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THE IRAN POLICY DECISION-MAKING OF THE UNITED STATES DURING THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION: A POLIHEURISTIC ANALYSIS

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January 2009 - July 2014

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Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Government and International Relations

School of Government & International Relations

University of Durham

2016

Abstract

This thesis deals with one of the most intriguing political and security issues of this decade, namely the Iran policy decision-making of the United States during the Obama administration, specifically from January 2009 to July 2014. The primary objective of this thesis is to address two questions: (1) why did the Obama administration choose to pursue the specific policy instruments of sanctions, sabotage and diplomacy, when dealing with Iran? (2) What were the variables considered by the decision-makers, when making the Iran policy decisions of the United States? (2.a) How, if at all, did the make-up of those variables change over time? (2.b) How, if at all, did the relative significance of variables change between different decision-making episodes? By drawing upon the theoretical framework of poliheuristic theory, this thesis provides a nuanced analysis of the Iran policy decision-making of the United States, by discussing three in-depth case studies dealing with three different Iran policy decisions. This thesis argues that, the United States had very few policy options when dealing with Iran. Even so, until Hassan Rouhani was elected as the President of Iran, the United States had made no commitment to pursue diplomacy with Iran to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue, because the Obama administration was more concerned with fighting domestic political battles, and appeasing America's international allies. However, since the election of President Rouhani, the Obama administration gave diplomacy a chance, by resisting pressure from domestic opponents and international allies who tried to derail diplomacy, because during this period the Obama administration had to deal with the security crisis in the Middle East, and cooperation with Iran was essential to cope with the turmoil in the region. These findings have profound implications for poliheuristic theory, because it reinforces the claim that decision-makers are not primarily concerned with utility maximisation on the same topic as the decision. By providing a better understanding of the Iran policy making of the United States, this thesis contributes to the literature on US foreign policy, as well as Ph theory, through the use of important and interesting case studies.

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Declaration

No material for this thesis has been previously submitted for a degree at this or any other university. The work is solely that of the author, Sneha Chembayil Rajan, under the supervision of Prof. John Dumbrell, Prof. John Williams and Dr. Carly Beckerman-Boys. Materials from the published or unpublished works of others which is used in this thesis is acknowledged and credited to the author.

Statement of copyright

To my Achan

Introduction

> *'I'm inheriting a world that could blow up any minute in half a dozen ways, and I will have some powerful but limited and perhaps even dubious tools to keep it from happening.'*

President Barack Obama[1]

Ever since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Iran has been at odds with the United States. Following the birth of the Islamic Republic, sanctions and sabotage have been at the core of America's Iran policy. Presently, Iran is one of the most important actors in America's foreign policy calculations, because of Iran's influence in the Middle East, its role in regional conflicts, and the concerns regarding the nature of Iran's nuclear program. This thesis deals with one of the most intriguing political and security issues of this decade, namely the Iran policy decision-making of the United States, during the Obama administration, specifically from January 2009 to July 2014. The subject matter of this thesis is intriguing and relevant, because of the real world importance of the issue, due to the impact it has on international relations and global security. The primary objective of this thesis is to address two questions: (1) why did the United States, during the Obama administration, choose to pursue the specific policy instruments of sanctions, sabotage and diplomacy when dealing with Iran? (2) What were the variables considered by the decision-makers, when making the Iran policy decisions of the United States? (2.a) How, if at all, did the make-up of those variables change over time? (2.b) How, if at all, did the relative significance of variables change between different decision-making episodes? The research questions are selected after considering the complex interplay amongst 'why', 'what' and 'how' questions in seeking satisficing options in a complex decision-making environment, as opposed to utility maximization in the context of clearly and consistently ranked interests and carefully explored consideration of the relative effectiveness of different policy instruments in achieving those interests. By drawing upon the theoretical framework provided by Ph theory, this thesis provides a nuanced analysis of the Iran policy decision-making of the United States, at the same

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[1] President Obama quoted in B. Woodward, *Obama's Wars: The Inside Story*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010, p.11

time identifying some of the flaws in the Ph model, by discussing three in-depth case studies, which are three different phases (starting January 2009 - the inauguration of President Obama, ending July 2014 - the decision to extend the nuclear talks between Iran and the P5+1) dealing with three different Iran policy decisions. This thesis argues that, the United States had very few policy options when dealing with Iran.[2] Even so, until Hassan Rouhani was elected as the President of Iran, the United States had made no commitment to pursue diplomacy with Iran to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue, because the Obama administration was more concerned with domestic politics, fighting domestic political battles, and appeasing America's international allies. However, since the election of President Rouhani, the United States gave diplomacy a chance, by resisting pressure from domestic opponents and international allies who tried to derail diplomacy, because, during this period, the Obama administration had to deal with the security crisis in the Middle East, and cooperation with Iran was essential to cope with the turmoil in the region. These findings have profound implications for Ph theory, because it reinforces the claim that decision-makers are not primarily concerned with utility maximisation on the same topic as the decision. By providing a better understanding of the Iran policy making of the United States, this thesis contributes to the literature on US foreign policy, as well as Ph theory, through the use of important and interesting case studies.

To begin with, the academic literature on the Iran policy decision-making of the United States, during the Obama presidency, is rather slim. A significant share of the literature on the Obama administration's Iran policy decision-making is devoted to narrating the events, criticising the policy, assessing the impact that American domestic politics had on the Iran policy decisions, and recounting the perspectives of America's allies and foes. The existing literature does not systematically study the variables which were considered by the decision-makers, when they rejected or when they chose different policy options. The existing literature also fails to furnish any methodical analysis of the motives of the decision-makers, and the pressures they were facing. Additionally, because the Iran policy decisions studied in this thesis are rather recent, they have not yet been studied using the framework provided by theories of decision-making. As already indicated, this thesis aims to analyse the reasoning behind America's Iran policy decision-making, by making use of the framework provided by Alex Mintz's Ph approach, to

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[2] The main policy options were diplomacy, sanctions, containment, sabotage and confrontation; see T. Parsi, *A Single Roll of the Dice: Obama's Diplomacy With Iran*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012

provide a theoretical foundation to highlight the fact that America's Iran policy decisions were not made with the goal of maximising the utility on the Iranian issue, as well as pointing out that traditional rational choice theories are not adequate to explain the reasoning behind the decisions analysed in this thesis. For example, under the rational choice theory or rational actor theory, human decision-making is concerned with utility maximisation.[3] That assumption is challenged in the case studies considered in this thesis. One advantage of using Ph theory is that it is accommodating of the rational choice theory and cognitive models;[4] at the same time it goes beyond a mere interpretation of decision-making based on theories of national interest. Ph theory is helpful in studying the reasoning of the decision-makers in the case studies considered in this thesis, because it is a 'bridging framework' between rational choice and cognitive models, and attempts to attain the descriptive quality seen in cognitive models and the predictive success usually identifiable in rational choice models.[5]

Foreign Policy Analysis

Foreign policy study under International Relations (IR) has been predominantly 'state centric'. Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), a sub-field of IR, began as a response to the classical realist approach.[6] To the classical realists, 'the state is a single, coherent actor pursuing clear national interests in a rational manner', the level of success in that pursuit depended on the efficiency of the leaders and the limitations imposed on them by circumstances.[7] To begin with, FPA 'is characterised by an actor-specific focus',[8] and it stresses the importance of decision-makers in foreign policy. In other words, 'it is the study of the process, effects, causes, or outputs of foreign policy decision-making in either a comparative or case-specific manner. The underlying and often implicit argument theorises that human beings, acting as a group or within a group,

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[3] J. Kraus and J. Coleman, 'Morality And The Theory Of Rational Choice', *Ethics*, Vol. 97, No. 4, July, 1987, pp.715-749

[4] G. Goertz, 'Constraints, Compromises And Decision Making', J*ournal of Conflict Resolution,* February 2004, Vol. 48, No.1, pp.14-37

[5] A. Mintz, 'How Do Leaders Make Decisions?: A Poliheuristic Perspective', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 48, No.1, February 2004, p.7

[6] C. Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p.6

[7] Ibid

[8] V. Hudson, 'Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory And The Ground Of International Relations', *Foreign Policy* Analysis, 2005, Vol.1, Issue 1, p.1-30

compose and cause change in international politics.'[9] The use of FPA scholarship is suitable for this thesis, because of the focus this thesis has on political actors who were making decisions. Even though most of the case studies under FPA are on American foreign policy making, the case studies in this thesis are a new contribution to the field. FPA offers useful analytical tools and theoretical frameworks to study decision-making. Foreign policy making is a complicated affair, with multitude of variables and actors at play. Therefore, in any effort to understand foreign policy decision-making, it is valuable to accommodate cognitive and rational choice models, and go beyond the 'state centric' study of foreign policy. As Sandal et al. argued, Ph theory is an attempt by FPA scholars to 'conceptualise decision-making in a way that recognises patterns deriving from cognitive and rational schools of thought about how foreign policy is made'.[10]

Chapter III of this thesis is dedicated to discussing FPA, and analising the scholarship on Ph theory. However, it is pertinent to provide an overview of those concepts at this point in this thesis, so as to introduce them. Ph theory is a relatively new field of study, initiated in 1993. Ph theory sees decision-making process in two stages. The first stage is where policy choices are reduced, by applying the 'noncompensatory principle' to remove options which, if pursued, will threaten the political survival of the decision-makers. Under the noncompensatory principle, politicians are primarily concerned about avoiding loss.[11] In all three case studies in this thesis, the Obama administration was clearly concerned about avoiding major losses, rather than striving to achieve success. Under the noncompensatory principle, the political consequences of a decision are critical to the decision-makers.[12] Political dimension is always the primary consideration of the decision-makers, and unacceptable alternatives are removed from the choice

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[9] W. Carlsnaes, 'Foreign Policy' In *Handbook of International Relations*, (eds.), W. Carlnaes, T. Risse and B. Simmons, Second Edition, London: SAGE, 2012, p.318; see also *Foreign Policy Analysis* (online publication), based in the Department of Political Science at the University of Missouri, published on behalf of the International Studies Association by Blackwell publishing, retrieved on 24 October 2014, http://foreignpolicyanalysis.org/index.html

[10] N. Sandal, E. Zhang, C. James and P. James, 'Poliheuristic Theory And Crisis Decision Making: A Comparative Analysis Of Turkey And China', *Canadian Journal of Political Science,* Vol. 44, Issue 01, March 2011, pp.27-57

[11] P. Anderson, 'Decision Making By Objection In The Cuban Missile Crisis', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 28, 1983, pp.201-222

[12] A. Mintz, 'Introduction',In *Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision Making,* (ed.), A. Mintz, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p.3

set, at the very first stage.[13] In the second stage, the decision-makers will select a final choice based on a cost-benefit analysis.[14] Because the Ph approach uses the noncompensatory principle to eliminate politically risky options from the choice set, it is also useful as a tool or criteria for the scholar involved in analysing the foreign policy decisions of leaders, in cases concerned with testing theory and/or predicting foreign policy decisions.[15]

Understanding the politics and political pressure behind decision-making is important to understand why some decisions are made, even if they do not appear to further the 'national interest' of the country. The Ph approach assumes that loss aversion is the primary consideration of the decision-makers.[16] Also, in Ph theory, the alternatives are chosen or rejected based on the 'satisficing rule'. Using the satisficing rule means that the decision-maker will select the alternative that is "good enough", and not necessarily perform 'a search and comparison' of all possible options.[17] That is, not all dimensions may be considered by the decision-makers. These issues will be elaborated in the third chapter to this thesis.

Methodology

This thesis will make use of process tracing (PT) techniques to pursue a qualitative analysis of the three cases considered in this thesis. PT techniques have been successfully used in Ph theory studies.[18] PT 'is defined as the systematic examination of diagnostic evidence selected and analysed in light of research questions and hypotheses posed by the investigator. PT can contribute decisively both to describing political and social phenomena and to evaluating causal claims.'[19] When the goal of the research is to study how and why the decisions were made, it is necessary to analyse the events and non-events, as they occurred. PT is a tool 'for capturing causal mechanisms in action. It is not simply glorified historiography, nor does it proceed by the

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[13] D. Brule, 'The Poliheuristic Research Program: An Assessment and Suggestions For Further Progress, *International Studies Review*, Vol. 10, No.2, June 2008, p.269

[14] A. Mintz, 'Applied Decision Analysis: Utilising Poliheuristic Theory To Explain And Predict Foreign Policy And National Security Decisions', *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 6, Issue 1, February 2005, pp.94-98

[15] D. Brule, 'The Poliheuristic Research Program: An Assessment and Suggestions For Further Progress', p.268

[16] P. Anderson, 'Decision Making By Objection In The Cuban Missile Crisis', p.201-222

[17] A. Mintz and K. De Rouen Jr. *Understanding Foreign Policy*, p.34

[18] S. Reed, 'The Influence Of Advisers On Foreign Policy Decision Making: An Experimental Study', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution,* Vol. 46, No.3, June 2002, pp.335-364

[19] D. Collier, 'Understanding Process Tracing', *Political Science and Politics,* No.4, 2011, p.823

logic of frequentist statistics'.[20] PT is also helpful in studying the cause-effect link between independent variable and outcome.[21] Consequently, PT aids this study, by making it possible to look into the available evidence, at every step of the way. PT is useful in addressing the issue of equifinality, 'by documenting alternative causal paths to the same outcomes and alternative outcomes for the same causal factor'.[22] There are alternative explanations, as to why and how certain decisions were made, and this thesis takes that factor into consideration. The case studies in this thesis will examine the options the decision-makers had, before they arrived at the final choice. As already indicated, Ph theory assumes that at the very first stage of decision-making the decision-makers will reject options which do not meet the requirements on the political dimension. Analysing the Iran policy of the United States, in the three cases considered in this thesis requires in-depth qualitative study of causal mechanisms, and PT aids in that endeavour. The objective of this thesis is to study a case 'in its own terms'.[23] The cases in this thesis are studied in detail, over a period of time, and not at a single point of time.[24] Case study design and PT techniques are useful for this study, and their merits outweigh their limitations.

According to George and Bennett, a case study is 'a well-defined aspect of a historical episode that the investigator selects for analysis, rather than a historical event itself'.[25] They proceed to further clarify this argument, by considering the study of the Cuban Missile Crisis.[26] They argue that the researcher should answer questions such as 'what is this event a case of?' and 'is this event a designated phenomenon?'[27] Answering these questions is crucial, in order to decide which cases are to be chosen for the study. The case studies discussed in this thesis denote three different phases which saw major shifts in the Iran policy of the United States. In this context, 'major shifts' refer to the 'shift' or 'change' in the Iran policy instruments of the United States. The cases in this thesis are concerned with the decision-making process, especially the reasoning

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[20] A. Bennett and J. Checkel, 'Introduction', In *Process Tracing: From Metaphor To Analytic Tool*, (eds.), A. Bennett and J. Checkel, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p.9

[21] S. Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997, p.64

[22] A. George, and A. Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development In The Social Sciences*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005, p.224

[23] M. Hammersley and R. Gomm, 'Introduction', In *Case Study Method*, (eds.), R. Gomm, M. Hammersley and P. Foster, London: SAGE, 2000, p.67

[24] Ibid, p.5-6

[25] A. George, and A. Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development In The Social Sciences*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005, pp.17-18

[26] 'Many different classes of events' formed the Cuban Missile Crisis. According to George and Bennett, classes of events include, 'deterrence, coercive diplomacy, crisis management, etc..'; Ibid p.18

[27] Ibid p.18

behind the decisions, and not the outcome of those decisions. Selection bias is a common issue faced by researchers involved in qualitative studies, while 'selecting extreme cases of the outcome they wish to explain',[28] but such limitations of selection bias is not especially an issue in the case studies in this thesis, because the cases were not chosen based on the outcome they produced. As already pointed out, the three case studies also correspond to three different periods in the relationship between the two countries. In each of these time frames, one can identify the development of major foreign policy events, which the United States had to deal with. For example, (a) the turmoil in Iranian domestic politics, following the 2009 election in Iran (b) the negotiations for the fuel swap proposal in 2009 (c) Geneva accord of November 2013. American policymakers had an important role to play in all those 'events', and it required significant political maneuvering on the part of the Obama administration, because of the pressure from America's international allies and domestic opponents who were interested in influencing those events. Therefore, these case studies are very telling of the manner in which decision-makers in Washington handled America's relationship with Iran, and the variables that determined their choices. The case studies in this thesis are designed to methodically address the research questions discussed earlier in this introduction. As Yin argues, these questions ('how' and 'why') are concerned with 'operational links', and has to be traced over a period of time.[29] Moreover, the objective of this thesis is to analyse the particulars and intricacies involved in each of the cases under consideration.

This thesis studies three different cases:

(I) The decision to pursue diplomacy with Iran in 2009

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[28] D. Collier and J. Mahoney, 'Insights And Pitfalls: Selection Bias In Qualitative Research', *World Politics*, Vol.49, No.1, October 1996, p.88

[29] R. Yin, '*Case Study Research: Design And Methods: Applied Social Research Methods Series*, Vol. 5, third edition, Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publication, 2003, p.6

Time frame: from President Obama's inauguration to the collapse of the IAEA's Tehran Research Reactor 'fuel swap' proposal[30] (hereinafter referred to as 'the fuel swap proposal') (January 2009 to October 2009)

(II) The decision to pursue the dual track policy of engagement and sanctions

Time Frame: from the collapse of the fuel swap proposal to the inauguration of President Rouhani (October 2009 to August 2013)

(III) The decision to pursue diplomacy with Iran during the Rouhani presidency

Time Frame: from President Rouhani's inauguration to the decision to extend the nuclear talks between Iran and the P5+1 in July 2014 (August 2013 to July 2014)

At this juncture it is pertinent to clarify the reason why the third case study discusses the period from the inauguration of President Rouhani to the decision in July 2014, to extend the talks. To begin with, the third case study highlights the significant and dramatic change in America's Iran policy, following the election of Hassan Rouhani as the President of Iran. Even though the final agreement on the nuclear issue is a historic event, its strategic and political value will depend on the manner in which it is implemented. Therefore, in order to study the reasoning behind the Obama administration's pursuit of diplomacy with Iran, during the Rouhani presidency, it is not necessary to include the fate of the final deal and its implementation. The 'final deal' and its implementation should be studied as a separate case study, seeking to address that decision. As the title of the third case study indicates, the third case study is pertaining to *the decision of the Obama administration to pursue diplomacy with Iran, after President Rouhani took office*. The period from August 2013 to July 2014 is especially important, for the reason that this was the first time the Obama administration had committed, as the events at the time indicate, to pursuing diplomacy with Iran, and the evidence points out that the Obama administration had resisted pressure from its allies and opponents who had tried to derail diplomacy between the two countries. Therefore, this period, from August 2013 to July 2014, is an appropriate time frame to consider, in order to analyse the reasoning behind the Obama administration's *decision to pursue diplomacy* with Iran, as well as highlight that the Iran policy decisions of the

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[30] A. Cordesman, B. Gold and C. Coughlin-Schulte, 'Iran: Sanctions, Energy, Arms Control, and Regime Change', *A report of the CSIS Burke Chair in Strategy, Center For Strategic and International Studies*, January 2014, p.128

administration, since the election of President Rouhani, were very much tied to the turmoil in the Middle East. This case will argue that the decision to pursue diplomacy with Iran was not made with the goal of maximising the utility on the Iranian issue.

The sources used in this thesis include official records, documents, and secondary sources. The documents[31] used in this thesis are valuable, for studying public discourse, especially because the events studied in this thesis are rather recent and several of the official records remain classified. Public records (including transcripts, official statements, government reports and strategy manuals[32]) and personal documents (including interviews of high ranking officials obtained from secondary sources, journal writings and newspaper articles by decision-makers) are analysed in this thesis. Even though all three cases in this thesis are recent, there are reliable (because of their credentials) and acclaimed sources available, to do justice to using the PT approach.

PT is a 'fundamental tool of qualitative analysis'.[33] Nonetheless, case study design and PT techniques offer many challenges and limitations as well. For example, it is often argued that elite interviewing is integral to PT, because elite interview data is useful to corroborate information from other sources, gather new information, gather information about those who cannot be interviewed and reconstruct events as they happened.[34] Given the fact that most of the official documents concerning the Obama administration's decision-making will remain classified for a long time to come, this thesis certainly would have benefited from having access to the decision-makers. However, most of the decision-makers who were involved in the decisions that are studied in this thesis are still in power. It is therefore difficult, if not impossible, to have access to key figures in the Obama administration. This problem is partly resolved by interviewing those who have had access to key members of the decision-making circle. That is, several members of academia and foreign policy circle interviewed for this thesis had close contact with the Obama administration officials who were involved in making the Iran policy decisions of the United States. It must be acknowledged that, interviews are not without

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[31] for discussions on the use of documents, see B. Gillham, *Case Study Research Methods*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000, p.21

[32] For example, National Security Strategy

[33] D. Collier, 'Understanding Process Tracing', pp.823-30

[34] O. Tansey, 'Process Tracing And Elite Interviewing: A Case Study For Non-probability Sampling', *Political Science and Politics,* Vol.40, No.4, October 2007

demerits.[35] Interviews could help in acquiring information that could potentially aid in avoiding the misinformation perpetuated by other sources. However, interviewees are also capable of distorting facts and perpetuating half-truths.

According to Keith Punch, 'developing abstract concepts and propositions raises the analysis above simple description, and in this way a case study can contribute potentially generalisable findings'.[36] However, not all cases can make claims about the generalisability of their results. According to George and Bennett, generalisability is a difficult standard to achieve in case studies. They also argue that, 'disagreements over measurement of qualitative variables can also limit the cumulation of case study results, just as disagreements over how to define and quantify variables can limit the cumulation of statistical findings'.[37] Acquiring context dependent understanding is a reasonable objective when trying to study human decision-makers. Not every research is aimed at producing generalisable results. As already stated, the aim of this thesis is to analyse decision-making during a certain period in the relationship between Iran and the United States. Focusing on the specific context is therefore a necessity in this thesis.

Structure

This introductory section has already provided an overview of the concepts and cases to be discussed in this thesis. The general structure of this thesis and the case study design are build based on the original works of Carly Beckerman-Boys.[38] Chapter I of this thesis will be reviewing the literature, and providing a historical context to the discussions in the following chapters. That chapter will use a narrative approach, focusing on identifying some of the key

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[35] A. George and A. Bennett, 2005, p.99

[36] K. Punch, *Introduction To Social Research: Quantitative And Qualitative Research*, London: SAGE, 2014, p.123

[37] A. George and A. Bennett, 'Process Tracing In Case Study Research', *MacArthur Foundation Workshop On Case Study Methods*, October 17-19, 1997 retrieved on 5 January 2015, http://users.polisci.wisc.edu/kritzer/teaching/ps816/ProcessTracing.htm

[38] C. Beckerman-Boys, *British Foreign Policy Decision-making Towards Palestine During The Mandate (1917-1948): A Poliheuristic Perspective*, (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis), University of Birmingham, Spring 2013, retrieved on 15 April 2016, http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/4565/1/BeckermanBoys13PhD.pdf ; C. Beckerman-Boys, 'Third Parties And The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Poliheuristic Decision Theory And British Mandate Palestine Policy', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol.10, Issue 3, 2014, pp.225-242; Also, advices and recommendations from Beckerman-Boys, concerning the application of Ph theory and case study methods, during PhD supervisory meetings and correspondences have greatly aided in developing the framework of this thesis.

periods in the US-Iran relations, determining how the shifts and changes that mark the transition from one period to the next relate to America's Middle East policy as well as to key developments in US and Iranian domestic politics. That chapter will briefly discuss the period from 1979 to 2001; thereafter focus on the legacy left to the Obama administration by the Bush administration.

Chapter II will engage in a detailed review of the literature on the Obama administration's Iran policy and decision-making. That chapter will identify the predominant narrative in the existing literature, as well as locate the gaps in the literature, and establish the value of this thesis in addressing some of that weakness. Chapter III will be devoted to discussing and reviewing the literature on Ph theory and FPA. That chapter will discuss the evolution of FPA and Ph theory. It will also discuss the relationship between FPA and other approaches under IR. Furthermore, that chapter will examine the merit of Ph theory, and will explicate why Ph theory is appropriate for this study.

Chapter IV will be the first case study. That chapter will examine the decision to pursue diplomacy with Iran in 2009 (January 2009 to October 2009). Since the inauguration, President Obama seemed (judging from the President's speeches, statements that came out of the White House and press releases from the State Department) ardent to reorient American foreign policy. Overtly, the American government was advocating for diplomacy with Iran. However, the Obama administration pursued several covert operations against Iran, and also engaged in efforts to sabotage the Iranian nuclear program. Why then did the United States pursue diplomacy? This case study will argue that diplomacy was not given a chance during this period, and it was destined to fail, because the Obama administration was more concerned with domestic politics, fighting domestic political battles, and appeasing America's international allies. In other words, the Obama administration's Iran policy decisions in this case were not made for maximising the utility on the Iran issue. As already discussed, this has profound implications for Ph theory, because it reinforces the claim that decision-makers are not primarily concerned with utility maximisation on the same topic as the decision. The facts of the case will also indicate that the lack of political will and mistrust between Iran and the United States[39] meant that the Obama

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[39] On the importance of trust, see B. Rathbun, *Trust In International Cooperation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012

administration's half-hearted 'experiment' with diplomacy had to collapse, along with the fuel swap proposal.

Chapter V will be the second case study (October 2009 to August 2013). That chapter will examine the decision to pursue the dual track policy of engagement and sanctions. Following the collapse of the fuel swap proposal, the American policy toward Iran was overtly and covertly more aggressive. This dual track policy continued till the end of the Ahmadinejad presidency in Iran. During this period, Iran and the United States did not make any attempt to arrive at a diplomatic solution to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue. The dual track policy did put significant strain on the Iranian economy. It also helped strengthen the sense of urgency, on both sides, to deal with the nuclear issue. However, the policy of economic coercion (and sabotage) escalated the tension between the two countries. Why then did the United States pursue the dual track policy? As with the first case study, the Obama administration was primarily concerned with fighting domestic political battles and appeasing America's allies. Also, decision-makers in this case were not primarily concerned with utility maximisation on the Iranian issue.

Chapter VI will be the third case study. That chapter will examine the decision to pursue diplomacy with the Iranian government (August 2013 to July 2014). The central point of that case study has already been discussed in this introductory section, for that reason it is not repeated here.

Chapter VII will be the concluding chapter. That chapter will summarise the key findings in relation to the research questions, reconsider the utility of the theoretical framework, point out how this research can contribute to theoretical refinement, identify limitations in the research, and determine issues which would warrant further research in the future.

As already indicated, there are various limitations and obstacles to pursuing this study. However, it is a worthwhile expedition because of the importance of the issue at hand, namely the Iran policy decision-making of the Obama administration. As experts have rightly pointed out, 'to focus on the obstacles to an enquiry is to ensure that the enquiry will fall short of what can be gleaned from the empirical materials at hand.'[40]

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[40] S. Smith, A. Hadfield and T. Dunne, *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, p.Viii

Chapter I: The historical background

This chapter will review the literature, and provide a historical background to the discussions in the following chapters. This chapter will use a narrative approach, focusing on identifying some of the key periods in the US-Iran relations, determining how the shifts and changes that mark the transition from one period to the next relate to America's Middle East policy as well as to key developments in US and Iranian domestic politics. In this context, 'key periods' refer to the times which warranted 'difficult' decisions from the American decision makers, and phases which marked significant change in the course of US-Iran relations. For example, the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran, the Iran-US hostage crisis, the Iran-Iraq war, Bush administration's invasion of Iraq and the development of the Iranian nuclear program. This chapter will begin with a brief discussion of the period from 1979 to 2001. Thereafter, the chapter will focus on the legacy left to the Obama administration by the Bush administration. This periodisation will help in systematically analysing the defining moments that changed the course of the the US-Iran relations, and thus determine where analysis is most effectively concentrated. The legacy left by the Bush administration is important to this thesis because the Obama administration's 'choice set' in the first case study of this thesis included the option to 'continue the Bush administration's policy, and use sanctions as the primary policy instrument'.

Why so much hostility?

> *"And given the vast power at its disposal for much of the past century, Washington could certainly have done much worse. But the record is clear: U.S. leaders have done what they thought they had to do when confronted by external dangers, and they paid scant attention to moral principles along the way. The idea that the United States is uniquely virtuous may be comforting to Americans; too bad it's not true."*

The three case studies in this thesis cannot be taken out of their historic context, because America's foreign policy toward Iran is very much rooted in the history of mistrust between the two countries.[2] Also, throughout the history of the Islamic Republic, that country has remained a sensitive issue in American domestic politics, and to America's international allies.[3] In the case of the United States and Iran, it is difficult to point to a single political development or event that damaged their relationship. The '28 Mordad 1332' (Persian date) coup can be identified as one of the most important events in the history of US-Iran relations. That event became the symbol of American threat to Iranian sovereign interests. Not even the 1941 invasion of Iran, by America's allies (Soviet Union and Britain) is as often associated with the beginning of the corrosion of American soft power in Iran. After the 1953 coup d'état in Iran**,** the Shah remained in power, due to the concerted effort of successive US governments.[4] Therefore, any opposition to the Shah was also a direct opposition to American policy toward Iran. Moreover, many in Iran believed that the United States supported the human rights abuses inflicted by the Shah, on the Iranian people. According to Kenneth Pollack,

> 'after the oil boom, America needed Iran in ways it never had in the past. Suddenly, what happened in Iran was critical to the American economy, and to the entire global economy. When the Shah's regime went down, the United States went down with it- and was blamed for its fall.'[5]

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[1] S. Walt, 'The Myth of American Exceptionalism', *Foreign Policy*, 11 October 2011, retrieved on 19 September 2014,
http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/11/the_myth_of_american_exceptionalism?wp_login_redirect=0

[2] H. Banai, 'The Wages Of Enemity', *International Politics Reviews*, 2, May 2014, pp.3-10

[3] H. Amirahmadi and S. ShahidSaless, 'Avoid Repeating Mistakes Toward Iran', *The Washington Quarterly,* Winter 2013, 36:1, pp.145-162

[4] A. Rahnema, *Behind The 1953 Coup In Iran: Thugs, Turncoats, Soldiers, and Spooks*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015

[5] M. Byrne, 'Introduction', In *Mohammad Mosaddeq And The 1953 Coup In Iran,* (eds.), M. Gasiorowski and Byrne, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004, p.XV

During the time of the Shah, Iran evidently was America's most noteworthy client state in the region.[6] The cooperation between the two states was extended to economic, military, political and diplomatic spheres.[7] For example, according to David Kinsella, 'until the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, an average of 86% of the country's annual arms imports were from the United States'[8]. Also, the nuclear program in Shah's Iran, initiated during the 1950s and developed during the 60s, was primarily supported by the United States.[9] The CIA and Mossad had also helped in training SAVAK. According to Fayazmanesh,

> 'Israeli leaders were fully aware of the animosity of many Iranians and the fact that Israel's relationship was with the Shah and not with the people of Iran. They also knew perfectly well that the Shah had no particular love for the Israelis and his interest in Israel was mostly tactical, based on a symbiotic relationship'.[10]

The waters of the Persian Gulf, the oil pipelines and the Strait of Hormuz made Iran a vital corridor for oil trade. The relationship between Iran and the United States was important to both countries. After the overthrow of the monarchy, those who came to power in Iran were not cordial to the United States government. Domestic politics in Iran was an important determinant of the relationship between Iran and the United States. The decision-makers in the newly established Islamic Republic were increasingly suspicious of American *strategy* in the region. As is used in this thesis, 'strategy' refers to 'the science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and military forces of a nation or group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace and war'.[11] Washington's political, economic and

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[6] K. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The conflict between Iran and America*, New York: Random House, 2004

[7] M. Gasiorowski, *U.S. Foreign Policy And The Shah: Building A Client State In Iran*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991

[8] D. Kinsella, 'Conflict in Context: Arms Transfers and Third World Rivalries during the Cold War, *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol.38, No.3, August 1994

[9] K. Katzman, 'Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses', *CRS report, Congress Research Service*, 17 December 2014

[10] S. Fayazmanesh, *The United States and Iran: Sanctions, Wars, and the Policy of Dual Containment,* London: Routledge 2008.

[11] P. Gove, (ed.) *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, September 1961

psychological resources were used to resist revolutionary Iran.[12] The fall of the monarchy was the formal move that started a policy of confrontation between Iran and the United States. The American economic sanctions on Iran began as a response to the American embassy hostage crisis in Tehran, in 1979.[13] However, the sanctions regime continued on, and became a crucial part of the American response to the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran.

The first decade following the 1979 revolution in Iran was especially challenging for Iran. The newly formed Islamic Republic was invaded by Iraq. The Iran-Iraq war was also greatly impacted by the rivalry between Iran and the United States, with America supporting Iraq's campaign against Iran. According to Kenneth Pollack,

> 'if Americans know the history of Iran and U.S.-Iranian relations too little, then Iranians know it too well. For Iranians, the history is a constant stumbling block, made much worse by the fact that what they know as history is, in most cases, a distorted concoction of their own nationalist, religious, and even Marxist Zealots.'[14]

After the Islamic revolution, the United States had several concerns regarding Iran. Iran was targeted by the United States, not simply because of the revolution in that country. Many in the region (particularly the Arab rulers of the Persian Gulf monarchies) and in the United States feared that Iran would strive to export its revolution to other countries.[15] According to H. Metz, 'the concept of exporting the Islamic Revolution derives from a particular worldview that perceives Islamic revolution as the means whereby Muslims and non-Muslims can liberate themselves from the oppression of tyrants who serve the interests of international imperialism.'[16] This was one of the pretexts for Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iran. The Iraqi invasion inflicted

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[12] S. Lee, The Second Iranian Revolution: Why Iran's modern radicalism should ease US fears', Stanford Journal Of International Relations, Vol.X, No.1, Fall/Winter 2008, pp. 44-51

[13] J. Phillips, 'Iran, The U.S., And The Hostages: After 300 Days', *The Heritage Foundation,* Backgrounder 126 on Middle East, 29 August 1980

[14] K. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The conflict between Iran and America*, p.xxii

[15] S. Walt, *Revolution And War,* Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1996, p.261

[16] H. Metz, (ed.), 'Iran: a Country Study', *Federal Research Division, Library of Congress*, Research completed in December 1987 under a program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Army, Washington: B&R Samizdat Express, p.222

severe human and economic loss on Iran.[17] The American support for the Iraqi war efforts, including diplomatic, tactical, financial and military support, as well as its support for Saddam Hussein (who used chemical weapons on Iranian soldiers, civilians and Iraqi Kurds), were factors that had directly contributed to worsening of the relationship between America and the new Islamic Republic. During the 1980s, the United States had aided[18] Saddam Hussein's war crimes[19] against Iran.[20] The United States had also imposed unilateral sanctions against Iran, all the while tangled up in the violence in the region. The United States also made the final push to end that war between Iran and Iraq. This had happened on 3rd of July 1988, with the USS Vincennes shooting down Iranian Airbus A300B2. After numerous conflicting stories, finally it was acknowledged that the airline was shot down while it was in the Iranian airspace.[21] The role of the United States in the Iran-Iraq war certainly intensified anti-American sentiments amongst the Iranian population. The relationship between Iran and the United States never really recovered after the Iran-Iraq war. In the 1980s and 1990s, Iran was aggressively trying to increase its influence in the region, especially in the Levant.[22] Washington was also pursuing an aggressive dual containment policy, guided by its Cold War outlook. The dual containment

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[17] S. Harris and M. Aid, 'Exclusive: CIA Files Prove America Helped Saddam as He Gassed Iran', *Foreign Policy,* 26 August 2013, retrieved on 27 October 2014,

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/08/25/secret_cia_files_prove_america_helped_saddam_as_he_gassed_i ran?utm_content=buffer5d474&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer

[18] Memorandum For: Director of Central Intelligence, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence; From: David B. Low, National Intelligence Officer at Large; Subject: Prospects for Use of Chemical Weapons by Iraq against Iran Over the Next Six Months, 24 February 1984, Approved for Release 2009/04/27: CIA- RDP86M00886R001100090010-3

[19] The report confirms the success of the mustard gas program, the first large scale use of an agent by Iraq was in July 1982(tear gas), initial use of mustard agent in July 1983, 'Actions' suggested includes: 'you may wish to alert key policymakers of the potential for nerve agent use by Iraq late this summer', Memorandum For: Director of Central Intelligence, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence; From: David B. Low, National Intelligence Officer at Large; Subject: Prospects for Use of Chemical Weapons by Iraq against Iran Over the Next Six Months, 24 February 1984, Approved for Release 2009/04/27: CIA- RDP86M00886R001100090010-3

[20] Iran-Iraq: Situation Report, No. 27, As of 0830 EDT 29 July 1982, CIA Files, Approved For Release 2007/06/29, CIA- RDP84B00049R001604000007-9

[21] T. Koppel (NPR), 'The USS Vincennes: Public War, Secret War', Nightline, 1 July 1992, retrieved on 19 May 2015,

http://homepage.ntlworld.com/jksonc/docs/ir655-nightline-19920701.html

[22] M. Levitt , (Director, Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, The Washington Institute) Testimony before the U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Near Eastern and Central Asian Affairs, 'Iran's Support for Terrorism in the Middle East', The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 25 July 2012

policy was first introduced on 18 May 1993 by Martin Indyk. The strategy was crafted by Indyk and Anthony Lake, while they worked for the Clinton administration as senior White House aids.[23] The dual containment strategy was aimed at isolating Iran and Iraq, 'cutting them off from the world economic and trading system, and encouraging a regime change in Iraq.'[24] However, in the case of Iraq, the international community was critical of the punishing circumstances brought upon the Iraqi citizens, as a result of the sanctions which were meant to punish Saddam Hussein.[25] Also, in the case of Iran, the implementation of the containment policy required cooperation from Iran's international trade partners, and the United States found it difficult to garner that support.[26] The issue of garnering support from international partners to implement the sanctions against Iran was a recurring theme in the relationship between the Islamic Republic and the United States, including the period considered in the case studies in this thesis.

The relationship between the United States and Iran was not especially good at the beginning of this new century. The Bush administration had a particularly challenging relationship with Iran because of the Iraq invasion and America's Middle East policy. President Bush's 'axis of evil' speech, even though unwarrantedly overvalued, was not utterly iniquitous. Even so, the Bush administration had also cooperated with Iran, when it was mutually beneficial. The Iranians were cooperating with the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq, at the same time they were also pursuing belligerent policies in the rest of the Middle East. Meanwhile, the Bush administration's demands and preconditions had made it impossible for the two countries to negotiate in good faith. Therefore, it is not accurate to conclude that opportunities were lost, for resolving the conflict between the two countries. There was no opportunity because there was no political will, in America and in Iran, to resolve the conflict. In 2003, the Iranian government approached Washington with a proposal, now popularly known as the 'grand bargain'. The American reply came from the then Vice-President Dick Cheney, who famously said 'we don't talk to evil.'[27] The proposal of spring 2003 was an Iranian initiative to resolve the conflict with the United States, through 'the establishment of three parallel working groups on disarmament,

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[23] A.Lake, 'Confronting Backlash States,' *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 2, March/April 1994

[24] F. Gause III, 'The Illogic Of Dual Containment', *Foreign Affairs,* March/April 1994

[25] S. Graham-Brown, 'Security Council Conflicts Over Sanctions,' *Middle East Report*, No.2, March/April 1995

[26] J. Goodarzi, 'Dual Containment: Origins, Aims and Limits,' *Middle East International*, No.507, 25 August 1995

[27] M. Javedanfar, 'The Grand Bargain With Tehran', *The Guardian*, 3 March 2009

regional security and economic cooperation'.[28] When the Iranians made the proposal for a 'grand bargain' in 2003, they were apprehensive of the American military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan. Therefore, it is possible that fear was the motivation behind the Iranian proposal. If that were indeed the case, then the American disregard for the said proposal was perhaps a 'lost opportunity' to resolve the conflict. However, President Khatami was not a powerful figure in Iranian politics, and Ayatollah Khamenei was never particularly trusting of the United States. 'Trust is a belief that the other side prefers mutual cooperation to exploiting one's own cooperation, while mistrust is a belief that the other side prefers exploiting one's cooperation to returning it.'[29] Both the American and the Iranian government did not have faith that the other side preferred mutual cooperation. Even though the Iranian proposal was made with the endorsement of the Supreme Leader, whether that was an effort to resolve the conflict between the two countries, or if it was an attempt to appease the United States in the aftermath of Iraq invasion, is a matter of speculation.[30]

Following the Bush administration's lack of response to the Iranian attempts to improve the relationship between the two countries, the Iranian government began to pursue a more aggressive foreign policy.[31] The mistrust between Iran and the United States was extremely high when President Ahmadinejad took office. It was President Ahmadinejad who made the Iranian nuclear issue the defining element of his foreign policy. The failure of the Bush administration to deal with the Iranian nuclear issue, and the aggressiveness in Iranian nuclear policy during the Ahmadinejad presidency resulted in a situation where 'Iran went from nuclear research and experiments to the ability to produce industrial quantities of enriched uranium and from a few test machines to 4000 working centrifuges.'[32] These developments did nothing to improve Iran's

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[28] The Spring 2003 Proposal by Iran, *Arms Control Association*, retrieved on 26 May 2014,

https://www.armscontrol.org/pdf/2003_Spring_Iran_Proposal.pdf

[29] A. Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007, p.6

[30] F. Leverett, 'Dealing With Tehran: Assessing U.S. Diplomatic Options Toward Iran', *A Century Foundation Report,* 2006

[31] F. Leverett and H. Leverett, *Going to Tehran: Why America Must Accept the Islamic Republic of Iran,* New York: Picador, 2013

[32] J. Cirincione, 'Strategic Collapse: The Failure of the Bush Nuclear Doctrine', *Arms Control Association*, retrieved on 18 January 2015,

http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008_11/cirincione

relationship with the United States. Given the power struggle in the Middle East, the relationship between the United States and Iran was based on mutual distrust. In order to improve America's relationship with Iran, both parties had to learn to effectively manage their mutual distrust. However, during the Bush and Ahmadinejad era, mutual suspicion and lack of political will made it impossible to arrive at a diplomatic solution. For the United States, there were several issues pertaining to the power struggle in the region that needed to be addressed, to arrive at an agreement with Iran. However, the threats and intimidation by the Bush administration worsened the tension between the two countries. Iranian power and influence in the region, especially in Iraq and in the Levant, was significantly high, by the end of the Bush presidency.

For the last three decades, one of the fundamental objectives of American policy in the Middle East was to retain American influence in the region.[33] The goal was to defend/ further American economic, political and strategic interests in the region. This meant that the United States had to try to maintain the status quo in countries with pro-American government, and try to topple governments that did not fall into American sphere of influence.[34] The Iran policy and the Middle East policy of the United States was a struggle to that end. The damage to life and property brought about by the US-Iran tensions was substantial, and the tensions between the two countries had negatively impacted other conflicts in the region; for example, the mammoth loss during the Iran-Iran war; the Israeli aggression in Lebanon during South Lebanon Conflict 1978, Lebanon War 1982, Operation Accountability 1993, Operation Grapes of Wrath 1996, Lebanon War 2006; the numerous attacks on Hamas; Israeli attacks on Syria, including the Ain es Saheb airstrike in 2003 and Operation Orchard 2007.

This policy of coercion and confrontation was a failure, inasmuch as it failed to strengthen America's influence in the region.[35] Even though the United States had started this century on a high note, in terms of the influence and impact it had on the Middle Eastern governments, the American influence in the region dramatically declined. The popular sentiment in Iran and in the Middle East was to resist the interference by foreign powers, in the internal matters of the region.

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[33] S. Jones, 'America, Oil, and War in the Middle East', *Journal of American History*, Vol.99, Issue 1, 2012, pp.208-218; S. Richman, '"Ancient History": U.S. Conduct In The Middle East Since World War Il And The Folly Of Intervention', *Cato Policy Analysis*, No. 159, 6 August 1991, retrieved on 10 October 2015, http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa-159.html
[34] F. Leverett and H. Leverett, 2013
[35] J. Nye, Jr., The Decline Of America's Soft Power', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.83, No.3, May/June 2008, pp.16-20

The United States had evidently resisted popular sentiments that worked against American interests in the region.[36] Furthering American interests in the Middle East had taken the form of many campaigns, such as spreading democracy, occupying nations, humanitarian interventions and combating terrorism. These campaigns had invariably resulted in some intended and several unintended consequences. For example, the United States managed to topple Saddam Hussein's government. However that invasion resulted in large scale sectarian violence which destroyed Iraq. Moreover, the conflict with Iran made the Iraq war even more costly for the United States, because of Iranian support to Shiites fighting the occupation forces. The United States had spent millions of dollars, on 'democracy promotion' in the Middle East.[37] That policy of democracy promotion was a failure, because it did not aid in transforming Arab countries into democracies. The only Arab democracies in the region, before the Arab Spring, were Lebanon, West Bank and Gaza. The United States did not have any role in making them democratic.[38] Moreover, American leadership lost its legitimacy in the Middle East, following the decade-long American occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. Many of the autocratic regimes, including Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain and Jordan, faced resistance from their people, and they were long-time allies of the United States. The 'failure' of American led invasions to contain the violence in the region and the American promotion of dictatorships in the region, are some of the possible reasons for the decline of American soft power in the region.

