islamic Republic of Iran promised to limit its nuclear program to civilian purposes in exchange for the lifting of sanctions, new trade agreements, and direct foreign investments. This deal now started to collapse. President Trump thus envisioned heavy sanctions to be initiated against Iran within 90 to 180 days. Trump moreover evoked "extraterritoriality". This means that when European banks or companies would continue to trade with Iran, they could be sanctioned or fined through their own economic activities and transactions in the US. Trump used the interconnectedness of the international financial system to effectively implode the Iran deal while trying to prevent the US from becoming isolated at the same time.

On 15 May 2018, EU High Representative Federica Mogherini met with the foreign ministers of France, Germany, & the United Kingdom, *and* Iran in two separate meetings to discuss future coordinated work following the U.S. violation of the JCPOA. They agreed to launch "intensive expert discussions" to find practical solutions to the following issues: maintaining and deepening economic relations with Iran; the continued sale of Iran's oil and gas condensate petroleum products and petrochemicals and related transfers; effective banking transactions with Iran; continued sea, land, air and rail transportation relations with Iran; the further provision of export credit and development of special purpose vehicles in financial banking, insurance and trade areas, with the aim of facilitating economic and financial cooperation, including by offering practical support for trade and investment; the further development and implementation of Memoranda of Understanding and contracts between European companies and Iranian counterparts; further investments in Iran; protection of European Union economic operators and ensuring legal certainty; and last but not least, the further development of a transparent, rules-based business environment in Iran. (Davenport, 2019).

Washington had concerns about the so-called "sunset clauses" of the agreement. These state that after 2025 crucial passages of the agreement would cease to exist, meaning that nuclear enrichment could effectively start again. Tehran's missile program has equally not been included in the agreement, and problems have arisen concerning the access to nuclear sites according to the American president. Finally, Trump lashed out at Iran because of its increasing regional activities. Specifically he now started pointing to Iran extending its sphere of influence to countries such as Syria and Yemen. Two days after Trump's withdrawal announcement, there was a direct military clash between Israel and Syria involving rocket exchange between the Golan Heights and alleged Iranian positions in the south of Syria.

*What were the geopolitical repercussions of Trump's decision?* In order to answer these questions, one has to have a clear understanding of the geopolitical dimension behind the

Iran deal. As stated earlier, Obama used the JCPOA deal as a geopolitical strategy in order to curb Saudi Arabia's power, without having to say so openly. By 2015, it had become clear that Riyadh had financed radical Sunni fighters in Syria, in an attempt to counter the growing Iranian influence in the region. It is exactly from that breeding ground that the Islamic State (ISIS or Daesh) originated.

Since 1945, a symbiotic relationship between the US and Saudi Arabia has existed; then president Franklin D. Roosevelt promised Saudi Arabia security in exchange for oil. As an illustration of that promise, the Gulf War of 1991 immediately comes to mind. President George H. W. Bush senior drove Saddam Hussein's Iraqi army out of the oil rich Kuwait, so as to protect the security and oil fields of Saudi Arabia. By 2015 however, the US had started producing its own shale oil, effectively making Washington less depended on Riyadh. President Obama sought to constrain the Saudi destabilization in the region by striking a deal with Iran. A new geopolitical balance of power was hence created, rubber stamped by the UN Security Council and the international community. After 2015, relations between Israel and the US soured.

Trump pursued an anti-Obama policy and reversed the geopolitical alliances in the region. Riyadh sweetened deals with Trump by throwing in weapons deals of historical proportions. Israel used every opportunity it could to voice its concern over Iranian influence in neighboring Syria. Trump contended that Iran no longer complied with the demands of the Iran deal, but according to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, there is no proof of non-compliance. Trump seemed to want to discard the agreement. The American president kept pointing to Iran's pre-deal nuclear infringements.



As stressed before, the French president Emmanuel Macron had tried to change Trump's mind before 8 May 2018. He had proposed to encompass the JCPOA in a wider agreement concerning Iran's rocket program and its increasing regional activities in countries such as Syria. France and Germany sought to trade with this emerging power. Companies such as *Renault* and *Airbus* had been

queueing in line to do business. The fact that the US ultimately blocked this, created serious tension between both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Is a rupture in the Western alliance imminent? Many European countries are rather more concerned about Saudi "financing activities" of diverse radical Sunni groups in the recent past (see supra), and hence see Iran as a more reliable ally for the future. However, it remains difficult to say such things openly.

On 7 August 2018, certain sanction measures reimposed by Trump's earlier May 8-decision came into full effect. The measures included restricting Iran's purchase of U.S. dollars, trade in gold, precious metals, aluminum, steel, coal, software, and transactions related to sovereign debt and the automotive sector. Licenses allowing certain foodstuffs to be exported to the United States and Iran to purchase commercial aircraft were also revoked. On 16 August 2018, Secretary of State Pompeo announced the creation of the '*Iran Action Group*', responsible for "directing, reviewing, and coordinating all aspects" of the State Department's Iran strategy and led by Brian Hook with the title Special Representative for Iran. On 23 August 2018, the European Commission adopted an €18 million package for Iran, the first part of a larger €50 million package, including €8 million assistance to the private sector. On 27-28 August 2018, the International Court of Justice heard arguments from Iran and the United States on Tehran's allegation that the U.S. reimposition of sanctions violates the 1955 *U.S.-Iranian Treaty of Amity and Economic Relations*. The United States contended that the court does not have jurisdiction to hear the case. On 12 September 2018, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported that Iran is implementing all nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA in a quarterly report. Iran's stockpile of uranium enriched to 3.67 percent uranium-235 is 139.4 kg, below the 300 kg of UF<sub>6</sub> limit set by the accord, according to the report. Iran's stock of heavy water was 122.9 metric tons, below the 130 metric ton limit (Davenport, 2019).

On 24 September 2018, the foreign ministers of China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini met in New York to discuss the implementation of the JCPOA. The participants decided to establish a so-called **Special Purpose Vehicle** "*to facilitate payments related to Iran's export (including oil) and imports, which will assist and reassure economic operators pursuing legitimate business with Iran.*" (Davenport, 2019).

Could European countries activate their national systems of export credit insurance to compensate these US sanctions in order to keep the Iran deal standing? For this purpose, the European Union created '**INSTEX**' – the **Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges**. INSTEX was set up in January 2019 as a European special-purpose vehicle (SPV). Its mission is to facilitate non-American dollar transactions and non-SWIFT payments to avoid breaking U.S. sanctions. The '**Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications**' (**SWIFT**) system is a vast messaging network used by banks and other financial institutions to quickly, accurately, and securely send and receive information, such as money transfer instructions. The US could use its financial regulators to stop any payments from and to Iran via this system. Hence the need for an alternative. But after almost a year, INSTEX has not produced any results. Worse even, European powers could no longer offer the advantages that were intended for Iran in the deal. As a result of this, Tehran no longer seemed to feel bound by the JCPOA.

