

War fears rise as Trump dumps nuclear deal

Is the world more dangerous? Tensions flared across the Middle East as Trump pulled out of Iran's "rotten" nuclear pact. Now, some say war is looming. Here are five things that may happen.



Divided: Former US president Barack Obama condemned Trump's decision as a "serious mistake".

1/ Iran launches an assault on Israel

Iranian troops are now in Syria, fighting for the Assad regime. Syria's neighbour, Israel, views Iran as a threat and has already killed Iranian forces with **airstrikes**. Without the deal, Iran may be emboldened to launch retaliatory attacks of its own, which could spark a war between the two states. Israel is on "high alert" and has opened bomb shelters in vulnerable areas.

2/ Saudi Arabia bombs Iran

Iran and Saudi Arabia are currently fighting a **proxy war** in Yemen, but have avoided direct conflict. However, shortly after Trump's announcement, Iran-aligned forces in Yemen fired a salvo of ballistic missiles at the Saudi capital, Riyadh. Some see this as a sign of deliberate escalation, which Saudi Arabia may respond to with direct attacks on Iran.

3/ Iran develops nukes — America goes to war

The deal prevented Iran from enriching nuclear material to **weapons-grade** levels.

Without it, Iran is free to build nuclear missiles — which would give the US a clear pretext for military action. However, Iran's president, Hassan Rouhani, wants to keep the deal alive in spite of America's exit, and previously said Iran would never develop nuclear weapons.

4/ Worldwide nuclear arms race sparked

If Iran builds nuclear weapons, it won't be the only country the US will have to worry about. Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia would all want their own atomic arsenals too. Then there's North Korea. With the Iran deal breaking down, some think Kim Jong-un will now be sceptical of any denuclearisation proposals Trump makes when the pair meet **later this year**.

5/ Trump's gamble pays off

"They are going to want to make a new and lasting deal," Trump said before withdrawing from the pact. He predicts that economic sanctions will force Iran back to the **negotiating table**. Right now, this seems unlikely. Yesterday, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali

Khamenei declared that Trump's body would be "food of the worms and ants", and hardline lawmakers lit an American flag on fire.

Is the world a more dangerous place now?

Deal-breaker

Of course, some argue. The move inflames multiple conflicts around the Middle East, puts Iran back on a dangerous path to nuclear weapons and alienates the US from key European allies. Worst of all, Trump has no backup plan if Iran does not play ball with his new demands. The consequences are bleak.

Not necessarily, others respond. Even if it wanted to, Iran is a long way off building nuclear weapons. And it will take serious escalations to push Israel or Saudi Arabia into open war. What's more, early signs suggest Iran will try to keep the deal afloat with other world powers. There is hope.



Q: What do we know?

A: The nuclear deal is not totally dead. As well as the US, the deal was also agreed to by Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China. Iran's president, Hassan Rouhani, has said: "If

we achieve the deal's goals in cooperation with other members of the deal, it will remain in place." A meeting between France, Britain, Germany and Iran to discuss this possibility is scheduled for Monday.

Q: What do we not know?

A: Trump claimed that the US will impose the

"highest level" of economic sanctions against Iran. Exact details of these sanctions are unclear. However, they could seriously damage European businesses that have begun operating in Iran since the deal was struck.

YOU DECIDE

1. Should all the world's nuclear weapons be destroyed?
2. Is Trump wrong to scrap the Iran deal?

ACTIVITIES

1. Write down all the terms that first come to your mind when you hear the word "Iran". Discuss your word choices as a class. How do they reflect how Iran is viewed in the West? Is this perspective fair? Why/why not?
2. Find and print a map of the Middle East. After doing some research, label each country according to whether it is at peace, engaged in a civil war or at war with a neighbouring country (either directly or by proxy). Choose one of the conflicts you recorded on the map. Why did it start? How could it be resolved?

SOME PEOPLE SAY...

"Nuclear weapons offer us nothing but a balance of terror, and a balance of terror is still terror."
George Wald

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

WORD WATCH

Airstrikes – Just hours after Trump made his announcement, Israel launched airstrikes against Iranian forces in Syria, killing at least nine fighters.

Proxy war – Yemen is split between the two main branches of Islam: Sunni and Shia. Saudi Arabia has launched airstrikes in support of

Sunni fighters, while Iran arms and supports the Houthis, a predominantly Shia militia.

Weapons-grade – Building a nuclear bomb requires uranium to be enriched to at least 80%, but preferably 95%. When the deal was first struck, Iran could enrich uranium to just 20%.

Later this year – Trump announced that the date and location of the meeting had been set,

but did not reveal any further details. He also announced that three US prisoners formerly detained by North Korea had been released.

Negotiating table – Trump would want a new deal to include much more comprehensive restrictions on Iran's military and nuclear activities. See *The Economist* link in Become An Expert for more details.

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 Notes