According to former US National Security Adviser Z. Brzezinski, 'we're [the United States] still the strongest, but we're not necessarily the most respected or the most legitimate leader as the United States historically was prior to the beginning of this century.'[39] According to Hillary Clinton, who was President Obama's Secretary of State from 21 January 2009 to 1 February 2013, America is still the 'indispensable nation', but the leadership should be 'earned by every generation'.[40] Vali Nasr also discusses the same issue of 'declining American power'. According

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[36] F. Leverett and H. Leverett, 2013

[37] A. Hawthorne, In *Uncharted Journey: Promoting Democracy in the Middle East*, (eds.), T. Carothers and M. Ottaway, Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005, p.98

[38] A. Barnes, 'Creating Democrats? Testing the Arab Spring', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XX, No. 2, Summer 2013, pp.55–72

[39] Z. Brzezinski interviewed by B. Landy, 'Zbigniew Brzezinski on ISIS, Ukraine, and the future of American power', *MSNBC*, 9 September 2014

[40] H. Clinton, *Hard Choices*, Simon & Schuster: London, 2014, p.xii

to him, there is no decline of American power, rather, he suggests, 'the question everyone should be asking is why, despite our overwhelming power and potential, our influence is diminishing. The answer lies in how we exercise our power and how we see our role in the world.'[41] Nasr goes on to say that the decline of influence, and not a decline of power, is because of the use of hard power and inconsistencies in American foreign policy making. This has impacted the reputation and leadership of the United States.[42]

The legacy left to the Obama administration by the Bush administration included the 'war on terror',[43] an economic crisis[44] and combat missions in Iraq as well as Afghanistan. The legacy left by the Bush administration is relevant because some of President Obama's policies were rooted in President Bush's initiatives. For example, President Obama continued on with the sabotage program against Iran, namely *Operation Olympic Games*, which was initiated by the Bush administration. According to David Sanger, 'the impetus for Olympic Games dates from 2006, when President Bush saw few good options in dealing with Iran.'[45] Another example is that, after the attack on 9/11, President Bush had adequate public support to venture into new military missions. However, following the Bush administration's war on terror, the American public was not fervent about the use of hard power.[46] The Obama administration had to respond to that change in public opinion.

Under the Bush administration, the war on terror was justified and legitimised in the name of defending the sovereignty and security of the United States. The war on terror had deprived the United Nations of its role as the 'higher tribunal'. This was because, in the aftermath of the attacks on September 11, the sovereign interests of the United States were placed above its international obligations. The stature (as 'the higher tribunal') would have given the United

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[41] V. Nasr, *The Dispensable Nation*, Doubleday : New York, 2013, p.251

[42] Ibid, p.251-252

[43] J. Record, 'The Bush Doctrine and War with Iraq', *Parameters*, Vol.33, No.1, Spring 2003, pp.4-21

[44]k. Ruffing and J. Friedman, 'Economic Downturn and Legacy of Bush Policies Continue to Drive Large Deficits:Economic Recovery Measures, Financial Rescues Have Only Temporary Impact', *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, 28 February 2013, retrieved on 10 October 2015, http://www.cbpp.org/research/economic-downturn-and-legacy-of-bush-policies-continue-to-drive-large-deficits

[45] D. Sanger,' Obama Order Sped Up Wave Of Cyber Attacks Against Iran', *The New York Times*, 1 June 2012

[46] E. Hallams, 'From Crusader To Exemplar: Bush, Obama And The Reinvigoration Of America's Soft Power', *European Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 6, No.1, Spring 2011

Nations the authority to legitimise the activities undertaken by members of the international community.[47] During the Bush administration, American foreign policy was often executed unilaterally or by coalition building. According to Michael Collier, 'the events of September 11 generated an initial wave of pro-US support that caused a White House formerly dedicated to unilateralism to appear abundantly multilateral.'[48] The inclusion of the United Nations to aid in reaching American foreign policy goals, during the Bush administration, was also for domestic political reasons. For example, the United States and the United Kingdom needed the support of the United Nations before going to war with Iraq. This was in part because Tony Blair was facing significant domestic opposition to the war, and a mandate from the United Nations was necessary for his domestic political survival.[49] A second resolution from the United Nations was necessary, and the United States was willing to go 'the extra mile' for its ally.

The lack of trust the Bush White House had in the UN was evident from the efforts by the then Vice President Dick Cheney. According to Alexander Thompson, 'Cheney shared with the neocons a strong scepticism of multilateral institutions, which they believed stood in the way of U.S. interests more often than they promoted them.'[50] Vice-President Cheney was especially interested in unilateral actions, and not seeking 'approval' from the UN. According to Cheney, the Congress, the Justice Department, the anti-war organisations, and the media had 'exposed, rejected or changed nearly all of the Bush counterterrorism policies.'[51] This general hostility toward the Bush administration was because of the Bush administration's unilateral tendencies, and the administration's unwillingness to take into consideration the inputs from civil society and international organisations. The sentiments against entrusting the UN with the security of the

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[47] A. Lingis, 'Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation of Peoples'; Edited by Philipa Rothfield, Cleo Fleming and Paul A. Komesaroff, *Pathways to Reconciliation: Between Theory and Practice*, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2008

[48] M. Collier, 'The Bush Administration's Reaction To September 11: A Multilateral Voice Or A Multilateral Veil', *Berkeley Journal Of International Law*, Vol.21, Issue 3, Article 12, 2003,

[49] Tony Blair speaking on the BBC Documentary 'The Iraq War', retrieved on 22 March 2014,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7AKnu8upe4Q

[50] A. Thompson, 'Why Did Bush Bypass The UN In 2003? Unilateralism, Multilateralism And Presidential Leadership', *White House Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2011

[51] J. Goldsmith, 'How Dick Cheney Reined In Presidential Power', *The New York Times*, 15 September 2011

world were running high in the Bush administration. According to Marc Lynch, 'the Bush administration turned to the UN out of need, not out of principle.'[52]

In the case of Iran and the United States, both countries were guilty of developing mistrust and suspicion, as a result of second guessing the ambitions of the other party. This paranoia had also negatively influenced the relationship between Iran, US and the UN. One prime example is the manner in which Iran and the US dealt with the IAEA. Given the secrecy surrounding the Iranian nuclear program, IAEA was an important source of information, pertaining to Iranian nuclear facilities. The UN, through IAEA, had direct access to the nuclear facilities in Iran. Until such time, when the United States and Iran resolve their conflict, it is imperative to have continued presence of the IAEA inspectors in Iran. However, Iran and the IAEA have had a complex relationship over the years. There were several instances where information pertaining to the Iranian nuclear program was 'leaked' from the IAEA database. There were speculations that Israel was behind several of those leaks.[53] However, the Iranian government had managed to escape any diplomatic fallout that stemmed from such leaks. For example, it is not clear why the Iranian government admitted to the IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei, the existence of a 'secret' nuclear site in Qom. On 21 September 2009, the Iranian government informed the IAEA that it was building a 'gas-centrifuge-based enrichment facility'. In another four days, USA, UK and France informed the IAEA about the existence of the Qom facility.[54] Perhaps the Iranian government did not desire to wait until the revelation was made by the United States.[55] According to reports, the United States and Israel were aware of the site during the early days of the Bush administration. According to a senior US official, 'we've been aware of this facility for several years; we've been watching the construction, we've been building up a case so that we

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[52] M. Lynch, 'Using and Abusing The UN, Redux', Middle East Research and Information Project, *MER* 225, retrieved on 30 January 2015,

http://www.merip.org/mer/mer225/using-abusing-un-redux

[53] J. Borger, diplomatic editor, 'Israel Suspected Over Iran Nuclear Programme Inquiry Leaks', *The Guardian*, 10 December 2012

[54] P. Kerr, 'Iran's Nuclear Program: Status', *CRS Report For Congress*, Congressional Research Service, 25 November 2009

[55] F. Dahl, and H. Jaseb, 'Iran Test-Fired Missiles Amid Nuclear Tension', *Reuters*, 27 September 2009

were sure that we had very strong evidence, irrefutable evidence that the intent of this facility was as an enrichment plant.'[56]

Conclusion

The importance of domestic politics and domestic political constraints are important reasons why it is not helpful for a researcher to consider the state as a unitary rational actor.[57] As discussed in this chapter, even though there were several reasons to negotiate with Iran, it was not easy for the United States to do so, because negotiations with Iran were made harder by the complicated power sharing mechanism in Iran and the domestic politics in the United States. Also, the qualms and mistrust between Iran and the United States had made the decision-making process particularly complicated. Trust is not considered rational by all. 'Aside from Locke and liberal utilitarians, most writers interpret trust as non-rational.'[58]

Even though there were many 'centres of power' in Iran, it always had revolutionaries, internationalists and moderates. Iran's domestic politics was often a struggle between those groups.[59] Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran, the moderates and the radicals in that country had fought each other for control of the government. Writing about the situation which existed in the Middle East in 1979, Mohammad Ataie argued that,

> '[in Iran] moderates and radicals envisaged contradictory approaches towards international and regional issues and exploited their influence inside state and revolutionary institutions to advance their agendas regarding Syria, Lebanon and other

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[56] J. Borger and P. Wintour, 'Why Iran Confessed To Secret Nuclear Site Built Inside Mountain', *The Guardian*, 25 September 2009

[57] H. Milner, *Interests, Institutions, and Information: Domestic Politics and International Relations,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997

[58] W. Riker, 'Political Trust as Rational Choice', *Theory and Decision Library,* Vol. 23, 1980, p.2

[59] M. Sariolghalam, 'Transition in the Middle East: New Arab Realities and Iran', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XX, No. 1, Spring 2013, pp.121–134

entities. Henceforth struggle over foreign policy was an integral part of the factionalism of the early years of the revolution.'[60]

As the following chapters will point out, that situation never really changed in Iran.

As noted in this chapter, one of the most recurring historiographical themes in the existing literature is how the shifts and changes in the US-Iran relations relate to key developments in Iranian and American domestic politics. The following chapter, reviewing the literature on the Obama administration's foreign policy decision-making will also point out the importance of domestic politics in America's Iran policy decision-making.

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[60] M. Ataie, 'Revolutionary Iran's 1979 Endeavour in Lebanon', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XX, No. 2, Summer 2013, p.137–157

Chapter II: Literature Review

> *'In an era when our destiny is shared, power is no longer a zero-sum game. No one nation can or should try to dominate another nation. No world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will succeed. No balance of power among nations will hold. The traditional divisions between nations of the South and the North make no sense in an interconnected world; nor do alignments of nations rooted in the cleavages of a long-gone Cold War.'*

President Barack Obama[1]

The literature on President Obama's term in the White House is not fully developed, for obvious reasons. The academic literature is especially narrow, because not enough time has lapsed, and most of the official documents are not available for study. The primary sources are also limited in the case of President Obama's Iran policy. Undoubtedly, there are many challenges to studying decisions (decision-making process) that were made rather recently. Fortunately, it is a worthy and timely area of study. There are evidently some exceptionally informative works on America's Iran policy during the Obama administration. However, much of the literature focuses on evaluating the Iran policy of the Obama administration, without much consideration to the decision-making process. Presently, the literature offers no theoretically grounded study of the Obama administration's Iran policy decision-making, reasons for the decisions made, variables that were considered by the American decision-makers and the constraints faced by the politicians who made the decisions. The non-existence of a comprehensive study analysing the Obama administration's Iran policy decision-making makes it necessary to systematically analyse that subject matter by theoretically grounding it.

A significant portion of the literature on the Obama presidency is dedicated to investigating and discussing the 'Obama doctrine', or lack of it. The Obama administration's foreign policy has

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[1] Remarks by President Obama to the United Nations General Assembly, United Nations Headquarters, New York, New York, 23 September 2009, retrieved on 24 May 2014,

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-to-the-United-Nations-General-Assembly

received mixed reactions from analysts, foreign governments, media, the public and academics. The lack of objective mainstream discussions has also been a challenge, and a good reason, for researchers analysing the Obama administration's decision-making. There is a substantial body of literature, with significant gap in it, appraising, analysing, criticising and supporting the thinking of American foreign policy-makers. The literature on the Obama administration's decision-making, especially the Iran policy decision-making, generally paints the decision-making during the Obama presidency as a process in which the policy choices were determined by: (a) pragmatism and (b) miscalculations/mistakes made in the Middle East, (c) no new doctrine, but a continuation of the policy which existed during the Bush era,[2] (d) influence of the advisers. All these conflicting analysis of the Obama administration's foreign policy decision-making are discussed in this chapter. Reviewing the existing literature on the Obama administration's foreign policy making will help in identifying the predominant debates in the literature, and pointing out the areas neglected in the literature, particularly concerning the Iran policy decision-making of the Obama administration.

Was the Obama administration's policy choices determined by pragmatism?

> *There was inevitable tension between Obama's soaring rhetoric and desire for fundamental change, on the one hand, and his instinct for governing pragmatically, on the other. The history of the Obama administration's foreign policy has thus been one of attempts to reconcile the president's lofty vision with his innate realism and political caution. In office, Obama has been a progressive where possible but a pragmatist when necessary. And given the domestic and global situations he has faced, pragmatism has dominated.*

Martin Indyk, Kenneth Lieberthal and Michael O'Hanlon[3]

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[2] M. Barone, 'Obama's Foreign Policy Is Very Much A Continuation Of The Bush Policies'*, CBS News*, 9 April 2009, retrieved on 5 May 2015,

http://www.cbsnews.com/news/obamas-foreign-policy-is-very-much-a-continuation-of-the-bush-policies/

[3] M. Indyk, K. Lieberthal and M. O'Hanlon, 'Scoring Obama's Foreign Policy: A Progressive pragmatist Tries to Bent History', *Foreign Affairs*, May/ June 2012

As will be argued in this section, President Obama was more of a pragmatist than is generally acknowledged in policy circles. During the early years of the Obama presidency, Stephen Walt was one of many who criticised President Obama for pursuing unrealistic foreign policy. Walt had argued that 'Obama is pursuing some misguided goals, and he's doing it with a foreign-policy establishment that seems to become less effective with each passing year.'[4] However, in recent times, Walt has changed his view on President Obama's foreign policy, and now calls President Obama 'a realist'. During the early days of the administration, and until rather recently, Walt was very critical of President Obama's foreign policy decisions. Even so, by 2014, Walt had claimed that, he was rather pleased with President Obama's tactics of 'buck-passing'.[5] Walt had in the past called President Obama a 'buck-passer', in the 'nicest sense' of that word.[6] A close examination of President Obama's political stance indicates that he had generally been a pragmatist, since his senate days. For example, since the beginning of the Iraq war, President Obama (then Senator Obama) had supported the pursuit of less idealistic and more realistic policy, in foreign affairs.[7]

James Mann's '*The Obamians*'[8] sheds light into President Obama's long term strategy, and how that had impacted his tactics. Mann's writing reflects his unbiased analysis of a presidency in the midst of multiple wars and occupations. As a politician, President Obama was guilty of delivering several hypocritical public statements, concerning his administration's foreign policy,

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[4] S. Walt, 'Does Obama Lack 'Ambition' To Shape The World?', *Foreign Policy,* 16 August 2013, retrieved on 19 January 2015,

http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/08/16/does-obama-lack-ambition-to-shape-the-world/

[5] S. Walt, 'Is Barack Obama More of a Realist Than I Am?', *Foreign Policy*, 19 August 2014, retrieved on 2 September 2014,

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/08/19/is_barack_obama_more_of_a_realist_than_i_am_stephen_m_walt_iraq_russia_gaza

[6] Ibid
[7] F. Gerges,*Obama and the Middle East*, p.90

[8] J. Mann, *The Obamians: The Struggle Inside The White House To Redefine American Power*, New York: Penguin Books, 2012

which did not reflect the policies that were being pursued by the administration.[9] For example, the Obama administration's publicly stated policy toward Iran was diplomacy, during the first 9 months of the presidency. However, the administration was also pursuing a campaign of sanctions and sabotage against Iran, during the same period. According to Mann, the reason why President Obama's public statements did not reflect his policy initiatives was not so much to do with dishonesty. 'Obama discovered that practical realities, among them the United States Congress, would not allow him to carry out what he had set out to do'.[10] The subsequent chapters of this thesis will also argue that, during the first term in office the Obama administration had to face domestic political constraints, particularly the hostilities from the Republicans in the Congress. However, as Mann indicates, there were also several occasions when President Obama pursued a foreign policy that was contrary to all his public statements, and these statements were not because of pressure from President Obama's republican opponents, but the President had himself or his political aspirations to blame for those contradictory statements.[11] For example, the Obama administration had made several public statements concerning the tough stance the United States was willing to take against Russia, if need be. However, in a meeting with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, President Obama was 'caught on open mike' saying 'let me get reelected first, then I'll have a better chance of making something happen [concerning the European missile defence].'[12] This thesis also argues that concerns regarding reelection had also influenced the Obama administration's Iran policy, and after the reelection the Obama administration was more 'flexible' concerning the Iranian nuclear negotiations, by resisting pressure from America's international allies and the Obama administration's domestic opponents.

According to David Remnick,

'Obama could change styles without relinquishing his genuineness. He subtly shifted accent and cadences depending on the audience: a more straight-up delivery for a luncheon of businesspeople in the Loop; a folksier approach at a downstate V.F.W.;

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[9] R. Wright, 'Ironies In Obama's U.N. Address', *The Wall Street Journal*, 24 September 2014

[10] J. Mann, *The Obamians*, p.156

[11] Ibid, p. 159, discussions on speech President Obama made in Cairo in 2009, and subsequent policies supporting President Hosni Mubarak during the course of popular revolt against him.

[12] D. Nakamura and D, Wilgoren, 'Caught on open mike, Obama tells Medvedev he needs 'space' on missile defense', *The Washington Post*, 26 March 2012

echoes of the pastors of the black church when he was in one. Obama is multilingual, a shape-shifter.'[13]

That trait had on occasions helped President Obama in his dealings with the Congress, Republicans, Arab governments, Israelis, Iranians, European allies and the United Nations to deal with the Iranian nuclear issue. In some instances, it is impossible to determine, with certainty, if the President was indeed guilty of hypocrisy, or if he was forced into making those choices, because of political pressure. For example, President Obama had given his support to maintaining the status quo in Egypt during the first few years of his presidency, even though he had run a campaign promising 'change' in US domestic and foreign policy; even if President Obama was against the dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak, he had no reason to believe that supporting the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 or the Muslim Brotherhood would have made Egypt democratic, 'free' or tolerant. Also, there was no guarantee that regime change in Egypt would have helped in stabilising the region.

Mann also argues that President Obama respected Brent Scowcroft's brand of realism. According to Denis McDonough, 'Scowcroft is someone the President really admires.'[14] According to Mann, Obama did not try to be a realist or allow his policy making to belong to a particular school of thinking, but 'he [President Obama] sought to blend the two opposing perspectives, the realism of Kissinger and Scowcroft and the idealism of Woodrow Wilson.'[15] According to an Obama administration official quoted by Mann, 'he [President Obama] wants to be buddies with Brent Scowcroft, and he also wants to go out and give speeches about democracy.'[16] According to Mann, Scowcroft 'argued repeatedly that the United States should pay little or no attention to what happened inside a country's borders or how a government treated its own people. Instead, American leaders should focus on a country's actions overseas and in relation to its neighbours'.[17] The Obama presidency saw instances where the American

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[13] D. Remnick, *The Bridge: The Life and Rise of Barack Obama*, London: Picador 2010

[14] D. McDonough quoted by J. Mann, *The Obamians*, p.166

[15] J. Mann, *The Obamians*, p.166

[16] J. Mann anonymously quotes an official of the Obama administration; see J. Mann, 2012, p. 166-167

[17] Ibid, p.164

policy was less about democracy promotion or supporting popular movements in foreign countries, but more about protecting American interests. The case in point was the American response to Egyptian revolution of 2011. While Secretary Clinton and the 'officials with more traditional foreign policy views'[18] had supported a more cautious approach to dealing with the political change in Egypt, 'the Obamians' were more welcoming of the new era in Middle Eastern politics. According to James Mann, the President relied on his 'small, informal network of close aides', who James Mann calls 'the Obamians'.[19] When the time came to choose between idealism (by supporting democratic movements and popular uprisings in the region) and securing American strategic interests (by supporting the counter-revolution and monarchies of the Middle East), President Obama gave priority to securing American interests. Shahram Akbarzadeh's *'America's Challenges in the Greater Middle East'*[20] argues that the Obama administration's Middle East policy choices follows the realist tradition 'that seeks not to implement change but to manage the existing institutions free of value judgements'.[21]

Steven Hurst in 'Obama and Iran'[22] also argues that President Obama had very few options when choosing America's Iran policy. According to Hurst, the Obama administration had to choose sanctions because of the limited policy options;[23] an argument supported by the case study analysis in this thesis. Military action against Iran was not the choice because it could not have eliminated the nuclear program and nuclear ambitions of that country. Furthermore, Hurst argues that the Obama administration could not afford another occupation or military attack in an already turbulent Middle East. Hurst also discusses how domestic politics and pressures from allies made it necessary for the administration to pursue punitive measures against Iran, without entering into a military confrontation. For all those reasons, Hurst concludes that the Obama

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[18] Ibid, p.266

[19] Ibid, p. xx to xxi

[20] S. Akbarzadeh, (ed.), *America's Greater Challenges in the Middle East*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011

[21] Ibid, p.7

[22] S. Hurst, 'Obama and Iran', *International Politics*, Vol.49, Issue 5, 2012, pp.545-567
[23] Ibid

administration had to choose sanctions.[24] The case studies in this thesis also concurs with that assessment.

Trita Parsi, in 'A Single Role of the Dice', furnishes a detailed account and analysis of the Obama administration's diplomacy with Iran.[25] Domestic politics and pressure from allies had limited President Obama's "political space", when it came to America's Iran policy decision-making.[26] Parsi argues that diplomacy between Iran and the United States was doomed because of domestic political pressures and intervening factors such as lack of information, as well as the mistrust between the Obama administration and the Iranian ruling elite.[27] The book is a rich source of information, based mostly on primary sources, including over sixty interviews involving several of the key actors involved in Iran's diplomacy with P5+1. The case studies in this thesis further develops the insights and information provided in this book by analysing them using the Ph approach. Parsi's discussions pertaining to the diplomacy between Iran, Brazil and Turkey, which culminated in the *Tehran Declaration* is particularly informative in the second case study of this thesis. However, this book only covers the first two years of the Obama administration. Parsi's journalistic writings, lectures and the interview conducted with Parsi for this thesis cover Parsi's inputs on the Obama administration's Iran policy choices following the publication of this book.

According to Gerges, 'Obama's foreign policy insists on the recognition of differences and specificities between and among states, and ranks them according to their significance to US national interests. Obviously, as a realist he cares less about consistency and more about successful outcomes and maximising American bargaining power.'[28] The case studies in this thesis will point out how 'working with Iran', pursuing a non-confrontational policy toward that country and engaging in diplomacy with Iran was beneficial to the United States, during the Obama presidency. According to Gerges, 'Obama attempted to shift the conversation between America and the Muslim world from armed confrontation and hostility to engagement and

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[24] Ibid

[25] T. Parsi, *A Single Roll of the Dice: Obama's Diplomacy with Iran.*

[26] Ibid

[27] Ibid

[28] F. Gerges, *Obama and the Middle East*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p.108

common interests.'[29] According to Trita Parsi, these gestures were welcomed by the Muslim world and the Iranian people.[30] The Iranian politicians had their reservations, because of the many years successive American governments had spent trying to topple the government in Iran.[31] Moreover, the many years of hostility had made it harder for both parties to negotiate, because diplomacy was seen as weakness, by hawks on both sides.

David Sanger's book '*Confront and Conceal*'[32] also argues that, under the Obama presidency, America's commitment to a cause, as well as America's interference in a conflict, depended on its direct impact on American interests. Also, President Obama was not willing to have the United States shoulder the full responsibility of maintaining international security. Sanger's book is about President Obama's 'secret' wars and the 'use of American power'. Sanger discusses in detail, America's war in Afghanistan and Pakistan.[33] According to Sanger, President Obama's policy was to redirect the United States from its defensive mode, and rescue the American foreign policy from the thinking of the bush era when American foreign policy was focused on the threat to the US security and strategy.[34] Sanger argues that President Obama's supporters and critics were 'surprised' by the President's policy initiatives. Sanger's book focuses on that very element of surprise.[35] Sanger examines the CIA's activities inside Iran, including the 'Olympic Games' (cyber attack on Iranian nuclear facilities), the sabotage program and spying in Iran. The discussions of President Obama's 'light footprint' strategy also give insight into the President's thinking, the nature of American strategy, and the manner in which the United States handled the conflicts in the Middle East. According to Sanger, 'President Obama's team formulated a 'light footprint strategy,' knowing full well that the era of big attritional wars was over – today, it is

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[29] F. Gerges, *Obama and the Middle East*, p.115

[30] T. Parsi, 'Will Tehran Tango? Obama's Historic Norooz Greeting', *The Huffington Post*, 19 April 2009

[31] 'Spider Web: The Making and Unmaking of Iran Sanctions', Crisis Group, *Middle East Report* ,N°138, 25 February 2013

[32] D. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*, New York: Broadway Paperbacks, 2013

[33] See also J. Mann 2012, that book also discusses CIA's perspective on dealing with 'terrorism', the campaign in Afghanistan and America's policy in the Middle East.

[34] D. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*, p. xvi

[35] Ibid, p. xvi

clear the United States is no longer going to send troops to a foreign nation with the objective of rewiring its society.'[36] Even though Sanger's book is an excellent source of information regarding the Obama administration's war and war time policies, it is more of a foundation for further research because of the wealth of information contained in it, but it does not have a theoretical foundation, because that was probably not a goal the book was meant to fulfill. This thesis aims to make use of the information from all the above mentioned literature, along with other sources, and use the analytical approach provided under the Ph framework, to understand the Obama administration's Iran policy decision-making. As this thesis will point out, the Obama administration's Iran policy decision-making was a complicated affair, with the decision-makers considering several different variables ranging from the economy to the Congress, as well as taking into account several dimensions ranging from the security dimension to the diplomacy dimension, and calling it merely 'pragmatic' would be an oversimplification.

Was the Obama administration's policy choices determined by a series of mistakes in the Middle East?

The literature on the Obama administration's Iran policy decision-making often portrays the decision-making during the Obama presidency as a process in which the policy choices were often determined by a series of miscalculations/mistakes made in the Middle East. According to Walt, the United States is rather secure when it is not minding the business of other nations.[37] There are geopolitical interests that have to be defended, 'but none of them are truly imminent or vital and thus they don't require overzealous, precipitous, or heroic responses'.[38] Walt suggests that the Middle East and the world in general, is in so much peril that it would be better for the United States to not get more involved in that region.[39] According to his assessment, every time

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[36] D. Sanger during a talk at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, quoted by A student correspondent, 'The "Light Footprint Strategy:" Drones And Cyberattacks In The Obama Presidency', *The Fletcher School*, 28 December 2012, retrieved on 7 March 2016, http://fletcher.tufts.edu/News-and-Media/2012/12/28/David-Sanger-The-Light-Footprint-Strategy

[37] S. Walt, 'Barack the buck-passer', *Foreign Policy*, 8 May 2013, retrieved on 2 September 2014,

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/05/08/barack_the_buck_passer

[38] Ibid

[39] S. Walt, 'Do No (More) Harm', *Foreign Policy*, 7 August 2014, retrieved on 19 January 2015,

the United States interferes, it has been costly and counterproductive. However, as the case studies in this thesis will highlight, because of the political turmoil and violence in the Middle East the Obama administration could not afford to completely ignore the region since the beginning of the presidency, and cooperating with Iran was also necessary to cope with the crisis in the Middle East, particularly during the second term of the presidency due to Iran's influence in the region and the role it played in regional conflicts.

Vali Nasr wrote '*The Dispensable Nation*',[40] furnishing a detailed study on the American foreign policy during the Obama administration, and the impact of the same 'for the greater Middle East and for us [America]'.[41] Nasr discusses in great detail, how the people and the leaders in the region were disenchanted by American policy. 'It seemed everyone was getting used to a directionless America. The best they could do was to protect themselves against our sudden shifts and turns.'[42] Nasr's discussions on Afghanistan and the war in that country, is especially telling of how disappointed the local leaders were in the United States and its policies. According to Akbarzadeh, America's moral standing in the Middle East is rather poor.[43] Fawaz A. Gerges, in *'Obama and the Middle East'*[44] argues that the American influence in the Middle East is beginning to decline.[45] 'America's ability to act unilaterally and hegemonically, unconstrained by the local context, has come to an end.'[46] This thesis will argue that, the Obama administration had to work with Iran especially during President Obama's second term in office, to deal with the crisis in the Middle East because of Iran's influence in the region and America's inability to unilaterally resolve the problems and crisis in the region

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http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/08/07/do-no-more-harm/

[40] V. Nasr, *The Dispensable Nation*

[41] Ibid, p.1

[42] Ibid, p.12

[43] S. Akbarzadeh, (ed.), *America's Greater Challenges in the Middle East*, p.7

[44] F. Gerges, *Obama and the Middle East*

[45] Ibid, p.13

[46] Ibid

More than foreign policy miscalculations or mistakes, the factor that invited a great deal of criticisms and misunderstandings concerning the Obama administration foreign policy was its inability to 'explain' its foreign policy strategy. For example, the Obama administration was not particularly successful in explaining its Libya strategy, at a time when American foreign policy, under the Obama administration, was often misunderstood and misinterpreted, even by scholars of foreign policy analysis. In the case of Libya, the Obama administration used force against that country, even though the Libyan government had a good track record of pursuing diplomacy with the United States.[47] Libya was perhaps a cautionary tale for Iran. That is, the Libyan case made it difficult for the United States to prove its commitment to long term peace and diplomatic solutions to problems in the region.

> 'Libya, by the administration's own admission, is not a core national interest. This has left Obama in the awkward position of trying to explain his foreign policy while de-emphasizing the use of blood and treasure to prosecute the first war he started. Simply labelling it a "kinetic military action" has not helped.'[48]

After the intervention in Libya, it was also hard for the United States to reassure Iran and Syria that the American military will not march into Tehran and Damascus, after signing a diplomatic deal.[49]

There are also many who have argued that the Obama administration was not adequately involved in influencing the outcomes of the conflicts/political unrests in the Middle East. Richard Fontaine and Michele Flournoy are two of those critiques. They are both well renowned analysts who had worked with the National Security Council, and had served the United States government in various capacities. In their writing, they argue that American engagement is

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[47] P. Kerr, 'New Analysis: Libya's Disarmament: A Model For U.S. Policy?', *Arms Control Today*, 1 June 2004, retrieved on 31 March 2015,

http://www.armscontrol.org/print/1582

[48] D. Drezner, 'Does Obama Have A Grant Strategy?', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, Issue 4, Jul/Aug2011

[49] P. Pillar, R. Reardon, J. Sebenius and M. Singh, 'Correspondence: Nuclear Negotiations with Iran', *International Security*, Vol. 38, No. 1, Summer 2013, pp.174-192

necessary because if the United States leaves its leadership role then that role will be filled by those who don't share American values (such as China and Russia), or there would be chaos.[50] That observation is faulty, because the alternative to American leadership is not terrorism or communism, but the growth of new alliances that could even better guarantee international security. The policy of democracy promotion in the foreign lands is no longer practical.[51] Moreover, the American interference in recent conflicts (from Palestine to Ukraine) had only worsened the situation for the victims.[52] The Obama administration seemed rather keen on limiting the extent of American interference in the internal affairs of the Middle Eastern countries, at the same time not completely abandoning America's international interests. For example, instead of a military intervention in Syria, the Obama administration decided to arm the 'moderate' rebels in that country. However, the situation in Syria worsened. The President also faced demands from the Democrats and the Republicans in the Congress, to act 'decisively'.[53] Contrary to what Fontaine and Flournoy suggest, concerning the importance of America's leadership role, this thesis will argue in support of Walt's claim that it was necessary for the Obama administration to work with other partners, and not be overly concerned about America's leadership role.[54] That is, the Obama administration had to 'let enemies beat themselves', offer sober responses to dramatic events in foreign lands (from Syria to Ukraine), appease the interest groups in the United States and limit the use of American power to solve problems of the world.[55] However Fontaine and Flournoy are not alone in advocating for greater American role

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[50] R. Fontaine and M. Flournoy, 'America: Beware the Siren Song of Disengagement', *The National Interest*, 14 August 2014

[51] J. Kurlantzick, 'When-And Why-U.S. Foreign Policy Stopped Being About Democracy', *The Atlantic*, 18 November 2011

[52] S. Milne, 'It's Not Russia That's Pushed Ukraine To The Brink Of War', *The Guardian*, 30 April 2014

[53] S. Simon, 'Staying Out Of Syria: Why the United States Shouldn't Enter The Civil War-But Why It Might Anyway', *Foreign Affairs*, 26 October 2014, retrieved on 19 January 2015,

http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/142295/steven-simon/staying-out-of-syria

[54] S. Walt, 'Is Barack Obama More of a Realist Than I Am?', *Foreign Policy*, 19 August 2014, retrieved on 2 September 2014,

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/08/19/is_barack_obama_more_of_a_realist_than_i_am_stephen_m_walt_iraq_russia_gaza

[55] Ibid

in international conflicts. According to former Ambassadors Ryan Crocker[56] and Robert Stephen Ford,[57] America needs to go 'all in', to fight the extremists in the region.[58] However, that proposition was not practicable for the Obama administration. For example, if America were to take up the responsibility of 'bringing peace to the Middle East', then that meant fighting the extremists who were spread across the region. That in turn meant that the American military had to maintain the law and order in the region, for the long term. The only way to effectively and affordably (economically, militarily and politically) influence the conflicts in the region was by partnering with the regional players, so that the primary responsibility of peacekeeping did not fall on the American military and economy.

President Obama supported the idea that it was necessary to get local actors involved, to resolve regional problems. The United States had to provide some support, militarily and economically, to help combat extremism in the region. However, that did not mean the United States had to send American military to resolve all political conflicts in the region. In President Obama's words, the United States cannot 'serially occupy various countries all around the Middle East', so as to bring peace to the region.[59] There are also many who are supportive of the Obama administration's decision to reduce American involvement in regional conflicts. Zbigniew Brzezinski is one of the most prominent figures who had advised against long term American involvement in military conflicts in the Middle East. In an interview with *MSNBC*, Brzezinski argued that, 'the basic heavy lifting has to be done by those Islamic states in the region that have

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[56] During his time as a career diplomat, he served as United States Ambassador to Afghanistan (2011 to 2012), United States Ambassador to Iraq (2007 to 2009); According to President Bush, 'during his [Ambassador Crocker's] nearly four decades in the Foreign Service, Ryan Crocker has become known as America's Lawrence of Arabia'; Statement by George W. Bush, 'President Bush Commemorates Foreign Policy Achievements and Presents Medal of Freedom to Ambassador Ryan Crocker', U.S. Department of State, Washington D.C., Office of the Press Secretary, 15 January 2009

[57] United States Ambassador to Syria, from 29 December 2010 to 28 February 2014

[58] R. Crocker and R. Ford interviewed by C. Amanpour, *CNN*, 10 September 2014, retrieved on 11 September 2014,

http://amanpour.blogs.cnn.com/2014/09/10/obama-must-go-all-in-against-isis-say-two-heavyweight-american-diplomats/

[59] President Barack Obama interviewed by C. Todd, 'NBC'S Meet the Press', *NBC*, 7 September 2014, retrieved on 11 September 2014,

http://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/president-barack-obamas-full-interview-nbcs-chuck-todd-n197616

a stake in stability'.[60] The following chapters will point out how the Obama administration had also pursued this line of thinking in several situations where the United States had left the 'heavy lifting' to be done by the countries in the Middle East. In the same interview, Brzezinski discussed the example of the Syrian conflict.[61] Brzezinski argued against American involvement in Syria, because the opposition group in that country did not have the noblest aspirations, and that Assad 'was more tolerant of non-Muslims than some of the Muslim countries now engaging themselves in some sort of special operation to unseat him'.[62] This is a sober observation, given the reason that there were so many state and non-state actors who had a stake in the Syrian conflict. Iran was Syria's most important ally, and the political future of Syria was important to Iran. The case studies will highlight how the tension between Iran and the United States had worsened the situation in Syria, and also how the United States needed to cooperate with Iran also for the sake of the stability of the Middle East. Any American involvement in Syria had the potential to breed more anti-Americanism in the region, amongst the Shiites and Sunnis. Additionally, the United States could not afford to send its troops to 'babysit' another civil war in the Middle East. Therefore, partnering with local allies was essential in the case of the Obama administration, to also share the burden of responsibility, when trying to influence the outcome of the conflict.

Another perspective on President Obama's policy making was given by Peter Beinart. The argument made by Beinart is that President Obama's Middle East policy was minimalistic.[63] The American citizenry was war weary. Also, the Republicans in the Congress were on a mission to attack President Obama's decision-making and policy choices. These political pressures make it necessary, for the Obama administration, to try and refrain from getting involved in conflicts that did not directly threaten American security interests.[64] The importance of the impact of domestic political constraints on President Obama's Iran policy decision-making and Middle East policy is also highlighted in the following chapters.

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[60] Z. Brzezinski interviewed by B. Landy, 'Zbigniew Brzezinski on ISIS, Ukraine, and the future of American power', *MSNBC*, 9 September 2014

[61] Ibid
[62] Ibid
[63] P. Beinart, 'Obama's Middle East strategy exists – and it's what America wants', *Haaretz*, 1 September 2014

[64] Ibid

One important aspect of American foreign policy under President Obama was that, there was not an active commitment to promoting democracy in the region, unlike the Bush administration. The book, *'US Foreign Policy and Democracy Promotion'*,[65] discusses the democracy promotion policy, from President Roosevelt to President Obama. As the author argues, 'the sobering state of democracy in the world further darkened the landscape of democracy promotion for the incoming Obama administration.'[66] In the Middle East, the Obama administration was willing to pragmatically choose a policy option, without committing to democracy promotion. In President Obama's words 'I'm not a particularly ideological person. There's things, some values I feel passionately about.'[67] The Obama administration's pragmatism was perhaps the reason why the United States worked with its partners when dealing with Iran, Libya and Iraq. 'Multilateralism and consensus-building'[68] formed the core of President Obama's foreign policy.

The Obama administration had supported the authoritarian rulers in the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and, Bahrain, even though there was popular support for regime change. However, there was no guarantee that a revolution (regime change) was going to make the region more stable or secular. Therefore, the Obama administration made the pragmatic decision to not support the 'revolutions'. Also, the lessons from the Iranian revolution had made it clear that popular movements do not always lead to secularism. The rise of fundamentalism in the Middle East, was a threat to the moderate political movements in the region. Moreover, the United States was also concerned about the anti-American movements such as Muslim Brotherhood, ISIS, Hamas and Al-Qaeda, which were hijacking the changing political landscape of the region. The Obama administration was also fearful of the uprisings in the region, because there was never a clear, singular, secular or pro-American opposition that was fighting the status quo. Therefore, the Obama administration had to pursue a counter-revolutionary policy. As the President of the

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[65] M. Cox, T. Lynch and N. Bouchet, (eds.), *US Foreign Policy and Democracy Promotion*, London: Routledge, 2013

[66] Ibid, p. 196

[67] President Obama quoted by L. Mccalmont, 'Obama: 'I'm Not A Particularly Ideological Person'', POLITICO, 25 November 2013, retrieved on 13 December 2013,
http://www.politico.com/story/2013/11/obama-ideology-100328.html
[68] M. Cox, *US Foreign Policy and Democracy Promotion*, p.204

United States, his primary commitment was to defend American national interests. Therefore, supporting the people of the Middle East was only a secondary concern.

Time and time again, many prominent foreign policy analysts have misinterpreted President Obama's 'uncommitted thinking' as his 'indecisiveness'.[69] According to Sanger's assessment, the Obama administration did not seem to have made the choice between 'strategic patience and target engagement'. That is, decide, if the United States was going to or not going to interfere in the internal affairs of the Middle Eastern countries[70] This thesis will point out that even though the Obama administration was not especially enthusiastic about interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, the Obama administration's decision to interfere or not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries were made on a case by case basis; for example the United States did not actively get involved as events unfolded in the midst of the Egyptian revolution of 2011, but the United States did play a role in Libya. As Zbigniew Brzezinski argued, 'well, obviously, if you can't intervene everywhere, you don't conclude that you interfere nowhere' [71]

Some critics have claimed that President Obama's foreign policy making was reactionary.[72] For example, in the beginning the Obama administration was not keen on supporting the democratic uprising in Egypt. Washington, by backing the military coup d'état, was able to have some influence on Egypt's internal politics[73] before and after the coup. Following the coup d'état, there were rampant human rights violations and political unrests in that country.[74] As the events unfolded, the Obama administration was seemingly unable to pursue any proactive policy. There were also several instances when US foreign policy had worsened the situation in the target country. For example, the United States under President Obama never developed an effective strategy to deal with the crisis in Syria, and reduce the violence in that country. The Obama

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[69] G. Schmitz, 'The Indecisive President: Obama's Weakness Is A Problem For The Global Economy', *Spiegel Online International,* 9 August 2011, retrieved on 17 March 2016, http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/the-indecisive-president-obama-s-weakness-is-a-problem-for-the-global-economy-a-779179.html

[70] D. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*, p. 366

[71] Z. Brzezinski interview, *PBS News Hour*, 21 March 2011, cited by J. Mann, *The Obamians*, p.293

[72] F. Gerges, *Obama and the Middle East*, p.91

[73] J. Sharp, 'Egypt In Crisis: Issues For Congress', *CRS Report*, Congressional Research Service, 19 August 2013

[74] J. Sharp, 'Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations', *CRS Report*, Congressional Research Service, 5 June 2014

administration's support of 'moderate rebels' did not help in simplifying the situation in Syria. According to Noah Bonsey,

> 'international support for the opposition has shifted away from Islamist groups and towards moderate non-ideological groups; however, the increase in support for the latter is insufficient to compensate for declining support for the former. Therefore the overall capacity of the opposition to fight both IS and the regime has been reduced.'[75]

However, the Obama administration's foreign policy had at times delivered some success, under very trying circumstances. For example, the relationship between Iran and the United States was extremely competitive during the Bush administration, and both countries were moving toward a military confrontation with each other.[76] However, the relationship significantly improved during the Obama presidency. That is, Iran during the Rouhani presidency and America under President Obama were more accommodating of diplomacy; even though the Republican Congress was a stumbling block to progress (diplomacy),[77] the Obama administration was able to give diplomacy a chance by resisting pressure from the Congress.