On 3 October 2018, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled unanimously that the United States "must remove, by means of its choosing, any impediments" to the export of food, agricultural products, medicine, aircraft parts, and other humanitarian goods. The 15-member panel concluded that Trump's decision to reimpose sanctions on Iran was unfounded given Tehran's compliance with the JCPOA, but the court did not order the United States to remove all sanctions or compensate Iran for damages. On 5 November

2018, the second round of sanctions on Iran following Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA, targeting Iran's banking, oil, shipping and ship-building sectors, came back into effect. In addition to redesignating entities removed from the SDN list under the JCPOA, United States designated an additional 300 new entities. The administration granted temporary waivers to China, India, Italy, Greece, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Turkey to continue importing Iranian oil at reduced levels, as well as waivers to allow nonproliferation projects at Arak, Bushehr and Fordow to continue.

On 13-14 February 2019, the United States and Poland hosted a ministerial summit on the Middle East in Warsaw where U.S. Vice President Mike Pence explicitly called on “*our European partners to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal*”. Several European foreign ministers boycotted the summit. On 19 March 2019, Iran announced that it registered its counterpart to the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX). On 22 March 2019, the U.S. Treasury Department designated 31 Iranian entities and individuals for past involvement in Iran’s nuclear weapons program under an executive order targeting the proliferators of weapons of mass destruction. On 8 April 2019, the United States designated the *Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps* as a Foreign Terrorist Organization. On 9 April 2019, in response, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani announced that Iran would install a cascade of 20 IR-6 centrifuges at Natanz (Davenport, 2019).

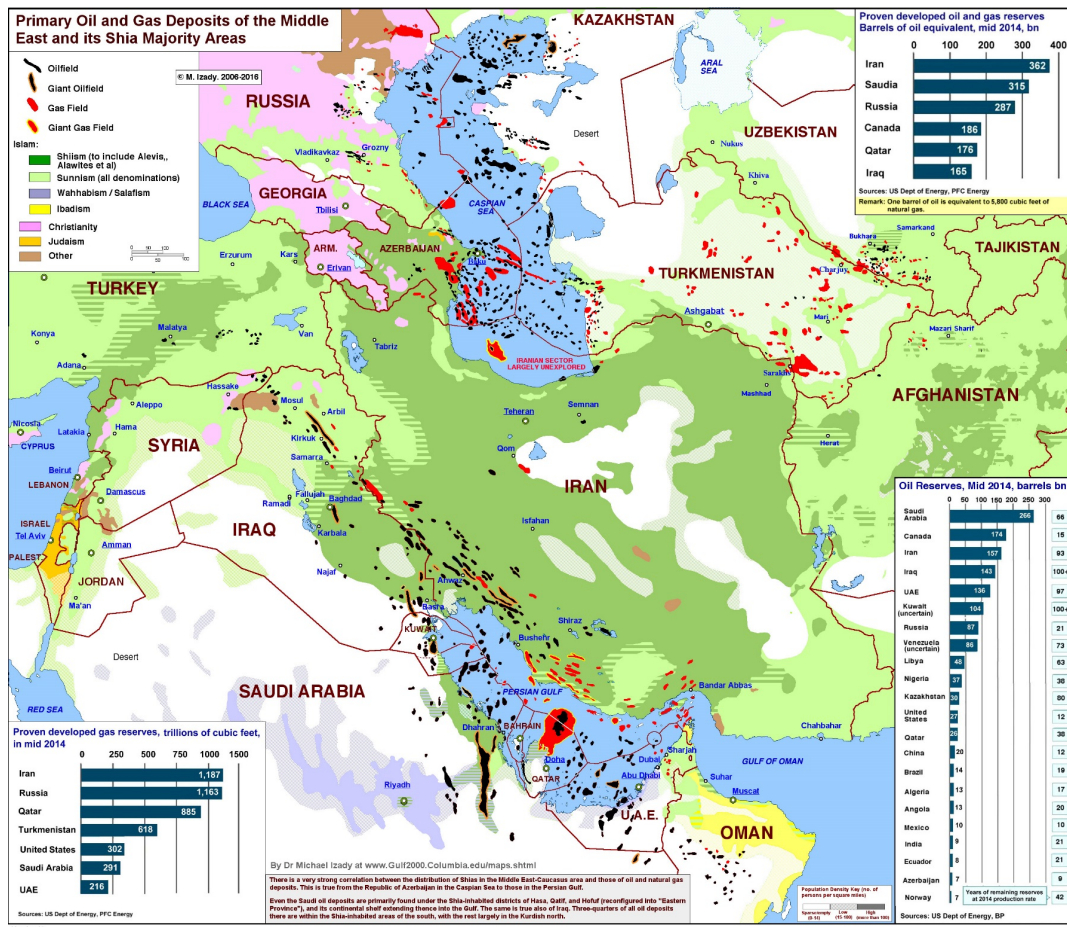
## **A changing geopolitical balance of power**

The geopolitical balance of power in the Middle East shifts visibly. The Islamic Republic of Iran, with its 82 million inhabitants, is a young and fast emerging nation. Although the younger layer of the population is mainly in favor of Western countries, this Shia regime has been led by a group of conservative clergymen since 1979. The current regional leader of the Middle East, Saudi Arabia, only counts 28 million inhabitants. Riyadh is very concerned over the emerging Iranian influence. Both countries are involved in a regional power struggle in Syria and Yemen. Even the superpowers may be dragged in as well into that geopolitical joust.

Earlier we established that Tehran became the unexpected true winner of the American invasion in Iraq in 2003. After the Sunni minority government of Saddam had been deposed, a Shia majority government seized power in Baghdad. Tehran progressively gained influence in Iraq. A similar scenario is now repeating itself in the Levant. In the Syrian war, Iran supported the Alawite, Shia government of president Bashar al-Assad. Special Iranian troops have been reinforcing al-Assad's regime for years and now seem to be ‘digging in’ for the long haul. After the start of the Russian intervention of September 2015, the Syrian war prompted a curious new “Russian-Shia axis” in the Middle East. But at the same time Russia wanted to make sure Iranian natural gas will not become a competitor for Moscow in the future. How strong that alliance actually is, still remains the question. Natural gas has more potential for the future, since it emits less CO<sub>2</sub> per energy unit. The geopolitics of energy in the region will soon all be about natural gas. Israel has now also become an offshore natural gas producer, thanks to its cooperation with the American company *Noble Energy*.

