

*INSS Insight* No. 1198, July 28, 2019

**Replacing IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano:**  
**A New DG at a Critical Juncture for Iran**  
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**An official announcement released by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on July 22, 2019 stated that Director General (DG) Yukiya Amano had passed away. The announcement came on the day that Amano was scheduled to announce his early retirement from his position in March 2020. Thus, the idea of the need for a replacement was already in the air, but the timeline for appointing a new DG has narrowed dramatically, and discussions regarding Amano's replacement have reportedly already begun among IAEA member states. This article focuses on Amano's role and past performance on the Iran nuclear file, and offers suggestions regarding the criteria for a new DG in order to maximize IAEA achievements.**

The Iranian file is arguably the most important current issue on the agenda of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In today's crisis environment regarding the Iran nuclear deal and US-Iran tensions, the role of the Director General (DG) has become ever more prominent. Thus, the new DG has the potential to influence whether there will be a peaceful resolution to current tensions, or whether the situation will continue to deteriorate to a diplomatic or possibly military crisis. Moreover, the DG's reports could be instrumental in determining whether Iran will be able to continue seeking a nuclear weapons capability or whether it will effectively be prevented from further pursuing its military nuclear ambitions.

The IAEA is responsible for carrying out inspections mandated by the Safeguards Agreement with Iran and by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The DG must submit quarterly reports to the IAEA Board of Governors (BOG) and to the UN Security Council. The main tasks of the inspectors include assessing that all declared activities and materials of Iran's nuclear program are present and accounted for. In addition, they must ensure that none of the mandated limits to Iran's technical capabilities and materials are exceeded. They must also check that no unauthorized activities related to possible nuclear weapons development programs are underway. The results of these inspections are included in the DG's quarterly reports, which should reflect both the status of Iran's program and the inspectors' activities. These should also detail any problems the inspectors encountered, and the efforts made toward their resolution.

However, these tasks have been fulfilled only partially. There is little doubt that the inspections of Iran's declared nuclear facilities, materials, and activities are carried out professionally. The problems encountered regard the search for undeclared facilities, activities, and materials, as well as the verification that no nuclear weapons-related activities are underway. The IAEA has the power to carry out activities in these two areas, but has apparently not done so. According to the basic Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement between the IAEA and Iran, the IAEA can request "special inspections" if it decides that it needs additional information in order to clarify an outstanding situation. Moreover, according to the JCPOA, Iran agreed to apply provisionally the Additional Protocol to its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement. In addition to these verification documents, the JCPOA includes detailed procedures that grant the inspectorate powers that, if requested, could help resolve the above two outstanding issues. Yet this option has not been exercised, and these two serious issues have not been resolved. Iran could be concealing activities, materials, and facilities with relative impunity, including nuclear materials processing, and could be working on the nuclear explosive mechanism.

It was not for the lack of information that the IAEA did not delve into Iran's past and possibly present activities in the development of nuclear weapons. The IAEA had ample information, beginning with its own sources that were not pursued further (specifically, Parchin was not revisited after suspicious materials were found in soil samples collected in September 2015), and culminating with the nuclear archive that was exposed by Israel and contains a multitude of data regarding facilities, scientists, equipment, and activities related to Iran's plans to produce five nuclear bombs. An interrogation of the Iranians – complemented by inspections – on the basis of this information could lead to the conclusion that Iran is still carrying out some nuclear weapons-related activities. But the IAEA has so far resisted utilizing this treasure trove of information for its inspections.

An additional problem has been the seemingly halfhearted and at best partial obligatory reporting of the DG to the BOG and the Security Council, reflecting Amano's apparent abhorrence of controversy and desire to avoid specifying the shortcomings of the inspection regime. The periodic reports are signed by the DG and reflect his opinions and assessment, based on his staff's work and evaluations. Amano used the excuse of confidentiality – which per the JCPOA was granted to Iran in its dealings with the IAEA – in order to justify the lack of reporting of important information, an excuse that has no basis in the IAEA Statute.

Despite having begun his term in 2009 with a professionalism that contrasted with the political tendencies displayed by the previous DG, Mohamed ElBaradei, ultimately by the end of his term, Amano had also seemingly begun making decisions that were not purely technical in nature. ElBaradei prevented the inclusion of the full annex on the

Possible Military Dimensions (PMD) of Iran's program in his quarterly reports for political reasons, including that it might give Israel a pretext to attack. After 2015, Amano became more committed to checking whether Iran upheld limits set in the JCPOA than in pursuing possible weaponization activities of Iran, per its membership in the NPT. These are not calculations that the head of a technical organization is supposed to make. Moreover, the BOG did not press Amano to take a more active stance on seeking out possible violations in Iran or indications of weaponization activities.

What, then, are the necessary criteria in a new DG, aside from the managerial capabilities that are essential for running any large and complex organization. Since 1981, all the DGs have been non-technical professionals, and their interests have tended to lie more in the political and diplomatic domains. Granted, the DG's job is both political and technical, but in the case of Iran, the technical profile must take precedence. For Amano, maintaining the JCPOA became a top priority, to the point that ensuring Iran's compliance with the few nuclear commitments that Iran made per the nuclear deal took precedence over thoroughly checking out possible evidence of Iran's continued weaponization efforts.

Moreover, any complications encountered with regard to inspections must be reported honestly and completely by the DG, so that the policymaking organs of the IAEA – the BOG and the General Conference – have a full picture, and can relate to the political side of the equation. Of equal importance, however, is the role of the BOG itself in conveying to the DG certain messages of urgency. Indeed, had the BOG sent a strong message to Amano with regard to the nuclear archive, he would likely have been obligated to act more quickly. Finally, although not the mandate of the DG, the confidentiality that was granted to Iran in dealings with the IAEA according to the JCPOA needs to be reconsidered – the dearth of information in the public reports of the agency is highly detrimental to the quality of the overall debate over Iran and the nuclear deal.

The Iranians obviously regarded Amano as beneficial to their case, to the point that according to reports in the Iranian press, Israel and the US are rumored to have assassinated him. Obviously, this is a highly critical moment for the Iran nuclear file, and the new DG must take into account the evidence that Iran has not been fully compliant in the nuclear realm, even if this means that the IAEA will have a serious confrontation with Iran. As for the nationality of the new DG, this will surely be an issue in the debates over Amano's successor, but it cannot overshadow the choice of the best possible professional for this demanding and sensitive job.