According to Sanger, by the time it was the end of President Obama's first term, his 'approach seemed more defensive than visionary, and a bit unsatisfying, at least in historical terms'.[78] However, the following chapters will point out that President Obama was standing for re-election, and was rather sensitive to American domestic politics. The concerns regarding reelction and the domestic political constraints at the time had meant that President Obama's approach did appear more defensive than visionary and a bit unsatisfying to his supporters and political analysts. Gerges also argues that domestic politics had an important role in determining the course of America's Middle East policy. For example, the election cycle and the influence of the Israeli lobby had forced the administration into 'Israel-first school', especially during the first

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[75] N. Bonsey, 'Syria's Conflict And The Impact On Its Neighbours: The Long View', Middle East North Africa Programme Meeting Note, *Chatham House*, 14 October 2014, retrieved on 22 January 2015,

http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/20141014SyriaConflict.pdf

[76] H. Blake, 'George W Bush Ordered Pentagon To Plan Iran Attack', *The Telegraph*, 09 November 2010

[77] D. Rohde, 'Newest Victim Of Congressional Wrecking Ball: Iran Policy', *Reuters*, 15 January 2014

[78] D. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*, p.419

term. This in turn had made it impossible for the Obama administration to improve America's relationship with the Muslim world, during the first term.[79] Sanger's book also discusses Israel's sabotage program, against Iran. Israel was also responsible for the target assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists.[80] However, the American government did not officially participate in the campaign to assassinate Iranian scientists. Even so, in the eyes of the Iranian government, the U.S. was also responsible for Israel's actions, because Israel was America's closest ally in the Middle East, and the American government and the US intelligence community was aware of Israel's activities in Iran. According to an official quoted by Sanger, these assassinations were the kind of 'things we don't ask about'.[81] Israelis were concerned that the United States would decide to live with a nuclear Iran.[82] Sanger argues that, 'inside the White House, the President was wrestling with exactly that question- whether what worked in the Cold War could work in the Middle East'.[83] According to Sanger, in his first months in office, President Obama was aware of the existence and development of new nuclear facilities in Iran (Qom).[84] However, President Obama waited to expose that discovery. According to Sanger, President Obama wanted to reveal that news only at the most opportune time, to gain advantage in the negotiations, and 'to give a chance' for diplomacy to work.[85] The lack of positive response from the Iranians, to President Obama's 'unclenched fist'[86] had made it difficult for diplomacy to produce results during President Obama's first term and also until President Rouhani was elected President of Iran. There are other theories concerning President Obama's Iran policy and Iran's reactions to

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[79] F. Gerges, *Obama and the Middle East*, p.122-123

[80] U. Putz, 'Sabotaging Iran's Nuclear Program: Mossad Behind Tehran Assassinations, Says Source', *Spiegel Online International*, retrieved on 22 January 2015,

http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/sabotaging-iran-s-nuclear-program-mossad-behind-tehran-assassinations-says-source-a-777899.html

[81] D. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*, p.145

[82] B. Posen, 'We Can Live With A Nuclear Iran', The Audit Of Conventional Wisdom, *MIT Center For International Studies,* March 2006

[83] D. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*, p.151

[84] Ibid, p. 155

[85] Ibid
[86] President Barack Obama, Inaugural Address, 20 January 2009, retrieved on 22 January 2015,

http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/inaugural-address

them. It could also be argued that the Iranians were right to not trust President Obama, because his Iran policy was indeed hostile to the Islamic Republic, during the first term. At the same time, it could also be argued that President Obama had to pursue the dual-track policy, because significant progress in Iran's nuclear program would have otherwise warranted a military response from America, if the negotiations did not yield results. According to Robert Jervis, 'to succeed in halting Iran's progress toward a bomb, the United States will have to combine the two [threats and promises], not simply alternate between them. It must make credible promises and credible threats simultaneously -- an exceedingly difficult trick to pull off.'[87] Also, the Executive Branch was under tremendous pressure from Congress to take 'decisive action' against Iran. Furthermore, the tense relationship between the Congress and the Obama administration meant that the House Republicans were more inclined to hearing Prime Minister Netanyahu's advice than President Obama's.[88] Elections and the need for campaign funding had made it necessary for American politicians to seek support from Israel and Israeli lobby in the United States.[89] The case studies in this thesis will make use of Ph theory, to analyse the different variables considered by the decision-makers, and how the Obama administration arrived at its final Iran policy choice. Ph theory, by taking into account the importance of domestic politics in foreign policy decision-making, offers a more sophisticated means to analyse the Obama administration's Iran policy decisions, by providing a 'new principle of rationality' by acting as a bridging framework between cognitive schools and rational choice theory under FPA. [90]

No new doctrine, but a continuation of the policy which existed during the Bush era?

According to Vali Nasr, 'Obama tweaked the dual–track approach. He tried his hand at diplomacy, but only to get to the sanctions track faster, and to make sanctions more effective. Engagement was a cover for a coercive campaign of sabotage, economic pressure, and cyber

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[87] R. Jervis, 'Getting To Yes With Iran: The Challenges Of Coercive Diplomacy', *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2013

[88] F. Gerges, *Obama and the Middle East*, p.138-139

[89] C. Bruck, 'Friends Of Israel', *The New Yorker*, 1 September 2014

[90] D. Brule, 'The Poliheuristic Research Program: An Assessment And Suggestions For Further Progress', *International Studies Review,* Vol. 10, Issue 2, 2008, p.267

warfare. It was Bush's policy with more teeth.'[91] Perhaps some aspects (for example, sanctions and sabotage) of the Obama administration's policy were a continuation of the policies during the Bush era.[92] However, the difference was that the Bush administration pursued a confrontational policy with no commitment to diplomacy to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue, and saw the end as a potential military conflict between the two countries.[93] However, in the case of the Obama administration, the campaign of sanctions and sabotage were pursued, so as to pressure the Iranian government to commit to diplomacy. Also, during the Bush administration, toppling the government in Tehran was an important objective of America's Iran policy. The Bush administration was also more inclined to taking unilateral actions, especially unilateral sanctions. According to Flynt Leverett,

> 'we got into this dilemma[94] because we essentially don't have a strategy for dealing with the Iranian nuclear issue. By "we" I mean the United States and the Bush administration. The Bush administration has deliberately ruled out direct negotiations with Iran either over the nuclear issue or over the broad range of strategic issues that you would need to talk to Iran about if you were going to get a real diplomatic settlement on the nuclear issue.'[95]

However, the Obama administration wanted cooperation from allies, and was willing to work with the Islamic Republic. During the Bush administration, there was intense competition between Iran and the United States. However, during the Obama administration, even though there was a struggle between Iran and the United States to increase their influence in the region, the Obama administration's focus was on dealing with the nuclear issue and less about trying to

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[91] V. Nasr, *The Dispensable Nation*, p.114

[92] T. Parsi, 'Iran And The US: An Inverted Prisoner's Dilemma', *Al Jazeera*, 16 May 2014, retrieved on 1 February 2015,

http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/05/iran-us-an-inverted-prisoner-di-201451613010914416.html

[93] D. Ignatius, 'Bush's Iran Policy Has Failed', *The Washington Post*, 30 November 2008

[94] The dilemma was that the UNSC could not effectively sanction Iran because Russia and China opposed Iran sanctions. Moreover, there was no incentive for Iran to comply.

[95] F. Leverett, Interview by B. Gwertzman, 'Leverett: Bush Administration 'Not Serious About Dealing With Iran', *Council On Foreign Relations*, 31 March 2006

interfere in the internal affairs of Iran.[96] Moreover, during the Bush administration, America was more inclined to using hard power to resolve foreign policy issues. According to Trita Parsi, 'there seems to be a lot of people in the [Bush] White House that have the military option as their first option, not as their last option.'[97] However, the Obama administration wanted to avoid another war in the Middle East, also resolve the Iranian nuclear issue through diplomacy, and prevent Israel from launching a military attack on Iran. For the Obama administration, the 'light footprint' was generally the preferred approach, when compared to using hard power to resolve international conflicts.[98] According to Gerges, 'while Obama has used hard and soft power to undo some of the damage caused by his predecessor, he has not tapped into the presidency's extraordinary power to bring about change and stir hope, nor has he fully engaged the current extraordinary events in the Middle East'.[99]

Was the Obama administration's decision-making influenced by the advisers?

President Obama and 'the so – called Berlin Wall of staffers'[100]

'A salient feature of the American institutional setting is that the president and the institutionalised presidency- the latter consisting of the president's personal staff and the Executive Office of the President- are preeminent in the foreign policymaking process.'[101] The Presidential decision is often influenced by his advisers, but the extent of that influence depends

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[96] J. Borger, 'A Nuclear Deal With Iran Would Mean A Less Volatile World', *The Guardian*, 31 December 2014

[97] T. Parsi interviewed by A. Goodman, 'Ex-Congressional Aide: Karl Rove Personally Received (And Ignored) Iranian Peace Offer In 2003', *Democracy Now*, 26 February 2007, retrieved on 1 February 2015,

http://www.democracynow.org/2007/2/26/ex_congressional_aide_karl_rove_personally

[98] M. Lujan, 'Light Footprints: The Future Of American Military Intervention', Voices From The Field, *Center For New American Security*, March 2013

[99] F. Gerges, *Obama and the Middle East*, p.92

[100] V. Nasr, *The Dispensable Nation*, p.37

[101] J. McCormick, (ed.), *The Domestic Sources Of American Foreign Policy: Insights and Evidence*, Sixth Edition, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2012, p.157

on several factors, as discussed below.[102] For example, traditionally, the national security adviser is responsible for 'managing the foreign policy decision-making process, undertaking operational matters, and assuming public responsibilities.'[103] However, not all national security advisers have the same influence on the President. The influence depends on the nature and character of both the President and the official in question. The relationship between the President and the national security adviser will also determine the significance of the national security adviser's role. For example, James Jones, the first national security adviser under President Obama, was not particularly influential in policy making. However, the next national security adviser, Tom Donilon had played a greater role.[104]

Presidential appointees are important starting point to learn how the President approaches policy making. This is because the closest advisers and those holding high ranking positions in the administration often have more access to influence the President. In the event they did not have any influence, their appointments are very telling of the nature of Washington politics. For example, James Mann argues that President Obama's goal in appointing Hillary Clinton was to appease her power base in the Democratic Party.[105] According to Mann, Clinton's role in the administration also kept her from being an opponent when President Obama was running for a second term.[106] According to Mann, President Obama's appointment of Hillary Clinton as the Secretary of State was necessary, to remove her from the Senate, 'where she would have been an independent power center, and putting her inside the administration, where she would find it far harder to oppose or criticise what he was doing'.[107]

The 'face' of foreign policy in any administration is usually the State Department. Woodward's discussions on President Obama's decision to appoint Hillary Clinton to the post of Secretary of

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[102] B. De Mesquita, 'Domestic Politics and International Relations', *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.46, 2002, pp.1–9

[103] I. (Mac) Destler, 'How National Security Advisers See Their Role', In *The Domestic Sources Of American Foreign Policy: Insights and Evidence,* (ed.), J. McCormick, pp. 209- 222

[104] J. McCormick, (ed.), *The Domestic Sources Of American Foreign Policy: Insights and Evidence*, p.164

[105] J. Mann, *The Obamians*

[106] Ibid
[107] Ibid, p.5-6

State focus on President Obama's trust in Clinton's competence and loyalty. Woodward makes it seem more of a pragmatic choice and less of a political decision, to appoint Clinton to that post. According to Peter Beinart, 'if Hillary's primary edge over her husband is her mental toughness, her biggest advantage over Obama is her skill in cultivating political relationships. Her success in this area almost certainly owes something to her single-mindedness as well.'[108] Regardless of the reasons for her appointment, Clinton had stayed loyal to President Obama's vision, as far as execution of foreign policy was concerned. That is, use of hard power (when needed), diplomacy (as long as possible) and soft power (if possible). Hillary Clinton's book, '*Hard Choices*', also adds to the discussions on the inner workings of the Obama administration, and the administration's Iran policy.[109] The book is about policy making in Washington and in international politics. According to Clinton, she saw her 'choices and challenges in three categories': (a) the problems she inherited, (b) the new events and threats, (c) opportunities.[110] Clinton argues that, her goal was to 'reorient American foreign policy' around 'smart power'.[111] The idea was to pool in all the available resources, from sources ranging from the military to the civil society in foreign lands, to advance American foreign policy goals. In Clinton's words, her role as Secretary of State made her the main diplomat for the country, the chief adviser to President Obama in issues pertaining to international relations, and also the executive head of the State Department.[112] In her book, Clinton also discusses her commitment to making sure that she did not give the press any reason to come up with stories about any tension between her and President Obama.[113] Clinton acknowledges that the general sentiment in the policy and intelligence circles is that there is a decline in American power and influence in the world.[114] However, Clinton maintains that she still has faith in America's future and ability to overcome the present challenges.[115] Clinton has always been a politically sensitive being, since her time as

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[108] P. Beinart, 'A Unified Theory of Hillary ', *National Journal Magazine*, 21 June 2014

[109] H. Clinton, *Hard Choices*

[110] H. Clinton, *Hard Choices,* p.x

[111] Ibid, p.x

[112] Ibid, p.21

[113] Ibid, p.22

[114] Ibid
[115] Ibid, p.25-26

the First Lady.[116] Hillary Clinton's time in office as the Secretary of State, had made her more media friendly than even before (not including the media coverage on the Benghazi issue, which was politicised by her opponents).[117] In her own estimation, Iran had 'consumed' much of her time as the head of the State Department. Even if Clinton was part of the 'team of rivals',based on all available public accounts of her time as Secretary of State, Clinton remained very devoted to Obama's White House policy on Iran. Concerning Iran, Clinton said, 'it's a deeply vexing set of interconnected problems. But it, I think, deserves to be labeled as, among a lot of very hard problems, the hardest.'[118] Even though she had expressed skepticism about the final agreement, Clinton remained loyal to the idea of diplomacy with Iran. However, Clinton's personal approach to conducting foreign policy is known to be 'governed more by the uses of hard power.'[119]

In the American system of governance, the President has the luxury and the burden to 'choose his men'. However, there are multitude of reasons and factors considered before choosing, who gets what role. As Brent Scowcroft had once observed, 'choosing people is an instinct. It's an art, not a science.'[120] Clinton was not the only one that President Obama had perhaps appointed for political reasons. According to James Mann, the appointments of James Jones as President Obama's National Security Adviser, Dennis Blair as Director of National Intelligence and Robert Gates (to continue in his post) as Defence Secretary, were also for political reasons. These appointments were to make President Obama's decisions credible, in the military and intelligence communities. Having these high profile figures on board with him was also

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[116] G. Collins, 'Hillary's Next Move', *The New York Times*, 10 November 2012

[117] S. Glasser, 'Was Hillary Clinton a Good Secretary of State?', *Politico Magazine*, 8 December 2013, retrieved on 27 May 2014,

http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2013/12/was-hillary-clinton-a-good-secretary-of-state-john-kerry-2016-100766.html#.U4SR1PldUXs

[118] Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's Remarks at the 2012 Saban Forum, provided by the U.S. Department of State, 30 November 2012

[119] see D. Ross quoted by M. Landler and A. Chozick, 'Clinton Struggles to Define a Legacy in Progress', *The New York Times*, 17 April 2014

[120] B. Scowcroft, interviewed for The George H. W. Bush Oral History Project, Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, Miller Center, 2011, retrieved on 19 September 2014,

http://millercenter.org/president/bush/oralhistory/brent-scowcroft

necessary for President Obama to repel any accusations that could have labeled him a weak President when it came to national security.[121] However, in the case of the Obama administration, this thesis will argue that, even though the advisers were influential, it is necessary to not exaggerate their influence, because the President was actively involved in America's Iran policy making. Mann discusses, in great detail, the politics behind many of President Obama's appointments.[122] According to Mann, President Obama was the 'dominant influence' on the administration's foreign policy.[123]

Vali Nasr, Robert Gates, Hillary Clinton and Leon Panetta had all written on the Obama White House, and none of them spoke very kindly of President Obama's staffers,[124] Nasr's book also criticises the inner circle of the President, which formed 'the so – called Berlin Wall of staffers who shielded Obama from any opinion or idea they did not want him to consider'.[125] There are others who have made similar claims about the Obama White House. For example, Bob Woodward's book, '*Obama's Wars: The Inside Story*',[126] also gives insight into the inner workings of the Obama administration. According James Logan Jones Jr.,[127] quoted by Woodward, 'there are too many senior aides around the President. They are like water bugs. They flit around. Rahm [Rahm Emanuel, President Obama's then Chief of Staff] gets an idea at 10 a.m. and wants a briefing by 4 p.m., and I will say no'.[128] Woodward's discussion of the internal dynamics of the administration is especially helpful in the analysis done in this thesis, on the Executive Branch's struggle in making Iran policy decisions. Woodward's access to prominent members of the administration, military and intelligence community made it possible for him to furnish an 'inside story', as he calls it. The book also discusses in great detail the

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[121] Ibid, p.9

[122] J. Mann, *The Obamians*
[123] Ibid, p.xx

[124] See R. Gates, *Duty: Memoirs Of A Secretary At War*, New York: Knopf, 2014; H. Clinton, *Hard Choices*; L. Panetta, *Worthy Fights: A Memoir Of Leadership In War And Peace*, New York: Penguin Press, 2014

[125] V. Nasr, *The Dispensable Nation*, p.37

[126] B. Woodward, *Obama's Wars*

[127] 22nd National Security Adviser, In office from 20 January 2009 to 8 October 2010

[128] B. Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, p.138

politics behind the appointments and the discussions are especially useful in understanding the politics behind the decisions that had impacted the conduct of 'Obama's Wars'. Woodward's and Nasr's book also discusses how the Obama administration's decision-making was influenced by domestic political battles. Nasr argues that President Obama relied on the advice of his White House insiders most of whom were part of his election campaign, rather than his cabinet.[129] The Obamians did not belong to the sphere of influence exerted by the Clintons.[130]

As regard Iran, many of the high ranking officials in the administration had supported President Obama's pursuit of diplomacy. For example, Robert Michael Gates who had occupied a position very close to the President; Gates was President George W. Bush's Secretary of Defense and had served under President Obama until 1 July 2011. Gates was an avid supporter of diplomacy with Iran. Gates had also expressed his objections to war with that country. In Gates's words, 'even a military attack will only buy us time and send the programme deeper and more covert,'[131] Moreover, Gates had also warned that the United States lacked 'an effective long-range policy' to deal with Iran.[132] According to Gates, he and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had both resented the intrusiveness of the White House into military affairs. Even though he shared a cordial relationship with Hillary Clinton, Gates, in his own words, had a hard time navigating the Washington bureaucracy.[133] Also, Leon Edward Panetta who succeeded Gates as the 23rd Secretary of Defense, had also already served under President Obama, as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency from 2009 to 2011, he was also a trusted ally to President Obama, and even though Panetta disagreed with President Obama on several political issues, he had supported President Obama's diplomacy with Iran. Panetta had also maintained that 'all options were on the table'.[134] Even so, according to Panetta, 'we [the United States] have to have very clear intelligence that they [Iran] are in fact -- developing a nuclear weapon before military action

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[129] V. Nasr, *The Dispensable Nation*

[130] J. Mann, *The Obamians*, p.69

[131] D. Blair, ' Robert Gates: Bombing Iran Would Not Stop Nuclear Threat', *The Telegraph*, 01 May 2009

[132] D. Sanger and T. Shanker, 'Gates Says U.S. Lacks A Policy To Thwart Iran', *The New York Times*, 17 April 2010

[133] R. Gates, *Duty*

[134] L. Panetta, *Worthy Fights,* Penguin Press: New York, 2014

should be taken.'[135] However, Panetta was at times misrepresented by the media, as advocating war with Iran,[136] even though he was merely reiterating what was said by the rest of the Obama administration.[137]

Conclusion

'Our differences with Iran are very real. However, by refusing to engage Iran, we are perpetuating dangerous geopolitical unpredictabilities. Our refusal to recognise Iran's influence does not decrease its influence, but rather increases it. Engagement creates dialogue and opportunities to identify common interests, demonstrate America's strengths, as well as make clear disagreements. Diplomacy is an essential tool in world affairs, using it, where possible, to ratchet down the pressure of conflict and increase the leverage of strength.'

Chuck Hagel[138]

George Modelski, discusses five basic concepts in theory of foreign policy. They are '(1) policy-makers;[139] (2) aims of foreign policy, including interests and objectives; (3) principles of foreign

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[135] Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta Sits Down With M. Raddatz, *abc News*, 18 January 2013, retrieved on 29 March 2014,

http://abcnews.go.com/US/full-transcript-secretary-defense-leon-panetta-iran-afghanistan/story?id=18241211&singlePage=true

[136] M. Shwayder, 'Panetta: US May Have To Use Military Force Against Iran', *The Jerusalem Post*, 1 November 2013

[137] 'Panetta: Iran Not Building Bombs Yet', *USA Today News*, 8 January 2012, retrieved on 25 January 2015,

http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/story/2012-01-08/iran-nuclear-weapons/52451620/1

[138] C. Hagel and P. Kaminsky, *America: Our Next Chapter, Tough Questions, Straight Answers*, New York: Harper Collins Press, 2008, p.93

[139] The 'policy makers' considered are the individuals who were at the helm of decision-making. This helps in narrowing down the discussions on policy makers to those who were involved in the decision-making process; see D. Rohde and W. Strobel, 'The Micromanager in Chief', *The Atlantic Magazine*, 9 October 2014, retrieved on 14 October 2014,

policy; (4) power, including power-input and power-output; and (5) context of FP.'[140] This chapter has analysed various perspectives on the Obama administration's policy-making, the role of the Iran policy advisers of the Obama administration, aims of foreign policy and principles concerning the Obama administration foreign policy. The three case studies to be discussed in this thesis, in the following chapters, will further clarify and built on these concepts. The decision-makers transform the power-inputs into power-outputs. 'Inputs are the demands and desires of the community, which come from domestic environment while the outputs are the decisions taken by the actor or elite in response to the inputs.'[141] The two-stage decision-making process used in the Ph approach attempts to bridge the divide between cognitive and rational schools of FPA, in order to analyse decision-making in high-stake politics. The decision-makers come to the resolution as to 'What to do? When to do? How to do?'[142]

As argued in this chapter, there are many analysts who identify America's Iran policy decision-making under President Obama as pragmatic. Many also tend to identify the America's Middle East policy as 'realist-minimalist'. As the case studies in this thesis will point out, President Obama's Iran policy was influenced by pressure from allies,[143] Congress,[144] domestic politics and concerns regarding the stability of the Middle East.

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http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/10/obama-micromanager-syria-foreign-policy/381292/2/

[140] G. Modelski, 'A Theory of Foreign Policy', *Princeton Studies in World Politics*, No. 2, Pall Mall Press Ltd. :London and Dunmow, 1962, p.11

[141] S. Mushtaq and I. Choudhry, 'Conceptualization Of Foreign Policy An Analytical Analysis', *Berkeley Journal of Social Science,* Vol.3, Spring 2013, p.4
[142] Ibid
[143] D.Williams and M. Spetalnick, 'Israel's Nethanyahu To Press Obama For No Let-Up On Iran Pressure', *Reuters*, 30 September 2013

[144] T. Cullis, 'Don't Let Congress' Inaction Kill a Peaceful Iran Deal', *NIAC insight*, 25 April 2014, retrieved on 21 October 2014,

http://www.niacinsight.com/2014/04/25/dont-let-congress-inaction-kill-a-peaceful-iran-deal/

Chapter III: FPA and Ph Theory

According to Zeev Maoz, decision-making 'is the glue that connects basic explanatory factors at the systemic, national, and societal levels to national and international behaviour.'[1] In order to analyse decision-making, one has to understand the complex causal relations and the (multiple) causality. This thesis will engage in assessing how effective Ph theory is in enabling the analysis of the case studies, as well as highlight important aspects of those case studies which cannot be explained by Ph theory, and thereby pinpoint the theoretical shortcomings. 'The purpose of theory is to simplify reality by capturing its most important aspects, not to duplicate reality in its entirety.'[2] Therefore, the use of FPA and Ph Theory is crucial to this thesis, to give necessary framework for this research. This chapter will introduce FPA as an area of study. This chapter will also briefly discuss the stages in which FPA grew, as a subfield of IR. Thereafter, the focus is narrowed down to Ph Theory. This chapter will discuss the Ph approach in detail and demonstrate its usefulness in this thesis. Naturally, FPA and Ph Theory are not without their limitations. However, this chapter will argue that, despite all its deficiencies, Ph Theory is well suited for this study. A section of this chapter will be dedicated to demonstrating the reasons why Ph theory is better suited for this thesis, when compared to other FPA approaches.

Foreign Policy Analysis

According to Walter Carlsnaes,

> 'foreign policies consist of those actions which expressed in the form of explicitly stated goals, commitments and/or directives, and pursued by governmental representatives acting on behalf of their sovereign communities, are directed toward objectives,

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[1] Z. Maoz, 'National Choices And International Processes', *Cambridge Studies In International Relations: 8*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.37

[2] Z. Maoz, 'National Choices And International Processes', p.8

conditions and actors-both governmental and non-governmental-which they want to affect and which lie beyond their territorial legitimacy.'[3]

This thesis also uses this approach, as stated by Carlsnaes, in defining the scope of foreign policy. Foreign policy instruments are chosen by individual(s) who are entrusted with the responsibility to make that decision. FPA is devoted to understanding and analysing different aspects of foreign policy, such as: (1) Determining the problem/issue faced by foreign policy makers; (2) determining the political (external and internal) context of foreign policy; (3) determining the foreign policy objectives; (4) determining the foreign policy options; (5) determining how foreign policy decision-makers decide on a policy by (a) assessing the political cost of the options (b) assessing the cost-benefit of the policy options (c) assessing alternative policy options (d) assessing the short term and long term impact of the policy options; (6) enforcement of the decision made. FPA maintains an actor specific focus, 'based upon the argument that all that occurs between nations and across nations is grounded in human decision makers acting singly or in groups'.[4] This thesis will, in the three case studies, analyse the issues/problems encountered by the Obama administration, the variables considered by the decision-makers, as well as different pressures (for example, public opinion, pressures from European allies and pressures from the Obama administration's domestic opponents) faced by the decision-makers. The first two chapters of this thesis have already provided the historical background and context to the more detailed analysis of the Obama administration's decision-making to be done in the case studies. Using the Ph approach in the case studies will aid in distinguishing the factors that did impact the decision-making, from those that did not. As Mintz and Geva argued,

> ''the Poliheuristic decision-making theory highlights the cognitive mechanisms that mediate foreign policy choices and behavior. The theory incorporates the conditions surrounding foreign policy decisions as well as the cognitive processes themselves

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[3] W. Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, Beth A. Simmons, *Handbook of International Relations*, London: SAGE, 2002, p.335

[4] V. Hudson, "Foreign Policy Decision-Making: A Touchstone for International Relations Theory in the Twenty-first Century," In *Foreign Policy Decision-Making (Revisited),* (eds.), R. Snyder, H.. Bruck, and B.Sapin, New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2002, pp.1–20

(i.e.,the why and how of decision-making), thus addressing both contents and the processes of decisions.'[5]

FPA is a subfield of IR, which deals with the external and internal factors that influences or impacts foreign policy making. The case studies in this thesis will point out that the Obama administration's Iran policy decisions were influenced by domestic and international politics. Even during the very early days of FPA, James Rosenau had identified and drawn attention to the possibility that international and domestic politics were "linked" to each other.[6] In 1998, Putnam argued that, 'domestic politics and international relations are often somehow entangled, but our theories have not yet sorted out the puzzling tangle.'[7] According to Putnam, it is not possible to fathom the complicated process of international negotiations, if one is not able to comprehend what the negotiators are able to "sell" to their electorate and international partners.[8] The link between domestic politics and foreign policy decision-making is especially relevant to this thesis because, as indicated in the '*Introduction*' to this thesis, until Hassan Rouhani was elected as the President of Iran, the United States had made no commitment to diplomacy with Iran, because the Obama administration was more concerned with fighting domestic political battles, and appeasing America's international allies. Much has changed in the study of foreign policy, since Putnam came out with his article on '*Diplomacy and Domestic Politics*'. As Bueno de Mesquita and Smith argued, 'today, almost every important dependent variable in the international arena is explored through the lens of domestic politics'.[9]

FPA scholars oppose the idea that the state is a unitary rational actor.[10] FPA stresses the state level and individual level, as important focal points, to study the international system.[11] The need

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[5] A. Mintz and N. Geva, 'The Poliheuristic Theory Of Decision-Making', In *Decision Making On War And Peace: The Cognitive-rational Debate*, (eds.), N. Geva and A. Mintz, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1997, pp.81-82

[6] J. Rosenau, 'Toward The Study Of National-International Linkages', in *Linkage Politics: Essays On The Convergence Of National and International Systems*, New York: Free Press, 1969

[7] R. Putnam, 'Diplomacy And Domestic Politics: The Logic Of Two-Level Games', *International Organisation*, Vol.42, No.3, Summer 1988, p.427

[8] Ibid

[9] B. Bueno de Mesquita and A. Smith, 'Domestic Explanations Of International Relations', *Annual Review of Political Science,* Vol.15, 2012, p.162

[10] P. James and J. Oneal, 'The Influence Of Domestic And International Politics On The President's Use Of Force', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 35, No. 2, June 1991, pp.307-332

[11] C. Alden, A. Aran, *Foreign Policy Analysis: New Approaches*, p.2

to develop a foreign policy study centred on decision-making, laid the groundwork for the development of FPA theories. FPA scholarship began as a reaction to the way in which the state and its interactions were studied under realism. Within FPA, there is substantial body of literature that criticises the neorealist unitary rational choice models.[12] For the realists, the key aspects of foreign policy include national interest (in whichever way it is interpreted), power and security.[13] As per Waltz, 'a theory of foreign policy is a theory of why particular states make particular foreign policy moves at particular times.' [14] According to the realists, power and national interest will be the primary concern of the decision-maker when he is attempting to choose between foreign policy options.[15] However, with the fall of the Soviet Union, it seemed necessary to go beyond the 'system-level variables', in order to 'explain or predict system change', because variables such as the personality of the leaders, role of transnational groups, domestic politics, bureaucratic infighting and the economy were all relevant to understanding the collapse of the bipolar world.[16] As V. Hudson argued, 'with the fall of the Iron Curtain, the need for an "actor-specific" complement to mainstream IR theory became stark in its clarity'.[17]

FPA scholars concentrate on foreign policy process instead of foreign policy outcomes, based on the argument that 'closer scrutiny of the actors, their motivations, the structures of decision-making and the broader context within which foreign policy choices are formulated would provide greater analytical purchase.'[18] To C. Alden and A. Aran, the task of the FPA scholars is normative, 'aimed at improving foreign policy decision-making to enable states to achieve better outcomes and, in some instances, even to enhance the possibility of peaceful relations between states.'[19] In order to appreciate the progress made by FPA scholars, it is also necessary to see

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[12] H. Sprout and M. Sprout, *Man – Milieu Relationship Hypotheses in the Context of International Politics*, Princeton University Research Monograph, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956

[13] C. Alden, A. Aran, *Foreign Policy Analysis: New Approaches* , pp.3-4

[14] see in J. Fearon, 'Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy, And Theories Of International Relations'*, Annual Review of Political Science,* Vol.1, 1998, pp.295-296

[15] H. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948

[16] V. Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis: Classic and Contemporary Theory*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007, p. 32
[17] Ibid
[18] C. Alden, A. Aran, *Foreign Policy Analysis: New Approaches*, New York: Routledge, 2012, p.1

[19] Ibid, pp.1-2

how different FPA is from other popular approaches (namely, the neorealist unitary rational actor models) under IR.

The neorealist rational actor school of thought was undoubtedly the single most important approach in the study of foreign policy, because of its wide application. However, neo-realists are generally not involved in attempting to explain the specific foreign policy decisions of specific states.[20] Neo-realists are primarily concerned with expounding regularities in state behaviour stemming from their responses to structural pressures to maximise security under conditions of anarchy and resource scarcity.[21] There is an assumption that, overall, (rational) security maximising behaviour will characterise state behaviour.[22]

Given the inadequacies of system level analysis alone, two prominent approaches evolved in FPA: rational actor and cognitive models. The rational actor models were used in economics, before it was applied in the study of foreign policy decision-making. Nobel laureate Gary Becker was one of the first economists to widely use and develop the rational choice theory.[23] Rational actor model is integral to understanding foreign policy because it has highly developed theories for studying anarchy, security and international cooperation.[24] Also, rational choice theory is well suited for simplified assumptions, for example, where the goal of the decision-maker is utility maximisation, and before choosing a policy option the decision-maker will: (1) Determine the objectives of the foreign policy; (2) evaluate the cost–benefit of a given policy option; (3) assess the alternative policies possible to arrive at the said goal, and the advantages of a particular policy over another[25]; (4) estimate the short-term and long-term (predictable) impact of

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[20] A. Wivel, 'Explaining why state X made a certain move last Tuesday: the promise and limitations of realist foreign policy analysis', *Journal of International Relations and Development,* Vol.8, December 2005, pp.355–380

[21] J. Williams, comments provided for an earlier draft of this thesis, August 2015; K. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics,* MA: Addison Wesley, 1979

[22] J. Donnelly, *Realism And International Relations,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.7-8

[23] G. Becker, *The Economic Approach To Human Behavior*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976

[24] W. Carlnaes, T. Risse and B. Simmons, *Handbook of International Relations,* First Edition, London: SAGE, 2002

[25] See also D. Baldwin, 'Success and Failure in Foreign Policy', *Annual Review of Political Science,* Vol. 3, June 2000, p.167-182

the policy.[26] Also, the rational choice theory is based on the assumption that 'outcomes are the result of choices made by actors'.[27]

Given the deficiencies in approaching decision-making solely from the point of view of the rational choice theory, where decision-makers are utility maximisers, it was necessary to find innovative ways to study foreign policy decision-making. There are several important approaches that help in seeing beyond the utility maximisation principle. For example, in the study of the Cuban Missile Crisis, G. Allison and P. Zelikow point out that rational actor model alone could not explain the decision-making process in that case.[28] Therefore, Allison introduced two other models, in addition to the discussions on rational actor model, in his book, namely organisational process model and bureaucratic or governmental politics model.[29] According to Allison, these three models, rational actor model, organisational process model and bureaucratic politics model, will together help in better understanding the complexities of foreign policy decision-making process.[30] One of the most important (because of its influence on future research) contribution made to the literature on decision-making is by Allison and Zelikow.[31] Allison's work has been influential in academia and in policy circles.[32] According to Allison, there are three different 'conceptual lenses' through which events and non-events can be studied. Model I is the 'Rational Actor Model' (RAM). This model was already a prevalent approach employed in the study of social sciences, especially economics and international relations. This model by itself is not suitable for this thesis, because of the influence domestic politics had on the Obama administration's Iran policy decision-making, and the policy choices in this thesis cannot be explained only in terms of the utility maximisation principle. Model II is Organisational Behaviour and Model III is Governmental Politics, they are useful in providing a different 'conceptual lense' in understanding decision-making in high stakes politics where

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[26] B. de Mesquita, 'War and Rationality' (Part I. Perspectives On Interstate And Civil Strife), In *Handbook Of War Studies III: The Intrastate Dimension*, (ed.) M. Midlarsky, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2009, p.8

[27] S. Quackenbush, 'The Rationality Of Rational Choice Theory', *International Interactions*, Vol. 30, 2004, p.101

[28] G. Allison and P. Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, New York: Longman, 1999

[29] Ibid

[30] Ibid

[31] Ibid

[32] C. Schwenk, *The Essence of Strategic Decision Making*, New York: Lexington Books, 1988, p.11

organisational behaviour and/or the politics of bargaining could influence the decision-making process. However, there are also many who have criticised Allison's approach.[33]

Model II: the Organisational Behaviour Model or Organisational Process Model: according to Allison and Zelikow, governmental behaviour can be understood as 'outputs of large organisations functioning according to standard patterns of behaviour'.[34] This model presupposes that decision-makers have well established goals. However the choices are limited because of the constraints placed by different organisations. This model suggests that decision-makers are concerned with satisficing principle, rather than optimising. In the case of American foreign policy, there are several governmental organisations playing their part in implementing a foreign policy decision. For example, the Treasury Department deals with the sanctions policy, but at the same time, the State Department and the White House also have significant part in directing the course of America's sanctions policy. The behaviour of these organisations in dealing with any issue is 'influenced by existing organisational capabilities and procedures'.[35] The case studies in this thesis will point out how organisational behaviour did not impact President Obama's Iran policy decision-making. This is primarily because of the White House centred nature of President Obama's foreign policy making style. Even if organisational behaviour had influenced any of the cases, that could have been addressed within the framework of Ph theory, by analysing the organisational behaviour as a variable within the political dimension when casting out options in the first stage of decision-making,[36] and such an inclusion if it were necessary, could have only aided in developing the descriptive quality of the analysis.[37] Allison found his three models useful in relation to the Cuban Missile Crisis – the closest the world has come to nuclear war and with the existence of the United States potentially in danger; this thesis recognises the importance of organisational behaviour model, but as pointed out in the following chapters,

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[33] J. Bendor and T. Hammond, 'Rethinking Allison's Models', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 86, No.2, June 1992, pp.301-322

[34] G. Allison and P. Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, p.143

[35] Ibid, p.144

[36] C. Beckerman-Boys, *British Foreign Policy Decision-making Towards Palestine During The Mandate (1917-1948): A Poliheuristic Perspective*, p.74-75

[37] Ibid, p.71

Allison's models alone cannot explain why the Obama administration rejected certain alternatives and why it decided to choose an option as its final choice.

Model III: The Governmental Politics Model or Bureaucratic Politics Model: The decision-makers are faced with various policy options. They have to survive the political bargaining process and arrive at a final choice. Ideally, the decision-makers should make every effort to identify the purported objectives of the foreign policy, the short term goals to be achieved by the policy and the long term interest of the nation state. Understanding governmental politics in decision making is useful in identifying the human element in foreign policy making. Under this model, governmental behaviour is understood as 'results of bargaining games'.[38] The players 'act in terms of no consistent set of strategic objectives but rather according to various conceptions of national, organisational, and personal goals; player who make government decisions not by a single, rational choice but by the pulling and hauling that is politics'.[39] This model advocates that decision-making is a consequence of political process. The bureaucratic infighting in a government can also dictate the course of decision-making. According to Allison and Zelikow, to understand decisions and decision-making, it is necessary to study the players and the politics they play.[40] This model is best illustrated by Allison and Zelikow in their reference to Richard Neustadt's work,[41] reflecting his experience as an actor playing politics in governmental decision-making. The key aspects in governmental politics model include:

> (1) 'Separated Institutions Sharing Power (each actor of each of the governmental institution has his/her own agenda when involved in the decision-making process); (2) The Power to Persuade (even the President has to bargain with other actors involved in decision-making); (3) Bargaining According to the Processes (bargaining is dictated by the pressures of the system); (4) Power Equals Impact on Outcome (the President's power is determined by his ability to bargain and get what he desires. In other words,

[38] G. Allison and P. Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, p.255

[39] Ibid

[40] Ibid, p.257

[41] R. Neustadt, '*Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*, Fifth Edition, New York: Free Press, 1990

even the President's power depends on his impact on the outcome); (5) Intranational and International Relations'[42] (domestic and international participants influence decision-making)

The President may indulge in governmental politics and the bargaining process, simply for the sake of appeasement. This consultation could also be for building the credibility of a decision and the institutions that are purported to be involved in decision-making.[43] The merit of a decision is often assessed by the merit of the process which produced it. Therefore, it is not unusual for the decision-makers to amass information, just to make it appear that due process have been followed in making the decision.[44] FPA is certainly not a hard science, and there is no foolproof means to study 'human beings, acting individually or in collectiveness'.[45] However, governmental politics was not a variable that mattered in the decision-making considered in this thesis.

How does one determine if the leader (President Obama in this case) or bureaucrats or any other factor should be an integral part of a study on decision-making? The system of governance in a country is important in determining the role played by different individuals, groups and institutions in shaping the foreign policy. In the case of the United States, different Presidents have had different style of governance.[46] Even so, the President of the United States always maintains an overriding authority over different branches of the government. However, the tension between the various branches of the government and the lack of trust amongst government agencies complicates the decision-making process itself. In the case of President Obama, unlike during the Bush era, bureaucratic infighting did not seem to have impacted the decision-making. However, the rift between the Congress and the Executive Branch had reached

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[42] G. Allison and P. Zelikow 1999, pp.258-263

[43] J. Meyer and B. Rowan, 'Institutional Organisations: Formal Structure As Myth And Ceremony', *American Journal of Sociology,* 83, 1977, p.340-363; J. Meyer and R. Scott, *Organisational Environments: Ritual and Rationality*, Beverly Hills: Sage, 1983

[44] J. Pfeffer, *Managing With Power*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1992, pp.247-265

[45] V. Hudson and C. Vore, 'Foreign Policy Analysis Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow', *Mershon International Studies Review,* Vol. 39, 1995, p.210

[46] M. Nelson, 'Person and Office: Presidents, the Presidency, and Foreign Policy', In *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy.* (ed.), J. McCormick, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, p. 179-188

unprecedented levels during the Obama presidency.[47] Even so, President Obama[48] was the single most important player in determining the course of American foreign policy. In order to determine the involvement of the leader or bureaucracies in decision-making, it matters how interested a President is, in making foreign policy decisions. President Obama came into office with a commitment to change the international relations of the United States.[49] President Obama had maintained a cabinet with several members who were much more experienced than himself. However, some of his campaign supporters, even though they were young and inexperienced in the field of foreign policy decision-making, were made part of the administration, as advisers to the President. Thus, the President had surrounded himself with persons who were professionally more experienced, and personally closed to him. As many have argued, 'Obama has kept the conceptualization, articulation, and sometimes even implementation of his foreign policy in his own hands. Intelligent, self-confident, ambitious, and aloof, he is more directly responsible for his record than most of his predecessors have been.'[50] President Obama was actively involved in decision-making, and had hardly ever delegated important foreign policy decisions to others,[51] and the Iran policy decision-making during the Obama presidency was not especially impacted by the politics of bargaining, as evidence point out no option was eliminated from the choice set, due to bureaucratic politics, during the first stage of decision-making in the case studies considered in this thesis..

Amos Perlmutter, in his criticism of revisionist and bureaucratic 'political orientations', had argued that, political conflict is essentially the 'struggle within the elite circle for the ''domination of the political center and the center of the center- the presidency and its most coveted power: the power over foreign affairs'''. Therefore, the political conflict concerning

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[47] D. Rohde, 'Newest victim of congressional wrecking ball: Iran policy', *Reuters*, 15 January 2014, retrieved on 12 September 2014,

http://blogs.reuters.com/david-rohde/2014/01/15/newest-victim-of-the-congressional-wrecking-ball-iran-policy/

[48] and the Obamians had an important advisory role

[49] J. McCormick, *Cengage Advantage: American Foreign Policy and Process,* Sixth Edition, Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2014, p.237

[50] M. Indyk, K. Lieberthal, and M. O'Hanlon, 'Scoring Obama's Foreign Policy: A Progressive Pragmatist Tries to Bend History', *Foreign Affairs Magazine*, May/ June 2012

[51] J. Mann, *The Obamians*

foreign policy is 'a central institutional–constitutional conflict'. Political conflict and foreign policy decisions cannot be explained simply in terms of bureaucratic politics.[52]

Behavioral theories of rational choice such as Herbert Simon's 'bounded rationality' 'make modest and realistic demands on the knowledge and computational abilities of the human agents, but they also fail to predict that those agents will equate costs and returns at the margin.'[53] Therefore, decision-makers are concerned with what Simon refers to as, 'bounded rationality'. In other words, decision-makers decide rationally, in as much as their limited information and other restrictions permit them. Simon's work is based on his experience as an economist. For Simon, procedural rationality is relevant in circumstances in which

> 'the "real world" out there cannot be equated with the world as perceived and calculated by the economic agent. Procedural rationality is the rationality of a person for whom computation is the scarce resource-whose ability to adapt successfully to the situations in which he finds himself is determined by the efficiency of his decision-making and problem solving processes.'[54]

According to Simon, when the study[55] moves toward circumstances that demand increased cognitive complexity, the study will have to take into account the ability of actors to deal with the complex situation.[56] Therefore the procedural aspects of rationality become crucial. Simon's bounded rationality is also reflected in the Ph approach, because Ph theory also takes into account the limitations and different variables considered by the decision-makers, as well as

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[52] A. Perlmutter, 'The Presidential Political Center and Foreign Policy: a Critique of the Revisionist and Bureaucratic –Political Orientations,' *World Politics*, Vol. 27, Issue 01, October 1974, p.89

[53] H. Simon, 'Rational Decision-Making In Business Organizations', Nobel Memorial Lecture, 8 December 1978, retrieved on 05 February 2015,

http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/economic-sciences/laureates/1978/simon-lecture.pdf

[54] H. Simon, 'On How To Decide What To Do', *The Bell Journal of Economics*, Vol. 9, No.2, Autumn, 1978, p.504

[55] Simon was referring to economics as a field of study, but the principle is applicable to all social sciences.

[56] H. Simon, 'Rationality As Process And As A Product Of Thought', *The American Economic Review*, Vol.68, No.2, Papers and Proceedings of the Ninetieth Annual Meeting of the American Economic Association, May, 1978, p.9

adopt the satisfying principle in the first stage of decision-making which is also nonholistic, additionally the Ph approach allows for rational choice, in the second stage of decision-making.

Inspired by Simon's theory of "boundedly rational agents", John Steinbruner's cybernetic processing approach was another major contribution to the study of decision-making, which considers the decision-maker to be a satisficer rather than a maximiser. According to Steinbruner, there are three paradigms of decision-making (1) rational, (2) cybernetic and (3) cognitive. Steinbruner argues that, it is necessary to integrate the cybernetic and cognitive paradigms, to understand the different variables that impact rational decision-making.[57] Cybernetic theory of decision is 'organised around the notions of short-cycle information feedback and the elimination of uncertainty.'[58] Steinbruner's theory has the same scope as the rational choice approach, but they thoroughly differ in 'operating principles'.[59] In Robert Cutler's words,

> 'the cybernetic paradigm is simple and conservative, not necessarily quiescent but animated by a criterion of "survival" (in the internal context of the decision making mechanism). According to the cybernetic paradigm, the decision maker's primary concern is to avoid being overwhelmed by the variety of the environment.'[60]

The goal of cybernetic theory of decision is not to provide a scientific analysis of decision-making, but a systematic study of decision-making. Cybernetic models assume a fixed state of preference, as opposed to preferences evolving in the course of time until a decision is arrived at, and they involve single stage decision-making process, where the decision-maker is concerned only about satisficing. Ph theory accommodates the satisficing principle in the first stage, and the second stage of decision-making is based on the rational choice principle, and therefore has applicability in cases comprising of unexceptional or routine foreign policy decisions, as

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[57] J. Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory Of Decision: New Dimensions Of Political Analysis*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974

[58] Ibid, p.51

[59] J. Snyder, 'Rationality At The Brink: The Role Of Cognitive Processes In Failures Of Deterrence', *The Rand Paper Series,* Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, October 1976

[60] R. Cutler, 'Decision Making and International Relations: The Cybernetic Theory Reconsidered', *Michigan Journal of Political Science*, Vol.1, No.2, Fall 1981, p.58

opposed to cybernetic models which are useful for analysing cases involving crisis circumstance.[61] Cybernetic theory argues that decision-makers' face cognitive limitations. The decision-makers will not search for information, once they have found an option that satisfied them. This option does not have to be optimal, but merely 'satisficing' a minimum threshold.[62] Ostrom and Job, in their study, '*The President and the Political Use of Force*', explain presidential decision-making, by characterising the president 'as a cybernetic human decision maker facing limitations.'[63] According to David Brule, Ph theory 'subsumes' cybernetic theory, because it is able to offer process validity and outcome validity.[64] According to Brule, given the fact that noncompensatory principle is disregarded under the cybernetic approach, the Ph approach allows for excess empirical content, compared to cybernetic theory, 'in the form of "novel facts"', by accommodating the noncompensatory decision-making principle.[65] Ph theory is useful for this thesis because, unlike the cybernetic approach which depends on a single stage decision-making process relying only on the satisficing principle with a fixed decision matrix, the Ph approach considers multiple dimensions and allows for the noncompensatory principle of decision-making.