Under current technological circumstances, natural gas can become a ‘bridge fuel’ towards a renewable energy future. The best way of dealing with the lower ends of downward wind or solar production peaks is to switch a natural gas plant on. The Islamic Republic disposes of large supplies of natural gas, whereas Saudi Arabia does not. The Saudi military interventions in Syria and Yemen could be interpreted as Riyadh’s ultimate attempt at reshaping the region to their own image. It may be their last chance though, because the geopolitical cards may be stacked differently in ten years. Once natural gas becomes dominant in Western energy mixes, Saudi power in the region could sunset. From the perspective of geopolitics of energy, Iran may well hold the future with its natural gas deposits (see Video 1). Meanwhile Riyadh is racing towards renewables, but it may already be too late for the medium term.

Europe wanted to forge new economic connections with Iran. France was initially exceptionally successful in doing so for the last years. *Total* managed to broker a 4.8 billion dollar contract for exploiting natural gas fields in southern Iran. *Renault* even signed a 780 million dollar deal for manufacturing 300.000 cars by 2023. *Royal Dutch Shell* is also wanted to invest in the Iranian energy sector. In addition, Iran has signed contracts for airplanes worth billions of dollars with both European *Airbus* and American *Boeing*. Once ten to fifteen percent of components in such planes are American in origin, as they are in the case of *Airbus*, Trump’s new anticipated extraterritorial fines may also hit the European airplane builder. Washington wages a form of geo-economic warfare against Tehran, but perhaps also against Europe? A European-Iranian economic cooperation would be very efficient and profitable. The European countries would be less dependent on future American shale gas deliveries after 2020, while also diversifying away from their current dependency on Russia.



## Europe's limited potential in this crisis

The European Union and the United Kingdom have thus clear economic interests. But at the same time, regional rival Saudi Arabia tried to keep countries such as France and the United Kingdom "on a leash" by forging major weapons deals with them. In November 2017, British Prime Minister May signed a mega deal worth 4.6 billion dollars, whilst being criticized by the international community. May was blamed for her lack of concern of the potential use of these weapons in the war in Yemen, nowadays the stage of a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia. In April 2018, the Saudi crown prince Mohammad bin Salman visited the French presidential *Elysée* palace and signed contracts with president Macron for a total value of 14.5 billion euros. Suddenly the French president spoke in defense of weapons deals in his speeches during the Saudi visit.

European countries and global superpowers seem to have been sucked into the vortex of this geopolitical power struggle between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The new balance of power which Obama envisioned has been cast aside by Trump's decision. Will the European and American roads part here? These developments might prompt a split in the Western alliance in the longer run, or is Washington willing to offers sweeteners to Europe later on? On the one hand there are Saudi Arabia and Israel, Iran's arch enemy, supported by the US. On the other hand there are Europe and the Shia-Russian axis which originated as a consequence to the Russian support of the Shia al-Assad regime. Perhaps the European countries will opt for the safest choice, meaning; following Washington once again, although grudgingly? Together with the other permanent members of the UN Security Council, the European countries try to keep the Iran deal alive though, but the chances for success are rather limited for now.

## From bad to worse: Iran threatens, Saudi Arabia responds

The tensions between Iran and the international community started to almost spiral out of control from the month of May 2019 onwards. On 5 May 2019, the then U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton announced that the *USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group* and a bomber task force were being deployed to the U.S. Central Command region to "*send a clear and unmistakable message to the Iranian regime that any attack on United States interests or on those of our allies will be met with unrelenting force.*". On 8 May 2019, Iran announced that it would no longer be bound by stockpiles limitations on enriched uranium and heavy water reserves in the JCPOA and could restart construction on its unfinished heavy water reactor at Arak and resume higher level enrichment in the future if the other parties to the agreement do not deliver on sanctions relief. On 9 May 2019, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini and the French, German and UK foreign ministers urged Iran to continue to meet its commitments under the JCPOA and reject "any ultimatums" in a joint statement. The leaders also urged countries not party to the JCPOA "*to refrain from taking any actions that impede the remaining parties' ability to fully perform their commitments.*". On 17 June 2019, Iran announced it would breach the 300 kilogram limit on uranium gas enriched to 3.67 percent within 10 days (Davenport, 2019).



From then onwards, a showdown started in the **Strait of Hormuz**, which then gradually became an open shadow war between Saudi Arabia and the US versus the Islamic Republic of Iran. On 13 June 2019, the United States accused Iran of attacking two tankers in the Gulf of Oman. Iran denies that it is behind the attack. On 20 June 2019, Iran shot down a U.S. surveillance drone. Iran claimed the drone was in Iranian airspace. The

United States said the drone was in international airspace (Davenport, 2019).

The Strait of Hormuz is geopolitically crucial in energy terms. Around 17 million barrels of oil pass on a daily basis in this region. Many European countries also buy natural gas from countries such as Qatar, which shares the *South Pars gas field* with Iran. This adds another dimension to the current crisis, which illustrates yet again the dependence of the European economies. Geopolitically speaking however, the Asian economies of China and India are buying every year



more and more hydrocarbons from the Middle East. This shows also the shifting geo-economic and geopolitical relations in the world. One might expect that also countries such as the People's Republic of China are more interested in stability in this region, and could perhaps also contribute to a diplomatic solution. On 18 October 2019, Japan's government announced it would not join a US-led coalition to protect commercial vessels in the Middle East, but is preparing to send its own independent force to ensure the safe shipment of oil to Japan. The country would cooperate closely with Washington even if it won't join the initiative of the US "aimed at protecting commercial tankers from alleged Iranian attacks".

In July 2019, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the body tasked with verifying Iranian compliance, stated Iran had breached the 3.67% enrichment limit. IAEA director general Yukiya Amano informed the IAEA board of governors in July 2019 that agency inspectors had verified that Iran was "enriching uranium above 3.67% U-235". The confirmation that Iran is enriching beyond the agreed limits is the second major breach of the stipulations of 2015 joint comprehensive plan of action (JCPOA) after it was confirmed at the end of June 2019 that Iran had also exceeded the agreed size of its stockpile of uranium (Beaumont, 2019). Soon it could reach 20%, but in order to 'weaponize' this uranium the levels would need to go up to 90%. The threshold of 3.67% had however been defined within the JCPOA agreement. Iran since July 2019 is now officially in violation of that commitment, although Tehran states it is a direct consequence of Donald Trump's "irresponsible" withdrawal from the JCPOA.

From then onwards it seems the proxy war between Saudi Arabia / US / Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran and its proxies is waged on many fronts; in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, on the Arabian Peninsula and in the Strait of Hormuz. The *Christian Science Monitor* recently tried to map all these incidents, and bring them together in a regional overview (Peterson, 2019).

Delegates are invited to study the correlation with the incidents numbered on the map, and their (potential) correlation. Some of these events were highlighted by the author as likely watershed events that further escalated the overall situation (Peterson, 2019).



