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- ❖ **Citizenship Question & Assam**
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Trump's Iran Conundrum

Tensions brewing between Washington and Teheran, especially in recent weeks in the aftermath of assassination of Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, by the US, had commenced with President Trump's action of withdrawing the United States from Iran-US Nuclear deal soon after his coming to office in 2016. Subsequently, Iran also walked away from the agreement – the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) that Iran had signed with the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany, along with the European Union (EU). Many experts have opined that despite its some flaws, the JCPOA could have helped Israel and the rest of the world, a hiatus of at least a decade from facing the prospects of a nuclear Iran. On the other hand, Soleimani's assassination not only triggered to escalate Iran's simmering discontent with Washington but also proved instrumental in reinforcing Iran's determination to pursue its nuclear weapon programme unabashedly.

It goes to the credit of Iran that irrespective of the present crisis that has gathered impetus in the aftermath of Maj. Gen. Soleimani's assassination, international inspections are still being permitted by Iran that can be said to the last vestiges of the Iran Nuclear deal having remained in place. Undoubtedly, Iran thus far has not closed doors to future negotiations on the nuclear deal; nonetheless, if pushed to the wall along with carrying out its research and development activities, Teheran may reach a stage from where it could prove cumbersome to turn the clock back on any progress that could be attained by Iran in the interregnum period. The other day, leaders of Britain France and Germany have urged Iran to return to full compliance with the deal. Here the question arises as to why Iran is unilaterally asked for making all concessions especially when the US is not prepared to accommodate Iran's legitimate demands.

Nevertheless, experts across the political and strategic spectrum differ in their respective perspectives on Iran's nuclear ambitions. While conceding Iran as a 'rational actor', some experts, while acknowledging Iran's nuclear potential in posing a nuclear threat, are still anxious to ask if Iran would seriously consider actually using nuclear weapon? Why does Iran need nuclear technology? What is it for? To the argument that current Iranian regime's nuclear policy is a part of Teheran's regional strongman strategy, these experts are keen to discern that even if Iranian nuclear programme is really for deterrence, then question arises whether Teheran would really be going in for using nuclear weapons.

Under the given situation characterized by relationship between the U.S and Iran being at low ebb and the two nations at loggerheads over nuclear sanctions, the strategic situation is deteriorating. The nuclear deal is dying a slow death with Iran gradually withdrawing from all prohibitions of the deal. Given the fact that Iran getting more time to accumulate more enriched uranium could lead to a point of no return, most of the Western experts suggest imposing further economic sanctions ahead that have proven effective in weakening Iran.

Whether Iran wants to make a nuclear weapon or not is a question of political will. Some experts opine that Iran is still allowing inspections and Iranian quest for removal of limitations on enrichment and number of centrifuges is perhaps designed to garner bargaining power in negotiations with the United States. Pressure of economic sanctions is likely to force Iran to come to the negotiating table either with a Democrat President or re-elected Trump. The twists and turns in American foreign policy under the Trump administration have envisaged trust deficit. One decision in foreign policy always entails the potential of impacting other decisions as well. Nevertheless, the dispensation in the Whitehouse has come to look at decisions affecting a single event with little concern to other events and the fallout is sometimes fraught with pernicious consequences. American involvement in the assassination of General Soleimani was uncalled for and the reactions it provoked did more damage to American interests than benefits Washington anticipated.

American foreign policy under Trump era is faced with trust and morality deficit. One critic has pointed out that the US which was admired after the Second World War no longer leads the world by example but by increasingly bullies with threats and military might.

— BK