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Europe's Role Under Scrutiny as Iran Shifts Blame Over Nuclear Deal Collapse

July 22, 2025

– Categories: General News



Tehran is once again placing blame on European governments for the collapse of the 2015 nuclear accord, just days before renewed discussions with Britain, France, and Germany in Istanbul. Iranian officials say European inaction and broken promises contributed to the deal's unraveling and Iran's worsening economic crisis.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the formal name of the 2015 nuclear deal, was signed by Iran and six major world powers: the United Kingdom, China, France, Russia, the United States, and Germany. Under the agreement, Iran agreed to scale back its nuclear

program in exchange for the lifting of international sanctions. It was seen by some as a diplomatic victory, while others remained skeptical of Iran's long-term intentions.

The JCPOA began to fall apart in 2018 when the U.S., under then-President Donald Trump, withdrew from the deal and reimposed tough economic sanctions on Iran. The Trump administration argued the agreement was flawed from the start, failing to address Iran's ballistic missile program and regional aggression. Many in Washington and beyond viewed the move as a necessary step to curb Tehran's ambitions and reassert Western leverage.

Following the U.S. exit, European nations, particularly the United Kingdom, France, and Germany (often referred to as the E3), pledged to uphold their commitments under the JCPOA. However, a European trade mechanism designed to bypass U.S. sanctions and continue economic engagement with Iran, called INSTEX (Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges), largely failed to deliver. Western companies, wary of U.S. penalties, pulled out of Iranian markets, contributing to Iran's deepening economic problems.

"Iran holds the European parties responsible for negligence in implementing the agreement," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei stated ahead of the upcoming Istanbul talks. The talks are set to evaluate whether any path forward exists for salvaging what remains of the accord.

The comments highlight a growing frustration in Tehran with what it sees as European double standards. Despite initial support for the JCPOA's framework, European powers have appeared unwilling or unable to shield Iran from the economic effects of Washington's renewed pressure campaign.

Critics argue that Europe's failure to counteract U.S. sanctions, combined with a lack of transparency from Tehran on nuclear inspections, leaves little room for optimism. While European officials have expressed interest in re-engaging diplomatically, there is skepticism over whether any new deal could be trusted or effectively enforced.

As Iran continues to escalate uranium enrichment and restrict international oversight, the future of the JCPOA remains uncertain. Talks in Istanbul may offer a diplomatic opening, but without real accountability and enforceable commitments, any deal would likely suffer the same fate. The European governments' inability to stand firm or act decisively during past critical moments has left both the region and the world with fewer options.