SOURCE: BBC, Haaretz, Radio Free Europe, Media Reports

Jacob Turcotte and Scott Peterson, see also: <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2019/0919/Attack-on-Saudi-oil-fields-Mapping-a-broader-view>

1. May 8, 2018: President Donald Trump unilaterally withdraws U.S. from landmark Iran nuclear deal and imposes crippling sanctions as part of “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran.  
About these ads
2. May 9, 2018: Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthis fire two missiles at economic targets in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
3. May 10, 2018: After accusing Iran of firing 20 rockets from Syria toward the Golan Heights, Israel strikes dozens of Iranian targets in Syria, including, it says, intelligence sites and weapons depots.
4. June 18, 2018: Israel strikes Shiite militia fighters on Iraq-Syria border (Abu Kamal/Al Qaim), reportedly killing 52.
5. June 24, 2018: Saudi Arabia intercepts two missiles fired at Riyadh.
6. June 26, 2018: Israel hits Hezbollah arms depot, south of Damascus.
7. July 22, 2018: Israel strikes Iranian-Syrian base near Masyaf, in Hama province.
8. July 25, 2018: Houthis attack Saudi oil tanker in Red Sea.
9. Aug. 2, 2018: Saudi-led coalition hits a fish market in port city of Al Hudaydah, Yemen, killing at least 30 people.
10. Aug. 8, 2018: Houthis fire missiles at southern Saudi city of Jizan, killing one.
11. Aug. 9, 2018: Saudi-led coalition killed some 51 in Dahyan market, northern Saada province, including a bus with school children.
12. Sept. 4, 2019: Israeli jets strike Iranian/Syrian targets near Baniyas and Wadi al-Ayun nearby.
13. Sept. 16, 2019: Israeli missiles strike Iranian-Hezbollah weapons depot south of Damascus, which reportedly received fresh weapons.
14. Jan. 12, 2019: Israel strikes missile depots of Hezbollah at al-Kiswah and near Damascus airport.
15. Feb. 17, 2019: Houthis conduct major cross-border offensive; 9 Saudi soldiers killed.
16. March 26, 2019: Saudi coalition airstrike kills seven at hospital, 60 miles from Sada, Yemen.
17. March 27, 2019: Israeli airstrike on weapons depot northeast of Aleppo kills Iranian and six Iraqi fighters.
18. April 7, 2019: Saudi coalition airstrike in Sanaa kills at least 13, including seven children.
19. May 13, 2019: Four oil vessels – two Saudi, one Emirati, one Norwegian – damaged by explosives or struck at mouth of Persian Gulf.
20. May 14, 2019: Houthis claim strike on two Saudi oil pumping stations, 200 miles west of Riyadh.
21. June 3, 2019: Israel attacks Tiyas airbase near Homs, Syria, targeting Iran-supplied weapons cache.
22. June 12, 2019: Houthi drone strikes Abha airport, Saudi Arabia.
23. June 13, 2019: Two tankers in Gulf of Oman struck by explosions; Iran blamed.
24. June 17, 2019: Israel strikes town south of Abu Kamal, Syria, near Iraqi border, reportedly killing 20 fighters of Iran-backed Shiite militia Kataib Hezbollah.
25. June 19, 2019: Houthis target electricity plant near Ash Shuqayq, Saudi Arabia.
26. June 20, 2019: Iran shoots down \$130m. U.S. intelligence drone over Persian Gulf.
27. June 20, 2019: Trump launches and then calls off in last 10 minutes a retaliatory strike against Iranian radar and missile units.
28. June 20, 2019: U.S. launches cyberattack

against IRGC missile-control systems.

**29.** July 1, 2019: Israel strikes multiple targets near Damascus and Homs, killing 16.

**30.** July 4, 2019: British forces detain Iranian tanker near Gibraltar, accusing it of taking oil to Syria in violation of EU sanctions.

**31.** July 18, 2019: Iran seizes foreign-flagged oil tanker off Strait of Hormuz.

**32.** July 18, 2019: U.S. shoots down Iranian drone in the Strait of Hormuz.

**33.** July 19, 2019: Iran seizes British-flagged oil tanker in Persian Gulf.

**34.** July 19, 2019: Israel strikes Iran-backed Shiite militia base of Amerli northeast of Baghdad, reportedly striking guided missiles bound for Syria.

**35.** July 24, 2019: Israel strikes Iran and pro-Iran militia positions in Syrian provinces of Dara and Quneitra, reportedly killing six Iranians, three pro-regime fighters.

**36.** July 28, 2019: Israel strikes Camp Ashraf, in Iraq's Diyala province, reportedly targeting ballistic

missile shipment, Iranian advisers.

**37.** July 29, 2019: Saudi airstrikes on market kill more than 13 civilians in northern Sadah province, Yemen.

**38.** Aug. 12, 2019: Israel strikes Saqr military base in Baghdad.

**39.** Aug. 20, 2019: Israel strikes Iranian-backed Iraqi militias at Balad Airbase, north of Baghdad, reportedly used by Iran to move weapons to Syria.

**40.** Aug. 25, 2019: Houthis fire 10 ballistic missiles at Jizan airport, Saudi Arabia, killing and wounding dozens.

**41.** Aug. 25, 2019: Israel launches airstrikes against what it called an Iranian "killer drone" attack about to be launched from a base near Damascus.

**42.** Aug. 25, 2019: Israeli drone attack in Beirut, target reportedly is key Iranian-made equipment for Hezbollah missile guidance systems.

**43.** Sept. 1, 2019: Saudi airstrikes kill at least 60 in Dhamar, Yemen, at a university used by Houthis as a detention center.

**44.** Sept. 9, 2019: Israel blames Iran-backed Shiite units for "several launches" from Syria that failed to cross into Israel. UAV's strike Iran-backed militias near Abu Kamal on Syria-Iraq border, killing 18.

**45.** Sept. 10, 2019: Reported Israeli UAV attack on Iran-backed militia arms depot in western Anbar province, Iraq. In subsequent explosions, 21 killed.

**46.** Sept. 14, 2019: World's largest oil processing facility at Abqaiq and Khurais, in Saudi Arabia, is extensively damaged by 17 impacts from drones and cruise missiles. Houthis claim responsibility. U.S. blames Iran. Saudis eventually allege Iranian involvement.

**47.** Sept. 17, 2019: Israel blamed for attack on Iran-backed Iraqi militia near Abu Kamal-Al Qaim. Fatalities reported.

**48.** Week of Sept. 16-19, 2019: President Trump blames Iran for strike on Saudi facility; Secretary of State Mike Pompeo calls it an "act of war," and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif vows "all-out war" if attacked.

The events portrayed on the last couple of pages show clearly that the Middle East currently already is in a state of a "shadow war" with dangerous further conflict potential.