One of the most influential cognitive models of decision-making which was aimed at producing a psychologically precise analysis of decision-making under situations of risk and danger is prospective theory.[66] Prospect theory argues against human rationality. That is, according to prospect theory, human beings do not always make a decision 'rationally' because 'humans evaluate the utility of gains differently than losses.'[67] Prospect theory has its roots in behavioural economics, and was first introduced in 1979 by Nobel Memorial Prize winner Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky. Under Prospect theory, decision processes in two phases. First phase being 'editing' and the second phase being 'evaluation'. In the first stage the decision outcomes are

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[61] J. Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory Of Decision: New Dimensions Of Political Analysis.*

[62] S. Redd and A. Mintz, 'Policy Perspective On National Security And Foreign Policy Decision Making', p.14

[63] C. Ostrom and B. Job, 'The President And the Political Use Of Force', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 80, Issue 02, June 1986, pp.541-566

[64] D. Brule, 'The Poliheuristic Research Program: An Assessment and Suggestions For Further Progress, p.267

[65] Ibid

[66] N. Barberis, 'Thirty Years of Prospect Theory in Economics: A Review and Assessment', *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 27, No. 1, Winter 2013, pp.173–196

[67] D. Beach, *Analysing Foreign Policy,* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p.121

'ordered' based on a certain heuristic. According to Kahneman and Tversky, 'the editing phase consists of a preliminary analysis of the offered prospects, which often yields a simpler representation of these prospects. In the second phase, the edited prospects are evaluated and the prospect of highest value is chosen.'[68] Prospect theory has evolved significantly since 1979. For instance, in 1992 Tversky and Kahneman developed a version of prospect theory, which they called 'cumulative prospect theory'; the refinement made to prospect theory is that, 'cumulative probabilities are transformed, rather than the probabilities itself', the decision-maker would be 'somewhat risk averse but would not pay attention to outcomes other than the worst and the best'.[69] Prospect theory is applicable to circumstances of uncertainty and risk,[70] because it does not assume any singular dimension or aspect as consistently important to decision-making all the way through case studies, but the state of risk and likelihood of danger or loss furnishes cognitive 'boundaries' for the researcher. Therefore prospect theory is not suitable for analysing routine foreign policy decisions, as is also required in this thesis.

Alex Mintz's Ph Theory is aimed at bridging the divide between cognitive and rational choice models; as discussed above, Ph theory incorporates various elements from both those paradigms, such as the descriptiveness seen in the cognitive approaches, as well as utility maximising principle and empirical predictability seen in the rational choice approach.[71] According to Alex Mintz, the question to be asked, concerning the cognitive-rational debate, is not which model is 'best'. Mintz argues that the real question should be: '(1) under what conditions do decisionmakers use one decision strategy or another? (2) Under what conditions do they switch strategies during the decision process?'[72] In the Ph approach, foreign policy decisions are viewed in two-stages; the first stage eliminates alternatives from the choice set.[73] In the second sage, policy options are chosen based on the rational choice principle, to maximise utility. This section

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[68] D. Kahneman and A. Tversky, 'Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision Under Risk', *Econometrica*, Vol.47, No.2, p.274

[69] J. Baron, *Thinking and Deciding*, Fourth Edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p.273

[70] A. Tversky and D. Kahneman, 'Advances In Prospect Theory: Cumulative Representation Of Uncertainty', *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*, Vol. 5, Issue 4, October 1993, pp.297-323

[71] A. Mintz, In *Decision Making On War And Peace: The Cognitive-rational Debate*, (eds.), N. Geva and A. Mintz, p.5

[72] Ibid
[73] political dimension in general

has located FPA and Ph theory within the field of foreign policy study, by pointing out how some of the theoretical models that came before Ph theory had influenced the Ph approach. The next section will strive to locate Ph theory within the field of FPA, by discussing the "three waves of FPA", and pointing out how the developments in FPA lead to Alex Mintz's Ph theory.

The foundations of FPA

In the United States, foreign policy study in academia is rooted in the field of public policy.[74] Foreign policy analysis during the early days, prior to the First World War, was a difficult venture, due to the privileged position of the field, because the secrecy surrounding the conduct of the affairs of the state had restricted the analyst's access to information regarding foreign policy decisions. According to Bernard Cohen, 'foreign policy is ''more important'' than other policy areas because it concerns national interests, rather than special interests, and more fundamental values.'[75] This meant that decision-makers and political elites wanted foreign policy to be given special considerations, 'that is, beyond democratic control and public scrutiny'.[76] However, after the First World War attempts were made by the ruling elites to simplify statecraft and remove unwarranted secrecy concerning foreign policy. Therefore, by the time FPA evolved as field of study, information concerning foreign policy was more easily accessible when compared to earlier times.

According to Valerie Hudson, the classic FPA writings are from 1954-1993. Within that period is the first generation (1954-1973) and the second generation (1974-1993) of FPA scholarship.[77] The first generation had developed the concepts, methods and methodology under FPA.[78] The second-generation scholarship was developments made on the works of the first-generation scholars. FPA evolved as a theoretical study, after the Second World War. The theoretical

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[74] W. Carlsnaes, In *Handbook of Public Policy*, (eds.) B. G. Peters and J. Pierre, London: SAGE, 2006, p.341

[75] B. Cohen, 'Foreign Policy', In *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, (ed.), D. Sills, New York: Macmillan & Free Press,1968, p. 530

[76] W. Carlsnaes in *Handbook of Public Policy*, (eds.), B.G. Peters and J. Pierre, p.341

[77] V. Hudson, 'Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations', p.18

[78] Ibid

foundations of FPA can be traced back to the writings in the 1950s and 60s;[79] the prominent scholars at the time included James Rosenau, Richard Snyder, H.W.Bruck, Burton Sapin, Harold and Margaret Sprout.[80] Even though FPA has advanced, as an area of study, the contributions of these scholars still form the basis of FPA theory.

Richard Snyder, H.W. Bruck and Burton Sapin (hereinafter referred to as 'Snyder et al.') were the first FPA scholars to focus on decision-making, to study foreign policy. To Snyder et al., the state is 'the fundamental level of analysis',[81] and they did not consider the state as a 'metaphysical abstraction'.[82] According to them, 'state action is the action taken by those acting in the name of the state'.[83] Snyder argued that three sets of factors (situational factors, organisational practices, and individual factors) act together. All three factors, together, determine the outcomes of foreign policy.[84] However, Snyder did not clarify how these three factors interact with each other.[85] To Snyder and his colleagues, the study of decision-making was more central to FPA than the outcomes of the policy.[86] Snyder's approach suggests that, those involved in decision making 'are influenced by spheres of competence, motivations, and constraints associated with communication and information-processing.'[87]

FPA also studies the structure of groups that make foreign policy. The theories on small group behaviour can be traced back to the work of social-psychologists.[88] Foreign policy decision-

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[79] Ibid

[80] Ibid

[81] R. Snyder, H. Bruck, and B. Sapin, 'Decision Making as an Approach to the Study of International Politics', *Foreign Policy Analysis Project Series*, No. 3, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954, p.53

[82] See also the new chapters by V. Hudson, D. H. Chollet and J. Goldgeier in R. Snyder, H.W. Bruck, B. Sapin, *Foreign Policy Decision Making, Revisited*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002

[83] R. Snyder, H. Bruck and B. Sapin, (eds.), *Foreign Policy Decision Making: An approach to the study of international politics,* New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962, p.65

[84] R. Snyder, H. Bruck and B. Sapin, (eds.), *Foreign Policy Decision–Making* , New York: Free Press, 1963

[85] J. Robinson and R. Snyder, 'Decision –Making in International Politics,' In *International Behaviour*, (ed). K. Herbert, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965

[86] R. Snyder, H. Bruck and B. Sapin, (eds.), *Foreign Policy Decision Making: An approach to the study of international politics,* p.60-74

[87] R. Golembiewski, W. Welsh and W. Crotty, *A Methodological Primer For Political Scientists*, Chicago: Rand McNally, 1969, p.341

[88] V. Hudson, 'Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations', p.19

making by small groups and large organisations were studied by Snyder et al.,[89] and significant work on small group dynamics was done by Irving Janis, in his seminal study, *'Victims of Groupthink'*.[90] According to Janis, group decision-making can negatively impact decision-making.[91] For example, the need for group consensus could compromise the quality of the decision made.[92] It was also the first time that such an approach, studying the impact of group-thinking on decision-making, was used to study foreign policy. The impact of organisational process on decision-making was already studied in economics, before it was introduced in FPA.[93] Organisations and bureaucracies often have their own agenda to pursue. Therefore, decision-making is often negatively influenced by the struggle for survival, between different organisations and bureaucracies. Larger organisations will also have operating procedures, which could negatively impact the decision-making process, by limiting the flexibility and creativity exhibited by that organisation, when arriving at a decision. The most significant work on this approach was done by Graham Allison.[94] *'Victims of Groupthink'*, was Irving Janis's work on the psychological factors influencing foreign policy decision-making. Irving Janis defined groupthink as, 'a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative course of action.'[95] According to Janis, foreign policy events can be, to a great extent, attributed to the happening of a specific and detrimental phenomenon in the decision-making circle, called 'groupthink'.[96] Members of the group are sensitive to the group dynamics. Members strive to achieve unanimity on the issues that the group has to deal with. Therefore groupthink could negatively influence decision-making. For example,

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[89] Ibid

[90] I. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign-Policy Decisions and Fiascoes*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1982

[91] Ibid
[92] Ibid
[93] M. Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, translated by A. Henderson, Talcott Parsons. New York: Free Press, 1947

[94] G. Allison, 'Conceptual Models And The Cuban Missile Crisis: Rational Policy, Organisational Process, and Bureaucratic Politics', *The Rand Corporation*, August 1968

[95] I. Janis, *Groupthink*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982, p.9

[96] I. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign Policy Decisions and Fiascoes,* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972

groupthink results in 'a distorted view of reality, excessive optimism producing hasty and reckless policies, and a neglect of ethical issues.'[97] The theory was originally introduced as a framework to study 'decision failures and policy fiascoes'. By 1982, Janis argued that groupthink increased the potential for negative influences on decision-making, which could contribute to disastrous policies and policy outcomes. Meaning, groupthink often leads to poor policy outcomes. According to Irving Janis, group decision making has several shortcomings: (1) mindless conformity, (2) lack of vigilance, (3) the predisposition toward excessive risk taking, (3) 'group madness'.[98] The groupthink approach is not suitable for this thesis because the case studies considered here are not dealing with failed policies per se. Moreover, decision-making in this thesis was primarily White House centered, with the President actively involved in determining the policy choices; even though the President had inputs from his advisers, it is by no means the same as groupthink.

This thesis is certainly indebted to the approach propounded by Snyder and his colleagues. However, this thesis will make some reference to the policy outcomes which impacted the Obama administration's decisions, as and when it is deemed essential to better explain, or even speculate, the reasons for some of the decisions of the United States. For example, in order to understand 'why did the Congress choose more sanctions?', it may be necessary to refer to the poor results produced by diplomacy, which in turn had galvanised the Congress's support to use sanctions as a means to further coerce the Iranian government. Consequently, any reference to the outcomes of a specific policy is made, only if those outcomes had an impact on the final policy choice in another decision.

James Rosenau also changed the course of foreign policy study by advocating for the advancement of a 'general testable theory' to study foreign policy. It was Rosenau who encouraged 'the development of middle–range theory- theory that mediated between grand principles and the complexity of reality.'[99] 'For Rosenau, explanations of foreign policy needed to be multilevel and multicausal, synthesizing information from a variety of social science

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[97] P. Hart, 'Irving L. Janis' Victims Of Groupthink', *Political Psychology*, Vol. 12, No. 2, June 1991, p.247

[98] I. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink*

[99] S. Smith, A. Hadfield, T. Dunne, *Foreign policy :Theories, Actors, Cases* , p.16

knowledge systems'.[100] Rosenau intended to develop the actor-specific theory, at the same time he also accentuated the importance of integrating knowledge at multi-levels, from individual decision-makers to the international system.[101]

Another sub-field that was developed during the 1960s was Comparative Foreign Policy (CFP). This field has its foundations in the work by James Rosenau. According to Valerie Hudson, this subfield was developed 'to build a cross-national and multilevel theory of foreign policy and subject that theory to rigorous aggregate empirical testing'.[102] Data was collected on different factors to identify how independent variables were related to each other. Due to the secrecy surrounding foreign policy decision-making it was problematic for analysts to study contemporary events, because a substantial portion of the government documents concerning foreign policy events and decisions remained classified for decades. Therefore analysts used CFP in studying historical cases, and then generalised their findings to apply to more contemporary issues.[103] CFP was also accused of replacing 'endless organising typologies for theory construction'.[104] According to Caparaso et al., 'typologies can be an important step for theory construction provided the classification generates surplus information.'[105] Caparaso et al., also argue that categorisation of variables which have similar characteristics and interconnection could lead to 'new ideas'.[106] 'But if a classification only generates information about its defining characteristics, then its usefulness is limited to organizing or "pigeon-holing" information not theory building.'[107] However, CFP has 'numerous typologies' only meeting the purpose of pigeon-holing.[108] The goal under CFP was to arrive at a grand unified theory, to study all countries and all time periods. It was under CFP that computer based aids were introduced for

[100] V. Hudson and C. Vore, 'Foreign Policy Analysis Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow', *Mershon International Studies Review,* Vol. 39, 1995, p.213

[101] J. Rosenau, 'Pre-theories and Theories of Foreign Policy', in edited by R. Farrell, *Approaches to Comparative and International Politics,* Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1966, p.27-92

[102] V. Hudson, 'Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations', p.21

[103] Ibid
[104] J. Caporaso, C. Hermann, Kegley, Jr., J. Rosenau and D. Zinnes, 'The Comparative Study Of Foreign Policy: Perspectives On The Future', *Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association*, 27th, Anaheim, CA, March 25-29, 1986, p.12
[105] Ibid
[106] Ibid
[107] Ibid
[108] Ibid

the study (by analysts and policy-makers) of foreign policy decision-making. However, CFP's aspirations to seek a grand theory, and its adherence to 'rigorous aggregate empirical testing'[109] became unrealistic, due to the challenges faced by analysts looking for unattainable amount of data. As a consequence, CFP eschewed 'aggregate empirical testing' and the pursuit of grand theory, and moved towards middle range theory.

Harold and Margaret Sprout reoriented the focus of FPA to contextualising foreign policy. To them, it is necessary to understand 'foreign policy undertakings', such as 'strategies, decisions and intentions'.[110] According to the Sprouts, the 'psycho-milieu' of the decision- makers, both individually and as a group, has to be studied.[111] 'The psycho-milieu is the international and operational environment or context as it is perceived and interpreted by these decision-makers.'[112] The Sprouts argued that, the lack of harmony between perception and reality can lead to a situation where the decision-maker has to make unsatisfactory policy choices.[113] Another important aspect of the theory proposed by the Sprouts was the manner in which they differentiated FPA from (what was later called) actor-general theory.[114]

The above-mentioned scholarship still remains the core of FPA. However, FPA as a field of study had substantial progress to make, in theory and in methodology. The foundations of FPA are rich enough to allow for further development of this field. As Valerie Hudson noted, 'if FPA did not exist, it would have to be invented. It is the longhand version of social science as applied to IR phenomena.'[115]

The third generation (1993-present) of FPA came with the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. This period saw significant progress in FPA theory and methodology. For

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[109] V. Hudson, 'Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations', p.21

[110] Ibid p.17; H. Sprout and M. Sprout, *Man – Milieu Relationship Hypotheses in the Context of International Politics*

[111] H. Sprout and M. Sprout, *Man – Milieu Relationship Hypotheses in the Context of International Politics*

[112] V. Hudson, 'Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations', p.17

[113] Ibid, p. 16

[114] Referred to as such by V. Hudson, Ibid, see also H. Sprout and M. Sprout, *Man – Milieu Relationship Hypotheses in the Context of International Politics*, p.118

[115] V. Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, p.194

example, computational models also became an important part of the researcher's tool in this era. The third generation has also went beyond the study of group decision-making (group decision-making was the core of the research, during the first two generations), and has made substantial progress in studying the relevance of cognitive factors involved in decision-making. Several new approaches, models and theories were developed, to improve FPA's applicability in studying foreign policy. One important theory developed during this era (the third generation of FPA) is Alext Mintz's Ph theory. The Ph approach is used in this thesis, and is discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Poliheuristic Theory

The term poliheuristic is a combination of the roots 'poly' meaning 'many' and 'heuristic' meaning 'shortcuts'.[116] Alex Mintz introduced Ph theory, in the third generation FPA literature, to 'bridge the gap between cognitive and rational schools in decision-making', so as to accede to the descriptiveness of the cognitive approach and make accurate empirical predictions as is usually expected of models having roots in rational choice theory,[117] also by addressing the process validity and outcome validity of decision-making.[118] The birth of the Ph approach can be traced back to (1993-1995) Alex Mintz's research work which introduced the noncompensatory principle, in his study of the 'cognitive algebra' of decision-makers.[119] According to Mintz,

> 'rather than choosing an alternative that maximizes utility on the basis of a holistic comparison process as suggested by the expected utility model, or selecting an alternative that "satisfices" a certain criterion as predicted by the cybernetic model, the noncompensatory theory suggests that decisions on the use of force are often made based

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[116] S. Redd and A. Mintz, 'Policy Perspective On National Security And Foreign Policy Decision Making', *Policy Studies Journal*, Vol. 41, Issue Supplement S1, 2013, p.17

[117] S.Parsons, *Rational Choice and Politics*, London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005
[118] S. Redd, D. Brule and A. Mintz, 'Poliheuristic Theory And Foreign Policy Analysis', In *The International Studies Encyclopedia*, (ed.), R. Denemark, Blackwell Reference Online, 2010

[119] A. Mintz, 'The Decision To Attack Iraq: A Noncompensatory Theory Of Decision Making', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 37, No. 4, December 1993, pp. 595-618; A. Mintz, 'The Noncompensatory Principle Of Coalition Formation', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, Vol. 7, Issue 3, 1995, pp.335-349

on the rejection of undesirable alternatives on the basis of one, or at most a few, criteria.'[120]

Mintz's approach also accommodated certain features from the then prevalent approaches of the rational actor model (utility principle) and the cybernetic approach (satisficing principle). Under Ph theory, decision-making process is characterised as: '(1) nonholistic, (2) dimension-based, (3) noncompensatory, (4) satisficing, and (5) order-sensitive.'[121] The Ph approach sees the actual decision-making to be based on heuristics. According to Sniderman, Brody, and Tedlock, political judgements are generally made systematically. However, there are differences in the manner in which judgements are made by different people. They suggested that people will base their judgements on heuristics.[122] Heuristic models (non-holistic) allow the decision-maker to use 'cognitive shortcuts' to arrive at the final policy choice. Therefore the non-holistic approach makes decision-making simpler for the actor, cognitively. Also, under the heuristic approach, decision-makers decide by rejecting or accepting options on the basis of one or few dimensions. Ph theory approaches decision-making[123] as a two-state process. The decision-makers employ 'a

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[120] A. Mintz, 'The Decision To Attack Iraq: A Noncompensatory Theory Of Decision Making', In *Necessary Conditions: Theory, Methodology, and Applications*, (eds.) G. Goertz, and H. Starr, Boston: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003, p.277

[121] A. Mintz and N. Geva, 'The Poliheuristic Theory Of Foreign Policy Decisionmaking', In *Decisionmaking On War And Peace: The Cognitive-Rational Debate*, (eds),. N. Geva and A. Mintz, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997, p.84

[122] P. Sniderman, R. Brody, and P. Tedlock, *Reasoning And Choice: Explorations In Political Psychology*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.14-30

[123] A. Mintz and K. DeRouen, *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p.15; G. Hastedt, *Encyclopaedia Of American Foreign Policy*, New York: Facts on File, 2004, P.132; D. Cooper, T. Connolly and T. Kugler, 'Lay Personality Theories In Interactive Decisions: Strongly Held, Weakly Supported', *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 2014; According to Alex Mintz and Karl DeRouen Jr, decisions can be (1) *Single decision* (foreign policy decisions which only involve one-shot. According to Glenn Hastedt, the influence of the public is greater when the decision to be made is pertaining to security or economic issues. Also, if the issue has been on the political agenda for a long time, then the public tend to be greatly involved (perhaps because of awareness and media pressure). Hastedt also argues that, single decisions or 'one-shot' foreign policy decisions are not usually in the political agenda for a long time and therefore are less likely to be influenced by domestic factors. Therefore the leadership has more power and is able to resist pressure groups and public, because they do not have sufficient time to organise or resist the decision); *(2) Strategic, interactive decisions* (at least two actors are involved. One person forms his strategy based on his anticipation of the other person's strategy. Information pertaining to the other person's personality seems to be integral to strategy making); (3) *Sequential decision-making* (there are a series of interconnected decisions. Decisions made are the result of 'sequential and interactive' course of action by two or more actors); (4) *Group decision-making* (decisions are made collaboratively. (a) Small group dynamics (b) Organisational process and Bureaucratic politics); (5) Unilateral Decisions (one sided decisions); (6) Negotiated Decisions (final choice is arrived at after considerable bargaining with other actors involved); (7) Structured Decisions (making defensible choices after considering all options available); (8)

dimension-based search of the alternatives, ruling out those that fail to satisfy requirements on a key, non-compensatory dimension in the first stage of the process.'[124] The decision-makers will then choose the final option based on a cost-benefit analysis of the alternatives that survived the first stage. According to S. Redd,

> 'a dimension can be represented in a number of different ways. It can be thought of as an organizing theme (OT) for related information as well as variables. In this sense, a political dimension that conveys the political implications of a chosen alternative could include variables such as public opinion polls, domestic opposition, the leader's popularity, and other such factors related to this general organizing theme. Dimensions can also be thought of as the thematic basis (or criteria) underlying the evaluation of an alternative'[125]

The politicians making a decision will consider political survival to be the single most important variable. Therefore, the noncompensatory dimension is the political dimension. For example, if an alternative is to use hard power, and it has a low score on the political dimension (political dimension is the critical dimension in that example too), then according to the noncompensatory principle, a high score in another dimension (example: the economic dimension) will not compensate the low score in the political dimension. Also, Alex Mintz had, in 2004, discussed several different circumstances in which political loss can be operationalised:

> ʿThreat to a leader's survival; Significant drop in public support for a policy; Significant drop in popularity; The prospects of an electoral defeat; Domestic opposition; Threat to regime survival; Intraparty rivalry and competition; Internal or external challenge to the regime; Potential collapse of the coalition, government, or regime; Threat to political

Unstructured Decisions (alternatives are created because they are not predetermined); (9) Holistic Decisions (decision-makers examine their options, different dimensions and the probable outcomes of the decision); (10) Heuristic Decisions (decisions made using mental shortcuts); (11) Holistic Decisions (decisions based on past events and parallels)

[124] D. Brule, A. Mintz, and K. DeRouen, *Political Leadership And Decision Analysis*, Oxford Handbooks Online, December 2013, retrieved on 7 February 2015,

http://www.herzliyaconference.org/_Uploads/dbsAttachedFiles/Pol_Leadership_and_Dec_Analysis.pdf

[125] S. Redd, 'The Influence of Advisers on Foreign Policy Decision Making: An Experimental Study', p.338

power, dignity, honor, or legitimacy of a leader; Demonstrations, riots, and so forth; The existence of veto players (e.g., pivotal parties in parliamentary government).'[126]

Alternatives are removed 'if a score on a critical dimension(s) is below a cutoff.'[127] Determining the cut-off point, that is deciding when an option is too perilous to pursue, is done by the analyst using specialised knowledge. Meaning, if pursuing a certain option is highly risky then the decision-maker will eliminate that option, but the analyst face the risk of selection bias, when trying to determine the cut-off point.[128] This is a theoretical weakness of the Ph approach.

According to Zeev Maoz, 'national decisions are based upon decision makers' anticipation of decisions made at the same or some future point in time by other actors.'[129] Maoz also argues that, decisions in an interdependent international process are often sequential.[130] This influence of external factors often could compromise the merit of the decision. For example, the decision-maker is forced to calculate the potential course of action or choice of policy by a foreign leader. The decision-maker also has no control over the actions of the foreign leader and may not even get accurate information regarding the policy choice of the foreign leader. This could in turn distort the calculations of the decision-maker, regarding the motives and moves of a foreign leader. Therefore, the decision-maker's ability to accurately or inaccurately anticipate the external actors' policy choices has immense potential for making a decision good or bad. However, it is also this ability or inability to predict the behaviour of others that makes a decision-maker good or bad. There are several factors that could render a decision less than optimal. One important factor is the 'poliheuristic bias' of the leader. As Mintz argues, decision-makers may at times discard the option which is overall the 'best', because the overall best option has been removed due to the threat it posed to the political dimension.[131] Moreover, there

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[126] A. Mintz, 'How Do Leaders Make Decisions?: A Poliheuristic Perspective', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution,* Vol. 48, No.1, The Poliheuristic Theory of Foreign Policy Decision Making, February 2004, p.9

[127] A Mintz and N. Geva, 'The Poliheuristic Theory of Foreign Policy Decision Making'. In*: Decisionmaking On War And Peace: The Cognitive-Rational Debate*, (eds.) Alex Mintz and Nehemia Geva, p.86

[128] C. Beckerman-Boys, 'Third Parties And The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Poliheuristic Decision Theory And British Mandate Palestine Policy', p.229

[129] Z. Maoz, 'National Choices And International Processes', p.4

[130] Ibid

[131] A Mintz, 'Behavioural IR As A Subfield Of International Relations', (ed.), A Mintz, *International Studies Review,* Vol.9, Issue 1, 2007, p.159

are challenges to assessing how good or bad the decision-maker was at anticipating events and making decisions in the light of such estimations. According to Maoz, 'to analyse the extent to which decision makers correctly perceived reality, we must have a better picture of reality than the one available to decision-makers at any given point in time.'[132] Maoz argues that the researcher must strive to understand the objective reality - 'the interdependent intersection of preferences of several actors and the outcomes of their interactive choices form the objective reality'.[133] Be that as it may, the subjective reality is far more applicable to the Ph approach and to this thesis because the Ph approach is a combination of rational and psychological models. Additionally, the decision-makers themselves rely on perceptions.

Ph theory also maintains that the decision-maker is averse to losses. According to Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman (referring to economic behaviour), 'losses and disadvantages have greater impact on preferences than gains and advantages.'[134] Under Ph theory, alternatives are chosen based on the satisficing rule. According to Mintz and Geva, 'the idea behind the Ph model, then, is to quickly eliminate (or adopt) alternatives based on one or a few noncompensatory dimensions, simplifying the information search and the evaluation phases of decision process.'[135] Also, according to 'the dimension-based process' under Ph decision-making theory, alternatives are chosen depending 'on the order in which particular dimensions (diplomatic, economic, military, political) are invoked'.[136]

The noncompensatory principle and the role of advisers are also helpful in predicting foreign policy decisions.[137] The noncompensatory principle is especially crucial in situations where the political importance of the issue is high. Redd argues that, the increased involvement of advisers in Presidential decision-making means that the process and outcome of decision-making depends

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[132] Z. Maoz, 'National Choices And International Processes', p.7

[133] Ibid

[134] A. Tversky and D. Kahneman, 'Loss Aversion In Riskless Choice: A Reference-Dependent Model', *Quarterly Journal Of Economics*, Vol. 106, Issue 4, November 1991, p.1039

[135] A Mintz and N. Geva,'The Poliheuristic Theory Of Foreign Policy Decisionmaking', eds. N. Geva and A. Mintz, *Decisionmaking On War And Peace: The Cognitive-Rational Debate*, p.86-87

[136] Ibid, p.87

[137] D. Brule, 'The Poliheuristic Research Program: An Assessment and Suggestions For Further Progress,p.268

also on the President's advisers.[138] Moreover, noncompensatory principle is used in decision-making, depending on the order in which the President receives information from his advisers.[139] According to Redd, 'who is included in the group, group size, the heterogeneity among group members, and group power and status structures may all influence how noncompensatory rules are implemented as well as the extent to which the final choice is affected.'[140]

Benefits and limitations of using the poliheuristic approach

As with any theory, there are several advantages and disadvantages to using the Ph approach. This section will discuss some of the benefits and limitations of using Ph theory. David Brule employed Lakatosian criteria to evaluate the literature on Ph theory. Brule argues that Ph theory is 'progressive' when compared to other theories of decision-making. Lakatos argues that one theory is relatively better than others if that theory can explain all the unrefuted component of other theories and furnish 'excess empirical content in the form of novel hypotheses, some of which are corroborated.'[141] This thesis is not concerned with assessing whether Ph theory is more 'progressive' or not, when compared to other theories of IR. However, the objective of this thesis is to use the Ph approach to analyse the Obama administration's Iran policy decision-making, and Ph theory is better suited for this purpose because it accommodates different components from different theories of IR, including rational actor models and behavioral IR. For example, domestic politics had influenced America's Iran policy decisions in the case studies considered in this thesis,[142] and that influence went beyond the rational choice principle; Ph

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[138] S. Redd, 'The Influence Of Advisers And Decision Strategies On Foreign Policy Choices: President Clinton's Decision To Use Force In Kosovo', *International Studies Perspectives*, 6, 2005, p.145

[139] Ibid

[140] Ibid; also see, E. Christensen and S. Redd, 'Bureaucrats Versus Ballot Box In Foreign Policy Decision Making', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, The Poliheuristic Theory of Foreign Policy Decision Making, Vol. 48, No. 1, February 2004, pp.69-90; S. Dyson, 'Personality And Foreign Policy: Tony Blair's Iraq Decisions', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol.2, No.3, 2006, p.289-306

[141] D. Brule, 'The Poliheuristic Research Program: An Assessment And Suggestions For Further Progress', *International Studies Review*, Vol. 10, Issue 2, 2008, p.268; See I. Lakatos, 'The Methodology Of Scientific Research Programmes, In *'Criticism And The Growth Of Knowledge'*, (eds.) I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, pp.91-195

[142] T. Parsi, *A Single Roll of the Dice: Obama's Diplomacy with Iran*.

theory accommodates the utility maximisation principle of the rational actor models, and also sees decision-making in light of the limitations faced by human decision-makers who are not always capable of thinking in terms of utility maximisation. Thus the Ph approach provides a more detailed description of the Obama administration's Iran policy decision-making process. Another advantage is that, given the fact that 'how' decision-makers use cognitive shortcuts is an empirical issue, there is scope to link the rational model (the rational choice approach is used by the decision-maker in the second stage) to domestic and international scenarios.[143]

The Ph approach has also proven useful in the study of decision-making at the leadership level. Chatagnier, Mintz and Samban used Applied Decision Analysis (ADA) to trace back the 'decision calculus' of the leader, in order to study the decision process and rules.[144] Ph theory provides the necessary framework to determine the process through which decision-makers arrive at their final policy choice, and one useful tool under the Ph framework is ADA. ADA is an analytical procedure to 'enter the minds of decision-makers in an attempt to uncover their decision rules.'.[145] The Ph procedure consists of two steps: (1) 'Identify the decision matrix of the leader (e.g., the alternative set, dimension set, and implications of each alternative on each dimension); (2) apply Ph calculations to the decision matrix to explain or predict the ultimate choice.'[146] Even though Chatagnier et al. were focused on the study of terrorist leaders, the integration of the knowledge under Ph theory and the tools under ADA has opened the door for improved research in the study of leadership. ADA has been used to 'reverse engineer' decision-making process by American Presidents, to understand 'how' the President/leader make a decision.[147] According to Mintz, ADA process can be utilised to employ the Ph approach to analyse 'how' an American President makes a decision, by identifying the decision-matrix, policy

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[143] M. Ye, 'Poliheuristic Theory, Bargaining, and Crisis Decision Making, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 3, Issue 3, 2007, pp.339-340

[144] J. Chatagnier, A. Mintz and Y. Samban, ' The Decision Calculus Of Terrorist Leaders', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 6, No 4-5, 2012

[145] A. Mintz quoted in K. Dougherty, *Military Decision-Making Processes: Case Studies Involving The Preparation, Commitment, Application And Withdrawal Of Force*, North Carolina: McFarland & Company Inc., Publishers, 2014, p.43

[146] A. Mintz, 'Applied Decision Analysis: Utilizing Poliheuristic Theory To Explain And Predict Foreign Policy And National Security Decisions', *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol.6, No.1, February 2005, p.95

[147] Mintz, 'Applied Decision Analysis: Utilizing Poliheuristic Theory To Explain And Predict Foreign Policy And National Security Decisions'.

alternatives, dimensions, implications of every alternative on every dimension, 'how the implications are rated' and level of importance of every dimension, then apply the Ph approach.[148] The Iran policy decision-making during the Obama administration was White House centered.[149] The Obama presidency also saw the President exercising his authority to alter the course of the relationship between Iran and the United States, by engaging in diplomacy and seeking to build a less hostile relationship.[150] This thesis will identify the policy alternatives that were available to the Obama administration, the different dimensions considered by the decision-makers, point out the dimensions that were applicable in evaluating the alternatives. As Alex Mintz has proven, the Ph approach can be used in the study of several types of decisions, including those that are sequential, interactive, in different settings (dynamic or static) and in different contexts.[151]

The Ph approach has also been useful in studying motivations and decisions of third parties involved in a conflict. The case in point is Carly Beckerman-Boys's study of British decisions pertaining to Palestine ('the British decision in 1922 to affirm the policy of Jewish national home').[152] Beckerman-Boys' study also points out what it sees as the procedural limitations of Ph theory. According to Beckerman-Boys, Ph theory fails in its role to bridge the gap between cognitive and rational approaches.[153] Beckerman-Boys refers to studies where there was only a single remaining option after the first stage. According to Beckerman-Boys, this negated Ph theory's role as a bridging framework between cognitive models and rational choice theory.[154] Even though the one alternative that survives the first stage of decision-making must satisfice the key substantive dimensions in the second stage, it is impossible to pursue a cost-benefit analysis

[148] k. Dougherty, *Military Decision-Making Processes: Case Studies Involving The Preparation, Commitment, Application And Withdrawal Of Force*, London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2014. pp.43-44

[149] T. Parsi, *A Single Roll of the Dice: Obama's Diplomacy with Iran*.

[150] Ibid

[151] A. Mintz, 'Applied Decision Analysis: Utilising Poliheuristic Theory To Explain And Predict Foreign Policy And National Security Decisions', *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 6, No.1, 2005, pp.94-98

[152] C. Beckerman-Boys, 'Third Parties And The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Poliheuristic Decision Theory And British Mandate Palestine Policy', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 10, Issue 3, 2014, pp.225-242

[153] Ibid, p.238

[154] Ibid

between rival options, and that is a theoretical shortcoming of the Ph approach.[155] This issue also calls into question Vesna Damilovic's argument that the Ph approach incorporates a rational element into cognitive models and a psychological component to rational choice.[156] Alex Mintz's work has not adequately addressed this issue regarding Ph theory's role in bridging the gap between rational and cognitive approaches, when only one option survives the first stage of decision-making. However, more than one policy option survived the first stage of decision-making in all three case studies in this thesis. Therefore, the use of the Ph approach in this thesis has certainly been helpful in incorporating rational and cognitive approaches to analyse the Obama administration's Iran policy making.

Ph theory can be also used to study decision-making by different types of governments. Brandon Kinne's study uses Ph theory to examine decision-making by non-democratic states.[157] Kinne's study also discusses the factors that democratic countries should consider when dealing with non-democratic countries. Non-democratic states are also of different types, and different leaders have different 'political' considerations that they have to meet, to stay in power. For example, President Obama had to take into account different political considerations, including the opinions of the public, the military, international standing, and America's international allies, when making a foreign policy decision. However, in the case of Israel, the leader (especially in the case of Prime Minister Netanyahu) is mostly concerned about the Jewish population in Israel and do not need to appease the Arab-Israelis, when making a decision.[158] Kinne's study indicates that Ph theory is better placed than rational choice theory, to explain the factors which are critical to the decision-makers, because according to him rational choice makes no mention of the 'sources of utility that actors draw from.'[159] However, Ph theory is more helpful in this endeavour to analyse different considerations that are of importance to the decision-maker, because the basic assumption under Alex Mintz's approach is that decision-makers are mostly

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[155] Ibid

[156] V. Danilovic, 'The Rational-Cognitive Debate And Poliheuristic Theory', In *Integrating Cognitive And Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision-Making,* (ed.), A. Mintz, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp.127-137

[157] B. Kinne, 'Decision Making In Autocratic Regimes: A Poliheuristic Perspective', *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 6, Issue 1, 2005, pp.114-128

[158] B. White, *Palestinians In Israel: Segregation, Discrimination and Democracy*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012

[159] B. Kinne, 'Decision Making In Autocratic Regimes: A Poliheuristic Perspective', p.127

and most immediately concerned about their political survival.[160] The Ph approach also aids in recognising generalisable and foreseeable behavioral patterns of political leaders.

The research using the Ph framework cannot be performed if the amount of information available is very limited. Sometimes there is too much information available in a case study, at times the information is not in abundance, and occasionally it is not feasible to go through (or have access to) all the data that is available. However, as Rosenau rightly observed, 'one cannot proceed to know anything without differentiating between the important and the trivial, and then confining one's analysis to the important and treating the trivial as a given or constant'.[161] Therefore, substantial research has been done for this thesis, to decide which is important and which is trivial. For example, domestic political considerations and pressure from America's international allies had played an important role in influencing the decisions studied in this thesis. However, these factors which influenced decision-making were discovered after doing substantial field work and research for this thesis, because the research for this thesis did not begin with a focus on any variable. The principal assumption under the Ph approach is that political leaders will primarily be concerned about their political survival, and all three cases will demonstrate the operationalisation of the political dimension. Careful study of the events, non-events, secondary sources and numerous interviews conducted in policy circles and academia also helped in narrowing down the focus of this study.

According to Kai Oppermann, Ph theory does not address the theory's 'scope conditions.'[162] Surely, as Oppermann argues, theories do not have universal applicability, and a Ph approach should be more suited to some instances than others.[163] Oppermann's article links the concept of issue salience with the Ph framework, and discusses the noncompensatory principle. Oppermann argues that there are no clear guidelines as to when policy options are disregarded because of domestic political considerations. Oppermann also questions the criteria by which 'the

[160] A, Mintz, 'How Do Leaders Make Decisions? A Poliheuristic Perspective'

[161] J. Rosenau, *The Study of World Politics: Volume 1: Theoretical and Methodological Challenges*, Routledge: New York, 2006, p.98

[162] K. Oppermann, 'Delineating The Scope Conditions Of The Poliheuristic Theory of Foreign Policy Decision Making: The Noncompensatory Principle And The Domestic Salience Of Foreign Policy', *Foreign Policy Analysis,* Vol. 10, Issue 1, 2014, pp.23-41

[163] Ibid p.24

noncompensatory status of domestic audience costs will prove more or less restrictive'.[164] Fortunately, there are ways to address these problems. Issue salience is the degree of importance that an actor attaches to an issue.[165] According to Oppermann, the decision-maker will only disregard an option if the issue goes past a 'domestic salience threshold'.[166] Therefore all issues that do not cross this domestic salience threshold will not have any domestic political cost associated with it. Thus, Oppermann's study establishes how issue salience is useful in estimating 'the explanatory power of the cognitivist component of poliheuristic theory relative to its rationalist component.'[167] Domestic politics is important to this thesis because it had impacted President Obama's Iran policy decisions. For example, during the period covered in the second case study, when President Obama was standing for re-election, his concerns regarding election politics had influenced the Obama administration's Iran policy decisions. The threat to the President's political survival cannot be countervailed by gains made in any other dimension, like the military or relationship with allies, in accordance with the noncompensatory principle. Ph theory's noncompensatory principle and the importance it attaches to political survival aids in deciphering decisions where the final policy choice may appear "irrational". That is, an understanding of the impact of domestic politics and domestic political considerations on President Obama's Iran policy decisions help in seeing 'rationality' in a different light reflecting the domestic political constraints faced by the Obama administration, which cannot be explained if one is to only view a decision in the light of the rational choice theory or the cognitive approach.

Does the 'threshold' at which options are eliminated because of their political costs change depending on the leader? Also, which other factors change the threshold? These questions were asked and answered by Keller and Yang. According to them, situational context and leadership style affect, (a) the 'noncompensatory threshold' at which an alternative is eliminated because it does not meet the requirements of the political dimension, and (b) the extent to which the

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[164] Ibid p.26

[165] Ibid

[166] Ibid

[167] Ibid p.29

decision-makers consider the opinions of their electorate.[168] All three cases considered in this thesis were Iran policy decisions made during the Obama Presidency, and the leadership style remained the same during the course of that period. Since the beginning of the Obama Presidency, foreign policy decisions were White House centred. However, the reliance on the constituents' opinions in making foreign policy choices had changed in the course of the Presidency, the reliance was greater in the first two cases, and lesser during the period covered in the third case study.

Conclusion

FPA offers several different frameworks for studying decision-making. Even though it is not possible to discuss all the different theoretical frameworks available to study decision-making, this chapter has discussed several theoretical frameworks that might seem appropriate for this study, at the first instance, but are not suited for achieving the purpose of this thesis, after closer examination. These frameworks were: rational actor model, bureaucratic politics model, organisational politics model, prospect theory, cybernetic model and group think. Ph theory is better suited to achieve the objectives of this thesis because it incorporates various principles of decision-making considered under rational and cognitive approaches, and aids in analysing America's Iran policy decision-making, identify the factors that influenced the decision-making and scrutinise the elimination process using which the decision-makers arrived at their final choice.[169]

As acknowledged, there are also a lot of challenges to pursuing a research based on Ph theory. However, as indicated in this chapter, Ph theory is suitable for analysing the case studies in this thesis composing of routine foreign policy decisions and decisions taken in the midst of extreme political pressure. The case studies analysed in this thesis will further demonstrate the usefulness of the Ph approach.

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[168] J. Keller and Yi Yang, 'Leadership Style, Decision Context, and The Poliheuristic Theory Of Decision Making: An Experimental Analysis', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 52, No. 5, October 2008, pp. 687-712

[169] A. Mintz, 'The Decision Board Software For Teaching And Research In International Relations', *Presented at the Annual Meeting Of The American Political Science Association,* Atlanta, Georgia, September 1999

Chapter IV: The decision to pursue diplomacy with Iran in 2009

Time frame: from President Obama's inauguration to the collapse of the IAEA's Tehran Research Reactor 'fuel swap' proposal[1] (hereinafter referred to as 'the fuel swap proposal') (January 2009 to October 2009)

> *'People think North Koreans are difficult to negotiate with. Let me tell you, your countrymen [Iranians] are the most difficult people to negotiate with. Imagine buying a car. You negotiate for a whole month over the price and terms of the deal. You reach an agreement and go to pick up the car. You see it has no tires. ''But the tires were not part of the discussion'' the seller says. ''We negotiated over the car.'' You have to start all over again, now wondering whether you have to worry about the metal rim, screw, or any other unknown part of the car. That should give you a sense of what talking to Iran looks like.'*

Jack Straw[2]

This case study will make use of the Ph framework, and utilise the two stage decision-making process to analyse the Obama administration's decision to pursue diplomacy with Iran. This chapter will argue that the Obama administration had very few policy options when dealing with Iran. Also, during the time period considered in this chapter, the Obama administration had made no commitment to diplomacy with Iran, because the Obama administration was more concerned with fighting domestic political battles and appeasing America's international allies. In this case study, all options which did not meet the requirements of the political dimension were eliminated in the first stage of decision-making. Thereafter, in the second stage of decision-making, the administration arrived at the final choice, based on a cost-benefit analysis of the options which survived Stage One.