The *International Crisis Group* has warned that a trigger event could spark direct military confrontation between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, on one side, and Iran on the other, precipitating a regional conflagration. After the Aramco Attack of 14 September 2019, the Middle East now finds itself one step closer to its own “1914 Moment”: *“The combination of the U.S. “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran, Iranian pushback, the spiraling civil war in Yemen and the paucity of de-escalation channels available to the rival actors has primed the region for such an outcome, even if neither side wants it. Now more than ever, cooler heads are needed to lower the temperature, break the escalatory cycle and chart a diplomatic off-ramp.”* (Vaez et al., 2019).

Others however refer to the fact that Iran is treated too harshly; there are already for many years rumors that Israel already possesses nuclear weapons in some fashion and that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia lives “within screwdriver distance” of a potential Saudi bomb. However, the mainstream idea is that once Iran openly would admit it possesses a nuclear bomb, a cascade effect in the region might materialize, with potential destabilizing consequences. Hence, there are still some observers that suggest work on a “nuclear weapons free zone” in the Middle East as a way out to this difficult problem. But which countries should it then encompass, and how would one be able to organize verification? Could the lessons from the end of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union offer us some inspiration on how to organize this?

## While the US seems to be in retreat, a new alliance gradually forms



Looking at the current geopolitical stalemate between Iran and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East, one might also ask questions with regard to the long term position of the United States of America. As the American president Donald J. Trump is nearing the end of his (first) term, he seems to stress again

the topic that *“the U.S. should withdraw from the ‘Endless Wars’ in the Middle East”*. His sanctions against both Iran and his trade and technology war with the People’s Republic of China have in reality created an opportunity for the Russian Federation to play an alternative role in the region. De facto an alliance seems to be forming between the Russians, the Shia in the Middle East (remember also the Russian military support for the Shia-Alawite president Bashar al-Assad in Syria) and, gradually also, the People’s Republic of China. The geopolitical developments in the Middle East could thus very well form a ‘test tube’ for the future power distribution in the world. As Asia will start importing more oil and natural gas from the region, it will also become a major player. The Russian federation is openly trying to weaken the position of the US dollar as a reserve currency, suggesting that oil should best henceforth be traded in euros as an alternative. Moscow thus also seems to lure in Europe, as several European countries such as France and Germany were directly affected by the American threat with sanctions in case European companies would further trade with Iran. Beijing on its part seems to set up mechanisms to start buying oil from Iran, in an attempt to circumvent the American sanctions and bring the Eurasian countries further together.

## Tehran buying time, Saudi Arabia seizing window of opportunity?



There also exist interesting parallels between the North Korean case and that of Iran. In the case of North Korea, president Donald Trump was willing to meet his counterpart, chairman Kim, in Singapore in June 2018. During that meeting the “denuclearization” of the Korean peninsula (not of North Korea) was agreed upon, without much devotion to detail or thoughts on

which steps should be taken when. Kim gained time, received implicit recognition from the US, and actually tried to reverse the odds by stressing that the US should also take some steps as a show of good will. That process has one year later completely derailed. A recent diplomatic meeting in Stockholm completely failed and Kim Jong-Un is again developing his missile capabilities, now also adding sea launched-variations. The calculus in Tehran may be similar; it might also be possible “to wait Trump out”. The American elections are nearby, in November 2020. In a best case scenario, Trump will not receive a second term. In a worst case scenario, he would, but then that diplomatic process could be frustrated in a much similar way such as North Korea did. Perhaps all Trump wants is a photo opportunity, as he will quite probably leave the details of a meeting to his current Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, or a successor. This means that Tehran’s strategy might very well be one in which they try to buy time if the threat of a war becomes too close for comfort.



The question remains whether the Islamic Republic of Iran has more time to spare. As this case dossier shows, the incidents between Iran and the US / Saudi Arabia / Israel are increasing, both in numbers and in intensity. Countries such as Saudi Arabia and/or Israel may very well currently make the calculation that the window of opportunity to counter Tehran is rapidly closing. If this is the case, then

one might very well expect that a race against time exists to stave off a major disaster in the Middle East. As a member of the UN Security Council, it is your duty to consult with your capital on these grave matters, to identify your goals and to come up with a strategy to achieve them. The ‘Cold War’ in the Middle East could very well soon ignite into a hot one (for more information, see also the video 3 by ‘Vox’: The Middle East's cold war, explained). On 12 October 2019, US Defense Secretary Mark Esper said that two American fighter squadrons and additional missile defense batteries were being sent to Saudi Arabia, for a total of about 3,000 new troops from September this year (XXX, 2019a). On 20 September 2019, the Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif warned that a US strike against Iran would trigger ‘all out war’ (see bibliography; video 5 with CNN and video 6 with ‘Face the Nation’).

## The danger of an all-out Saudi-Israeli-US war against Iran



Such an all out war, a “1914 moment”, could very well cripple the Middle East and severely strain world politics. It would not be limited, but rage on many fronts. Retired US Marine Lt. Gen. Vincent Stewart wrote an analysis on how Iran may fight the US. He stated; *“The Iranian strategy would be to avoid, where possible, direct conventional force-on-force operations”*. *“They would attempt to impose cost on a global scale, striking at US interests through cyber operations and targeted terrorism with the intent of expanding the conflict, while encouraging the international community to restrain America’s actions.”* The Iranians would thus escalate the situation in many different ways and places or theatres. Although their means are limited, Tehran possesses the resources to create a lot of damage. Iran’s vast network of proxies and elite units — like the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps — could be activated against American or other allied troops, diplomats, and citizens throughout the region. What remains of the US troops in Syria is poorly defended and has little support, making them easy targets. Western countries also have thousands of civilians, troops and contractors in Iraq, many of whom work in areas near where Iranian militias operate within the country. US allies would also be prime targets. Hezbollah, an Iran-backed group in Lebanon, might attack Israel with rockets and start its own brutal fight. We have heard this story before, states Ward: *“In 2006, they battled in a month-long war where the militant group fired more than 4,000 rockets into Israel, and Israeli forces fired around 7,000 bombs and missiles into Lebanon. Iran could also encourage terrorist organizations or other proxies to strike inside Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and other Gulf nations.”* Its support for Houthis rebels in Yemen would increase, offering them more weapons and funds to attack Saudi Arabia’s airports, military bases, and energy plants (Ward, 2019).

However, there is still hope. In September 2019, Iran’s foreign minister Javad Zarif proposed *“a non-aggression pact with all the countries in the Persian region and a regional dialogue”* (see video 5, 11:50). Meanwhile, **Pakistan’s Prime Minister Imran Khan** has offered to mediate between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which offers a new glimpse of hope (for more, read: XXX, 2019b). The stakes could thus not have been any higher. You have been asked by your government to defend the interests of your country in an emergency session of the UN Security Council to discuss this complex web of issues.

## Beware of the Dynamics in the Decision-making Arena!

The Emergency Session of the UNSC on the topic *'Iran versus Saudi Arabia. Geopolitical struggle in the Middle East'* will convene in Brussels.

The UN Security Council consists of five permanent members (the so-called "P-5", with veto powers); **the People's Republic of China, the Republic of France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States.**

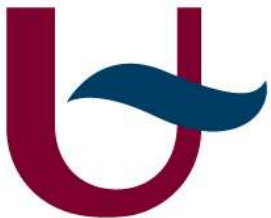



*Furthermore*, the UNSC consists of an additional ten non-permanent members; currently **Belgium (2020), Côte d'Ivoire (2019), Dominican Republic (2020), Equatorial Guinea (2019), Germany (2020), Indonesia (2020), Kuwait (2019), Peru (2019), Poland (2019), South Africa (2020).**

*In addition*, a number of delegations will also be invited to the work of the Security Council during the negotiations, a representative of the following countries: **Iran, Iraq, Israel, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates.**

Be aware that these invited delegations can be a source of advice and/or exert informal pressures on the negotiations. However, they do *not* have any voting powers in the UNSC...

At the end of the day, it will thus be upon the 15 to (try to) decide upon an international course of action to safeguard peace and stability. The presidency of the Security Council will be observed by a number of professors, together with 2 vice-presidents (assistants).

The distribution of the delegations among the different Flemish universities is as follows:

 <p><b>Universiteit Antwerpen</b></p>	 <p>Vrije Universiteit Brussel</p>	 <p>UNIVERSITEIT GENT</p>	 <p>KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT <b>LEUVEN</b></p>
The Russian Federation	The Republic of France	People's Republic of China	The United States of America
	The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland		
Belgium	Kuwait	Côte d'Ivoire	Poland
Equatorial Guinea	South Africa	Germany	Dominican Republic
Peru		Indonesia	
Pakistan	Israel	Iraq	
United Arab Emirates	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	Iran

## The Role of the Security Council in this Case, and Your Role

In light of all these developments, **it is decided that the UN Security Council (UNSC) will again convene to assess the current situation, and possibly to vote a resolution on this topic.** It is important for all delegations to distinguish the different security dimensions embedded within this case. Together with your colleagues, you will thus have to come to a decision concerning the following (interconnected) questions;

### 1. THE STATUS OF THE “IRAN DEAL” (JCPOA) AND A NEW FUTURE DEAL ON IRAN

- 1.A. Can the JCPOA still be considered to be a basis upon which the “Iranian question” should be dealt with by the international community?
- 1.B. Should the “missile programme” of Iran be included into “a broader new deal” with the Islamic Republic of Iran, or should this dimension be kept as a separate negotiation track?
- 1.C. Should the “alleged destabilization attempts” of Iran in the region (in countries such as Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq) be addressed within a broader framework? If so, how can this be operationalized, if ever? And what about verification then?
- 1.D. Should (new) sanctions be imposed on Iran, since the country has now started enriching uranium beyond the agreed level of 3.67%. If so, which ones?

### 2. A QUID PRO QUO WITH SAUDI ARABIA’S ROLE?

Does the question of Iran need to be connected with similar attempts by Saudi Arabia over the past years to develop a (military) counter strategy? If so, then some (though not all) of the following matters could be contemplated;

- 2.A. Should a wider “nuclear weapon free zone” be considered as a wider confidence building measure?
- 2.B. Can ‘confidence building measures’ (CBMs) in distinct areas in the Middle East serve as a building block for a future peace? What about the suggestions by some to create a ‘Multinational Maritime Security Force’ in the Strait of Hormuz, hence protecting the international sea lanes?
- 2.C. Is a gradual “phasing down” scenario of hostilities between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the wider Middle East feasible? Could for instance alleged interventions and support in several theatres of conflict (Syria vs. Yemen) be connected in such de-escalation scenarios? But even if the international community would seek to explore such a scenario, is it at all feasible to verify these alleged interventions and support?
- 2.D. Is the proposal by the Iranian minister of Foreign Affairs Zarif of a non-aggression pact for the region a possible route, and could the international community support it?
- 2.E. Should the international community develop a weapons embargo to the countries in the region? To whom and under which modalities and legal framework?

### 3. RADICALISATION VS. HUMANITARIAN DIMENSION

- 3.A. The political destabilization in the region of the Middle East has produced many different forms of radicalisation. What measures can the international community develop against radicalisation itself as a form of political violence, either Sunni or Shia in origin, which threatens to destabilize parts of the world beyond the Middle East?
- 3.B. How to alleviate the dire humanitarian situation in the region?



The United Nations Security Council will convene in an **Emergency Meeting** in an attempt to develop a common answer from the international community to this volatile crisis. A Plenary Session will give each of the member-countries of the UN Security Council an opportunity to influence the course of current international politics. Some other countries will also be invited by the 15 to

have a say, although they will themselves not be deciding parties. You will act as the Ambassador of one of the 15, or of an invited delegation. Be aware, however, that negotiations constitute a *dynamic process*; it will be up to you to defend the interests of your country/delegation! You and only you will also be answerable for your actions to your own Government upon returning to your capital.

Thus, much is at stake... It will therefore prove crucial that you reflect in advance about the strategy you will follow during the deliberations. For this purpose, you will be asked to write a *position paper* in preparation of the Emergency Meeting. The position papers will be officially distributed in advance. The strategy papers however should be considered top secret material which can only circulate *within* and *not between* delegations.

It is very probable that the UNSC will move from a formal setting to an informal setting during its deliberations. This is called '*caucusing*', a setting which can be suggested by one or more of the delegations. There are two forms of '*caucusing*'; moderated and unmoderated. Both are informal ways of negotiating. The difference can be stated quite simply; (1) a '*moderated caucus*' is led by the presidency around the negotiating table, (2) an '*unmoderated caucus*' can be seen as an interaction between delegations away from the negotiating table (the presidency thus has no role to play in an '*unmoderated caucus*').

When you return to a formal setting, be aware that a resolution is adopted if 9 out of 15 votes are in favour and if there is no veto. Any amendments will be voted upon before the resolution has become final. In procedural matters, a veto cannot be used. The presidency calls the meeting to order and as it proposed this emergency session of the Council, he/she will speak up first. After this opening address the permanent members will take the floor, followed-up by the non-permanent members.

The final goal of the negotiations should be the drafting of a UNSC resolution. If this would ultimately prove politically and/or technically unattainable, the negotiating parties can draw up statements, on their own or as a group. If a resolution is attainable, the negotiating parties can also issue explanatory statements. *Last but not least*, if certain countries were to agree upon separate 'secret' deals during the Emergence Session in Brussels, the parties involved will be asked to disclose the content of their arrangements during the evaluation *after* the negotiations, so that a full *group-evaluation* of the political process can be made, all the cards on the table.