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[1] A. Cordesman, B. Gold and C. Coughlin-Schulte, 'Iran: Sanctions, Energy, Arms Control, and Regime Change', A report of the CSIS Burke Chair in Strategy, *Center For Strategic and International Studies*, January 2014, p.128

[2] J. Straw conversation with V. Nasr in 2006, his negotiating experience with Iran as the British Foreign Secretary, cited in V. Nasr, *The Dispensable Nation*, p.111

As per the available body of scholarship on Ph theory, broadly speaking, there are four dimensions that are considered principal in decision-making, namely political, military, economic, and diplomatic.[3] The variable considered in this chapter, based on Alex Mintz's work describing the circumstances in which an option may be rejected, on the political dimension is: dignity.[4] In this case, 'the economy' which was going through a great recession,[5] was also considered as a variable on the political dimension. Even though the economy does not seem like a variable that should be included in the political dimension, during times of privation it belongs in the first stage of decision-making as a variable under the political dimension, because 'economy' as a variable is referring to the political use of the conceptions concerning the economy.[6] The options available at the first stage of decision-making were: (1) continue the Bush administration's policy, and use sanctions as the primary policy instrument; (2) pursue a campaign of sanctions and sabotage; (3) pursue diplomacy; (4) limited use of force, such as airstrikes against Iranian nuclear facilities.

In stage-two, the alternatives which survived the first stage will be scrutinised further. In the second stage, the decision-makers had arrived at the final choice by attempting to minimise the costs on the key substantive dimension of diplomacy: (a) diplomacy with the Europeans; (b) diplomacy with the Arabs and Afghans; (c) diplomacy with Israel.

The goal of the administration, based on the discussions in the first two chapters, was to: (1) 'deal with' (not be seen as ignoring) the Iranian nuclear issue; (2) prevent/delay a potential Iranian nuclear weapon; (3) prevent a potential military attack on Iran, by America's allies in the region (Israel and/ or Arab countries);[7](4) work with international partners (IAEA, UN, P5+1) to

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[3] P. James and E. Zhang, 'Chinese Choices: A Poliheuristic Analysis of Foreign Policy Crises, 1950–1996'; K. Sathasivam, '''No Other Choice': Pakistan's Decision to Test the Bomb.'' *In Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy decision making*, edited by A. Mintz, pp. 55–76.

[4] A. Mintz, 'How Do Leaders Make Decisions? A Poliheuristic Perspective', p.9

[5] The Recession of 2007–2009, *U.S. Bureau Of Labor Statistics*, February 2012, retrieved on 12 December 2015,

[6] C. Beckerman-Boys, 'Third Parties And The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Poliheuristic Decision Theory And British Mandate Palestine Policy', p.233

[7] In 2008, President Bush had 'deflected' Israel's request for bombs, for attacking Iranian nuclear facilities. However, the Bush administration did authorise cyber attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities. C. Michaud, 'US Spurned Israel Plan For Iran Reactor Attack-NYT', *Reuters News*, 10 January 2009; President Obama was also against Israeli strike on Iran; D. Dombey, 'US Does Not Support Israeli Strike Against Iran', *The Financial Times*, 7 July 2009

resolve the nuclear issue. The Obama administration was keen on using 'smart power' and building 'a world with more partners'.[8]

The Obama administration had pursued a campaign of diplomacy, sanctions and sabotage, during this period, January 2009 to October 2009; even so it is appropriate to title this chapter, 'the decision to pursue *diplomacy* with Iran in 2009', because diplomacy was the officially and publically stated policy instrument the United States wanted to pursue.[9] Moreover, after decades of hostilities between the two countries, this was the first time that diplomacy was officially used as a policy instrument by the United States, 'to break the 30-year downward spiral in U.S.-Iranian relations'.[10] Prior to the Obama presidency the United States had cooperated with Iran, in Afghanistan, and also within the framework of the IAEA to deal with the Iranian nuclear issue, but none of those efforts were with a purported objective of changing the course of the relationship between the two countries. For that reason, the Obama administration's experimentation with diplomacy has a unique place in the history of the US-Iran relations, even though other foreign policy instruments such as sanctions and sabotage were also used during this period. Although there was not enough enthusiasm to impose new sanctions on Iran, during this period, the Obama administration had made it possible for existing sanctions to be enforced with more vigour. This chapter will also argue that diplomacy was not given a chance to succeed, during this period.[11] The short experiment with diplomacy was destined to fail because of the political constraints, lack of political will, mistrust between the two countries and the pressure from allies. This official policy of pursuing diplomacy to deal with the Iranian nuclear issue collapsed, along with the fuel swap proposal, but it was brought back to life with the election of Hassan Rouhani as the President of Iran, as discussed in the third case study of this thesis.

This chapter will make use of the Ph approach to answer the research questions at the heart of this thesis. Why the Obama administration chose diplomacy? What were the factors which influenced that decision? The two stage decision-making process will help in identifying the

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[8] A. Spillius, 'Hillary Clinton Promises The New America Will Become The World's Friend', *The Daily Telegraph*, 14 January 2009

[9] J. Limbert, Negotiating with Iran: Wrestling the Ghosts of History, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2009

[10] J, Limbert, 'The Obama Administration', In *The Iran Primer: Power, Politics, and U.S. Policy,* (ed.), R. Wright, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute Of Peace Press, 2010, p.146

[11] S. Maler, 'Obama Says He Wants progress With Iran By Year's End', *Reuters News*, 18 May 2009

variables which were considered by the decision-makers while eliminating options from the choice set, the substantial dimensions, why alternatives were eliminated, and how the decision-makers arrived at the final policy choice.

The Choice Set

> *'Sometimes foreign policy is like community organizing -- i.e., you're trying to herd diverse groups to work together for a common goal and your task is to overcome suspicions so that the common ground can be seized. But at other times it's more like a gang war. And when it's the latter, you have to take names, draw lines, and use the power at one's disposal to get the outcomes you want.'*

> *Stephen Walt[12]*

This section will analyse the Obama administration's choice set when making the decision considered in this chapter. This case study analysis will point out how the Obama administration, using heuristic decision rules, had rejected unfavorable options from the choice set, based on a nonholistic approach, where the choice set was defined by a dimension-based search. The Ph approach is non-holistic, and it is the responsibility of the analyst to discern which policy alternatives are to be examined in the choice set. This is a theoretical deficiency of the Ph approach. The Ph approach does not seek to analyse *foreign policy-making*, but is concerned about *foreign policy decision-making*.

This was not a dull phase in America's relationship with the Islamic Republic. Even though mutual distrust had made it difficult to make any tangible progress in lessening the hostilities between Tehran and Washington, this period saw some shrewd statecraft from both countries.[13] The Obama administration had a choice set comprising of 'persuasive and punitive options'. As the case study will elaborate, the policy initiated by the Obama administration was based on a

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[12] S. Walt, 'Time to start working on Plan B', *Foreign Policy*, 19 October 2009, retrieved on 18 April 2014,

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/10/19/time_to_start_working_on_plan_b

[13] B. Slavin, 'Engagement', In *Gulf Kaleidoscope: Reflections on the Iranian Challenge,* (ed.), J. Alterman, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 2012, pp.11–21

carrot and stick approach.[14] For example, the Obama administration had expressed interest in pursuing diplomacy with Iran. However, it did not mean that the administration was to impede Stuart Levey's negotiations pertaining to the enforcement of sanctions against Iran, with the banking and business communities. As the first Undersecretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence at the Treasury Department, Levey worked closely to get the Iran sanctions implemented.[15]

For several reasons, as mentioned below, the Obama administration had considered: (a) Continuing the confrontational policy which existed during the Bush Presidency; (b) using limited force such as air strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities. By the time President Obama took office, Iran was a top priority in his foreign policy agenda.[16] Also, the Iranian nuclear program was one of the most urgent matters the Obama administration had to address, because Washington and Tehran were on a collision course by the end of the Bush presidency. The Bush administration was inclined to pursuing coercive measures to pressure Iran to change its behavior, and the Bush White House had also advocated for 'regime change' in that country.[17] As Lewicki argued, 'if the cost of depending on someone's behaviour outweigh the benefits, we are typically inclined to either change or terminate the relationship.'[18] However, the Obama administration was interested in seeking new options to deal with Iran, at the same time intended to continue on with some of the policies of the past, especially the punitive measures such as sanctions. Even before President Obama took office, the Iranian issue was sensationalised by the Bush administration[19] and the American intelligence community. According to American *National Security Strategy of 2006*, 'we [the United States] may face no greater challenge from a

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[14] R. Jervis, 'Getting To Yes With Iran', *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2013

[15] Stuart Levey was the Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence at the Treasury Department, from 21 July 2004 to March 2011, for details on Levey's work, see R. Wright, 'Stuart Levey's War', *The New York Times*, 31 October 2008

[16] Under Secretary of State W. Burns, Testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 22 June 2010, retrieved on 10 January 2016, http://foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Burns,%20William%20J.pdf
[17] S. Sagan, 'How to Keep the Bomb From Iran', *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2006
[18] see the quotation from R. Lewicki, 'Trust, Trust Development and Trust Repair', In *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice*, (eds.), M. Deutsch, P. Coleman and E. Marcus, Second Edition, San Francisco, Jossey –Bass, 2006, p.104

[19] M. Silva, 'Bush Says Iran Still A Threat', *The Chicago Tribune*, 5 December 2007

single country than from Iran.'[20] Therefore, the Obama administration also had to take Iran's behavior into consideration. For example, Iran's alliance-making in the Levant was for countering American influence in the region, and toward the end of the Bush presidency Iran had increased military, economic and political cooperation with its allies in the region.[21] President Obama also had to take into account the history of the region where proxy wars and military campaigns in the Levant were directly or indirectly the cause and result of the conflict of interest between Iran and the United States.[22] The tension between Iran and the United States in the Persian Gulf had impacted the regional and peripheral states. For example, Iran-Hezbollah, Iran-Syria and Egypt (under the leadership of Mubarak) -Israel alliances were useful for those parties to address their security concerns or to expand their 'sphere of influence'. These were the happenings in the Middle East, when President Obama took office.[23] The Iranian support to extremist groups in the Levant and the Persian Gulf was driven by Iran's geopolitical interests, than by any religious or moral obligation.[24] Even so, much significance was attached to religion in Iran's foreign policy.[25] However, it would be a mistake to conclude that religion alone drove the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic. It could be argued that, Iranian leaders exploited religion, to allow for themselves a leading role in the Muslim world, and thereby increase the Iranian influence in the region.[26] 'Islam served the same purpose for Iran as Arab nationalism had for Egypt under Nasir'.[27] Iran, its allies and an Iranian nuclear weapon (possible, but nonexistent), had the potential to challenge the power and influence of the United States, in the

[20] The National Security Strategy of The United States of America, George Bush, President of the United States, The White House: Washington, March 2006, p.20

[21] J. Alterman, (ed.), 'Gulf Kaleidoscope: Reflections On The Iranian Challenge', *A Report of the CSIS Middle East Program*, May 2012, retrieved on 10 January 2016,
http://csis.org/files/publication/120518_%20Alterman_GulfKaleidoscope_Web.pdf
[22] A. Nerguizian, with assistance from N. Kasting and A. Cordesman, 'U.S.-Iran Competition In The Levant- II: The Proxy War In Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, The Palestinian Territories And Syria', *Center For Strategic & International Studies*, Fourth edition, 10 January 2013

[23] A. Nerguizian, 'U.S. And Iranian Strategic Competition: The Proxy Cold War In The Levant, Egypt And Jordan', *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, March 2012
[24] Ibid
[25] L. Carl Brown, (ed.), *Diplomacy in the Middle East*, London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2001

[26] K. Barzegar, 'Balance Of Power In The Persian Gulf: An Iranian View', *Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs,* 2010, retrieved on 11 January 2016,
http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/Barzegar-Balance-of-Power-in-the-Persian-Gulf.pdf
[27] L. Carl Brown, (ed.) *Diplomacy in the Middle East*, p.249

region.[28] Most of Iran's allies in the region did not have much in common, in terms of their ideology or geopolitical goals. For Iran and its allies, one unifying factor it seemed was the desire to form a coalition against the United States, as well as defend against the influence of the United States and its allies in the region. The most important Iranian allies included Bashar al-Assad of Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas. According to Leylaz, 'Hamas is a very practical and useful tool for Iran, not an ideological one at all'.[29] Bashar al-Assad's Syria and Iran had maintained a mutually beneficial strategic relationship, with Iran aiding that country by providing military and economic resources;[30] Syria was Iran's ally and its client state in the Levant, acting as a link between Iran and its interests in the Levant.[31] Hezbollah was indebted to Iran for many reasons, not the least of which was the fact that Iran had funded and helped organise Hezbollah, following the Israeli Operation Peace for Galilee.[32] Hezbollah's very existence was tied to Iran. Therefore, if the United States were to get involved in a war against Iran, it had to face resistance from Hezbollah as well. According to the American National Strategy for Homeland Security 2007, 'Hizballah may increasingly consider attacking Homeland if it perceives the United States as posing a direct threat to the group or Iran, its principal sponsor.'[33] In contrast, Hamas was an Iranian ally, partly because of the lack of support from the Arab governments had forced Hamas to accept aid and support from whomsoever was willing to give.[34] These factors had made it necessary for the United States to deal with Iran. Iran was too important a country to ignore. However, it was difficult for the United States to negotiate in good faith with Iran, on the nuclear issue, when Iran was guilty of so much 'bad behaviour' in the

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[28] D. Dombey, 'Obama Pledges Early Focus On Middle East', *The Financial Times*, 11 January 2009

[29] S. Leylaz, economist and political analyst, quoted in M. Slackman, (with contribution from Nazila Fathi), 'Iran Gives Hamas Enthusiastic Support, But Discreetly, Just In Case', *The New York Times*, 13 January 2009

[30] J. Gelbart, 'The Iran-Syria Axis: A Critical Investigation', *Stanford Journal of International Relations*, Vol. XII, No.1, Fall 2010, pp.36-42
[31] Ibid
[32] O. Szekely, 'Hezbollah's Survival: Resources and Relationships', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XIX, No. 4, Winter 2012, pp.110-126

[33] United States National Strategy for Homeland Security, Homeland Security Council, G. Bush, The White House: Washington, October 2007, p.9

[34] C. Migdalovitz, 'Israeli-Arab Negotiations: Background, Conflicts, and U.S. Policy', CRS Report for Congress, *Congressional Research Service*, 29 January 2010

region.[35] The Obama administration's Iran policy choice set had to include punitive measures, also because America's relationship with Iran was based not on the Obama administration's trust in Iran's good behavior, but the only way to develop or sustain 'trust' was to a large extend based on the 'punishment', which had to be clear, plausible, and had the potential to be enforced if Iran was guilty of violating any arrangements made between Iran and the United States, while the Obama administration was trying to reorient America's Iran policy.[36] The Obama administration also could not ignore Iran's role in the conflicts in the Middle East, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Sunni-Shia conflict in Iraq. Therefore, confronting Iran - like the Bush administration did, or working with Iran, were necessary options to include in the choice set to cope with the challenges of the region.

The Obama administration had to consider continuing the Bush administration's policy, and use sanctions as the primary policy instrument, also because as Vali Nasr argues, 'Iran basks in the image of the outsider challenging the status quo, the inconvenient spoiler that keeps the region on the edge'.[37] Iran used Islam and the Palestinian cause, as a means to bridge the Sunni–Shia, Arab-Persian divide.[38] Iran, in the past, had encountered resistance, when trying to increase its influence in the Arab countries. This was because the Sunni Arabs were suspicious of the motives of the Shiites, and also was keen to hold on to what was left of Arab nationalism. Thus Iran remained an outsider, whose only way in was to find common grounds with the Arabs. The way for Iran to garner support in the Arab streets was to champion the Palestinian cause, support the oppressed Arabs who were mistreated by their Arab rulers, be the symbol of anti-Americanism in the Middle East, fight foreign interference and stand up against the status quo in the region.[39]

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[35] J. Sebenius and M. Singh, 'Is A Nuclear Deal With Iran Possible?', *International Security*, Vol. 37, No. 3, Winter 2012/13, pp.52–91

[36] On 'trust' and 'deterrence-based trust' see D. Shapiro, B. Sheppard, and L. Cheraskin, 'Business On A Handshake', *Negotiation Journal*, Vol.8, 1992, pp.365-377, cited in R. Lewicki, 'Trust, Trust Development and Trust Repair', In *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice*, (eds.), M. Deutsch, P. Coleman and E. Marcus, Second Edition, San Francisco: Jossey–Bass, 2006, pp.94-95

[37] V. Nasr, *The Dispensable Nation*, p.99

[38] T. Parsi, *A Single Roll of the Dice: Obama's Diplomacy With Iran*
[39] Ibid

Sanctions had always been part of America's Iran policy since the Islamic revolution in that country, and that was a policy option in the Obama administration's choice set as well. Sanctions were an integral part of American foreign policy history. According to Congressional record, produced as far back in 1998, 'the United States, more than any other country, uses sanctions to further its many, sometimes conflicting, foreign policy objectives.'[40] Historically, 'nearly all existing sanctions against Iran have been motivated by domestic political considerations - the accommodation of the interests of the pro-Israeli lobby in the United States'.[41] By the time President Obama took office, the American public, Congress and America's allies had all fundamentally supported the sanctions regime to deter Iran from developing its nuclear program and to hurt Iran's economy.

Historically, 'most scholars and sanctions experts who have studied Iran's sanctions agree that US measures against Iran have not deterred the Iranian behaviour to which the United States objects'.[42] However, ignoring Iran's behaviour in the region was not an option, and therefore the Obama administration, like its predecessors, had to include sanctions as a policy option in the choice set.[43] Moreover, the United States had very limited options in dealing with Iran, because as *The Iran Project Report* argues,

> 'U.S. policies may have narrowed the options for dealing with Iran by hardening the regime's resistance to pressure; contributed to an increase in repression and corruption within Iran; distorted trade patterns and encouraged the expansion of illegal markets in the region; and possibly contributed to sectarian tensions in the region by pushing an isolated Iran further toward dependence on its Shia allies.'[44]

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[40] Congressional Record, Proceedings And Debates Of The 105th Congress, Second Session, Vol. 144-part 10, 25 June 1998, p.14173

[41] H. Alikhani, *Sanctioning Iran: Anatomy of a Failed Policy*, p.402

[42] Ibid, p.411

[43] M. Landler, 'U.S. Is Seeking a Range of Sanctions Against Iran', *The New York Times*, 27 September 2009

[44] The report reflects the view of 35 experts (including former bureaucrats, generals, national security officials, CIA officials), 'Strategic Options For Iran: Balancing Pressure With Diplomacy', *The Iran Project Report,* 17 April 2013, retrieved on 26 January 2015,

http://www.rbf.org/sites/default/files/IranProjectReport3_.pdf

The United States also had to consider diplomacy as an option in the choice set, because President Obama had run an election campaign promising 'change', and the American public was also supportive of trying to change the course of American domestic policies and foreign relations.[45] The Obama administration also could afford to consider diplomacy as an option because there was international cooperation in preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapon and monitor the nuclear facilities of that country. IAEA's monitoring of Iran's nuclear program and Israel's spying on Iran was adequate assurances that major violations by the Iranian government did not go undetected while attempts were made to use diplomacy to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue.

During his Presidential Campaign, Obama had supported direct diplomacy with Iran, and soon after taking office, he mentioned his desire to extend America's hand, if those that remained on the 'wrong side of history' were willing to unclench their fist.[46] In his inaugural address, President Obama went on to articulate his solidarity with the Muslim world.[47] President Obama also went on to say,

> 'to the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect. To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society's ills on the West, know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy.'[48]

To counter the threat from Iran, the United States had, since the 1980s, armed its allies in the region, and maintained its own military presence in the Persian Gulf. For example, the Aegis cruisers on patrol in the Persian Gulf were part of the American presence in the region since the 1980s. 'Those cruisers are equipped with advanced radar and anti-missile systems designed to intercept medium-range missiles.'[49] The American military presence in the region was a cause of

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[45] T. Henrikse, *America and the Rogue States,* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012

[46] President Barack Obama's Inaugural Address, 20 January 2009, retrieved on 9 March 2014,

http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/inaugural-address

[47] Ibid

[48] Ibid

[49] 'Those systems would not be useful against Iran's long-range missile, the Shahab 3, but intelligence agencies believe that it will be years before Iran can solve the problems of placing a nuclear warhead atop that missile.'; D. Sanger and E. Schmitt, 'U.S. Speeding Up Missile Defenses in Persian Gulf', *The New York Times*, 30 January 2010

concern for the Iranian government. For that reason it was necessary that all parties communicated with each other, so as to avoid any military conflict arising out of misunderstanding. Until President Obama came to office, the lack of effective communication between Iran and the United States had worsened the relationship between the two countries.[50] Communication is critical to any relationship. Also, the ways in which parties present their intention is also important. For example, as fisher and Ury pointed out,

> '...in Persian, the word 'compromise' apparently lacks the positive meaning it has in English of a 'midway solution both sides can live with,' but has only a negative meaning as in 'our integrity was compromised.' Similarly, the word 'mediator' in Persian suggests a 'meddler,' someone who was uninvited.'[51]

The records generally discuss the contacts between the Iranian and United States government through the Swiss embassy and the Pakistani embassy.[52] However, there has been no mention of any negotiations through them. Except the Iranian letters in 2003 to the United States, send through the Swiss embassy indicating interests in talks. Perhaps 'the positive role of communication in the amelioration of conflict seems so obvious that the premise is seldom given serious examination.'[53] President Obama also had to consider diplomacy as a policy option to give more room for communication. Pursuing diplomacy with Iran also meant that Washington could have better access to Iran and Iranian nuclear facilities, through the IAEA.

In the case of the Obama presidency, 'the Obamians' were free of the Vietnam War baggage, and seemed to have a different worldview than those who had served during the Bush and Clinton administration. Most of the 'inner circle' in the administration were relatively younger, and were from the post Bill Clinton era, in terms of their political career. In Mann's assessment, 'the Obamians reflected the influence of Democratic congressional leaders who had operated outside

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[50] A. Torbat, 'A Glance At US Policies Toward Iran: Past And Present', *Journal of Iranian Research and Analysis*, Vol.20, No.1, April 2004, pp.85-92

[51] R. Fisher and W. Ury, *Getting To Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In,* Penguin Books: New York, 1981, pp.33-34

[52] A. Kamel, *The Political Economy Of EU Ties With Iraq And Iran: An Assessment Of The Trade-Peace Relationship*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p.118

[53] R. Krauss and E. Morsella, *Communication and Conflict*, New York: Columbia University, retrieved on 31 March 2014,

http://www.columbia.edu/~rmk7/PDF/Confl.pdf

the orbit of the Clintons.'[54] The Obamians were willing to consider diplomacy with Iran as an option.[55] In President Obama's words,

> 'I also had a lot of confidence, I guess, coming in, that the way our system of government works civilians to have to make policy decisions. And then the military carries them out. You know, I don't see this as a civilian versus military situation the way I think a lot of people coming out of Vietnam do. I also don't see it as a hawk/dove kind of thing.'[56]

Those who had served during the Bush administration were guided by the dramatic change in world affairs, brought about by the events of September 11. Conversely, those in the Obama administration had their political perceptions shaped by the turmoil following the war on terror. The political cost of another war was so severe considering the reason that 'to a large extent, it was Obama's anti-war stance that won him the Democratic nomination'.[57] Therefore, including diplomacy with Iran as an option in the choice set was a matter of necessity. American policy had to reflect the mood of the electorate. While the second term has the potential to give the President more scope to stretch the gap between actual policy and popular policy, during the first term the President and the bureaucracy were more responsive to the public mood. Therefore, one of the biggest responsibilities that President Obama had was to find a way to accommodate the public sentiment when considering his foreign policy options, without excessively compromising the administration's policy strategy. The President and his electorate were not zealous about launching a full scale military attack on Iran. President Obama was, 'progressive where possible but a pragmatist when necessary.'[58]

Pursuing a policy of sabotage was also an option in the Obama administration's choice set. The cyber attack programs were active during the Bush administration, and were considered in the choice set of the Obama administration as well. The Obama administration was under pressure from America's Middle Eastern allies, to consider a confrontational policy and campaign of

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[54] Ibid

[55] J. Mann, *The Obamians.*

[56] B. Woodward, *Obama's Wars*

[57] J. Cassidy, 'Obama And The Bush Legacy: A Scorecard', *The New Yorker*, 31 May 2012

[58] *M. Indyk, K. Lieberthal, and M. O'Hanlon*, 'Scoring Obama's Foreign Policy: A Progressive Pragmatist Tries To Bend History', *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2012

sabotage.[59] America's Arab allies were also hostile to the idea of 'peace' with Iran.[60] According to classified information leaked by the wikileaks, 'leaders in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt referred to Iran as "evil", an "existential threat" and a power that "is going to take us to war."'[61] The Arab hostility toward Iran was best expressed by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, when he asked the United States to 'cut off the head of the snake' with a military strike.[62] Iran's response to America's Iran policy was also an important consideration for the decision-makers in Washington. According to Mohsen Milani, 'Tehran views the United States as an existential threat and to counter it has devised a strategy that rests on both deterrence and competition in the Middle East.'[63] The Persian Gulf monarchies and Israel were alarmed by the possibility of having to face an existential threat from an Iranian nuclear weapon.[64] They were also concerned about the impact of an Iranian nuclear weapon, on the balance of power in the region.[65] If the balance of power in the region shifted in Iran's favour, then these Persian Gulf monarchies and Israel would have had to depend on the United States for their security. That would have also meant losing their independence, both domestically and in their foreign relations. Neither the Arabs, nor the Israelis wanted to be excessively dependent on the United States for their sustenance and survival. Also, it was not desirable for the United States, to be held responsible for the security of the region, especially when America was finally trying to 'come home'. Therefore the choice set of the Obama administration had to include the sabotage program as an option, along with others.

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[59] D. Sanger and E. Schmitt, 'To Calm Israelis, U.S. Offers Ways to Restrain Iran,' *The New York Times*, September 3, 2012

[60] M. Warnaar, *Iranian Foreign Policy During Ahmadinejad: Ideology and Actions*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p.121

[61] I. Black and S. Tisdall, 'Saudi Arabia Urges US Attack On Iran To Stop Nuclear Programme.', *The Guardian*, 28 November 2010

[62] R. Colvin, '''Cut off head of snake'' Saudis told U.S. on Iran', *Reuters*, 29 November 2010

[63] M. Milani, 'Tehran's Take: Understanding Iran's U.S. Policy', *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2009

[64] A. Terrill, *The Saudi-Iranian Rivalry And The Future Of Middle East Security,* Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2011

[65] F. Procida, 'Overblown: Why An Iranian Nuclear Bomb Is Not The End Of The World', *Foreign Affairs*, June 2009

Israel was already involved in assassinating Iranian scientists, even before President Obama took office.[66] Iran had held the United States and Israel responsible, for the assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists.[67] While Israel was actively involved in a program of assassinations, the United States had vehemently denied having any part in the same. Even though there were programs to destroy the centrifuges in Iran, American authorities had no legal authority to assassinate Iranian scientists. According to former Defense Secretary, Leon Panetta, 'we (the United States) were not involved in any way -- in any way -- with regards to the assassination that took place there.... that's not what the United States does.'[68] The assassination of Iranian scientists, by Israel had worsened an already tense relationship between Iran and Israel.[69] The Iranian government, at least in public, had held both the United States and Israel accountable for the assassinations of their scientists during the Bush and Obama administration. The accusations against the United States were not unexpected, given the close alliance between the United States and Israel. According to Roger Cohen, 'if Obama allows the Israeli agenda on Iran to become America's, his outreach is dead.' [70] Therefore assassination of Iranian scientists was not a policy option that made it to the Obama administration's choice set, even though the Obama administration was held culpable for Israel's actions because it failed to stop Israel.

There were several reasons that went beyond the pressure from allies, why the Obama administration could not ignore Iran, and why the Obama administration had to consider pursuing clandestine operations against that country. President Obama's first year, and the first few months in office had seen many astounding developments and headlines concerning the Iranian nuclear program. For example, one such headline making episode was concerning Mohsen Fakhrizadeh and Shahram Amiri. Fakhrizadeh was the man who was alleged to have had a role as a researcher, working on the Iranian nuclear program. There is very little

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[66] P. Cockburn, 'Just who has been killing Iran's nuclear scientists?', *The Independent,* 5 October 2013

[67] 'Iran Accuses US And Britain Of Role In Killing Nuclear Scientist', *The Guardian*, 14 January 2012

[68] CNN Wire Staff, 'Iran threatens Israel, U.S. over scientist killing', 15 January 2012, retrieved on 18 March 2014,

http://edition.cnn.com/2012/01/15/world/meast/iran-nuclear-scientist-killed/

[69] A. Cowell and R. Gladstone, 'Iran Reports Killing of Nuclear Scientist in 'Terrorist' Blast', *The New York Times,* 11 January 2012

[70] R. Cohen, 'Obama In Netanyahu's Web', *The New York Times*, 27 May 2009

information publicly available about the work and profile of Fakhrizadeh. According to David Sanger,

> 'for more than a decade, he [Fakhrizadeh] has been identified as the relentless force behind on-again, off-again programs to design a nuclear warhead that could fit atop one of Iran's long-range missiles — a complex set of technologies that are a critical factor in how long it would take for Iran to build a weapon.'[71]

The United States and IAEA had both insisted on having access to Fakhrizadeh. Iran refused UN's request to interview Fakhrizadeh. Iran's refusal to furnish more information about Fakhrizadeh increased the friction between Washington and Tehran. As for Amiri, there is much speculation concerning his status. That is, there is still much confusion surrounding the 'role' of Amiri.[72] Amiri was an Iranian nuclear scientist who disappeared in May of 2009, supposedly while on a pilgrimage to Mecca. According to Iranian media reports, Amiri 'was an expert on radioactive isotopes for medical uses at Melek Ashtar University, in Tehran.'[73] There are plentiful speculative theories which discuss Amiri as a double agent or triple agent. There were also speculations that Amiri was one of the sources who corroborated the news concerning Iranian suspension of their nuclear weapons program in 2003. Iranian media reports had also claimed that Amiri was an employee of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation, and that he was looking forward to seeking 'asylum' abroad.[74] Iran had accused the United States of kidnapping Amiri. The episode was a powerful demonstration of the propaganda war between Iran and the United States. Iranian government and intelligence community had called Amiri a hero and a double-agent. The United States claimed he was a defector and spy.[75] All these much publicised episodes meant that the United States could not ignore Iran and the Iranian nuclear issue was politically important.

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[71] D. Sanger, 'Long Absent, Nuclear Expert Still Has Hold On Iran Talks', *The New York Times*, 24 June 2014

[72] D. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*

[73] Quoted by J. Borger, 'Iran: US Behind Missing Scientist', *The Guardian*, 7 October 2009

[74] 'Mystery Over Iranian Researcher', *BBC News*, 8 October 2009, retrieved on 20 February 2015,

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8296923.stm

[75] O. Memarian, '''Reading Amiri In Tehran'': Hero, Spy, or Kidnapped?', *The Huffington Post*, 27 July 2010

President Obama had only limited means to safe keep 'a world that could blow up any minute in half a dozen ways.'[76] Even though 'all options' were almost always on the table according to the public statements made by officials of the Obama administration,[77] the case studies in thesis points out that there were only a few viable options that made it to the first stage of decision-making, to even be considered.

Stage One

Under the Ph approach, at the very first stage of decision-making, the decision-makers consider the noncompensatory principle, and eliminate the alternatives which threaten their political survival. This section will also explain how the noncompensatory principle is operationalised in this case study. The decision-making in Stage One is also based on a nonholistic approach, where the decision-makers are not seeking to do a comprehensive search of all the possible options, so as to do a cost-benefit analysis between all alternatives as done by rational choice theorists. The nonholistic approach at the first stage also means that, the choice set at the beginning of Stage One is also defined by a dimension-based search. Only the most important political dimension is considered in this first stage, and the options which do not meet the 'threshold' will be removed from the choice set. Here the decision-makers are using heuristic rules in their decision-making. Heuristic rules involve the use of mental shortcut to arrive at a decision. They are helpful when the decision-makers have limited time and/or limited access to information necessary to make a decision.[78]

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[76] President Obama quoted by Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, p.11

[77] 'In Heavy Waters: Iran's Nuclear Program, The Risk Of War And Lessons From Turkey', *Crisis Group Middle East and Europe Report* No.116, 23 February 2012, p.3, 15

[78] R. Hogarth and N. Karelaia, 'Heuristic and Linear Models of Judgment: Matching Rules and Environments', *Psychological Review,* Vol. 114, No. 3, 2007, pp.733–758

Variable: Dignity

According to Alex Mintz, decision-makers are sensitive to potential threat to dignity.[79] If there is threat to dignity of the leader brought about by a certain foreign policy option, then that alternative ought to be rejected at the very first stage of decision-making because of the threat it poses to the political survival of the decision-makers, as a variable under the political dimension.[80] 'Dignity' as a variable in this case study refers to the domestic status of the newly elected President Obama. According to Mintz, threat to the dignity of the leader will manifest itself as a political loss, calling for the application of the noncompensatory principle, channeling the loss-aversion tendencies of political leaders.[81]

According to Benjamin Rhodes, President Obama's first term strategy was,[82] 'if you were to boil it all down to a bumper sticker, it's "wind down these two wars, re-establish American standing and leadership in the world, and focus on a broader set of priorities, from Asia and the global economy to a nuclear non-proliferation regime"'[83] By the time President Bush left office, there was significant public criticism of America's foreign policy, and in particular America's Middle East policy.[84] Considering the Bush administration's lack of public support,[85] and President Obama's election campaign promising 'change', the Obama administration had to reject the option of continuing the bush administration's policy of using sanctions as the primary policy

[79] A. Mintz, 'The Decision To Attack Iraq: A Noncompensatory Theory Of Decision Making'; C. Beckerman-Boys, *British Foreign Policy Decision-making Towards Palestine During The Mandate (1917-1948): A Poliheuristic Perspective*

[80] Ibid; C. Beckerman-Boys, 'Third Parties And The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Poliheuristic Decision Theory And British Mandate Palestine Policy'

[81] P. James and E. Zhang, 'Chinese Choices: A Poliheuristic Analysis of Foreign Policy Crises, 1950–1996', *Foreign Policy Analysis,* Vol.1, 2005, p.35

[82] Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications and Speechwriting; Ben Rhodes, White House Profile, retrieved on 11 May 2014,

http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/author/Ben%20Rhodes

[83] F. Gerges, *Obama and the Middle East*, p.10

[84] E. Hallams, 'From Crusader To Exemplar: Bush, Obama And The Reinvigoration Of America's Soft Power', *European Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 6, No.1, Spring 2011

[85] 'Global Public Opinion In The Bush Years (2001-2008)', *Pew Research Center*, 18 December 2008, retrieved on 1 March 2015,

http://www.pewglobal.org/2008/12/18/global-public-opinion-in-the-bush-years-2001-2008/

instrument, or at the very least reject it as the official policy. The political costs[86] of continuing the Bush administration's policy was too high, and therefore that option had to be removed from the choice set, because the noncompensatory principle in decision-making meant that a low score on the political dimension considered in this first stage cannot be compensated for by a high score in any other dimension.

For the last three decades, Washington had pursued coercive and confrontational policies toward Iran, and it failed to deliver the expected results;[87] the support to President Obama's election campaign meant that the public in America was ready for a fundamental restructuring of American policy, therefore to continue on with the policy choices of the past, without any alteration, would have meant compromising the dignity of the leader who promised that change. The 'threat to the dignity of the leader' meant that the decision-makers had to remove the option to continue with the confrontational policies of the past, because of the noncompensatory principle and the loss-aversion variable in decision-making. Therefore the Obama administration had to present its Iran policy in a different manner compared to how it existed during the Bush administration. At this point the Congress was controlled by the Democratic Party, and the election of a democratic President meant that it was possible to change the course of American policies. That meant greater investment in domestic affairs of the nation, and less use of hard power to resolve international conflicts.[88] However, that did not always nullify American involvement in 'resolving' international conflicts. Rebuilding and reorienting American foreign policy did not mean that President Obama could completely do away with America's international commitments and interests.

According to his campaign promises President Obama was an anti-war President, even though he inherited the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.[89] Also, the American public did not support

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[86] A. Mintz and N. Geva, 'The Poliheuristic Theory Of Foreign Policy Decisionmaking', In *Decisionmaking On War And Peace: The Cognitive-Rational Debate*', (eds.), N. Geva and A. Mintz, p.84

[87] B. Boylan, 'Moving Beyond Coercive Diplomacy: A New Policy Approach toward Iran's Nuclear Ambitions,' *Journal of Public & International Affairs*, Vol. 20, Spring 2009, pp.91-114

[88] President Barack Obama's Inaugural Address, 20 January 2009, retrieved on 19 February 2015,

http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/inaugural-address

[89] President Obama, Transcript: Obama's Speech Against The Iraq War, *NPR*, 20 January 2009, retrieved on 22 February 2016, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99591469

a new war in the Middle East, therefore the administration had to reach out to those who opposed 'rapprochement', because continuing the old policy could have resulted in a war with Iran, and such an eventuality could have damaged the image of the President, if he was not seen to have tried a new approach toward Iran.[90]

Since the beginning of the Obama presidency, the public statements and discourse by the Obama administration officials were rather friendly toward the Iranian people, and that was a different approach compared to the Bush administration's 'axis of evil' view of Iran. President Obama was generous in his praise and show of respect for the 'Iranian people and civilisation'.[91] At the same time the President had maintained that no options were off the table, to impress upon the Iranian government, the need to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue.[92] However, openly pursuing a confrontational policy of sanctions, as it was used during the Bush administration, would have been a humiliation to the President because it would have made the administration appear hypocritical, only a few months into office. This perhaps was a reason why President Obama had his White House work on new 'smart sanctions', just as he was preparing his Nowruz address to the people of Iran. Another reason was that, the Iranian ruling elites were not welcoming in their dealings with the then newly elected President Obama. The Supreme Leader was especially suspicious of the new administration, and was unwilling to 'unclench' his fist.

The Obama administration had also exhibited tendencies of what could be called 'uncommitted thinking'.[93] According to Morton H. Halperin, this means the officials of the administration dealt with uncertainties by offering a multitude of solutions to various problems at hand. The predilection for freedom of maneuver also meant that the Obama administration was often seen as oscillating between options, in its policy making.[94] This in turn seemed to have convinced the Obama White House to appeal for cooperation, from those within and without the 'Presidential

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[90] H. Cooper and M. Landler, 'Obama Pressured To Strike A Firmer Tone', *The New York Times,* 17 June 2009

[91] T. Erdbrink and G. Kessler, 'Obama Message To Iran', *The Washington Post*, 21 March 2009

[92] R. Colvin, 'Obama Seeks Comprehensive Strategy Toward Iran-White House', *Reuters News*, 29 January 2009

[93] M. Halperin, P. Clapp and A. Kanter, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, Washington D.C. : The Brookings Institution, 2006, p.23 ; The Bush administration was certainly ideologically inclined.

[94] See his notes on 'Uncommitted thinking', M. Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, Washington D.C. : The Brookings Institution, 1974, p. 24

circle'. Free from the obligations brought about by ideological thinking, the Obama administration was able to choose foreign policy instruments based on the happenings in a 'changing world'. Continuing the policies of the previous administration, and refusing to attempt the use of a different approach was not acceptable under that worldview.[95]

The Executive Branch was rather keen on exploring the use of new policy instruments toward Iran,[96] and the President did not need Congress's absolute commitment, to pursue new or old policy toward Iran. The constitution of the United States granted wide ranging powers to the Executive Branch, in order to determine the foreign policy of the nation.[97] The powers of the office, and the unique access to information guaranteed that the President was well placed to determine the course of the American foreign policy. Even though the Legislature and the Judiciary had the authority to keep the Executive Branch from abusing its power, since 9/11 the powers of the Executive Branch had increased substantially.[98] However, the Congress did have substantial power in influencing foreign policy, and the President could not dismiss it. According to William Galston, 'there is little doubt that the Republicans decided early on (just when is a matter of dispute) to act as a disciplined and relentless opposition, or that this decision was a dagger aimed at the heart of Obama's public standing.'[99] Therefore, publicly rejecting the policies of the former Republican President, was politically useful for the Obama administration, and openly following those policies or inability to drift from President Bush's course of action would have been an embarrassment to President Obama, during this time period.

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[95] J. Mann, *The Obamians*

[96] T. Parsi, *A Single Roll of the Dice: Obama's Diplomacy With Iran*

[97] H. Powell, 'The President's Authority Over Foreign Affairs: An Executive Branch Perspective', *The George Washington Law Review*, Vol. 67:527, 1999, pp.527-576

[98] L. Fisher, 'The War Power: No Checks, No Balance', In *Congress And The Politics Of Foreign Policy,* (eds.) C. Campbell, N. Rae and J. Stack, Jr., New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003, p.1

[99] W. Galston, *President Barack Obama's First Two Years: Policy Accomplishments, Political Difficulties*, Washington DC.: Brookings Institute, 4 November 2010, retrieved on 5 March 2015,

http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2010/11/04-obama-galston

Variable: The Economy

The global economic crisis and the damage caused by two very long wars had imposed certain limitations on the American foreign policy establishment.[100] Economy was an important factor under the political dimension, for the Obama administration, because of the fragile state of the American and global economy in 2009,[101] and during times of privation it has to be considered in the first stage of decision-making as a variable under the political dimension, because 'economy' as a variable is referring to the political use of the conceptions pertaining to the economy.[102]

During this time period, healthy economic choices were crucial to the political survival of the Obama administration, and using even a limited use of force such as air strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities was not an economically responsible choice given the potential consequence it could have had on the region, the oil trade and the world economy. The Middle East was an important region in the geopolitical calculations of the United States.[103] One major issue of concern for the Obama administration was the security threat emanating from the region. However, the United States could not accommodate any option which had high economic costs, also because it was already spending heavily on the 'war on terror' in the region. Because the security and economy of the world are integrated, the Middle East did matter to the Obama administration. However, the degree of importance attached to the Middle East was lower in some respects, and higher in some cases. For example, the United States was not completely reliant on the Middle East for oil security. The recent discoveries of oil and petroleum resources in other regions have made it possible to provide an alternative to the Middle Eastern energy sources.[104] For the United States, the way forward included options such as switching to alternate energy sources or increasing the American oil production. However, the United States had to protect the oil sources of the region for its allies, and save them from potential extremist attacks. 'Protecting oil sources means that

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[100] Transcript of President –Elect Barack Obama's Speech On The Economy, *The New York Times*, 8 January 2009

[101] Remarks of President Barack Obama – As Prepared for Delivery, Address to Joint Session of Congress, Washington: White House, 24 February 2009

[102] C. Beckerman-Boys, 'Third Parties And The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Poliheuristic Decision Theory And British Mandate Palestine Policy', p.233

[103] R. Owen, 'One Hundred Years Of Middle Eastern Oil', Middle East Brief, Brandeis University, January 2008, retrieved on 10 January 2016, http://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/MEB24.pdf

[104] A. Jaffe, K. Medlock III and R. Soligo, 'The Status of World Oil Reserves: Conventional And Unconventional Resources In The Future Supply Mix', *James A. Baker III Institute For Public Policy,* Rice University, October 2011

the United States is in an 'access-driven security dilemma'.[105] Moreover, the oil security of American allies was a long term national security concern for the United States, but there was a limit to the economic resources the Obama administration had at its disposal. The Middle East was arguably important to the energy security of the world, as a source of oil and route for oil trade. However, the reliance on the Middle Eastern oil and oil routes brought with it several risks. The problem with reliance on the Middle Eastern energy sources was that it had made the global energy security vulnerable to the political climate in the region. However, the threat was not limited to the unstable politics in that part of the world. The United States could not completely relieve itself from the responsibilities concerning the maritime security of the Persian Gulf, because of America's presence and interests in the region. That burden of responsibility was economically and militarily costly. Therefore any foreign policy instrument that was chosen had to be affordable from the economic standpoint, because the newly elected President was working to get the economy out of the great recession, also the President had to be sensitive regarding the possibility that 'the well-documented successes of the financial stabilisation and stimulus initiatives are invisible to a public reacting to the here and now, not to the counterfactual of how much worse it might have been.'[106]

Any attack, even limited attack, on Iran could have escalated the violence in the region, given Iran's involvement in Iraq and the Levant.[107] The political cost was too high, the 'logic of political survival' under the Ph theory meant that the Obama administration had to reject the option to use limited force on Iran, because an air strike on Iran could have escalated into a military conflict with that country, and the United States could not afford another war in the Persian Gulf, for economic and security reasons.[108] According to David Sanger, the United States did not have any intention of launching a military strike on Iran, even under President Bush. Sanger argues that, President Bush 'never instructed the Pentagon to move beyond the contingency planning, even during the final year of his presidency, contrary to what some critics

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[105] C. Glaser, 'How Oil Influences U.S. National Security', *International Security*, Vol. 38, No. 2, Fall 2013

[106] W. Galtson, 'President Barack Obama's First Two Years: Policy Accomplishments, Political Difficulties'.
[107] T. Parsi, 'With Iran, Diplomacy Is the Only Solution', *New York Times*, September 25, 2009; P. Beinart, 'Obama Shrinks the War on Terrorism', *Time Magazine,* 07 December 2009
[108] The Iran Project, Weighing Benefits And Costs Of Military Action Against Iran, *The Wilson Center*, 2012, retrieved on 16 January 2016, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/IranReport_091112_FINAL.pdf

have suggested.'[109] However, according to President Bush's memoir, 'I directed the Pentagon to study what would be necessary for a strike. Military action would always be on the table, but it would be my last resort.'[110] Iran was crucial because it was at the crossroads of the trade routes in the region, therefore the Obama administration had to reject the option to pursue a confrontational policy toward Iran, which had the potential to lead to a very expensive war with that country,[111] and the world economy could not afford another crisis in the region, during that period.