A final piece of advice; be aware that the negotiations can also be affected by 'new developments on the ground'. You must therefore '*be prepared for anything*'.

## **SOME VERY IMPORTANT REMARKS**

Delegates may not and will not receive any 'instructions' from their university responsables or other individuals. You are on your own during these negotiations. If this happens, they may even ignore such 'instructions'.

However, the university responsables may still, collectively, give certain brief advice in limited circumstances or organise a 'feed back session'. The joint committee of university instructors may also, either by a joint statement or through the acting president of the UNSC, give general recommendations on procedural matters or problematic formulations in terms of the content of proposed clauses or formulations.

Please be aware, this simulation is not a competition between universities, rather to the contrary. You are competing with yourself, trying to bring the best out of you in an open diplomatic spirit. The simulation is a learning experience in which you will learn each day and grow. Enjoy this process, and try to take as much out of it as possible, not only academically but also in terms of friendship and empathy.

This simulation tries to be as close to reality as possible. Use that 'reality check' always when proposing or amending clauses in statements, working papers or draft resolution texts.

The organising committee wishes you a fruitful negotiation, and a lot of fun while doing so.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Extra Video's on the topic

- **VIDEO 1:** Prof. David Criekemans over Iran: diplomatie achter de schermen (juli 2019)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOwUP4aZGkE>
- **VIDEO 2:** Wall Street Journal: Saudi Arabia vs. Iran: The Sunni-Shiite Proxy Wars  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7cdBjYd2Bo>
- **VIDEO 3:** Vox: The Middle East's cold war, explained  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=veMFCFyOwFI>
- **VIDEO 4:** Al Jazeera - Inside Story: How will Saudi Arabia respond to attacks on oil facilities?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=veMFCFyOwFI>
- **VIDEO 5:** France24 – The Debate: Attacks on Saudi oil fields: US-Iran blame game as fuel prices set to rocket  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w46Q8AmfDK4&t=492s>
- **VIDEO 6:** CNN: Interview with Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif US strike would trigger 'all out war'(20 September 2019)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BuTktR8KQwI>
- **VIDEO 7:** Face the Nation: Interview with Iranian Foreign Minister: Javad Zarif "not confident" war can be avoided  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ft-4rPQOecM>

## **Annex 1: Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) at a Glance**

### **Fact Sheet by the Arms Control Association**

<https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/JCPOA-at-a-glance>

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is a detailed, 159-page agreement with five annexes reached by Iran and the P5+1 (China France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) on July 14, 2015. The nuclear deal was endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231, adopted on July 20, 2015. Iran's compliance with the nuclear-related provisions of the JCPOA will be verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) according to certain requirements set forth in the agreement. On May 8, 2018, President Trump announced that the United States would withdraw from the JCPOA and reinstate U.S. nuclear sanctions on the Iranian regime.

The following is a summary of the timeline and key components of the multi-year agreement.

#### **Timeline for Implementation**

- July 14, 2015, Finalization Day: conclusion of the agreement. Finalization day triggers Iran and the United States to begin domestic review processes of the JCPOA. Iran also begins providing the IAEA with information necessary for the agency to complete its investigation into past activities related to nuclear weapons development.
- October 18, 2015, Adoption Day: 90 days after the passage of the UN Security Council Resolution endorsing the deal (July 20, 2015). Adoption day triggers Iran and the P5+1 to take steps (outlined below) to meet the commitments to fully implement the JCPOA.
- January 16, 2016, Implementation Day: the IAEA certifies that Iran has taken the key steps to restrict its nuclear program and has put in place increased monitoring. The IAEA's report on implementation day triggers U.S., EU, and UN sanctions relief.
- October 2023, Transition Day: Eight years after adoption day (or the IAEA reaching its broader conclusion on Iran's nuclear program, whichever is sooner). Adoption day triggers the UN to lift missile restrictions, Iran to seek ratification of its additional protocol, the EU to terminate all remaining nuclear sanctions, United States to remove certain entities from the sanctioned list, and the United States to seek legislative termination of certain sanctions.
- October 2025, Termination Day: Ten years after adoption day. Termination day terminates Resolution 2231 and the Security Council closes Iran's nuclear file.

## **Annex 2: Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)**

The States concluding this Treaty, hereinafter referred to as the Parties to the Treaty,

Considering the devastation that would be visited upon all mankind by a nuclear war and the consequent need to make every effort to avert the danger of such a war and to take measures to safeguard the security of peoples,

Believing that the proliferation of nuclear weapons would seriously enhance the danger of nuclear war,

In conformity with resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly calling for the conclusion of an agreement on the prevention of wider dissemination of nuclear weapons,

Undertaking to co-operate in facilitating the application of International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards on peaceful nuclear activities,

Expressing their support for research, development and other efforts to further the application, within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards system, of the principle of safeguarding effectively the flow of source and special fissionable materials by use of instruments and other techniques at certain strategic points,

Affirming the principle that the benefits of peaceful applications of nuclear technology, including any technological by-products which may be derived by nuclear-weapon States from the development of nuclear explosive devices, should be available for peaceful purposes to all Parties to the Treaty, whether nuclear-weapon or non-nuclear-weapon States,

Convinced that, in furtherance of this principle, all Parties to the Treaty are entitled to participate in the fullest possible exchange of scientific information for, and to contribute alone or in co-operation with other States to, the further development of the applications of atomic energy for peaceful purposes,

Declaring their intention to achieve at the earliest possible date the cessation of the nuclear arms race and to undertake effective measures in the direction of nuclear disarmament,

Urging the co-operation of all States in the attainment of this objective,

Recalling the determination expressed by the Parties to the 1963 Treaty banning nuclear weapons tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water in its Preamble to seek to achieve the discontinuance of all test explosions of nuclear weapons for all time and to continue negotiations to this end,

Desiring to further the easing of international tension and the strengthening of trust between States in order to facilitate the cessation of the manufacture of nuclear weapons, the liquidation of all their existing stockpiles, and the elimination from national arsenals of nuclear weapons and the means of their delivery pursuant to a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control,

Recalling that, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, States must refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations, and that the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security are to be promoted with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources,

Have agreed as follows:

#### Article I

Each nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices directly, or indirectly; and not in any way to assist, encourage,

or induce any non-nuclear-weapon State to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, or control over such weapons or explosive devices.

#### Article II

Each non-nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to receive the transfer from any transferor whatsoever of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or of control over such weapons or explosive devices directly, or indirectly; not to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices; and not to seek or receive any assistance in the manufacture of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

### Article III

1. Each non-nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes to accept safeguards, as set forth in an agreement to be negotiated and concluded with the International Atomic Energy Agency in accordance with the Statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Agency's safeguards system, for the exclusive purpose of verification of the fulfilment of its obligations assumed under this Treaty with a view to preventing diversion of nuclear energy from peaceful uses to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Procedures for the safeguards required by this Article shall be followed with respect to source or special fissionable material whether it is being produced, processed or used in any principal nuclear facility or is outside any such facility. The safeguards required by this Article shall be applied on all source or special fissionable material in all peaceful nuclear activities within the territory of such State, under its jurisdiction, or carried out under its control anywhere.

2. Each State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to provide: (a) source or special fissionable material, or (b) equipment or material especially designed or prepared for the processing, use or production of special fissionable material, to any non-nuclear-weapon State for peaceful purposes, unless the source or special fissionable material shall be subject to the safeguards required by this Article.

3. The safeguards required by this Article shall be implemented in a manner designed to comply with Article IV of this Treaty, and to avoid hampering the economic or technological development of the Parties or international co-operation in the field of peaceful nuclear activities, including the international exchange of nuclear material and equipment for the processing, use or production of nuclear material for peaceful purposes in accordance with the provisions of this Article and the principle of safeguarding set forth in the Preamble of the Treaty.

4. Non-nuclear-weapon States Party to the Treaty shall conclude agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency to meet the requirements of this Article either individually or together with other States in accordance with the Statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Negotiation of such agreements shall commence within 180 days from the original entry into force of this Treaty. For States depositing their instruments of ratification or accession after the 180-day period, negotiation of such agreements shall commence not later than the date of such deposit. Such agreements shall enter into force not later than eighteen months after the date of initiation of negotiations.

### Article IV

1. Nothing in this Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with Articles I and II of this Treaty.

2. All the Parties to the Treaty undertake to facilitate, and have the right to participate in, the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Parties to the Treaty in a position to do so shall also co-operate in contributing alone or together with other States or international organizations to the further development of the applications of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, especially in the territories of non-nuclear-weapon States Party to the Treaty, with due consideration for the needs of the developing areas of the world.

#### Article V

Each Party to the Treaty undertakes to take appropriate measures to ensure that, in accordance with this Treaty, under appropriate international observation and through appropriate international procedures, potential benefits from any peaceful applications of nuclear explosions will be made available to non-nuclear-weapon States Party to the Treaty on a non-discriminatory basis and that the charge to such Parties for the explosive devices used will be as low as possible and exclude any charge for research and development. Non-nuclear-weapon States Party to the Treaty shall be able to obtain such benefits, pursuant to a special international agreement or agreements, through an appropriate international body with adequate representation of non-nuclear-weapon States. Negotiations on this subject shall commence as soon as possible after the Treaty enters into force. Non-nuclear-weapon States Party to the Treaty so desiring may also obtain such benefits pursuant to bilateral agreements.

#### Article VI

Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

#### Article VII

Nothing in this Treaty affects the right of any group of States to conclude regional treaties in order to assure the total absence of nuclear weapons in their respective territories.

## Article VIII

1. Any Party to the Treaty may propose amendments to this Treaty. The text of any proposed amendment shall be submitted to the Depositary Governments which shall circulate it to all Parties to the Treaty. Thereupon, if requested to do so by one-third or more of the Parties to the Treaty, the Depositary Governments shall convene a conference, to which they shall invite all the Parties to the Treaty, to consider such an amendment.

2. Any amendment to this Treaty must be approved by a majority of the votes of all the Parties to the Treaty, including the votes of all nuclear-weapon States Party to the Treaty and all other Parties which, on the date the amendment is circulated, are members of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The amendment shall enter into force for each Party that deposits its instrument of ratification of the amendment upon the deposit of such instruments of ratification by a majority of all the Parties, including the instruments of ratification of all nuclear-weapon States Party to the Treaty and all other Parties which, on the date the amendment is circulated, are members of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Thereafter, it shall enter into force for any other Party upon the deposit of its instrument of ratification of the amendment.

3. Five years after the entry into force of this Treaty, a conference of Parties to the Treaty shall be held in Geneva, Switzerland, in order to review the operation of this Treaty with a view to assuring that the purposes of the Preamble and the provisions of the Treaty are being realised. At intervals of five years thereafter, a majority of the Parties to the Treaty may obtain, by submitting a proposal to this effect to the Depositary Governments, the convening of further conferences with the same objective of reviewing the operation of the Treaty.

## Article IX

1. This Treaty shall be open to all States for signature. Any State which does not sign the Treaty before its entry into force in accordance with paragraph 3 of this Article may accede to it at any time.

2. This Treaty shall be subject to ratification by signatory States. Instruments of ratification and instruments of accession shall be deposited with the Governments of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America, which are hereby designated the Depositary Governments.

3. This Treaty shall enter into force after its ratification by the States, the Governments of which are designated Depositaries of the Treaty, and forty other States signatory to this Treaty and the deposit of their instruments of ratification. For the purposes of this

Treaty, a nuclear-weapon State is one which has manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive device prior to 1 January 1967.

4. For States whose instruments of ratification or accession are deposited subsequent to the entry into force of this Treaty, it shall enter into force on the date of the deposit of their instruments of ratification or accession.

5. The Depositary Governments shall promptly inform all signatory and acceding States of the date of each signature, the date of deposit of each instrument of ratification or of accession, the date of the entry into force of this Treaty, and the date of receipt of any requests for convening a conference or other notices.

6. This Treaty shall be registered by the Depositary Governments pursuant to Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations.

#### Article X

1. Each Party shall in exercising its national sovereignty have the right to withdraw from the Treaty if it decides that extraordinary events, related to the subject matter of this Treaty, have jeopardized the supreme interests of its country. It shall give notice of such withdrawal to all other parties to the Treaty and to the United Nations Security Council three months in advance. Such notice shall include a statement of the extraordinary events it regards as having jeopardized its supreme interests.

2. Twenty-five years after the entry into force of the Treaty, a conference shall be convened to decide whether the Treaty shall continue in force indefinitely, or shall be extended for an additional fixed period or periods. This decision shall be taken by a majority of the Parties to the Treaty.<sup>1</sup>

#### Article XI

This Treaty, the English, Russian, French, Spanish and Chinese texts of which are equally authentic, shall be deposited in the archives of the Depositary Governments. Duly certified copies of this Treaty shall be transmitted by the Depositary Governments to the Governments of the signatory and acceding States. IN WITNESS WHEREOF the undersigned, duly authorized, have signed this Treaty. DONE in triplicate, at the cities of London, Moscow and Washington, the first day of July, one thousand nine hundred and sixty-eight.

#### Note:

On 11 May 1995, in accordance with article X, paragraph 2, the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons decided that the Treaty should continue in force indefinitely (see decision 3).

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