According to Oren, 'the main reason why neither the Bush nor the Obama administration has opted for a military strike is that the 'haulers', who were led by a formidable bureaucratic-political player, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, have had the upper hand over the hawkish 'pullers'.'[112] Robert Gates, as the Defence Secretary, had tremendous influence in Washington. However, one has to be cautious to not exaggerate his role in shaping the American foreign policy, pertaining to the Iranian nuclear issue. Even though some had argued that Gates was the best Secretary of Defence in the post-World War II era,[113] Gates had a very difficult relationship with the White House, Congress, career politicians in Washington and (even though otherwise amicable) did not trust President Obama's war strategy. Gates also disapproved of Vice-President Joe Biden's foreign policy acumen. According to Gates, "I think he [Joe Biden] has been wrong on nearly every major foreign policy and national security issue over the past four decades.[114] Gates was outspoken about his dislike for the unwarranted meddling by the Congress and White House, in matters of National Security. In his memoirs, Gates discusses his frustrations with those in power in Washington. Gates accuses Washington politicians of making national security decisions based on domestic political considerations. Moreover, President Obama's mistrust of the military officials made Gates's relationship with the White House even

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[109] D. Sanger, 'Israel Tried For U.S. Aid To Hit Iran Atomic Site Bush Rebuffed Plea But Revealed Plan For Covert Sabotage', *International New York Times*, 12 January 2009

[110] G. Bush, *Decision Points*, New York: Crown Publishers, 2010, p.417
[111] J. Rawshandil, and N. Lean, *Iran, Israel, and the United States: Regime Security Vs. Political Legitimacy*, California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2011
[112] I. Oren, 'Why Has The United States Not Bombed Iran? The Domestic Politics Of America's Response To Iran's Nuclear Programme', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 24, No. 4, December 2011

[113] G. Jaffe, Book review: 'Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War' by R. Gates, *The Washington Post*, 7 January 2014

[114] R. Gates, *Duty*, p. 288

more difficult than it needed to be.[115] The Bush administration and the Obama administration could not use hard power to deal with Iran, because the military option was not politically viable. Both the Bush administration and the Obama administration would have jeopardised their political survival by venturing into a war with Iran.

Stage Two

By the end of the first stage, all options which threatened the political survival of the decision-makers were eliminated. The operationalisation of the noncompensatory principle meant that pursuing the confrontational policies such as using limited air strikes on Iran, or pursuing the sanctions policy as it existed during the Bush administration were removed from the choice set. The only two policy options that remained were: (a) pursue a campaign of sanctions and sabotage; (b) pursue diplomacy. In this second stage, the decision-makers had to choose from the remaining options. This time the final choice is arrived at, after doing a cost benefit analysis of the alternatives. Also, this section will argue that the decision-makers could not pursue diplomacy, without having another policy instrument to supplement diplomacy. The substantive dimension considered in this stage was the diplomacy dimension: (a) diplomacy with the Europeans; (b) diplomacy with the Arabs and Afghans; (c) diplomacy with Israel. These diplomatic relations are considered in the second stage because they were substantive, rather than political for the reason that they were not politicised like the variables in the first stage were. and the issue of 'diplomacy' in this case study was not about any perceptions concerning diplomacy or America's relationship with its allies but about practical concerns associated with diplomacy, as explained in the following sections of this chapter.

The Diplomacy Dimension: Diplomacy with the Europeans

President Obama came to office with a publically declared agenda to fundamentally change America's relationship with the Islamic Republic, but this was not welcomed by America's allies without reservations. At the start of the Obama Presidency, America's European allies were still struggling to cope with the transition from the Bush administration's confrontational policy

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[115] R. Gates, 'The Quiet Fury of Robert Gates: Bush and Obama's secretary of defense had to wage war in Iraq, Afghanistan—and today's Washington', *The Wall Street Journal*, 7 January 2014

toward Iran, to the Obama administration's advocacy for pursuing negotiations without preconditions.

The Obama White House had to deal with the suspicion regarding America's policy toward Iran, from American allies. America's European partners had at times accused the Obama administration of being 'too soft' on Iran.[116] The accusation was partly unfounded,[117] and also based on the misinterpretation of Washington's handling of the Iranian nuclear issue, because the Obama administration's Iran policy was a combination of punitive and persuasive measures. However, pursuing a less confrontational policy toward Iran was not an agenda supported singularly by the Obama administration; there were several international players who had a role in diplomacy with Iran. For example, the EU-3 had pursued diplomacy with Iran, even during the Bush administration.[118] The European governments, especially in France, Britain and Germany were against a military strike on Iran. Following the Iraq invasion, there was no European public support for another war in the Middle East. It is also probable that the reason why the EU 3 (and Russia) was keen to pursue diplomacy with Iran, during the time of the Bush administration, was because of their fear that the United States might use hard power to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue.[119] However, the EU3 were also concerned about America's Iran policy under President Obama. This perchance was due to the trepidation that Obama administration was seemingly more accommodating of Iranian ambitions, than any other American government. However, many in Europe had also actively supported America's new approach to foreign policy, under President Obama.[120] For example, in 2009, the then German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier had praised President Obama for offering to pursue diplomacy with Iran. According to Steinmeier, 'offering dialogue with Iran – that's neither a weakness nor a concession. It's sensible.'[121] However, the transatlantic strategy on Iran was rather inconsistent in the last decade,

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[116] C. Moore, 'Barack Obama needs to be forceful in using 'soft power' against Iran', *The Telegraph*, 19 June 2009

[117] B. Mazanec, *The Evolution of Cyber War: International Norms For Emerging Technology Weapons*, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2015

[118] Public Papers Of The Presidents Of The United States, George W. Bush, Book 1: January 1 to June 30, 2005, Washington: U S Government Printing Office, 2007, p.1085

[119] C. Mazzucelli, 'EU3-Iranian Nuclear Diplomacy: Implications For US Policy In The Middle East', *EUMA,* Vol. 4, No. 6, March 2007

[120] Á. de Vasconcelos and M. Zaborowski (eds.), *The Obama Moment: European And American Perspectives,* Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2009

[121] D. Graham, 'Germany's Steinmeier Hails Obama Iran Stance', *Reuters News*, 11 January 2009

with the good cop/bad cop role playing switched many times. For example, during the Bush administration, the United States was at times criticised for being the bad cop who was not a good faith partner in Europe's negotiations with Iran, because the United States was not committed to pursuing diplomacy to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue. Since the Obama administration took office, the United States was often criticised for overplaying the good cop role, and rushing to commit to diplomacy with Iran.[122] However, until President Obama got involved in diplomacy with Iran, the negotiations between EU and Iran had not led to any progress in terms of resolving the nuclear issue, because before President Obama came to office, Europe's diplomacy with Iran was constrained by the Bush administration's lack of cooperation in negotiating with Iran without preconditions.[123] Until the Obama presidency, the Europeans for the most part were satisfied just to have the diplomatic channel open. During the Bush administration, one major issue of contention between Iran and 'the West' was regarding the suspension of Iran's uranium enrichment program. The Iranians were unwilling to suspend the enrichment program to merely continue negotiations, without any results from them. The EU wanted to continue the negotiations and expect of the Iranians to continue suspension. The policy eventually had to fall apart, because it did not have a final goal. The Mahmoud Ahmadinejad Presidency in Iran marked the end of the negotiations on 'complete suspension of enrichment'. During the Obama presidency, the West was willing to accept the Iranian demands to maintain some level of Uranium enrichment in Iranian territory, even though France had objected to it.[124]

According to M. O'Hanlon's analysis, there was potential, even during the Bush administration, to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue through diplomatic means.[125] There were several instances where American national interests were effectively and efficiently served by resorting to diplomacy.[126] For example, it was through diplomacy that the Bush administration had

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[122] R. Einhorn, 'A Transatlantic Strategy on Iran's Nuclear Program', *The Washington Quarterly,* Vol. 27, No.4, 2004, pp.21-32

[123] A. Nikitin and M.B. Mærli, (eds.), *Tuning Priorities In Nuclear Arms Control And Non-Proliferation,* Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2008

[124] O. Meier, 'European Efforts To Solve The Conflict Over Iran's Nuclear Programme: How Has The European Union Performed?', *EU Non-Proliferation Consortium, Non-Proliferation Papers,* No. 27, February 2013

[125] P. Rodman, 'Countering Iran's Revolutionary Challenge: A Strategy For The Next Phase' , In *Opportunity 08: Independent Ideas for America's Next President*, (ed.), M. O'Hanlon, Second Edition, Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2008, p.31

[126] N. Soderberg, 'Turns Out Diplomacy Works', *Washington Monthly*, May 2005

convinced Libya to give up their support for terrorism,[127] and the negotiations had also resulted in an agreement with Muammar Gaddafi which prevented nuclear proliferation to that part of the world.[128] Consequently, diplomacy with Iran was an excellent alternative, with great potential, to avoid going to war with Iran.[129] The remedy of 2003 was to invade Iraq and to start a war on terror. That remedy did not settle past grievances, instead it led to further violence.[130] The Obama administration's option to pursue diplomacy to deal with the Iranian nuclear program was admissible, from the perspective of America's diplomacy with its European allies.

For the last three decades, the American policy-makers did not consider diplomacy with Iran to be a viable policy option. The United States had, during the Bush era, refused to negotiate with unfriendly states and actors in the region, on several occasions. That policy was not only against those under the 'Shiite crescent', but also included Iraq, Hamas and other Anti-American groups. The Obama administration attempted to appease the allies and pursue a new course of action. It was necessary to give diplomacy a chance, because even if the United States wanted to eventually impose more sanctions, or begin a military strike against Iran, it was necessary to secure support from the European partners and from the UN. Therefore, diplomacy was also a means to arrive at other potential goals.

The Diplomacy dimension: Diplomacy with Israel

The Iranian nuclear program was one of the most talked about issues in Israel. The Iranian nuclear program was also made out to be the single biggest threat to Israeli security, by the Netanyahu government.[131] When the Iranian nuclear program was restarted by the Islamic

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[127] B. Richardson, 'A New Realism: A Realistic And Principled Foreign Policy', *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2008

[128] K. Davenport, 'Chronology of Libya's Disarmament and Relations with the United States', *Arms Control Association*, February 2014, retrieved on 16 January 2016,
https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/LibyaChronology

[129] M. O'Hanlon, *Budgeting for Hard Power: Defense and Security Spending Under Barack Obama*, Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2009, p.134

[130] G. Sick, 'Iran: Confronting Terrorism', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.26, No.4, 2003, pp.83-98

[131] D. Reider, 'Israel's Prime Minister Is Obsessed With Iran. The Rest of Israel? Not So Much.', *Reuters*, 2 October 2014, retrieved on 6 March 2015,

http://blogs.reuters.com/great-debate/2014/10/02/netanyahu-finds-himself-increasingly-alone-on-iran/

Republic, it was because of the threat from Saddam Hussein's Iraq.[132] During the 1990s, the Iran's nuclear program was a matter of national pride, identity and security. By the time President Obama took office, Iran seemed to want to keep their nuclear options open and be self-sufficient in nuclear energy. Israel was the single most important Middle Eastern ally of the United States,[133] and before making America's Iran policy, the Obama administration had to consider Israel's fears, and Israeli policy toward Iran. This was because the United States would have been held accountable for any Israeli aggression against Iran. Also, for domestic political reasons, such as lobbying by AIPAC, the American government was under pressure to address Israel's security concerns.[134] Moreover, the Obama administration had to worry about Israel 'dragging the United States into a war with Iran'.[135] That fear was not unfounded. According to former IAEA chief, Mohamed ElBaradei, 'Israel would be utterly crazy to attack Iran.. I worry about it. If you bomb, you will turn the region into a ball of fire and put Iran on a crash course for nuclear weapons with the support of the whole Muslim world.'[136] According to Israeli intelligence agencies, the Netanyahu government had exaggerated the threat posed by Iran.[137] According to Trita Parsi, Prime Minister Netanyahu merely wanted to push Iran and the United States into a war with each other. '[President] Obama had famously stated that the conflict with Iran could not be resolved by issuing threats, and wanted to create an atmosphere conducive to diplomacy. Making war threats would achieve the opposite, which Netanyahu undoubtedly understood.'[138]

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[132] R. Reardon, 'Containing Iran: Strategies For Addressing The Iranian Nuclear Challenge', p.71

[133] J. Goldberg, 'Is Israel America's Ultimate Ally?', *The Atlantic*, 26 April 2011

[134] J. Mearsheimer and S. Walt, 'The Israel Lobby And U.S. Foreign Policy', *London Review of Books*, Vol. 28, No.6, 23 March 2006

[135] D. Usborne, 'Pentagon Predicts Israel Will Drag US Into War With Iran', *The Independent*, 21 March 2012

[136] M. ElBaradei in an interview with R. Cohen, 'Realpolitik For Iran', *The New York Times*, 12 April 2009

[137] R. Ahren, 'Ex-Mossad Boss: Fear-mongering Netanyahu Is Antithesis Of Churchill', *The Times of Israel*, 3 February 2015

[138] T. Parsi, 'To Netanyahu, Peace Is An Existential Threat', *The Huffington Post*, 2 March 2015

Israel did not face an existential threat from Iran or an Iranian nuclear weapons program.[139] For the Obama administration, there was no reason to believe that America's diplomacy with Iran could have compromised Israel's security.[140] Iran had no reason to attack Israel or start a war with Israel or the United States. Iran and Israel do not share territories. Moreover, Iranian chemical weapons program was not aimed at Israel. The Iranian chemical weapons program was started only after Iran had sustained severe losses as a result of Iraqi chemical attacks. Moreover, the program was started because of the inaction of the United Nations and the international community, following the Iraqi assault on Iran. The use of chemical weapons was forbidden by Ayatollah Khomeini on moral as well as religious grounds, and '..studying Iran's effort to create a CW deterrent during the Iran-Iraq War can provide context regarding Iran's nuclear program.'[141] The Chemical Weapons program was started as a means to deter further chemical weapons attack on Iranian territory.[142] Israel was not Iran's highest priority, until the Israeli government made Iran a key security issue. Therefore, the Obama administration had to consider diplomacy, so as to avoid creating hostile circumstances which could have led to an undesirable war with Iran. Also, Prime Minister Netanyahu was pushing for urgent action to deal with the Iranian issue.[143] For Prime Minister Netanyahu, time was a factor when dealing with the issue of Iranian nuclear program.[144] Therefore the Obama administration had to use a policy instrument which was to slow down the Iranian nuclear program. It was possible to serve that purpose by pursuing a campaign of sanctions and sabotage against Iran. The Obama administration chose to

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[139] P. Beinart, 'Iran Is Not An 'Existential' Threat to Israel - No Matter What Netanyahu Claims', *Haaretz*, 7 August 2015

[140] Times of Israel Staff, 'Obama To US Jews: Iran Deal Lifts Existential Threat To Israel', *The Times of Israel*, 28 August 2015

[141] M. Eisenstadt, 'What Iran's Chemical Past Tells Us About Its Nuclear Future', *The Washington Institute For Near East Policy*, Research Notes, No. 17, April 2014, retrieved on 19 April 2014,

http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/ResearchNote17_Eisenstadt2.pdf

[142] A. Cordesman and A. Seitz, *Iranian Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Birth of a Regional Nuclear Arms Race?*, California: Greenwood Publishing Group, p.140

[143] Additional reporting by M. Spetalnick, 'Israel's Netanyahu To Press Obama On Nuclear Iran', *Reuters News*, 18 May 2009

[144] A. Lieberman of the anti-Arab Israel Beiteinu party quoted by J. Goldberg, 'Netanyahu to Obama: Stop Iran— Or I Will', *The Atlantic*, 31 March 2009, retrieved on 19 April 2014,

http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2009/03/netanyahu-to-obama-stop-iran-or-i-will/307390/2/

pursue sanctions, and also conduct the joint Israeli-American cyber attack on Iranian nuclear facilities.[145]

The American intelligence community and the Department of Defence had played a significant role in aiding America's clandestine operations with Israel, against the Iranian nuclear program. One of the most significant moves by the United States to set back the Iranian nuclear clock was the cyber attack program launched during the Bush administration. President Obama's Defence Secretary Robert Gates requested that the 'Olympic Games' be moved out of the control of the military. It was later placed under the supervision of the intelligence community. The 'Olympic Games' was an aggressive move to destroy and delay Iranian nuclear program. According to Marc Ambinder, China and Russia had viewed, 'an operation like Olympic Games- a military-led cyber attack against another country-as an aggressive act. [The National Security Agency is a defense intelligence agency; the Central Intelligence Agency, which is not, almost certainly played a role in introducing the weapon into the Iranian centrifuge processing system.].'[146] The use of cyber weapon by Israel Sigint National Unit and the United States (Department of Defense and National Security Agency) to attack Iranian centrifuges in Natanz was by all definition an act of war. 'The bug' was what gave the Americans much needed space between diplomacy on the one hand and a potential war with Iran on the other.

The 'Olympic Games' was the most important collaboration between Israel and the United States, to deal with the Iranian nuclear program. The 'bug' was introduced during the time of the Bush administration. According to David Sanger, 'Olympic Games' was presented to President Bush, as an alternative to starting a war with Iran. In 'a one –on –one talk, in which Bush urged Obama to preserve two classified programs, the cyber attacks on Iran and the drone program in Pakistan. The Iranians, Obama was told, were still clueless about why their centrifuges were blowing up. Obama took Bush's advice.'[147] By most accounts, President Obama was actively involved in all the programs of his administration, to sabotage and set back the Iranian nuclear program.

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[145] D. Sanger, 'Obama Order Sped Up Wave of Cyberattacks Against Iran', *The New York Times*, 1 June 2012

[146] M. Ambinder, 'Did America's Cyber Attack On Iran Make Us More Vulnerable?', *The Atlantic*, 5 June 2012

[147] D. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*

The Israelis had always produced alarming reports concerning the status of the Iranian nuclear program. Much of the Israeli paranoia, concerning the non-existent Iranian nuclear weapons program, was based on myths and not facts.[148] When President Obama took office, there was enormous pressure on him to urgently address the issues concerning Iran. Even though Israel had no capability to successfully carry out a military strike against Iranian nuclear facilities, there were reasons to fear that they might still attempt to do the same.[149] The 'Olympic Games' therefore served the purpose of not only slowing down Iranian uranium enrichment, but also prevented a possible Israeli military aggression against Iran.

The Israeli Prime Minister's office and AIPAC had both advocated for strict enforcement of economic sanctions against Iran. Therefore, the Obama administration needed other policy instruments to supplement diplomacy, so as to continue pressuring Iran to negotiate in good faith. Also, it was necessary to tighten the existing sanctions regime, before imposing new sanctions, because sanctions were not especially effective in changing Iran's behaviour, for the reason that Iran had found ways to circumvent sanctions.[150] Because Iran had to cope with sanctions for over three decades, they were ingenious in dealing with the issue. For example, according to Kenneth Katzman, Iran had managed to run a robust black market economy by taking advantage of countries 'with lax enforcement of export control laws, such as UAE and Malaysia. In some cases, Iran was able to obtain sophisticated technology even from U.S. firms.'[151] Also, in order to garner support for diplomacy, the Obama administration needed to have a strict sanctions regime in place. Moreover, sanctions and sabotage were useful campaigns to supplement diplomacy, so as to pressure Iran to negotiate with a sense of urgency.

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[148] C. Bolan, 'The Iranian Nuclear Debate: More Myths Than Facts', *Parameters,* Vol.43, No.2, Summer 2013, pp.77-88

[149] A. Harel, 'Obama took Netanyahu's threats to attack Iran seriously', *Haaretz*, 13 October 2014

[150] See prepared statement of Mr. Mark Dubowitz, 'Progress Of The Obama Administration's Policy Toward Iran', Hearing before the Subcommittee on National Security, Homeland Defense and Foreign Operations of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives, One Hundred Twelfth Congress, First Session, 15 November 2011, Serial No.112-99

[151] K. Katzman, 'Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses', *Congressional Research Service Report*, RL32048, 22 June 2009

It seemed to be a difficult task for the Obama administration, to negotiate with Iran, and deal with the anxiety of American allies who were opposed to making peace with Iran. Just as Hillary Mann Leverett argued, 'the United States is going to have to say: "yes you are our allies but you cannot stand in the way of critical U.S. interests." Just as when Nixon went to China we kept Japan and Taiwan as allies but we didn't let them stand in the way of the biggest geopolitical prize of the century: going to China.'''[152]

The Diplomacy Dimension: Diplomacy with the Arabs and Afghans

The Arab countries were not reserved in their criticism of Iran and its nuclear program. The Arab monarchies were concerned about the balance of power in the region shifting in Iran's favor. That is, if Iran had a nuclear weapon, then the balance of power might shift in Iran's favour. However, not all Arab governments were hostile to Iran. Syrian government, post-Saddam Iraq and Hezbollah were Iran's closest allies. Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Afghanistan were important factors in the Obama administration's Iran policy calculations. These countries were influential in the Iran policy decision-making of the United States, because of their proximity to Iran, and the relationship they shared with Iran.

Saudi Arabia: There were several reasons why the Obama administration had to consider Saudi Arabia's concerns, when arriving at an Iran policy choice. The relationship between the Kingdom and the United States was beneficial to both parties. America needed Saudi Arabia's cooperation for economic and strategic reasons.[153] Saudi Arabia was especially dependent on the United States for its security and political survival. For several reasons, Iran was a particularly sensitive issue to the Saudi monarchy. The Saudi government had, for long, blamed Iran for trying to export its revolution to the neighbouring Arab countries.[154] The Saudi rulers had also accused

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[152] H. Leverett quoted by S. Stearns, 'US Faces Israeli, Saudi Concerns Over Iran Nuclear Talks', 06 March 2014, retrieved on 16 April 2014,

http://www.voanews.com/content/us-faces-israeli-saudi-concerns-over-iran-nuclear-talks-/1865964.html

[153] T. Jones, 'America, Oil, And War In The Middle East', *Journal of American History*, Vol. 99, No.1, 2012, pp.208-218

[154] B. Ganji, *Politics Of Confrontation: The Foreign Policy Of The USA And Revolutionary Iran*, New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006, p.119

Iran of meddling in the internal affairs of the Arab countries in the region.[155] These accusations were not unfounded. Iran had a great deal of influence on the Shiite Arabs. Iran had also used this influence to encourage opposition groups in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia was hostile to changing the status quo in the region in Iran's favor. 'Its rulers, being old, are not coping well with radical change.'[156] Iran, since the Islamic revolution, has been the poster child for radical change in the region. Saudi Arabia's sensitivity concerning America's diplomacy with Iran had to do with the Kingdom's fear of being marginalised.[157] A more amicable relationship between Iran and the United States would have enhanced the security of the region. However, the prospect of any improvement in Iran's status in the region was not well received by Saudi Arabia, because to them, politics is a zero sum game.[158]

Iran was not the only country in the region which had nuclear ambitions. The United States had to address the concerns of the Arab countries in the region, also because several of them had nuclear ambitions, and they were sensitive to the gains and losses made by Iran, and the development of Iran's nuclear program. However, the Iranian program was more advanced and independent, compared to its Arab neighbours. The United States had tried to control the supply of nuclear energy in the region - civilian programs in the Arab countries and a potential nuclear weapons program in Iran. However, by 2009, the Iranian nuclear program was rather advanced, and it was no longer practical for the United States to cling to the zero enrichment policy there. Even so, the United States still had much control over the activities of its allies. For example, the United States had preliminary agreements with Bahrain and Saudi Arabia to help those countries with their civilian nuclear energy. The United States also had several reasons to be concerned about Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia had plans to have a civilian nuclear program, which was to meet the energy needs of the kingdom.[159] The program was theoretically similar to that of the Iranian civilian nuclear program. However, Saudi Arabia did not have the nuclear infrastructure for a civilian program. The only institution which the Kingdom had was the King Abdullah City

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[155] Ibid

[156] A. Gresh, 'Saudi Arabia feels insecure', *Le Monde diplomatique*, English Edition, May 2014

[157] F. Wehrey, T. Karasik, A. Nader, J. Ghez, L. Hansell and R. Guffey, *Saudi-Iranian Relations Since The Fall Of Saddam: Rivalry, Cooperation, And Implications For U.S. Foreign Policy*, Santa Monica, California: Rand Corporation, 2009, p.XIV

[158] Ibid

[159] M. Fitzpatrick, *Nuclear Programmes in the Middle East: In the Shadow of Iran*, London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2008, p 40

for Atomic and Renewable Energy.[160] The tension between Saudi Arabia and the United States, regarding the Iranian nuclear issue made the negotiations on the Saudi civilian nuclear program, a particularly complicated issue. Moreover, the UAE which is Saudi Arabia's neighbor was negotiating the 123 agreement (which came into force on 17 December 2009) with the United States.[161] Instead of denying nuclear energy to these countries, the United States was trying to control the way in which transfer of nuclear technology occurred. Other suppliers were entitled to their own rules, on how they wanted to deal with their clients. However, the United States had strict policies on the management of the nuclear materials and technology it gave to American allies in the region. According to Daniel Horner,

> 'in the 123 agreement, the UAE says it will not pursue an indigenous enrichment or reprocessing program. The pact gives the United States the right to stop nuclear cooperation and require the return of materials or technology if the UAE changes its mind. As the advocates note, that condition is unique in U.S. 123 agreements.'[162]

However, that model was not a prototype for other nuclear agreements to follow. According to a State Department official quoted by Daniel Horner, 'the UAE made the commitment not to pursue enrichment and reprocessing activities in part as a result of a "political calculation" stemming from its desire to conclude an agreement with the United States and make sure that Congress did not reject the pact.'[163] Therefore the situation across the Middle East was very different from how it was in the Islamic Republic, concerning nuclear energy and technology. Enrichment and nuclear knowhow was already an important political issue in Iran. President Obama's decision to accept Iran's enrichment rights was a step away from the course of action

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[160] O. Heinonen and S. Henderson, 'Nuclear Kingdom: Saudi Arabia's Atomic Ambitions', *The Washington Institute For Near East Policy*, POLICYWATCH 2230, 27 March 2014, retrieved on 19 April 2014,

http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/nuclear-kingdom-saudi-arabias-atomic-ambitions

[161] R. Wigglesworth, 'UAE And US Sign Nuclear Deal', *The Financial Times*, 18 January 2009

[162] D. Horner, 'U.S., UAE Sign New Nuclear Cooperation Pact', *Arms Control Today*, June 2009, retrieved on 20 April 2014,

http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2009_6/UAE

[163] D. Horner, 'U.S. Policy on Nuclear Pacts Detailed', *Arms Control Today*, January/ February 2014, retrieved on 20 April 2014,

http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2014_01-02/US-Policy-on-Nuclear-Pacts-Detailed

pursued by the Bush administration. Because the Bush administration and the Obama administration had already placed significant limitations on the nuclear ambitions of its Arab allies in the region, the United States had to deal with the Iranian nuclear issue, with a great sense of urgency.

Saudi Arabia had made several attempts 'to drag' the United States into a military confrontation with Iran.[164] The kingdom had also contributed to increasing the tension between Washington and Tehran. Saudi Arabia's frustration was also because of its failure to build an effective coalition against Iranian influence in the region. Moreover, Saudi Arabia was also unable to control the energy policies of the smaller states in the Persian Gulf. For example, Iran had managed to sign an agreement with Oman for building a natural gas pipeline for $1 billion.[165] The improved relationship between Iran and its neighbours had the potential to threaten Saudi Arabia's influence in the region. 'Oman faces Iran across the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most important trade route for crude shipments. Oman is well placed to benefit from Iran's reintegration into the global economy, which would only strengthen the two nations' historic ties.'[166] Iran's economic cooperation with its Persian Gulf neighbours had the potential to further strengthen Iran's power and influence in the region.

All the above mentioned reasons had prompted Saudi Arabia to consider joining Israel, to launch a military attack on Iran.[167] In order to avoid such a development, the Obama administration had to act. Saudi Arabia, akin to Israel, had advocated for strengthening the sanctions regime against Iran.[168] Saudi Arabia also wanted to slow down the Iranian nuclear program. For the Obama

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[164] M. Allison, 'U.S. And Iranian Strategic Competition: Saudi Arabia And The Gulf States', Center for Strategic & International Studies, December 2010

[165] Reporting by M. Balali in Dubai and F. Al Arimi in Muscat, Writing by S. Aboudi, 'Iran says seals gas export deal with Oman', *Reuters*, 12 March 2014, retrieved on 12 May 2014,

http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/12/us-iran-oman-gas-idUSBREA2B24K20140312

[166] 'Oman Fights Saudi Bid for Persian Gulf Hegemony with Iran Pipeline Plan', *FARS News Agency*, 22 April 2014, retrieved on 22 April 2014,

http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13930202000989

[167] D. Sanger, J. Glanz and J. Becker, 'Around The World, Distress Over Iran', *The New York Times*, 28 November 2010

[168] N. Habibi, 'The Impact Of Sanctions On Iran-GCC Economic Relations', Brandeis University, November 2010

administration, a campaign of sanctions and sabotage were desirable alternatives to appease American allies, and avoid a potential war with Iran.

Afghanistan: Afghanistan was a consideration which influenced the Obama administration's Iran policy decisions. In the case of Afghanistan, the United States had worked with Iran on numerous occasions.[169] However, that cooperation did not facilitate or result in improved relationship between Tehran and Washington. The Afghan issue was particularly complicated for both Iran and the United States. Iran and the United States had both fought the Taliban, at various points in their history.[170] The United States had also worked with Taliban, at various points in its history.[171] Iran's association with Taliban was mostly to undermine the American efforts in Afghanistan. The Taliban was a threat to Iranian interests and security.[172] There was no long term interest for Iran, to support the Taliban in Afghanistan. Moreover, the Pakistani supply of arms and money to the Taliban was grave enough a threat to Iran. Therefore, the Iranians could not enter into any fruitful alliance with the Taliban.[173] However, Afghanistan was an important country for Iran, for strategic reasons and also because it was Iran's neighbor. The United States could not ignore Iran's influence in Afghanistan, because America had spent significant economic and military resources to increase its influence in Afghanistan.

For the United States, cooperation with Iran and the other regional actors were important for regional stability, because of the nature of the threat to regional peace, in the form of international terrorism. It was not possible for the United States to 'bring peace to Afghanistan', without Iranian participation in the process, because of the Iranian influence in the region.[174] According to Secretary Gates, he had tried to not see the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in terms

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[169] W. Danspeckgruber, 'If You Want A Stable Afghanistan—Don't Attack Iran!', *The Huffington Post*, 27 March 2012

[170] I. Al-Marashi, 'Iran: A Not So Unlikely Ally', *Al Jazeera*, 8 December 2014, retrieved on 6 March 2015,

http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/12/iran-not-so-unlikely-ally-20141285192862941.html

[171] J. Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism*. Virginia: Pluto Press, 1999

[172] G. Bahgat, 'Iran And The United States: The Emerging Security Paradigm In The Middle East', *Parameters*, Vol.37, No.2, Summer 2007

[173] S. Kutty, 'Iran and Afghanistan: The Urgent Need for Inclusive Regional Diplomacy', *Asia Policy*, No.17, January 2014

[174] A. Gray, 'US, Iran Share Interests In Afghanistan – Petraeus', *Reuters News*, 9 January 2009

of 'winning' or 'losing'. In his words, '...the key thing is to establish what our objectives are, and can we achieve our objectives. And the answer to that question is absolutely.'[175] The Obama administration's main objectives in Afghanistan were to ensure the stability of that country,[176] and to pull out the international troops at the earliest possible date. According to R. Paris, there are so many things that went wrong with the Afghan mission. 'From time to time, frameworks were appealing precisely because they seemed to offer a ready solution for Afghan stability.'[177] 'But the critical point here is that, without U.S.-Iranian rapprochement, the United States will not be able to achieve any of its high-priority goals in the Middle East and, more broadly, Afghanistan.'[178] It would not have been possible for the United States, to be the guarantor of Middle East security, without working with the state and non-state actors in the region. President Obama had to face significant criticism from his own administration, regarding America's strategy in dealing with the 'war on terror'. According to Robert Gates, 'the president doesn't trust his commander, can't stand Karzai, doesn't believe in his own strategy and doesn't consider the war to be his. For him, it's all about getting out.'[179] During this period the Obama administration was trying to share the responsibility, to guarantee the security of the region, by garnering support from regional actors; it was all the more important to work with Iran, because Iran was an important adversary working against American interests in the region.[180] Moreover, Iran could have been a partner in fighting Sunni extremism in the region.

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[175] Excerpts of remarks by Secretary of Defence R. Gates as answer to the question posed by C. Amanpour , 5 October 2009, 'Obama to Increase troops in Afghanistan by 30,000', *Foreign Policy Bulletin*, Vol. 20, Issue 01, March 2010, pp.10-37

[176] R. McMahon, 'The Purpose of the Afghan War', *The Council on Foreign Relations,* 21 September 2009, retrieved on 10 May 2014,

http://www.cfr.org/afghanistan/purpose-afghan-war/p20242

[177] R. Paris, 'Afghanistan: What Went Wrong?', *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 11, Issue 02, June 2013, pp. 538-548

[178] Hilary Mann Levertt's statement from the edited transcript of the sixty-first in a series of Capitol Hill conferences convened by the Middle East Policy Council. The meeting was held Tuesday, July 13, 2010, with T. Mattair presiding; H. Leverett, M. Indyk, I. Lustick, P. Pillar, 'U.S. Policies Toward Israel and Iran: What are the Linkages?', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XVII, No. 3, Fall 2010, pp.1–22

[179] R. Gates, *Duty,* 2014

[180] T. Parsi, 'Should U.S. work with Iran in Iraq? Yes, if it wants to take on the real challenge: China', *Reuters*, 23 June 2014, retrieved on 23 June 2014,

For all the above mentioned reasons it was necessary for the Obama administration to 'talk' to Iran. The Obama administration also could not afford to ignore Iran's role in the region, because cooperation from Iran was much needed. Therefore, the Obama administration had to try diplomacy with Iran. Also, continuing with the sanctions regime was helpful, to give Iran incentives to cooperate with the United States, and not prolong dialogue for the sake of 'buying time'.

Iraq: Iraq is a Shia majority country, and Iran's neighbour. Since the removal of Saddam Hussein from power, Iraq has been 'under the Iranian sphere of influence'.[181] The American attempts, under President Bush, to 'bring democracy' to Iraq further increased Iranian influence in that country. That is, the democratisation of Iraq left that country with a government that was predominantly Shiite, and closer to Iran.

According to Brent Scowcroft, democracy cannot be forced into the Iraqi political culture. Besides, 'democracy doesn't just consist of holding elections.'[182] During the time period considered in this case study, Iraq was in the midst of a civil war and was not nearly ready for a political transition or economic rehabilitation. Iran had a role in the Iraqi civil war, and was also very influential in Iraqi politics. No progress in economic or political front was possible without addressing the issue of civil unrest in that country. The process of democratisation and economic development had to happen together.[183] Therefore, the United States had to try to rescue Iraq from its civil war, because peace was the key to political and economic progress. Iraq was an important example, where the conflict between Iran and the United States was played out so publicly. America needed Iran, to maintain peace and security in Iraq, and Tehran and Washington had to work together, to stabilise Iraq. The shared interests between the two countries were nowhere more visible than it was in Iraq, at a time when Iran was having severe

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http://blogs.reuters.com/great-debate/2014/06/23/should-u-s-work-with-iran-in-iraq-yes-if-it-wants-to-take-on-the-real-challenge-china/

[181] K. Barzegar, 'Iran's Foreign Policy in Post-Invasion Iraq', *Middle East Policy Council*, Vol. XV, No.4, Winter 2008

[182] Brent Scowcroft's statement, when he was discussing the 'lack of democratic traditions' in Iraq; B. Scowcroft interview by G. Mascolo and H. Hoyng in Washington, Translated by C. Sultan, *Spiegel,* 14 August 2005

[183] C. Boix, 'Democracy, Development, and the International system', *American Political Science Review*, Vol.105, No. 4, November 2011, pp.809- 828

disagreements with some of its allies, regarding Iraq. For example, Syria and Iran did not have complete agreement as to which way the Iraqi political process should have developed, in the aftermath of the American invasion. Iran and Syria had significant rift in their Iraq policy, and preference concerning Iraq's the new premier. Iran had wanted a Shiite rule in Iraq. However, Assad had supported all variations of insurgencies, 'from al-Qaeda to the Baathist diehards'[184] in Iraq. Ultimately, because of the Iranian pressure, Syria had to abandon its support to the Shia politician Adel Abdul-Mahdi (Maliki's opponent) and support Maliki's premiership, as Iran had advocated.[185] That course of action was supported by the United States as well.

Iran had several issues of contention such as territorial disputes, struggle for power and economic rivalry with its Persian Gulf neighbours.[186] Iran also resented American interference in regional conflicts. That was one of the reason why Iran had not wanted the United States to guard the security of the region. Since the Islamic revolution in that country, Iran had tried to play a leadership role in the Muslim World.[187] American interference in the region was seen by the Iranians as a direct threat to Iranian leadership in the region. It was perhaps for this reason that Iran had tried its best to convince the GCC to not seek an American security umbrella. According to the Iranian thinking, cooperation between the regional actors would ensure the security of the region. Therefore, there was no need to rely on the United States, as a guarantor of peace and stability in the region.[188]

By the end of the second stage of decision-making, for Israel's sake, the Obama administration had to pursue a campaign of sanctions and sabotage, in order to slow down the Iranian nuclear

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[184] V. Nasr, *The Dispensable Nation*, p.147

[185] Ibid

[186] S. Chubin and C. Tripp, 'Iran-Saudi Arabia Relations And Regional Order', *ADELPHI,* Paper 304, Oxford: Oxford University Press, July 2004

[187] A. Pillalamarri, 'Iran's Important Role in the Future of the Middle East', *The Diplomat*, 21 June 2014, retrieved on 26 June 2014,

http://thediplomat.com/2014/06/irans-important-role-in-the-future-of-the-middle-east/

[188] F. Shayan, 'Geopolitical Subjectivity in Iran-GCC Relations: The Three Islands Issue Since 1979', *Geopolitics*, 18:3, 2013, pp.633-661

program. The Obama administration had to consider diplomacy because even if the United States intended to eventually impose more sanctions on Iran, or begin a military strike against Iran, it was important to garner support from America's European allies and the UN, for that reason diplomacy was also a means to arrive at other potential goals such as building a stronger sanctions regime against Iran. Since the EU and UN were keen on giving diplomacy a chance, the Obama administration could not disregard that option. Also, considering the Afghan factor, the administration had to pursue diplomacy with Iran, because cooperation between Iran and the United States was essential to stabilise Afghanistan.[189] Because the hostilities between Iran and the United States had made matters worse in Iraq, the Obama administration could no longer work on Iraq without working with Iran.[190] Also, in order to appease Saudi Arabia, and avoid a potential Saudi military strike on Iran, it was necessary for the Obama administration to pursue a campaign of sanctions and sabotage.

Why the pursuit of diplomacy did not mean a commitment to diplomacy or a diplomatic solution, in this case study?

This section will analyse why the decision to pursue diplomacy failed to produce a commitment to arrive at a diplomatic solution, and why choosing diplomacy as the final option did not equal to a commitment to diplomacy or a diplomatic solution, in this case study. Even though the final policy choice was *diplomacy*, and by choosing that option the Obama administration had potentially delayed or prevented a military confrontation with Iran, the choice of diplomacy in this case did not help in resolving the nuclear issue. Diplomacy was not given a chance during this case study, because of the lack of commitment and continued mistrust between Iran and the United States.

One of the most avid supporters of America's diplomacy with Iran is Dr. Trita Parsi, the President of the National Iranian American Council, who in his book[191] provides an in-depth

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[189] C. Bohan and A. Sullivan, 'Obama: Iran As Threat But US Should Try Diplomacy', *Reuters News*, 9 January 2009

[190] J. Kerry, 'New Direction For Foreign Relations', *The Boston Globe*, 13 January 2009

[191] T. Parsi, *A Single Roll of the Dice: Obama's Diplomacy With Iran*

analysis of President Obama's diplomacy with Iran, and the various influences on President Obama's Iran policy. According to Trita Parsi, 'the policy as it was before [prior to the Obama presidency] was to put sanctions and threats at the center and diplomacy was something that was out there far in the periphery. That's the shift that the administration seems to be pursuing.'[192] In Trita Parsi's assessment, 'contrary to the prevailing narrative, the limited diplomatic encounters between Iran and the U.S. in 2009 and 2010 cannot be characterised as an exhaustion of diplomacy'.[193]

Shahram Akbarzadeh's book[194] is rather sympathetic to the 'genuine' efforts made by the Obama administration, to pursue diplomacy with Iran. However, this is not a true assessment of the situation, because during the early days of the administration, President Obama was committed to the sanctions regime and a campaign of sabotage against Iran, while pursuing diplomacy with that country. For the Iranians, the invitation to diplomacy was not without danger. This probably was one reason why Tehran was cautious and hesitant in responding to President Obama's offers for reconciliation. The assassination of Iranian scientists (the United States was also held accountable for Israel's actions) and the cyber-attack on Iranian nuclear facilities, during President Obama's first term did not help develop trust between the two countries. Even though the CIA was sensitive about any mention of America's 'assassination policy', or the nonexistence of such a policy, the Obama administration's counterterrorism strategy, including the use of drones in the Middle East, were not trust building measures.[195]

Beyond sabotage and sanctions, there were other efforts in place to influence events inside Iran. For example, the Voice Of America and its contributions in frustrating the Iranian political elites

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[192] T. Parsi, 'Great Decisions', *GDTV 2010 Transcript*, Fall 2009, retrieved on 28 January 2015,

http://www.fpa.org/usr_doc/Parsi.pdf

[193] T. Parsi, *A Single Roll of the Dice: Obama's Diplomacy With Iran*, p.IX-X

[194] S. Akbarzadeh, (ed.), *America's Greater Challenges in the Middle East*

[195] Statement by B. Emmerson, 'UN Special Rapporteur on Counter Terrorism and Human Rights concerning the launch of an inquiry into the civilian impact, and human rights implications of the use drones and other forms of targeted killing for the purpose of counterterrorism and counter-insurgency', News release, UNHR, Office of the High Commissioner, retrieved on 13, January 2015,

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Terrorism/SRCTBenEmmersonQC.24January12.pdf

were by no means discountable achievements. Parazit, a weekly 30 minute Persian television show of the Voice Of America was modelled along the lines of The Daily Show on Comedy Central. It found significant audience in Iran and was so successful that the Iranian authorities had made several attempts to block the satellite. The humour in political infighting was new to Iranian television audience who were subjected to severe censorship of press, mass media and even social network, by their government. Even as Iran and the United States were holding negotiations in Europe, the Parazit had continued to reach Iranian population. All these facts also point out that it was possible to facilitate change in Iran, without going to war with that country. A new war in the Middle East between Iran and the United States was not a viable option during the Bush administration,[196] and was not a viable option under the Obama administration.[197]

There are several fundamental features that are identifiable, in the Iran policy of the United States, under the Obama administration. The Obama administration was sensitive from the beginning, to cultivate a more tolerant rhetoric in dealing with the Iranian government and people. Even though President Obama had offered to pursue diplomacy with Iran, the gesture was mostly lost on President Ahmadinejad.[198] Ahmadinejad was a politician who championed anti-American cause in the region, but he was not devoid of political sophistication.[199] Even under President Ahmadinejad's watch, Iran had attempted to pursue negotiations with the United States. However, during Ahmadinejad's presidency, the Obama administration's policy toward Iran was a campaign of sanctions, sabotage and cyber warfare, without any commitment to diplomacy.[200]

The Obama administration did not have an amicable relationship with the Ahmadinejad government. The early months of the Obama Presidency were also the last months of the

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[196] J. Logan, 'War With Iran Is Not The Answer', *USA Today Magazine*, March 2007

[197] C. Kahl, 'Still Not Time to Attack Iran', *Foreign Affairs*, 7 January 2014

[198] G. Samore, who served as the White House Coordinator for Arms Control and Weapons of Mass Destruction during President Obama's first term, interviewed by J. Shainin, *The New Yorker*, 24 November 2013, retrieved on 27 May 2014,

http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2013/11/q-and-a-with-gary-samore-iran.html?mobify=0

[199] V. Nasr, *The Dispensable Nation*, p.113

[200] S. Hersh, 'Preparing The Battlefield', *The New Yorker*, 7 July 2008

Ahmadinejad government's first term. By May of 2009, the Obama administration was more focused on Iran's presidential election in June, rather than the commitment to diplomacy, and therefore no effort was made to make substantial progress in arriving at a diplomatic solution.

The June 2009 Presidential election in Iran was a turning point, or had the potential to be a turning point, in the relationship between the two countries, because America had a newly elected President who was interested in improving the relationship with Iran, and Iran had an opportunity to perhaps elect a President who could have been less confrontational than Ahmadinejad. However, that possibility did not materialise. After the reelection of President Ahmadinejad, the circumstances became more hostile for diplomacy to produce results. The election, the fraud allegations against President Ahmadinejad, the green movement and Ahmadinejad's second term as President of Iran, had significant impact on the relationship between Iran and the United States, as well as on the diplomatic efforts.

The protests in Iran had started as a peaceful demonstration against the election results. However, by the second week of June, the protest became larger and more violent. It was reportedly the largest protest in Iran, since the Islamic Revolution in 1979.[201] By committing to diplomacy with the Ahmadinejad government, the Obama administration had opened itself to more criticisms for engaging with a government that was responsible for widespread human rights abuses. This had made the negotiation process more challenging because the domestic politics in Iran was very volatile, and the United States was trying to avoid any accusation of being counter-revolutionary. During this period, media reports and foreign policy analysts often drew comparisons between the revolution of 1979 and the protests following the 2009 election.[202] The Obama administration had reasons to be concerned about any diplomatic progress being politicised by the Ahmadinejad government, while it was suppressing the civil and political rights in Iran.

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[201] 'Ahmadenejad Defiant On 'Free' Iran Poll', *BBC*, 14 June 2009, retrieved on 26 February 2015,

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8099115.stm

[202] A. Alizadeh, 'Why are the Iranians dreaming again?', In N. Hashemi and D. Postel, (eds.), *The people reloaded: The Green Movement and the struggle for Iran's future*, Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2010 ; E. Rauh, 'Thirty Years Later: Iranian Visual Culture from The 1979 Revolution To The 2009 Presidential Protests ', *International Journal of Communication*, Vol.7, 2013, pp.1316–1343

Supporting the Green Movement was also difficult for the Obama administration, because it wanted to avoid being seen to be meddling in Iran's internal affairs, while that country was going through a domestic political crisis. The United States was cautious and calculating in offering its support to the Iranian opposition. President Obama had to be concerned about the political consequences, when he criticised the Iranian government and the role of the Iranian government in suppressing the Green Movement. However, President Obama did condemn the Iranian government's use of an 'iron fist of brutality' against the protesters.[203] President Obama's support for democracy or a moderate government in that country meant that it was politically problematical to work with President Ahmadinejad after the election turmoil. However, President Obama had refrained from direct confrontation with the Iranian government, when dealing with the issue of human rights.[204] It was difficult to commit to diplomacy with the Ahmadinejad government and at the same time publicly criticise them for what seemed like a rigged election. In his public statements, President Obama was seemingly sympathetic toward the Iranian opposition groups and their plight. There was immense pressure on President Obama, from both the Democrats and Republicans to 'speak out' against the election fraud in Iran.[205]

The Arab states of the Persian Gulf were alarmed at the prospects of regime change in Iran. The uncertainties associated with such a scenario, and potential impact it could have had on the regional security were causes of concern to them.[206] Moreover, President Obama was also troubled by the issue of Iranian nuclear program. Washington had to deal with whoever was in power in Tehran. The Green Movement was the work of the Iranian people, and even before the Iranian election took place, President Obama had expressed his desire to not interfere in the internal affairs of the Islamic Republic. In President Obama's words, 'ultimately, the election is for the Iranians to decide, but just as it has been true in Lebanon, what can be true in Iran as well is that you're seeing people looking at new possibilities.'[207] All these political challenges

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[203] 'Obama Says U.S. Stands With Protesters In Iran', *Reuters News*, 28 December 2009

[204] J. Anderson, 'After The Crackdown', *The New Yorker*, 16 August 2010

[205] J. Shahryar, 'Can The US Help Iran's Green Movement?', *The Huffington Post*, 5 June 2010

[206] V. Nasr, *The Dispensable Nation*, p.115

[207] President Obama Remarks on Passage of Kids Tobacco Legislation, an Answer on Iranian Elections, 12 June 2009, retrieved on 14 March 2014,

increased the tension between the United States and Iran, and that made this period not conducive for looking at solutions to improve the relationship between the two countries or to resolve the nuclear issue.

The Iranian Green Movement was essentially a protest for civil rights, demanding personal and political freedom for the Iranian people.[208] In 2009 the protesters were not unified in their demand for regime change. The only unanimous demand was for the government to uphold human rights, personal and political freedom. The Ahmadinejad government was brutal in its suppression of protesters, and several Iranians were imprisoned for alleged ties to the United States or American funding.[209] These complicated affairs meant that the United States could not commit to arrive at any diplomatic resolution with Iran, while Ahmadinejad was the President of that country.

The protesters of the Green Movement had no opportunity to get President Ahmadinejad to abdicate his power. Ahmadinejad was backed by the military. Moreover, Ahmadinejad's political career was a product of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and he was endorsed by Ayatollah Khamenei.[210] Also, much of President Obama's goodwill gestures during the first term were lost on President Ahmadinejad. President Ahmadinejad's first election as a presidential candidate was a wagnerian moment in Iranian politics. Against all odds, he had defeated some of the most prominent politicians in the Islamic Republic. The support from the establishment was also a catalyst in Ahmadinejad's victory during his first presidential campaign. The Obama administration did not share a particularly warm relationship with Iran's Supreme Leader or its military. Therefore, the lack of trust between the Obama administration and the Iranian establishment, as well as the poor relationship between the Obama administration and the

http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/Remarks-on-Passage-of-Kids-Tobacco-Legislation-an-Answer-on-Iranian-Elections/

[208] H. Dabashi, 'What Happened To The Green Movement In Iran?', *Al Jazeera*, 12 June 2013, retrieved on 26 February 2015,

http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/05/201351661225981675.html

[209] Subcommittee On International Human Rights Of The Standing Committee On Foreign Affairs And International Development, House of Commons, Canada, No. 085, 1st session, 41st Parliament, 30 May 2013

[210] K. Sadjadpour, 'Reading Khamenei: The Worldview Of Iran's Most Powerful Leader', *Carnegie Endowment*, 2009, p.27

Ahmadinejad government made it impossible to negotiate in good faith. Also, Ahmadinejad's anti-American rhetoric had made it difficult to make any progress in the nuclear negotiations, while he was in office.

The policies of the Islamic Republic were generally the result of extensive consultations between different 'centres of power' in Iran. The only decisions which weren't the result of consultation were usually the decisions made by the Supreme Leader. According to Jahangir Amuzegar, 'instead, he [Ahmadinejad] took a defiant, condescending and dismissive attitude, repeatedly bragging about his more than 20 million votes and claiming to have a mandate for drastic change,'[211] However, that statement is not entirely accurate in that Ahmadinejad's strength and defiance also came from his connections to the Iranian military and religious circles, during this time period.[212] After a full term in the office, Ahmadinejad was powerful and defiant enough to rig the election results, against the will of the Iranian people. There was no raison d'être for the Obama administration to vigorously support the Green Movement, because: (a) the Iranian domestic politics had many centres of power, (b) the key foreign policy decisions had to be approved by the office of the Supreme Leader, [213] (c) the Supreme Leader could override all the constitutional powers of the President, (d) in President Obama's assessment, there was not much difference in the 'actual policies' proposed by Mousavi and Ahmadinejad. The support from the establishment had made it easier for the Iranian government to dismiss the protesters as traitors. All of which made it harder for the Obama administration, to negotiate with that government, and the lack of trust between the two countries made it difficult to commit to diplomacy to arrive at a solution.

The governance during the Ahmadinejad era was almost as totalitarian as it was during the time of the Shah. The protesters of the Green Movement were dealing with an Iranian government whose ruling elites were very much part of the revolution of 1979, and had their political roots in the turmoil, including the war with Iraq, which followed the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran. Even though the opposition which took to the streets in the aftermath of the

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[211] J. Amuzegar, 'Ahmadinejad's Legacy', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XX, No. 4, Winter 2013, pp.124–132

[212] N. Habibi, 'The Economic Legacy Of Mahmud Ahmadinejad', *Brandeis University*, No. 74, June 2013

[213] W. Buchta, *The Structure Of Power In The Islamic Republic,* Washington: A Joint Publication of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy and the Konard Adenauer Stiftung, 2000

disputed 2009 election was not unified, the street protests in Tehran were the immediate concern of the Iranian government. Therefore, diplomacy with the Obama administration was not the Ahmadinejad government's priority at this point in time.

During this period the Obama administration decided to cut the funding for the *Iran Democracy Fund*. That fund was introduced by President Bush in 2006, to support the civil society work in Iran. According to Akbar Ganji,

> 'the US democracy fund was severely counterproductive. None of the human right activists and members of opposition in Iran had any interest in using such funds, but we were all accused by Iran's government of being American spies because a few groups in America used these funds.'[214]

However, the subsequent introduction of the *Near East Regional Democracy Fund*,[215] was for the same purpose. None of these measures aided in building trust between the Iran and the United States.

Even though the relationship between Iran and the United States was not particularly better, Iran needed to cooperate with the Obama administration because in June of 2009 Iran needed to refuel the Tehran Research Reactor (TRR). The Iranian government wanted the IAEA to help them in this endeavour. It was during this time that the Obama administration proposed a 'fuel swap' deal with Iran. The proposal was that,

> 'in return for a supply of 120 kilograms of fuel for the TRR, Iran ship out an equivalent amount of uranium enriched to 4%, totalling about 1,200 kilograms. This was the Obama administration's offer, to reduce the amount of enriched uranium Iran had in its

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[214] A. Ganji quoted in BBC report; see B. Kalbasi, 'US cuts funding to Iran opposition', *BBC news* 20 October 2009, retrieved on 16 March 2014,

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/8315120.stm

[215] M. Kamrava and H. Hassan-Yari, 'Suspended Equilibrium In Iran's Political System', *The Muslim World*, Vol. 94, October 2004

possession. The 1,200 kilograms accounted for roughly 80% of Iran's LEU stockpile at that time, a percentage that diminished as Iran continued to produce LEU'.[216]

Iran, P5+1 and the IAEA were all involved in the negotiations which followed. The negotiations did not go uninterrupted. There were several hurdles which the parties had to overcome. For example, on 25 September 2009, President Obama, British Prime Minister Brown and French President Sarkozy, announced the existence of a second uranium-enrichment facility in Qom.[217] When the Qom facility first came to the attention of the western intelligence agencies, it was decided that they would wait to report it to the IAEA, until they were sure about the nature and purpose of the plant.[218] When it was finally revealed in 2009, the Iranians went on to defend the plant as 'semi-industrial fuel enrichment facility'.[219] These new discoveries led to new economic sanctions. The United Nations sanctioned Iran, for violating the safeguards agreements. However, the Chinese and Russian veto power helped in diluting the UN sanctions.[220] The sanctions imposed by the Security Council helped in justifying America's unilateral economic sanctions against Iran. The UN Security Council had not held Iran guilty of violating its obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty,[221] 'neither the council nor the U.N. General Assembly has a responsibility to adjudicate treaty violations.'[222] However, the Security Council had taken action against Iran, based on the IAEA Board of Governors' assessment that Iran had

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[216] A. Cordesman, B. Gold, C. Coughlin-Schulte, 'Iran :Sanctions, Energy, Arms Control, and regime change', A Report of the CSIS Burke Chair in Strategy, *Center for Strategic and International studies*, January 2014,   p.128

[217] Statements by President Obama, French President Sarkozy and British Prime Minister Brown on Iranian Nuclear Facility, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 25 September 2009

[218] D. Albright and J. Shire, 'Iran's Growing Weapons Capability And Its Impact On Negotiations', *Arms Control Today,* Vol. 39, Issue 10, December 2009

[219] D. Sanger and W. J.Broad, 'U.S. and Allies Warn Iran Over Nuclear 'Deception', *The New York Times*, 25 September 2009

[220] J. Phyllips, 'Iran Economic Sanctions At The U.N. Security Council: The Incredible Shrinking Resolution', *The Heritage Foundation*, 2 April 2010, retrieved on 27 February 2015,

http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/04/iran-economic-sanctions-at-the-un-security-council-the-incredible-shrinking-resolution

[221] P. Kerr, 'Iran's Nuclear Program: Tehran's Compliance with International Obligations', *Congressional Research Service,* 20 December 2013, pp.11-13

[222] Ibid, p.11

violated the safeguards agreement.[223] At this point, it was no longer possible for the United States to hold on to diplomacy as the official Iran policy, and the Iranian government did not have much interest in negotiating or working with the Obama administration. The work of the Obama White House, the State Department and P5+1, was crucial in getting the Iranian government to negotiate in Geneva, in October 2009. The goal of the American negotiators was to have much of Iran's enriched uranium shipped out of Iran, and moved to Russia, in order to enrich it further and deliver it to France.[224] Thereafter, the French government was to take responsibility for manufacturing the TRR fuel rods, and provide it to Iran.[225] The negotiations did not go much further. The fuel swap proposal did not materialise into a deal, and within months new sanctions were imposed on Iran. This time there was wider domestic and international support for sanctions against Iran. The support for sanctions was mainly because President Obama had 'tried' diplomacy with Iran. The discussions in Geneva lead to a 'constructive beginning' and President Obama could blame Iran for not capitalising on the same.[226] There were several reasons why the fuel swap proposal collapsed. The mistrust between the Obama administration and the Ahmadinejad government had made it impossible for the parties to commit to the fuel swap proposal.[227] The reason why the fuel swap proposal fell through had also to do with the political infighting in Iran. Some in Iran had evidently opposed it because of their lack of confidence in the P5 +1.[228] There were others who had opposed it because they were against the policies of President Ahmadinejad.[229] There were also politicians on both sides who opposed diplomacy. President Obama had waged a campaign to pursue cyber attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities, and the Iranian government did not have enough political will to commit to any confidence building measure.[230] Both Iran and the United States were not

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[223] Ibid

[224] K. Davenport, 'History of Official Proposals on the Iranian Nuclear Issue'

[225] Ibid

[226] D. Sanger, J. Glanz and J. Becker, 'Around The World, Distress Over Iran', *The New York Times*, 28 November 2010

[227] R. Reardon, 'Containing Iran: Why The Taboo Policies Of Engagement And Containment Are The Right Ones', In *Project On Nuclear Issues: A Collection Of Papers From The 2012 Conference Series*, (eds.), S. Spies and S. Weiner, Center For Strategic & International Studies, June 2013, p.114

[228]Ibid

[229] R. Pomeroy, 'Two Years After Polls, Ahmadinejad Under New Pressure,' *Reuters*, 10 June 2011

[230] S. Erlanger, 'Talks On Iran's Nuclear Program Close With No Progress', *The New York Times*, 22 January 2011

commitment to diplomacy, during President Obama's first year. In the words of the 76th United States Secretary of the Treasury, Jacob Joseph Lew 'the bottom- line is: Promises are not enough – Iran must meet its obligations. This is not a case of trust and verify. This is a case of verify everything.'[231] That principle remained integral to America's Iran policy, during this time period as well, and the end of this period marks the beginning of the Obama administration's dual track policy toward Iran.

Conclusion

As this case study has argued, the Obama administration was more concerned with fighting domestic political battles and appeasing America's international allies, rather than pursuing diplomacy to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue. Even though the Obama administration had considered continuing the Bush administration's Iran policy as an option in the choice set, eventually at the end of the decision-making process, the decision was to pursue diplomacy, in light of the political pressure on the administration and the prevailing conditions in the Middle East, such as the wars and unrest in that part of the world where Iran had a role. President Obama's engagement policy was a result of the complicated interaction between different variables that was concerned with domestic and international politics.[232] Even so, the Obama administration had officially diverted from the long time American policy of confrontation toward Iran, and had avoided a military conflict with that country. This is relevant because, President Obama was under pressure from some Middle Eastern allies such as Saudi Arabia and Israel, as well as domestic opponents, to 'act decisively', which in Washington terms meant 'be seen to be doing something dramatic'.[233] From the perspective of Israel, this 'decisive' act was one which involved a military campaign against Iran. For the American public, a 'decisive' act was something which produced results, but did not involve 'putting boots on the ground'. The American military officials were ostensibly not supportive of a campaign against Iran, without a

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[231] Remarks of Secretary of the Treasury, J. Lew before the 2014 AIPAC Policy Conference, 3 February 2014, retrieved on 28 March 2014,

http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2301.aspx

[232] J. Mann, *The Obamians*, p.203

[233] T. Parsi, *A Single Roll of the Dice: Obama's Diplomacy with Iran.*

clear military objective. The Republicans in the Congress seemed to have a policy of objecting to almost everything a Democratic President or the democratic majority had to offer. As President Obama stated, it was a challenge for the Obama administration to work with the Republicans, since the beginning of the Obama Presidency, because

> 'when I [President Obama] first came into office, the head of the Senate Republicans [Mitch McConnell] said, "my number one priority is making sure president Obama's a one-term president." Now, after the election, either he will have succeeded in that goal or he will have failed at that goal.'[234]

America's Middle Eastern allies and domestic opponents who did not support diplomacy, were also often only willing to see the usefulness of diplomacy based on how negatively it impacted Iran. However, that was a faulty scale to measure the success of America's diplomacy with Iran. The focus of the American negotiators had to be on achieving American goals, and not on what Iran stood to lose from diplomacy. The United States had much to gain by resolving the Iranian nuclear issue through diplomacy.[235] Also, an agreement that had severe negative impact on one party could not have been sustainable in the long run. After addressing the grievances of both parties, the conflict should have been resolved. However, what was lacking in this case, and what needed to be an organic part of the negotiations was the commitment to diplomacy.

There are also several issues concerning the application of Ph theory that has to be addressed here. The Ph framework does operate on the basis of certain assumptions. As already indicated, one assumption is that politicians attach more value to their political survival, than any other consideration. That is true in this case. The newly elected President Obama was very sensitive to variables which had high political costs, such as the economy and the dignity of the President. Also, in this case study, the decision-makers had a very limited list of options. The decision-makers had used 'heuristic rules', so as to avoid making exhaustive search for all potential options available. The dimension chosen for the first stage of decision-making in this case study was the political dimension. That is an important element that differentiates the Ph approach from other FPA theoretical frameworks. For instance, in other rational choice theories (for

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[234] G. Kessler, 'When did McConnell say he wanted to make Obama a 'one-term president'?', *The Washington Post*, 25 September 2012

[235] M. Cummings and E. Cummings, 'The Costs of War with Iran: An Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield', *Small Wars Journal*, August 2012

example, according to the classical realists) the goal of the decision-maker is to maximise utility. However, in the case of utility maximisation, decision-makers have to consider all options, following a holistic approach. Therefore, if this case were decided purely on the basis of the rational school of thought, then the decision would have been to maximise the utility on the Iranian nuclear issue, without much consideration for domestic politics or diplomacy with allies. However, as already identified in this case study, the decision-makers in Washington were more concerned about domestic politics and relationship with allies, than utility maximisation. As already indicated, in Stage One the decision-makers in this case study only considered the political dimension, and ignored other dimensions. In the second stage, the rational choice was to choose diplomacy as the official policy instrument, and also supplement it with a campaign of sanctions and sabotage.

This chapter has already provided the groundwork for the discussions in the next chapter. The next chapter will deal with the Obama administration's 'dual track policy' of sanctions and diplomacy. Even though President Obama had favoured diplomacy, his critics were partly right in arguing that President Obama had continued many of President Bush's policies, in the most practical sense.[236] The collapse of the fuel swap proposal was a turning point in the relationship between Iran and the United States, during President Obama's first year. As already identified in the literature review chapter, a campaign of sabotage, sanctions and diplomacy were all, collectively, helpful in making the American bargaining position better, in the negotiations with Iran. The next chapter will discuss why the use of diplomacy as the official, publicly stated, policy was discontinued, and why the dual-track policy was pursued. The next chapter will also discuss how the distrust between the United States and Iran had made it impossible to negotiate in good faith.

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[236] W. Kristol, 'Continuity We Can Believe In', *The New York Times,* 12 January 2009

Chapter V: The decision to pursue the dual track policy

Time Frame: from the collapse of the fuel swap proposal to the inauguration of President Rouhani (October 2009 to August 2013)

> *'Engagement is just a tactic, not a real strategy'*

David Sanger[1]

> *'There is one country that resembles the Iranian power structure. It is the United States of America. [To get a deal], talking to the president is not enough. You have to talk to everyone.'*[2]

A journalist who was anonymously quoted by Trita Parsi

Using the Ph approach, this chapter will scrutinise the Obama administration's Iran policy making in the aftermath of the collapse of the fuel swap proposal. Analysing the decision-making process will help in understanding the reasons why the United States, under the Obama administration, chose to pursue the dual-track policy toward Iran. After the collapse of the fuel swap proposal, the Obama administration was officially committed to a policy whereby it was to impose 'crippling sanctions' against Iran, and still pursue diplomacy.[3] According to Suzanne Maloney, this dual-track policy 'incorporating both pressure and incentives to negotiate' has been 'the basic binary logic of U.S. policy toward Iran', since establishment of the Islamic Republic in that country.[4]

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[1] David E. Sanger mentions this while referring to President Obama's Presidency, the expectations that were placed on him and the gradual emergence of the Obama Doctrine; see D. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*, p. xvi

[2] T. Parsi, 'How Obama Should Talk To Iran', *The Washington Post*, 13 January 2012

[3] F. Gerges, *Obama and the Middle East*, p.181

[4] S. Maloney, 'Progress Of The Obama Administration's Policy Toward Iran', Testimony (House Subcommittee on National Security, Homeland Defense and Foreign Operations, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform), 15 November 2011

Economic sanctions were historically an integral part of America's Iran policy.[5] This chapter will also establish that, contrary to what several critics[6] of the Obama administration had suggested, the administration was not naïve in its decision to pursue diplomacy with Iran during the first nine months, for the reason that the pursuit of diplomacy during the first nine months had led to greater international support for America's use of the dual-track policy toward Iran.[7] Chapter VI will demonstrate that the dual-track approach discussed in this case study was crucial to developing a sense of urgency amongst the Iranian decision-makers to negotiate with the United States, and the crippling sanctions used against Iran during this time period also aided in the pursuit of diplomacy and fruitful negotiations in that case study. Briefing on the implementation of the sanctions, on September 2010, James Steinberg, the then Deputy Secretary of State commented that,

> 'at the end of the day, what we most care about is how Iran responds to this [new sanctions] in terms of its preparedness to engage in negotiations. Our goal, as I said, is not sanctions for sanctions' sake, but to make clear to Iran that there are costs for the path that they're pursuing.'[8]

During the time frame analysed in this case study, there was no attempt made to arrive at a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. However, this period did set the foundation for future negotiations, by making it costly for Iran to dismiss diplomacy. This period had also seen

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[5] President Barack Obama's State of the Union Address, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 28 January 2014

[6] H. Clinton's criticism of President Obama's foreign policy, in 'Clinton: Obama Is 'Naïve' On Foreign Policy', *NBC*, 24 July 2007, retrieved on 26 March 2015,

http://www.nbcnews.com/id/19933710/ns/politics-the_debates/t/clinton-obama-naive-foreign-policy/;

J. Bolton's criticism of Obama, in J. Bolton, 'John Bolton: On Iran, Sanctions Are Not The Answer', *USA Today*, 17 January 2012, retrieved on 26 March 2015,

http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/opinion/story/2012-01-17/John-Bolton-Iran-military-action/52623920/1

[7] R. Shelala II, B. Fite, and N. Kasting, 'US And Iranian Strategic Competition: The Impact Of The EU, EU3, and Non-EU European States,', *Center For Strategic & International Studies*, 4 April 2013

[8] Special Briefing James B. Steinberg, Deputy Secretary of State , 'Briefing on Iran Sanctions Act Implementation', 30 September 2010, retrieved on 12 March 2014,

http://www.state.gov/s/d/former/steinberg/remarks/2010/169315.htm

escalation of tension between Tehran and Washington. Even so, a military confrontation with Iran was not an option considered by the United States.[9]

In the first stage of decision-making in this case study, the following variables were considered by the decision-makers: (1) public opinion; (2) domestic opposition (AIPAC and Congress). In stage-two of decision-making, the dimensions considered were: (1) the diplomacy dimension - diplomacy with European allies; (2) the strategic dimension - security and stability of the Middle East. The Obama administration had very limited options to deal with Iran during this time period. The options were to continue on with the official policy of using persuasive means, punitive means or a combination of both. The policy-makers had the following options in the choice set, during the first stage: (1) continue using diplomacy as the primary foreign policy instrument; (2) use sanctions and sabotage as the main policy instrument; (3) pursue sanctions and diplomacy at the same time.

After the collapse of the fuel swap proposal, engagement was more of a tactic for the United States. Washington found allies in Europe and in the United Nations to address the Iranian nuclear issue. The United Nations was also willing to consider more sanctions against Iran. Continuing the pursuit of diplomacy was a consideration in the choice set because the Obama administration came into office advocating the importance of dialogue between nations, and throughout the period considered in this case study the Obama White House had emphasised the need to rely on negotiations to resolve the conflict with Iran and within the Middle East. Using sanctions and sabotage was also part of the choice set because sanctions were historically part of America's policy toward Iran, and the Obama administration had to enforce the existing sanctions. Moreover, the Obama administration was also under pressure from the Congress and America's international allies, to impose more sanctions on Iran for the reason that the fuel swap proposal had collapsed, and the pursuits of diplomacy during the first 9 months of the Obama presidency had not yielded any result in resolving the Iranian nuclear issue. The option to pursue sanctions and diplomacy at the same time was also included in the choice set because even during the first 9 months of the Obama administration, the policy toward Iran was a combination of punitive and persuasive measures, even though the administration had officially pursued

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[9] G. Bahgat, 'Dealing With Iran: The Iranian Nuclear Crisis: An Assessment', *Parameters*, Vol.43, No.2, Summer 2013

diplomacy. The first and second stages of this case study will further elaborate the relevance of these options and why they were considered or rejected before arriving at the final choice.

What complications did the decision-makers have to consider when pursuing a policy focused on sanctions?

The complications that the decision-makers had to primarily consider when pursuing an Iran policy option focused on sanctions were: (a) the heavy costs that had to be incurred by the senders of sanction, (b) the general limits to estimating the effectiveness of sanctions, to look at the history of American sanctions against Iran, so as to determine the merit in continuing on that path of economic coercion, (c) specific challenges to measuring the impact of sanctions on the Iranian economy, (d) a track record with Iran which highlights that thirty years of sanctions against Iran had not succeeded in pressuring Iran into changing its nuclear policy, (e) despite all the hardships faced by the citizens when coping with international sanctions most Iranians supported their right to peaceful use of nuclear technology, (f) sanctions in general had a history of being counterproductive.

As this section will argue, on a practical level, it is difficult for the decision-maker to do a cost-benefit analysis of sanctions itself, to measure the 'success' of sanctions, in order to decide if that policy must be retained or replaced. As for the researcher, as Baldwin suggests, one could evaluate the merit of a policy instrument based on the approaches provided under different social sciences, and thereafter make a comparative study of these policy choices.[10] However, the purpose of this chapter is to analyse the Obama administration's decision-making, and that does not require the analyst/researcher to measure the 'success' or 'failure' of sanctions. Even so, if it were necessary, a middle ground of two approaches may be in some cases a better alternative, instead of merely following one school of thought.[11] Given the fact that FPA welcomes an interdisciplinary approach to studying foreign policy, making use of the knowledge in other areas of social science research is an organic course of action. However, in academia and in policy

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[10] Ibid, p.167

[11] M. Schafer, 'Science, Empiricism, and Tolerance in the Study of Foreign Policymaking', In 'Foreign Policy Analysis in 20/20: A Symposium', (ed.), J. Garrison, *International Studies Review,* Vol.5, 2003, p.172

circles, experts have found it hard to arrive at a 'baseline' to measure the success of a policy. The decision-makers assessment concerning the success or failure of a policy also influences the course of a nation's foreign policy. Therefore, it is necessary to arrive at a 'baseline' to measure 'success'. For example, in the case of evaluating sanctions, researchers and decision-makers encounter problems in qualitative and quantitative approaches. It is always hard to evaluate the success of one case of sanctions by comparing it to another. It is not always useful to compare one situation to another, because there are varied variables involved in all cases. As is the case with peacekeeping missions, it may not be helpful to compare one mission or sanctions regime against a previous mission or previous case on sanctions, because the cost-benefit is not the same and the goals of an operation is different from the objectives of a previous mission.[12] However, Druckman and Stern offer a partial solution to this problem. According to them, 'a partial solution to these problems, in lieu of waiting for methodological progress to overcome them, is to combine the various types of evaluations, comparing and contrasting the results to identify overlap and divergence in the findings.'[13] This approach is one way to make an assessment and understand success in relative terms. However, this approach still requires the analyst to look beyond the rational actor theory, because information in this case cannot be processed based on utility maximisation principle alone. One important benefit of using Ph framework is that it does not completely disregard rational actor theory, but uses it in the second stage of decision-making, after filtering the policy options using the cognitive approach.

According to J. Masters, economic sanctions are

> 'the withdrawal of customary trade and financial relations for foreign and security policy purposes. They may be comprehensive, prohibiting commercial activity with regard to an entire country, like the longstanding U.S. embargo of Cuba, or they may be targeted, blocking transactions of and with particular businesses, groups, or individuals.'[14]

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[12] D. Druckman and P. Stern, 'Evaluating Peacekeeping Missions', *Mershon International Studies Review*, Vol. 41, Issue 1, 1997

[13] Ibid, p.163

[14] J. Masters, 'What Are Economic Sanctions?', *Council on Foreign Relations*, 13 March 2015, retrieved on 27 March 2015,

http://www.cfr.org/sanctions/economic-sanctions/p36259

International sanctions have existed since the establishment of the League of Nations. The UN has been a platform for senders of sanctions, to work with the international community, to impose sanctions on their target(s). In the case of the Iran sanctions, sanctioning Iran was also costly to the senders in the international community.[15] As Thijs Van de Graaf argues, sanctions can be a useful tool for the sender to deal with the target, but it also has the potential to backfire. According to Thijs Van de Graaf, 'while the goals of nuclear non-proliferation and deterring an Israeli strike on Iran are certainly laudable, policy-makers need to weigh the potential benefits of sanctions against costs and risks - some of which are not well understood.'[16]

Historically, sanctions generally did not have a good track record.[17] Also, there are shortcomings and risks that come with pressure tactics,[18] because the target may not always behave as expected. Sanctions are employed as an instrument of foreign policy, and also for 'maintaining or restoring international peace and security'. Over the years, the United Nations had also endorsed the idea of using sanctions to deal with international conflicts and disputes. Scholars such as Pape, had questioned the efficacy of sanctions, as a foreign policy instrument.[19] According to Pape, in his criticism of sanctions and the study of sanctions by Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliot,[20] economic sanctions have no effectiveness in bringing about noneconomic objectives.[21] Pape argues that,

> 'practically none of the claimed 40 successes of economic sanctions stand up to examination. Eighteen were actually settled by direct or indirect use of force; in 8 cases there is no evidence that the target made the demanded concessions; 6 do not qualify as

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[15] R. Hass, *Economic Sanctions: Too Much Of A Bad Thing*, Washington DC.: Brookings Institute, June 1998, retrieved on 30 March 2015,

http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/1998/06/sanctions-haass

[16] T. Van de Graaf, 'The ''Oil Weapon'' Reversed? Sanctions Against Iran and U.S.-EU Structural Power', *Middle East Policy Council*, Fall 2012, Vol. XX, No. 3

[17] H. Alikhani, *Sanctioning Iran: Anatomy of a Failed Policy*, London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2000

[18] Also, sanctions (as a policy instrument) have its limitations. See S. Carter, 'Iran, Natural Gas and Asia's Energy Needs: A Spoiler for Sanctions?', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XXI, No. 1, Spring 2014, pp.41–61

[19] R Pape, 'Why economic sanctions do not work', *International Security*, Vol. 22, Issue 2, Autumn 1997, pp.90-136

[20] G. Hufbauer, J. Schott, and K. Elliot, in *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered: History and Current Policy*, Washington DC.: Institute for International Economics, 1985

[21] R Pape, 'Why economic sanctions do not work'

instances of economic sanctions; and 3 are indeterminate. Of HSE's [Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliot] 115 cases, only 5 are appropriately considered successes.'[22]

In Richard Olson's words, 'there is a consensus in this literature that economic sanctions are largely ineffective'.[23] According to Dr. Fred Bergsten, Director, Institute for International Economics, 'a cost-benefit analysis suggests that sanctions are one of the worst foreign policy tools we have.'[24]

In general, there are limits to estimating the effectiveness of sanctions. The interdependence of different factors and the impossibility to accurately test the results of sanctions makes it impossible to measure or precisely predict the effectiveness of sanctions. For example, there are political, economic and diplomatic consequences which can be directly or indirectly attributed to every round of economic sanctions imposed by the sender on its target. However, there are also several other factors such as international relations or election politics, which could have contributed to producing these consequences. Whilst the existing scholarship does aid in understanding the usefulness of sanctions as an extension of state policy, there is no objective formulae to assess, with accuracy, the effectiveness of sanctions.

It is a thorny endeavour, to measure the impact of sanctions on the Iranian economy. The primary reason for that difficulty is the lack of data available on Iran and the Iranian economy. The reports from Tehran are often a distorted view of their economy. According to a report by the *Rand Corporation*,

> 'the model of a shadow economy and the creation of networks of patronage and clientage are roughly analogous to an institution that has long been a feature of Iran's post revolutionary landscape—the bonyads, or parastatal, revolutionary foundations that

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[22] Ibid

[23] R. Olson, 'Economic Coercion In World Politics: With A Focus On North South Relations,' *World Politics* XXXI, July 1979, p.473

[24] F. Bergsten, CFR Great Debate Series, 'Sanctions Against Rogue States: Do They Work?', Speakers: F. Bergsten, and R. Torricelli, Moderator: L. Gelb, *Council on Foreign Relations,* 20 May 1998

constitute vast reservoirs of wealth controlled by key clerics, ostensibly for charitable purposes'.[25]

There is very little information that is publically available, regarding the state/military run economy of Iran.[26] This is especially the case of Iran's bonyads. The *Congressional Research Service Reports* assess that, it is impossible to learn the exact net worth of bonyads. Also, because the bonyads fall under the direct control and supervision of the Supreme Leader, they are not accountable to the Majils. *The General Accounting Law* of Iran is not applicable to bonyads and charitable foundations created subsequent to the Islamic revolution. The lack of accountability to the public, and the absence of financial audits, makes it impossible to track the activities of these entities.[27] Moreover, the Iranian government was not especially transparent in their publicly declared assessment of the status of their economy. For example, *The Congressional Research Service Report* of March 2014 pointed out that, 'the Iranian Central Bank acknowledged an inflation rate of 45% rate in late July 2013. Many economists assert that these official figures understated the actual inflation rate substantially, and that was between 50% and 70%.'[28] Therefore, in order to analyse the status of the Iranian economy, one is left with the option of having to rely on the data provided by the United States and Europe. The data which 'the West' can provide is often based on their own trade with Iran. However, it is not possible for European governments to provide any accurate information regarding the shadow economy in Iran, at a time when even the Iranian government did not have absolute control over the black-market in that country. For example, after several failed attempts to close down the currency black market, the Iranian government had to finally allow for trading in dollars, even though the trading in dollars was mostly done by speculators who had ties to the Iranian

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[25] F. Wehrey, J. Green, B. Nichiporuk, A. Nader, L. Hansell, R. Nafisi, S. Bohandy, 'The Rise of the Pasdaran Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps', *National Defence Research Institute*, RAND Corporation, 2009

[26] A. Cordesman, B. Bosserman, S. Khazai, 'U.S. and Iranian Strategic Competition: The Sanctions game: Energy, Arms Control, and Regime Change', *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, April 2012

[27] S. Ilias, 'Iran's Economic Conditions: U.S. Policy Issues', *Congressional Research Service*, 22 April 2010

[28] K. Katzman, 'Iran Sanctions', *Congressional Research Service*, 18 March 2014

government.[29] In any case, the currency exchange in the Iranian black market, in unofficial rates, was not impacted by any American sanctions.[30]

Even though the Iranian policy making, especially the handling of the nuclear issue was not ideologically based, when the Iranians were excessively pressured, using sanctions or diplomacy, as it was toward the end of the Bush administration, they aggressively defended their enrichment rights.[31] Thirty years of sanctions against Iran had not succeeded in pressuring Iran to change its nuclear policy. Reflecting on this behavior, President Obama had remarked that, 'even the so-called moderates or reformers inside of Iran would not be able to simply say, we will cave and do exactly what the U.S. and the Israelis say.'[32] Regardless of where they stood in the political spectrum, most Iranians supported their right to peaceful use of nuclear technology. As a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, they were entitled to the same under International Law. In the report of a 2013 poll by Zogby, on the Iranian attitudes,[33] it was concluded that the Iranian public opinion still favoured a nuclear program. 'Possibly out of a strong sense of national pride, a majority does not appear inclined to surrender their nuclear program either to end sanctions or to improve ties with the West, both of which are among their lowest priorities.'[34]

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[29] S. Peterson, 'Iran's Deteriorating Economy: An Analysis of the Economic Impact of Western Sanctions', *International Affairs Review*, retrieved on 23 March 2014,

http://www.iar-gwu.org/node/428

[30] One of the most important scholarships advocating sanctions was written by G. Hufbauer, J. Schott, and K. Elliot, in *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered: History and Current Policy*

[31] R. Costello, 'Lessons Learned From Successful Iran Diplomacy', *National Iranian American Council*, 21 April 2014, retrieved on 2 February 2015,

http://www.niacouncil.org/roll-call-lessons-learned-from-successful-iran-diplomacy/

[32] Remarks by President Obama, In A Conversation With The 10th Annual SABAN Forum, Washington D.C., The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 7 December 2013

[33] There were also other polls which indicated that people in Iran and America did not have any inclination for fighting a war with each other; see also Congressional Record, Proceedings And Debates Of The 109th Congress, Second Session, Vol. 152- Part 5, 7 April 2006 to 5 May 2006, p.6149

[34] 'Iranian Attitudes', Prepared for Sir Bani Yas Forum Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, *Zogby Research Services, LLC*, September 2013, retrieved on 22 February 2014,

http://b.3cdn.net/aai/afbac366bf54883638_ijm6bnp9f.pdf

American sanctions in the past had impacted the Iranian economy and people.[35] For example, the economic sanctions by the United States had severely compromised Iran's ability to economically compete with its neighbours. Most of the Arab countries in the Persian Gulf, such as the UAE, had undergone significant economic reforms in the last two decades.[36] The inability to negotiate a transparent deal because of the sanctions imposed on Iran had left that country in a vulnerable position, potentially exposing it to disadvantageous trade relations. Imposing sanctions on Iran was economically challenging for the United States as well, because of the interdependence of world economy, and the United States had to appease its allies, in order to keep the sanctions regime together. For example, the EU's support for Iran sanctions were only achieved after some diplomatic maneuvering between the United States and European leaders, because the EU was not supportive of sanctions for sanctions' sake.[37] The United States saw sanctions as a tool to pressure Iran to gain advantage during negotiations with Iran.[38] However, sanctions on Iran were also counterproductive in some ways. For example, the Iranian government was able to exploit the American pressure on Iran, by making the Iranian populace more dependent on the government. Iranian citizenry was already heavily dependent on the government for subsidies. This power dynamics, the people's dependency on the government, gave great advantage to the Iranian government, when suppressing domestic opposition. There are examples where economic sanctions had destabilised the leadership of the target nation,[39] but in the case of Iran, the profiteering from illegal trade and shadow markets were additional source

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[35] W. Sherman, Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Written Statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington DC, 15 May 2013, retrieved on 29 March 2015,

 http://www.state.gov/p/us/rm/2013/202684.htm

[36] H. Hakimian, 'Iran's Free Trade Zones: Back Doors to the International Economy?', *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 44, Issue 6, 2011, pp.851-874

[37] R. Patterson, 'EU Sanctions on Iran: The European Political Context', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XX, No.1, Spring 2013, pp.135–146

[38] Paul Pillar's statement from an edited transcript of the seventieth in a series of Capitol Hill conferences convened by the Middle East Policy Council. The meeting was held Wednesday, 17 October 2012, in the Rayburn House Office Building, with T. Mattair moderating; S. McConnell, J. Cesari, N. Kern and P. Pillar, 'Policy Choices for the New Administration', *Middle East Policy,* Vol. XIX, No.4, Winter 2012, p. 1–28

[39] N. Marinov, 'Do Economic Sanctions Destabilize Country Leaders?', *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 49, No. 3, July, 2005

of income for the Iranian government. Consequently, the civilians in Iran were essentially under attack from their own government.[40]

Despite all the complications, President Obama also had the support of other members of his administration, to pursue the dual-track policy with Iran; for example, President Obama's Vice-President Joseph Robinette Biden, Jr. Even though Joe Biden was not a domineering personality in the Obama administration's foreign policy-making, compared to his predecessor Dick Cheney's role in the Bush administration's foreign policy-making, Biden was a well-respected figure in the Obama administration. and had supported the dual track policy. From 3 January 2001 to 20 January 2001, 6 June 2001 to 3 January 2003, also from 4 January 2007 to 3 January 2009, Biden was the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, and during those times he was an avid supporter of 'hard-headed' diplomacy with Iran. The sanctions regime put in place by the Obama administration was integral to Biden's own strategy as the head of the Committee on Foreign Relations. Biden was a 'war hating Democrat' when dealing with Iran.[41] Even as he had actively supported sanctions against Iran, Biden had also vehemently opposed any escalation of the conflict between Iran and the United States. Biden's support for sanctions came from his strong opposition to a military conflict with Iran.[42] Biden had even threatened to impeach President Bush, if he went to war with Iran without credible justification for the same. In his words, 'the president has no constitutional authority to take this nation to war against a country of 70 million people, unless we're attacked or unless there is proof that we are about to be attacked.'[43] Even as the Vice President of the United States, Biden continued to actively support the need to develop international cooperation to impose effective multilateral sanctions,

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[40] K. Oskarsson, 'Economic Sanctions on Authoritarian States: Lessons Learned', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XIX, No. 4, Winter 2012, pp.88-102

[41] 2008 Vice Presidential debate, Gov. Sarah Palin (R, AK) vs. Sen. Joe Biden (D, DE), at Washington University in St. Louis Missouri, 3 October 2008, Transcript of Palin, Biden debate from CNN, retrieved on 27 May 2014,

http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/10/02/debate.transcript/

[42] Ibid

[43] Senator Joe Biden, 'Hardball with Chris Matthews', *MSNBC*, 12 April 2007 , retrieved on 28 March 2014,

http://www.nbcnews.com/id/22104596/ns/msnbc-hardball_with_chris_matthews/t/biden-i-would-move-impeach-him/#.UzXpB_l_tNI

and resolve the Iranian nuclear issue, an Iran policy approach long advocated by President Obama.

Stage One

The decisions-makers were primarily concerned with their political survival. The time period studied in this case study was especially important to the Obama administration, because the President was standing for re-election. For that reason, President Obama had to be especially sensitive to the issues concerning the political dimension. This section will analyse the variables which were considered by the decision-makers, in Stage One of the decision-making process. Stage One included variables such as public opinion and domestic opposition (AIPAC and Congress). These two variables belong in the first stage because of their political nature, and the political risks associated with them for a President who was keen on his reelction. According to Mintz, the lack of public support for a policy or a significant drop in public's support for a policy meant that it was politically risky, and therefore the option will have to be removed from the choice set at the very first stage.[44] Also domestic opposition was also a variable which had serious political consequences because it had the potential to threaten the political survival of the President.[45] Consequently, this stage in decision making 'is cognitively satisficing along the lines of domestic politics rather than rational or utility maximizing in other aspects.' [46]

Variable: Public Opinion

Public opinion is important throughout the presidency, and especially important to a President looking for re-election. Because Iran was considered, by the media and American politicians, to be a 'threat' to American national interest, the public was also sensitive to the Iran factor. 'The political dimension can be described as policy considerations that may lead to consequences, good or bad, for the standing of the current regime, that is, political parties and leaders in particular.'[47] The Obama administration had to be concerned about public opinion as a variable

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[44] A. Mintz, 'How Do Leaders Make Decisions?: A Poliheuristic Perspective'
[45] Ibid
[46] P. James and E. Zhang, 'Chinese Choices: A Poliheuristic Analysis of Foreign Policy Crises, 1950–1996, p.35
[47] Ibid, p.41

under the political dimension because negative public opinions and perceptions had the potential to bring about grave political consequences for the Obama White House.

Amongst the American public, there were several misunderstandings and concerns regarding Iran's nuclear program, and foreign policy. Public opinion polls in the United States, on Iran, were often a testament to this deformed understanding of Iran, by the American public. For example, seven out of ten Americans polled in February 2010, by *CNN*, believed that Iran already had a nuclear weapon.[48] There were several polls suggesting very different 'public opinion', concerning the issue of Iranian nuclear program. According to a poll by *Reuters* in early 2012, 56% of American public was willing to back a military strike on Iran, if there was proof that Iran was building nuclear weapons.[49] The important factor in that poll was that, the public was supportive of a new war in the Middle East, 'if' there was a new nuclear weapons threat from that region. However, there was no evidence to prove the existence of a nuclear weapons program in Iran, since President Obama took office. Therefore, war was not a solution to deal with Iran's Uranium enrichment program. As already discussed in the previous chapters, war was not considered a realistic option by the administration, for multiple reasons. American public was also war weary and was not supportive of a war, unless there was a direct and significant threat to American national security.[50] According to an ABC news poll in 2012,

> 'more than twice as many Americans say it's a better idea to wait and see if economic sanctions against Iran work- even if this allows more time for its nuclear program to progress (64 percent) – than to attack Iran soon, before its nuclear program progresses further than it already has, even if that means not waiting to see if sanctions work (26 percent).'[51]

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[48] P. Steinhauser, 'CNN Poll: American believe Iran has nuclear weapons', *CNN*, 19 February 2010, retrieved on 7 September 2014,

http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2010/02/19/cnn-poll-american-believe-iran-has-nuclear-weapons/

[49] J. Mason, 'Most Americans Would Back U.S. Strike Over Iran Nuclear Weapon: Poll', *Reuters*, 13 March 2012

[50] L. Madison, CBS News/ New York Times Poll, 'Poll: Most Support U.S. Military Action To Stop Iran From Getting Nuclear Weapons', *CBS News*, 14 December 2012, retrieved on 16 March 2015,

http://www.cbsnews.com/news/poll-most-support-us-military-action-to-stop-iran-from-getting-nuclear-weapons/

[51] J. Phelan, 'Concern About Broader War Dampens Support For Iran Attack', *ABC News*, 14 March 2012

Because public opinion was a crucial factor for a President who was looking forward to a second term in office, the administration could not pursue diplomacy alone, as the primary Iran policy instrument. After the collapse of the fuel swap proposal, it was no longer possible for the administration to merely rely on diplomacy as the official/primary Iran policy instrument. Moreover, after the fuel swap proposal failed to materialise, President Obama was also keen on pursuing measures which could help facilitate diplomacy.[52] Therefore, for political reasons the United States had to reject the notion of pursuing 'engagement' policy, without it being supplemented by coercive measures.

Variable: Domestic Opposition

> *'Struggle has indeed been the hallmark of legislative-executive relations in the United States'*

Machael Mezey [53]

> *'President's job can be consolidated into four roles: 'chief of state, chief of legislature, chief administrator, and chief decision maker.'*

Roger Hilsman[54]

AIPAC and Congress are discussed together, as domestic opposition in this stage because AIPAC was used as a forum by the Republicans in the Congress to undermine and challenge President Obama's Iran policy, at the same time AIPAC had also used the rift between the Republicans and the White House to further their interests by 'siding' with the Republicans to pressure the Obama administration.

According to Hagan, domestic political opposition is a determinant of foreign policy decision-making, for the reason that '(1) foreign policy decision making is inherently political, (2)

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[52] S. Mettler, 'Reconstituting the Submerged State: The Challenges of Social Policy Reform in the Obama Era', *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 8, Issue 03 , August 2010, pp.803 - 824

[53] M. Mezey, *Congress, the President, and Public Policy*, p.46

[54] R. Hilsman, *The Politics of Policy Making in Defence and Foreign Affairs*, Second edition, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1987, p.116

domestic politics has substantively important effects on foreign policy behaviour, and (3) political opposition is a pervasive phenomenon across nations with diverse political systems.'[55] Domestic opposition was especially challenging in the case of President Obama's Iran policy decision-making, because by 2012 Washington was more dysfunctional than ever before.[56] As Fiorin argued,

> 'gridlock reigns: politics is polarized, government is dysfunctional, and public policy is stalemated. Elected officials barely avoid one cliff only to find themselves on the brink of another. Credit downgrades, debt crises, national bankruptcy, climate catastrophe, and other forms of Armageddon loom. The system is broken.'[57]

Consequently, policy making in Washington was to some extend captive to Washington politics.[58] For political reasons, the Obama administration had to toughen its position on Iran.[59] On 24 June 2010, the United States Congress imposed a new set of sanctions against Iranian petroleum business, and tightened the existing sanctions regime, by adopting the *Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act*.[60] These new sanctions had their roots in the sanctions imposed during the Clinton administration. The *Iran and Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA) of 1996* was introduced by the Congress, during the Clinton era,

> 'to deny Iran the ability to support acts of international terrorism and to fund the development and acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver

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[55] J. Hagan, *Political Opposition and Foreign Policy in Comparative Perspective*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc., 1993

[56] Remarks By The President At The White House Correspondents' Association Dinner, Washington Hilton Hotel, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 29 April 2012

[57] M. Fiorin, 'America's Polarized Politics: Causes and Solutions', *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 11 , Issue 03, August 2013, pp.852-859

[58] E. Klein, '14 Reasons Why This Is The Worst Congress Ever', *The Washington Post*, 13 July 2012

[59] P. Weiss, 'Will The US Act As Israel's Proxy Against Iran?', *Mondoweiss*, 29 February 2012

[60] Fact Sheet: Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, And Divestment Act, Bureau Of Economic, Energy And Business Affairs, released by the US Department of State, 23 May 2011, retrieved on 30 March 2015,

http://www.state.gov/e/eb/esc/iransanctions/docs/160710.htm

them by limiting the development of Iran's ability to explore for, extract, refine, or transport by pipeline petroleum resources of Iran.'[61]

ILSA had also laid the foundation for future sanctions on Iran. *ILSA* was renamed as *Iran Sanctions Act (ISA)* on 30 September 2006. Even though the sanctions against Libya are no longer in force, the Congress had continued to impose several sanctions on Iran, targeting the oil resources and petroleum industry of that country. During the Obama administration, the *Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010*, was the Congress's solution to extend the powers under *ILSA*.[62]

According to Mark Landler, in 2012, when the US election campaign was at its heights, the Republicans in the Congress had 'seized on Iran's nuclear ambitions to accuse Mr. Obama of being weak in backing a staunch ally [Israel] and in confronting a bitter foe [Iran].'[63] Therefore, any policy instrument which appeared to be a concession to Iran had to be removed from the choice set. The result was that the White House and the Congress were both determined to pursue a more aggressive policy toward Iran.[64]

The Republicans in the Congress were rather aggressive in their fervour to sanction Iran. After the collapse of the fuel swap proposal, it was not possible for the President to secure congressional support, to pursue diplomacy as the primary Iran policy instrument of the United States. At this juncture it was also clear that any policy, especially any policy of compromise, was not acceptable to AIPAC and the Republicans in the Congress. In the first term, the President was more accommodating, willing to compromise and 'work with' his domestic opponents. Pressure groups such as AIPAC and ADL were important considerations, until after President Obama's re-election. According to Trita Parsi, there were two key factors which

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[61] Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996 (Enrolled as Agreed to or Passed by Both House and Senate), Bill Text, The Library of Congress, 104th Congress (1995-1996), H.R.3107.ENR

[62] The Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 , Public Law 111–195 , 111th Congress, 1 July 2010, retrieved on 24 July 2014,

http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Documents/hr2194.pdf

[63] M. Landler, 'U.S. Backers Of Israel Pressure Obama Over Policy On Iran', *The New York Times*, 3 March 2012

[64] M. Landler and S. Myers, 'White House And Congress Are In Step Over Iran Sanctions', *The New York Times*, 31 July 2012

determined America's Iran policy, in 2012: (1) 'congressional obstructionism and President Obama's limited room to maneuver in an election year'; (2) the unrealistic expectations regarding the efficacy of sanctions and the results it could achieve.[65]

The Congress was unwilling to even consider containment as America's Iran policy objective, and they wanted to attack Iran's ability to further develop its Uranium enrichment program. Therefore, after the 'failure' of diplomacy to arrive at a solution to the Iranian nuclear issue in the first 9 months of the Presidency, and after Iran definitely increased its Uranium enrichment, it was no longer possible for the Obama administration to focus on diplomacy as the official policy toward Iran.[66] However, since the beginning of the presidency, the Obama administration had considered, at least officially, persuasive measures over punitive measures.[67]

President Obama also had to take into account AIPAC's influence on Washington's policy-makers. AIPAC had influence on American foreign policy making, but that influence was often exaggerated in the media.[68] However, AIPAC was indeed successful in limiting the Obama administration's Iran policy options, but not in dictating it. Traditionally, the American policy-makers 'engaged in a kind of preemptive self-censorship', when it came to dealing with Israel and policies concerning Israel.[69] As Stephen Walt argued, 'bottom line: powerful interest groups often get their way not by achieving specific goals directly, but by shaping and constraining the options politicians are willing to contemplate.'[70] In the case of Iran, AIPAC tried to influence and pressure President Obama, by aligning with the Republicans in the Congress,[71] this alliance

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[65] T. Parsi, 'Give Obama Elbow Room On Iran', *The New York Times*, 13 June 2012

[66] Remarks by the President at AIPAC Policy Conference, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Washington, D.C., 4 March 2012

[67] R. Kampeas, 'Obama and Netanyahu will meet under the shadow of Iran and their own histories', *The Times of Israel,* 5 March 2012

[68] See also, J. Mearsheimer and S. Walt, 'Is It Love Or The Lobby? Explaining America's Special Relationship With Israel', *Security Studies*, 18, 2009, p.58-78

[69] S. Walt, 'How not to think about the Israel lobby', *Foreign Policy*, 1 November 2013, retrieved on 19 April 2014,

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/11/01/how_not_to_think_about_the_israel_lobby

[70] Ibid

[71] M. Sieff, 'US Affairs: How AIPAC handled Obama's U-turn', *The Jerusalem Post,* 29 September 2013

between the Republicans in the Congress and AIPAC went beyond just the Iran policy issues. For example, AIPAC and the pro-Israel Republicans in the Congress were against the nomination of Chuck Hagel, to the post of Secretary of Defence. According to President Obama, Hagel was a friend of his.[72] Secretary Hagel also was the first Secretary of Defence in the history of the United States to be filibustered. According to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, partisanship was the reason why the Senate Republicans delayed Hagel's confirmation process.[73] 'Democrats don't love the former Nebraska senator because he's a Republican. Republicans don't think he's a real Republican.'[74] However, Hagel won the nomination, became the Secretary of Defence, in spite of all the allegations of anti-Semitism against him,[75] and took office on 27 February 2013. As regard Iran, he had held the same view as his predecessors. In his words, 'when we engage Iran along with our partners, we are clear-eyed about the reality in the Middle East. Iran is a state sponsor of terror... but foreign policy is not a zero-sum game.'[76] According to Loren Thomson, 'he's [Hagel] a veteran who understands how Congress works and has stayed plugged in to developments in defense policy. He is not tied to the status quo and will think creatively about how to manage America's military forces.'[77]

AIPAC was also used as a forum by the Republicans in the Congress to undermine President Obama's Iran policy. For example, in 2012, all three Republican hopefuls, Rick Santorum, Mitt Romney and Newt Gingrich, spoke at AIPAC in person or via satellite, and accused President

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[72] B. Bender, 'Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel Steps Down', *The Boston Globe*, 24 November 2014

[73] 'Reid Floor Remarks On The Sequester And Republicans' Unprecedented Filibuster Of Secretary Of Defense Nominee, 26 February 2013, retrieved on 26 May 2014,

http://democrats.senate.gov/2013/02/26/reid-floor-remarks-on-the-sequester-and-republicans-unprecedented-filibuster-of-secretary-of-defense-nominee/

[74] R. Epstein, 'Why President Obama picked Chuck Hagel', *POLITICO*, 7 January 2013, retrieved on 29 March 2014,

http://www.politico.com/story/2013/01/why-barack-obama-picked-chuck-hagel-85822.html

[75] T. Parsi, 'The Illusion of AIPAC's Invincibility', *The Huffington Post*, 8 February 2014

[76] M. Shwayder, ' Panetta: US may have to use military force against Iran', *The Jerusalem Post*, 11 January 2013

[77] L. Thompson (Defense analyst at Lexington Institute think tank) quoted by L. Baldor, 'Chuck Hagel, Defense Secretary Frontrunner, Has Strong Obama Ties', *The Huffington Post*, 17 December 2012

Obama of trying to negotiate 'with a terrorist regime'.[78] This rift between President Obama and the Congress was exploited by the pro-Israel lobby, to pressure the administration to harden its position on Iran, and remove the option to continue the official policy of diplomacy, as it existed during the first 9 months of the presidency.

It may be argued that Ph theory's accentuation of the importance of the political dimension and domestic politics makes decision-making seem reactive. However, focusing on the political dimension was useful in trying to decipher some of the motivations of the Obama administration. The Obama administration had to reject the option to continue the official policy of diplomacy, when it had sufficient reason to believe that the option would have been opposed and/ or 'voted out' by its political opponents. Also, even if the Obama administration had chosen the option which was opposed by the Congress, at a time when the option had high political risk associated with it, the Obama administration would not have been able to implement the policies because the administration would not have survived politically. An important goal of Ph theory is to analyse why an option becomes a final choice, and explain why other alternatives were eliminated. In achieving that goal, the Ph analysis has aided in discovering the crucial factors that influenced the decision-makers as they arrived at their final choice.

Stage Two

> *'The Obama approach has been relatively nonideological in practice but informed by a realistic overarching sense of the United States' role in the world in the twenty-first century. The tone has been neither that of American triumphalism and exceptionalism nor one of American decline. On balance, this approach has been effective, conveying a degree of openness to the views of other leaders and the interests of other nations while still projecting confidence and leadership.'*

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[78] D. Wilgoren, 'GOP Hopefuls Blast Obama At AIPAC', *The Washington Post,* 6 March 2012

In stage-two of decision-making, the United States had to consider the diplomacy dimension - diplomacy with America's European allies and the strategic dimension - security and stability of the Middle East. In this stage, the decision-makers had to arrive at the final choice, after a cost benefit analysis of the options which had survived stage-one of decision-making. As discussed above, by the end of stage-one, it was no longer possible for the administration to pursue diplomacy as the primary foreign policy option. The options which survived the first stage of decision-making were: (1) use sanctions and sabotage as the main policy instrument; (2) pursue sanctions and diplomacy at the same time. In this case study, diplomacy was a substantive dimension and not a variable under the political dimension in the first stage of decision-making because 'diplomacy' here is not concerning the political survival of the Obama administration, but about important diplomatic interests which had to be taken into account. The strategic dimension was considered in the second stage of decision-making as a substantive dimension, because the United States had significant security and geopolitical interest in the Middle East which had to be considered when choosing America's Iran policy. The economy was also a substantive dimension in this case, because the United States and the world economy were still recovering from the recession. However, unlike the first case study, 'the economy' in this case study is not concerning the perceptions regarding economy, but about affairs pertaining to the economy.

The Diplomacy Dimension: Diplomacy with America's European Allies

> *'I think that we are a part of the world, that we want to cooperate with the world. We are not the dominant power in the world that everyone falls in behind us. But we want to reach out and cooperate. After all, we`re the ones that set up the League of Nations, the U.N., NATO. That`s the way we do business. That`s the way we want to do business. We want to work with friends, with allies, with people of good will to make this a better world. That`s the message.'*

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[79] M. Indyk, K. Lieberthal and M. O'Hanlon, 'Scoring Obama's Foreign Policy: A Progressive pragmatist Tries to Bent History', *Foreign Affairs*, May/ June 2012

American policy toward Iran had posed several challenges to the relationship between US and its allies in Europe. By the time President Obama took office, America's relationship with Europe needed serious investment, to restore trust. [81] Iran was a sensitive issue to the United States and the EU, because it had the potential to start a new war in the Middle East. Since the beginning of the Obama presidency, the US Senate and the House of Representatives had worked with the Executive Branch, to put together an elaborate sanctions regime against Iran. It was not a new strategy for the United States, to use sanctions, in order to further its political goals. However, the success of the sanctions regime depended on the cooperation from the International community and International institutions.[82] According to James Mann, 'he [President Obama] was in favor of talks, diplomacy and other interaction; at the same time, he also favoured putting pressure on a regime through economic sanctions'.[83]

During the early months of 2010, Turkey and Brazil, both with temporary seats on the United Nations Security Council, made the 'last minute effort' to give diplomacy a chance, before the United Nations voted on Iran sanctions.[84] This tripartite negotiation between Iran, Brazil and Turkey resulted in the next official proposal, known as the *Tehran Declaration*. On 17 May 2010, the deal was signed in Tehran, addressing most of the issues discussed in the fuel swap proposal of the previous year. The deal reached by Iran, Turkey and Brazil, had begun with President Obama's support. Even so, the deal was promptly rejected by the P5 + 1. This was because of the change in circumstances concerning Iran's stockpile of Uranium. At this juncture,

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[80] B. Scowcroft interviewed by C. Rose, event organized by the *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, New York, 15 June 2007

[81] J. Kelley, 'Keep Calm and Carry on: Appraising the Transatlantic Relationship from Iraq to Obama', *European Political Science*, Vol.10, Issue 1, 2011, pp.20-26

[82] J. Mann, *The Obamians*, p.196

[83] J. Mann 2012, p.194

[84] J. Acton, 'Progress Or Setback-Brazil And Turkey's Engagement On Iran'*, Carnegie Endowment For International Peace*, 17 May 2010, retrieved on 30 March 2015,

http://carnegieendowment.org/2010/05/17/progress-or-setback-brazil-and-turkey-s-engagement-on-iran

Iran had a greater stock of Uranium, and was enriching Uranium at 20%.[85] The fuel swap proposed in the Tehran Declaration did not take into account the increase in Iran's stockpile of Uranium; the proposal did not require Iran to remove an increased amount of enriched Uranium from Iran, compared to the fuel swap proposal in 2009. In 2009, the export of 1200 Kg of LEU, would have been a confidence building measure. In 2009, 1200 Kg of LEU was around 80% of Iran's stockpile.[86] But by the time Iran agreed to the Tehran Declaration, 1200Kg of LEU was only about 50% of Iran's stockpile. Eventually the United Nations voted to impose more sanctions on Iran.[87] *Resolution 1929* was passed on 9 June 2010, and its targets included technology transfer to Iran, IRGC members, and Iranian financial institutions. Iran was rather antagonistic in its response to the rejection of the Tehran Declaration by the United States and its European allies, as well as the sanctions imposed on Iran in 2010.[88]

In July 2011 Russia was involved in an initiative to help address the West's concerns regarding Iran's Uranium stockpile. It was a proposal made public by the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, to implement the initiatives made by the P5+1.[89] It was a proposal to get Iran to reduce its uranium enrichment, and implement the IAEA additional protocols. At the same time, the P5+1 was to gradually lift the sanctions on Iran, in a 'step by step' manner.[90] In the end, the proposal did not materialise, because of the lack of commitment from the P5+1 and Iran.

According to Olli Heinonen,

> 'after failing to reach a later deal brokered by Turkey and Brazil, Iran expanded its enrichment activities to produce 20% enriched uranium at Qom. By June 2012, Iran had

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[85] T. Parsi, *A Single Roll Of The Dice: Obama's Diplomacy With Iran*

[86] Ibid

[87] see Reporting by S. Westall; Editing by K. Liffey, 'Text: Powers dismiss Iran fuel offer before U.N. vote', *Reuters*, 9 June 2010

[88] Security Council Imposes Additional Sanctions On Iran, Voting 12 In Favour To 2 Against, With 1 Abstention, United Nations Security Council, 6335th Meeting, 9 June 2010, retrieved on 30 March 2015,

http://www.un.org/press/en/2010/sc9948.doc.htm

[89] K. Davenport, 'History of Official Proposals on the Iranian Nuclear Issue', *Arms Control Association*, January 2014, retrieved on 19 August 2014,

http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Iran_Nuclear_Proposals

[90] Ibid

produced about 140 kg 20% enriched uranium, out of which some has been moved to Isfahan for fuel manufacturing.'[91]

Since the beginning of the Obama presidency, the EU had cooperated with the United States, and had imposed sanctions against Iran. For the EU, sanctions were a means to make diplomacy work. However, the EU had significant differences with the Obama administration, concerning the manner in which the 'Iran issue' had to be dealt with. For example, the Obama administration's attempts to enforce extraterritorial sanctions were met with significant resistance from European allies. On 31 December 2011, the US Congress authorised the sanctioning of foreign financial institutions which did business with the Iranian Central Bank. 'Previous American administrations have waived similar extraterritorial sanctions. Congress is insisting that President Obama enforce this new law. It also gave him some room to waive punishments, on a case-by-case basis, on companies in countries that are cooperating with efforts to isolate Iran.'[92] Subsequent diplomatic grapple with European partners made it possible for the Obama administration to tighten the sanctions imposed on the Iranian Central Bank. In order to have the support of the European allies, the United States had to make diplomacy work, or at the very least avoid shooting down diplomacy as an option. Pursuing sanctions and sabotage as the main policy instrument would have meant losing the support of America's European allies.

Sanctions were costly for the United States and the EU. According to a report by the *National Iranian American Council (NIAC)*, the United States had incurred significant loss in trade and job opportunity, as a price for the sanctions it imposed on Iran. 'From 1995 to 2012, the U.S. sacrificed between $134.7 and $175.3 billion in potential export revenue to Iran.'[93] According to another report by the NIAC, the EU had incurred (2010-2012) 'more than twice as much as the United States in terms of lost trade revenue. Germany was hit the hardest, losing between $23.1

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[91] O. Heinonen , 'Iran's Nuclear Ambitions and Future Prospects', *Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs*, John F. Kennedy School of Government , Harvard University, retrieved on 19 March 2014,

http://belfercenter.hks.harvard.edu/files/Iran%20nuclear%20ambitions%20and%20future%20prospects.pdf

[92] Editorial, 'Congress, Sanctions and Iran', *The New York Times*, 3 July 2010

[93] J. Leslie, R. Marashi and T. Parsi, 'Losing Billions: The Cost of Iran Sanctions To The U.S. Economy', *NIAC,* July 2014, retrieved on 21 March 2015,

http://www.niacouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Losing-Billions-The-Cost-of-Iran-Sanctions.pdf

and $73.0 billion between 2010-2012, with Italy and France following at $13.6-$42.8 billion and 10.9-34.2 billion respectively.'[94] Therefore, the use of sanctions as a means to pressure Iran into pursuing diplomacy was more beneficial, when compared to relying on sanctions and sabotage alone, to resolve Iran's nuclear issue. Sanctions were only a limited means to arrive at the desired political end. According Suzanne Maloney,

> 'the historical efficacy of sanctions has been undermined by their limited scope of applicability. The Obama administration has made substantial progress toward greater international cooperation, but Washington risks alienating crucial allies through adoption of more indiscriminate measures.'[95]

The European countries had strong economic ties with Iran, unlike the United States. These countries were willing to back the sanctions regime for a limited period of time, until it was possible to resort to diplomacy, in order to manage and eventually resolve the conflict. According to a study by *Center for Strategic & International Studies*,

> 'if a period of confrontation and sanctions does last for several more years, without Iran actually moving to acquire nuclear weapons, there may be a lasting increase in oil prices and pressure on the world economy. This period of time will also allow Iran time to steadily improve its asymmetric capabilities and political warfare.'[96]

Moreover,

> '…the case of Iran illustrates the risk that, precisely due to their inability to secure their primary goal, sanctions may turn into an end in and of themselves – or, stated differently,

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[94] 'Report: Iran Sanctions Cost US Economy up to $175 Billion', *NIAC*, 14 July 2014, retrieved on 21 March 2015,

http://www.niacouncil.org/report-iran-sanctions-cost-us-economy-175-billion/

[95] S. Maloney, 'Progress of the Obama Administration's Policy Toward Iran', Testimony before the House Subcommittee on National Security, Homeland Defense and Foreign Operations, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 15 November 2011

[96] A. Cordesman, B. Gold, S. Khazai, and B. Bosserman, 'U.S. and Iranian Strategic Competition: Sanctions, Energy, Arms Control, and Regime Change', *Center For Strategic & International Studies*, 19 April 2013

the measure of their success grows to be how many sanctions have been imposed and how much pain they inflict.'[97]

By the time President Obama was into his third year in office, the EU 3 was accepting of the failure of their diplomacy with Iran, and openly acknowledged the need for tougher sanctions. In January of 2012, EU imposed more sanctions on Iran, placed an embargo on Iran 'to bring Iran back to the negotiating table.'[98] By February of the same year, the Iranian Foreign Ministry had reached out to the European negotiators to restart diplomacy.[99] During the same time, the Obama administration was also under pressure, brought about by domestic politics in the midst of an election year, to impose more sanctions on Iran.[100] However, Washington had to take into account the impact that 'broad sanctions' had on other actors in the region. According to a congressional aide quoted by Warrick and Rezaian, 'after a while it becomes a question of' "Who are you hurting…If you completely cut off Iran's ability to make payments to some of its neighbours, that's going to affect these countries' enthusiasm for helping us further.'"[101] America's European partners were also hurt by such a policy, because they too had trade relations with Iran and its neighbors. It was no longer practical for the United States to completely banish Iran from international commerce, because of the impact it had on American allies. Also, the United States only had limited means and limited alternatives. As Baldwin argued,

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[97] 'Spider Web: The Making and Unmaking of Iran Sanctions', Crisis Group, *Middle East Report*, No. 138, 25 February 2013

[98] O. Meier, 'European Efforts To Solve The Conflict Over Iran's Nuclear Programme: How Has The European Union Performed?', *EU Non-Proliferation Consortium,* Non Proliferation Papers, No.27, February 2013

[99] T. Van de Graaf, 'The ''Oil Weapon'' Reversed? Sanctions Against Iran and U.S.-EU Structural Power', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XX, No. 3, Fall 2013, pp.145–163

[100] R. Satloff , 'President Obama on Iran: Assessing Key Passages in the AIPAC Speech', Policy Analysis, *The Washington Institute*, 5 March 2012, retrieved on 9 June 2014,

http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/president-obama-on-iran-assessing-key-passages-in-the-aipac-speech

[101] J. Warrick and J. Rezaian, 'U.S. lawmakers push for stricter sanctions on Iran', *The Washington Post*, 13 July 2012

'because resources are scarce, people cannot have everything they want. They must therefore choose among alternative uses of such resources. In doing so, they give up some valued alternatives in order to gain others. All concepts of costs… refer to this basic choice situation… From this perspective, all costs are opportunity costs.'[102]

Therefore, the United States had to accommodate the concerns of the allies. That is, the United States had to pursue sanctions, so as to make diplomacy work, but not impose sanctions for sanctions' sake.

The Strategic Dimension: Security and Stability of the Middle East

The period considered in this case study, from October 2009 to August 2013, was especially eventful and turbulent for the countries in the Middle East. The change in circumstances brought about by the 'Arab Spring' made it necessary for the United States to be more concerned about the security and stability of the region. The Arab Spring was an important phase in the history of the region, which also saw the power struggle between Iran and the United States have significant impact on some of the events in the region. The people and governments of the region were important to the United States because of the economic, military and strategic importance of the region. Public opinion in the region was important, because the Obama administration was trying to increase American influence and soft power in the region.[103] Soft power is necessary for garnering international support to facilitate military objectives and political goals. For example, even in the case of imposing international sanctions against Iran, it was necessary to have support from the international community and international institutions. Therefore as Nye argued, 'soft power therefore is not just a matter of ephemeral popularity; it is a means of obtaining outcomes the United States wants'[104] The public opinion depended on the public's perception of America's role in the region. That is, the public opinion depended on the public's

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[102] D. Baldwin, 'The Costs of Power,' In *Paradoxes of Power*, (ed.)*,* D. Baldwin, New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989, pp.83-84; quoted in T. Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy: Logic For American Statecraft*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p.335

[103] M. Lagon, 'The Value Of Values: Soft Power Under Obama', *World Affairs*, September/October 2011

[104] J. Nye, Jr., 'Decline Of America's Soft Power: Why Washington Should Worry', *Foreign Affairs,* Vol.83, Issue 3, May/June 2004, pp. 16-20

perception of America's role in problem creation and problem solving in the region.[105] This period also saw a great deal of tension between Iran and the United States because the Obama administration was working with America's Middle Eastern allies, in order to deal with the Iranian nuclear issue. Iran and the United States were also competing for influence in the region, during the Arab spring. Therefore, decision-makers on all sides were sensitive to the events in the region, and these events had significant impact on America's Iran policy choice.

Arab spring (18 December 2010 to mid-2012)

"You say elections, I say Lebanon"

A 'relatively liberal business man' in Riyadh[106]

Lebanon is one country in the Middle East which had contested elections. However, that country had not known peace or stability for decades. Therefore, according to the gentleman ('relatively liberal business man') quoted above, the rulers of the Middle East prefer status quo.[107] Moreover, almost all popular movements in the Middle East, from Iran in 1979 to Egypt during the Arab Spring, were eventually hijacked by radicals.

There are many who referred to the Arab spring as the great political movement by the Arab populace. For example, according to Chas Freeman,

> 'delusions of imperial omnipotence die hard, but the question of the day is no longer how we or other outside powers will act to affect the Arab future. Both colonialism and neocolonialism are no more. For better or ill, the states of the region have seized control of their own destiny. *Masha allah* — and good luck to them!'[108]

However, that is not an accurate assessment of the situation, because outside powers did act; for example in Syria, Bahrain, Lebanon, Iraq and Palestine, to affect the Arab future. Even in the

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[105] S. Renshon, (ed.), *The Political Psychology of the Gulf War: Leaders, Publics, and the Process of Conflict*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993

[106] Quoted by T. Lippman, In S. Akbarzadeh, (ed.) *America's Greater Challenges in the Middle East*, p.36

[107] Ibid

[108] C. Freeman, Jr., 'Coping with Kaleidoscopic Change in the Middle East', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XX, No. 4, Winter 2013, pp.29–36

aftermath of the Arab spring, there were states in the region which were facing unwarranted interference from foreign powers.[109] Palestine, Iraq, and Syria were facing destabilising interference from foreign powers, such as the United States.[110] Therefore, the people and governments of the region were not in control of their destiny. Iran and the United States were supporting opposing parties in all these countries, except may be in Iraq, but Iraq was under a bloody and complicated civil war which was worsened by the lack of cooperation between Iran and the United States, that civil war had also worsened the tension between Iran and the United States because

> 'while Iran, since 2003, has encouraged its Iraqi political allies to work with the United States and participate in the nascent democratic political process, it has also armed, trained, and funded Shiite militias and Shiite—and, on occasion, Sunni—insurgents to work toward a humiliating defeat for the United States that would deter future U.S. military interventions in the region.'[111]

The unrest in the Middle East, during the Arab Spring, had impacted the stability and state of the regional politics. The Arab Spring brought with it a new wave of Islamists and fundamentalists, into the power struggle in the region.[112] The Middle East politics was seemingly getting more radicalised, with democracy - in Lebanon and Gaza, and armed struggle - in Egypt, and Syria, bringing radical elements into power. The United States chose to continue backing the authoritarian rulers and monarchies in the region, such as the rulers of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, who were longtime American allies in the region.[113] Moreover, the undemocratic countries in the region saw more stability.[114] It was costly for the United States to deal with Iran's opposition to

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[109] R. Mason, *The International Politics of the Arab Spring: Popular Unrest and Foreign Policy*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014

[110] L. Berger, The Missing Link? US Policy and the International Dimensions of Failed Democratic Transitions in the Arab World, *Political Studies*, Vol.59, Issue 1, March 2011, pp.38–55

[111] M. Eisenstadt, M. Knights, and A. Ali, 'Iran's Influence In Iraq: Countering Tehran's Whole-of-Government Approach', *The Washington Institute For Near East Policy*, April 2011, p.ix

[112] M. Fisher, 'In Tunisia After Arab Spring, Islamists' New Freedoms Create New Muslim Divide', *The Washington Post*, 28 April 2012

[113] The regional powers had the potential to be 'competitive power brokers'; N. Khoury, 'The Arab Cold War Revisited: The Regional Impact of the Arab Uprising', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XX, No. 2, Summer 2013, pp.73–87

[114] C. Freeman's statement from an edited transcript of the seventy-first in a series of Capitol Hill conferences convened by the Middle East Policy Council. The meeting was held Wednesday, January 16, 2013, in the Rayburn

American interests in all these countries across the Middle East,[115] which made it all the more important for the United States to keep the diplomatic option open, when dealing with Iranian nuclear issue.

The countries discussed in this section are Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Israel and Bahrain. America's relationship with these countries was an important consideration when making decisions pertaining to Iran. Also, American policy-makers could only arrive at the final policy option, pertaining to Iran, after taking into account the future of the above mentioned countries, and Iran's role in influencing the future of those countries. The decision-makers are not seeking to maximise utility on the Iran issue alone. The decision-makers were concerned about minimising costs and maximising rewards, but that concern was not singularly focused on the Iran issue, because the Obama administration was alarmed by the destabilising political developments in the Middle East, following the Arab Spring.

Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabia was America's closest ally and Iran's worst foe in the Persian Gulf. As discussed in the last case study, Saudi Arabia had no interest in seeing the relationship between Iran and the United States improved. Riyadh had also pressured the United States to toughen its Iran policy. This period during the Arab Spring was critical to Riyadh, because the Kingdom and its allies in the region had faced significant domestic unrest. Some of these unrests were rightly and wrongly blamed on Iran.[116] This period also saw significant increase in Iran's influence in the region.[117] Iran was also dealing with the pressure from the United States, pertaining to the Iranian nuclear program, and all of these issues made it necessary for the United States to address Riyadh's concerns regarding Iran's role in regional conflicts.

House Office Building, with Thomas R. Mattair moderating, Chas W. Freeman, Jr., William B. Quandt, John Duke Anthony and Marwan Muasher, 'U.S. Grant Strategy in the Middle East: Is There One?', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XX, No. 1, Spring 2013, pp.1–29

[115] F. Gause III, 'Beyond Sectarianism: The New Middle East Cold War', *Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper*, No.11, July 2014

[116] I. Black, 'Saudis Crush Dissent And Point Finger At Iran For Trouble In Eastern Province', *The Guardian*, 6 October 2011

[117] S. Mabon, 'The Battle For Bahrain: Iranian-Saudi Rivalry,' *Middle East Policy Council*, Vol. XIX, No. 2, Summer 2012

There were several issues and grievances which prompted protests from the people, against the Saudi government. However, the ethnic make of the Middle East made it possible for other state and non-state actors to get involved in the problems of the Kingdom; Iran had invested significant economic and political capital to nurture the opposition against the Saudi government, and vice versa.[118] Iran had significant influence on the Shiite population in the region, that influence had also fueled the friction between Iran and Saudi Arabia.[119] Therefore, when President Obama was taking a stand to support or oppose a political group in the Middle East, he was most likely backing the Iranian or Saudi political camp. Supporting Riyadh or Tehran also meant that in a way the United States was choosing between the Shiites and Sunnis of the region. For example, when the United States was backing the government supporters in Bahrain, it was also supporting the Sunni population of that country, and the Saudi interest in that country, against the Shiites and Iranian interests in that country.[120] The relationship between the government of Iran and the government of Bahrain was historically complicated. For instance, when the Shah reached an arrangement to relinquish his claims on Bahrain, he had tried to retain his control over the disputed Islands and oil resources of the Persian Gulf; even during the period considered in this thesis, Iran's territorial disputes with the UAE over the Island of Abu Musa remained unresolved. The Iranian government's attempts to export their revolution, and influence the Shiites of the region had deeply worried the ruling family of Bahrain. That fear was especially intense during the days of the 'Arab Spring' in Bahrain. It was against American interest, to allow Iran's influence to grow in Bahrain, and the Obama administration had to work against the democratic current in Bahrain.[121] Retaining diplomacy to give room for negotiations during a volatile period in the regional history, while using sanctions to make Iran's transgressions expensive, was necessary, considering the security and stability of the region, the

[118] M. Monshipouri and M. Dorraj, 'Iran's Foreign Policy: A Shifting Strategic Landscape', *Middle East Policy Council*, Vol. XX, No. 4, Winter 2013

[119] L. Boghardt, 'Iranian Aid to Fighters in the Gulf Peninsula', *The Washington Institute For Near East Policy*, 24 March 2014, retrieved on 19 April 2014,

http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iranian-aid-to-fighters-in-the-gulf-peninsula

[120] R. Neumann, 'Bahrain: A Very Complicated Little Island', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XX, No. 4, Winter 2013, pp.45–58

[121] J. Glaser, 'Why Obama Supports Tyranny Over Democracy In Bahrain,' *The Huffington Post*, 3 July 2013

need to have communication lines open during perilous times and the necessity to punish Iran for its 'bad' behavior in the region.

Saudi Arabia saw Iran's role, existent or imagined, in all the major conflicts in the region.[122] According to Saudi sources, Iran played a major role in the turmoil in Syria, the struggle in Bahrain, the problems in Lebanon and so forth.[123] According to Riyadh, almost all the conflicts in the Middle East were the direct result of Iranian interference and influence. Moreover, Saudi Arabia saw many of its opponents as proxies of Iran.[124] This in turn made it impossible for Saudi Arabia to participate in any meaningful diplomatic ventures with Iran. Riyadh also objected to Iranian involvement in resolving the conflicts in the region. Case in point was the Syrian issue, where Saudi Arabia was against having Iran at the negotiating table. The United States needed Iran's support to contain the violence in the region, because of Iran's influence on the regional actors. Therefore, the United States had to be tough on Iran when dealing with the Iranian nuclear issue and at the same time work with Iran in order to deal with the issue of regional stability.

The period also saw some very public confrontation between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Both countries were involved in several campaigns of sabotage, against each other. In some cases, their animosity had the potential to force the United States into getting involved in new conflicts in the region. One such event happened in October 2011. In that case, Iran was accused of plotting to assassinate the Saudi Ambassador Abel al-Jubeir. The alleged plot involved the assassination of the Ambassador in American territory, in an operation code named 'Operation Red Coalition.'[125] The allegations were promptly denied by the Iranian government[126] and dismissed by several analysts and experts in the field. The issue of concern to those who were

[122] A. Goodman, 'Barack Obama Must Speak Out On Bahrain Bloodshed,' *The Guardian*, 13 April 2011

[123] A. Alsharif and R. El Gamal, 'Saudi Arabia Accuses Iran Of Meddling Ahead Of Summit', *Reuters*, 24 December 2012

[124] R. Worth, 'Iran accord widens rift between U.S. and Saudis; Kingdom fears losing power in Middle East as American priorities shift', *International New York Times,* 27 November 2013

[125] The code name was given by the FBI

[126] A. Cordesman and B. Gold, *The Gulf Military Balance: The Conventional and Asymmetric Dimensions*

advocating diplomacy between Iran and the United States was that, this 'incident'/ accusations against Iran had increased the tension between Iran and the United States. The incident also resulted in another round of American sanctions against Iran.[127] It is a matter of speculation, whether the 'incident' was a Saudi plot to interfere with President Obama's diplomacy with Iran. According to Stephen Walt, it is very unlikely that Iran had attempted to commit such a crime on American territory, especially because they were aware of the potential consequences of such an act.[128] As Walt observed,

> '…blowing up buildings in the United States is an act of war, and history shows that the United States is not exactly restrained when it responds to direct attacks on U.S. soil. Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and we eventually firebombed many Japanese cities and dropped two atomic bombs on them.'[129]

Moreover, the American response following the September 11 attack was also alarmingly costly for the Middle East and the United States. Under these circumstances, considering the hostility between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the lack of trust between those two neighbors, America's important alliance with Saudi Arabia, as well as the fragile relationship between Iran and the United States, it was beneficial to pursue diplomacy, and use sanctions as a punitive measure to supplement diplomacy.

Iraq: Iraq was also a reason why it was necessary for the United States to pursue diplomacy with Iran. By 2009, it was clear that the American invasion of Iraq had produced unwanted and unexpected results, such as the civil war in that country. The situation deteriorated even after the withdrawal of American troops in 2011.[130] Even after the withdrawal of troops, the United States still had interests in Iraq, such as securing the stability of that country. At the same time, Iran had significant influence in post-Saddam Iraq, and the Shiite government in Iraq was a closer ally to Iran, than it was to the United States. Iran and Iraq had military, economic, and political ties to each other. For example, according to J. Risen and D. Adnan, the illegal trade between Iran and

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[127] Ibid

[128] S. Walt, 'Something just doesn't add up…', *Foreign Policy*, 13 October 2011, retrieved on 19 April 2014,

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/10/13/something_just_doesnt_add_up

[129] Ibid

[130] J. Logan, 'Last U.S. Troops Leave Iraq, Ending War', *Reuters*, 18 December 2011

Iraq was rampant, and government officials close to Prime Minister Maliki were also directly benefiting by helping Iran circumvent sanctions.[131] Prime Minister Maliki was also an Iranian ally, in dealing with the crisis in the region, from Bahrain to Syria. For example, even though Iraq was embroiled in extremist violence, the Iraqi government had played a supportive role to the Assad government in Syria.[132] The reports concerning Iranian use of Iraqi airspace, to bring supplies to the Syrian military, was a prime example of Iran's growing influence in the region.[133] During the Saddam era, Syria was Iran's main channel to transfer weapons and resources to Iranian allies in the Levant. In the post-Saddam Iraq, Iranian alliance with the Maliki government had provided Iran with a new route, via Iraq, to reach its allies in the Levant.

Iraq's alliance with Iran was also one of necessity and mutually beneficial. The Shiite support was important to the Iraqi government because of electoral reasons.[134] Moreover, rescuing Iraq from its civil war was only possible with Iran's cooperation, because of Iran's influence on the Iraqi Shiites. Iran and Iraq were also bound by several agreements of trade and investments as well. As already discussed, Iran was also influential in shaping Iraq's post-Saddam policy toward other state and non-state actors in the region.[135] Iran's role in Iraq had made it necessary for the United States to cooperate with Iran, in order to deal with the crisis in Iraq. Therefore, for practical reasons, the Obama administration could not dismiss diplomacy with Iran, or terminate communication channels with Iran.

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[131] J. Risen and D. Adnan, 'U.S. Says Iraqis Are Helping Iran to Skirt Sanctions', *The New York Times*, 18 August 2012

[132] C. Freeman, Jr., 'Change without Progress in the Middle East', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XIX, No. 4, Winter 2012, pp.29–39

[133] M. Gordon and D. Kirkpatrick , 'Iran Supplying Syrian Military via Iraqi Airspace', *The New York Times*, 5 September 2012

[134] 'Mapping The Global Muslim Population', *Pew Research Center*, 7 October 2009, retrieved on 31 March 2015,

http://www.pewforum.org/2009/10/07/mapping-the-global-muslim-population/

[135] J. Strakes. 'The "Omnibalancing" Proposition and Baghdad's Foreign Policy: Reinterpreting Contemporary Iraq-Iran-US Relations', *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 3, Summer 2011

The Arab Spring had changed the political climate of the Middle East,[136] and the infighting amongst the opposition groups had led so many Middle Eastern countries into civil war, such as in Syria, Egypt and Yemen. The Arab Spring had also brought forth a new wave of Sunni extremism.[137] Even though most of the Middle Eastern governments were dealing with significant tensions in their own domestic politics, there were concerted efforts made to interfere in each other's affairs. That is, even though many of these states were fighting Sunni extremists in their own country, they were also supporting extremists in their neighbouring countries.[138] Case in point was Saudi Arabia's active support to the Sunni extremists fighting in Iraq.[139] The Saudi monarchy was fighting for its own survival. The kingdom had to deal with domestic opposition and threat from extremists in the region. At the same time, Saudi Arabia was also aiding the fundamentalists fighting the Iraqi government.[140] Iran and the United States had common interests in fighting Sunni extremists in the region.

Israel: Israel was America's single most important ally in the region. As this section will explain, the Obama administration had to pursue sanctions, along with diplomacy, in order to placate Israel, because Israel was against America's diplomacy toward Iran.[141] Israel was an important factor in America's Iran policy, 'and for many on Capitol Hill, the reality is that Iran is primarily viewed through an Israeli lens'.[142] The Israel factor had also increased the tension between Iran and the United States due to Israel's hostile policies toward Iran, such as the Israeli assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists. Alliance with Israel had also complicated America's relationship with other regional actors, when dealing with the Palestinian issue. Israel had to

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[136] Revolution in the Middle East would perhaps be successful if it were united against a common cause. This certainly was the main reason for the success of the Iranian revolution of 1979; A. Ansari, 'Continuous Regime Change from Within', *The Washington Quarterly,* Vol.26, No..4, 2003, pp.53-67

[137] H. Akin Ünver, 'How Turkey's Islamists Fell out of Love With Iran', *Middle East Policy,* Vol. XIX, No. 4, winter 2012, pp.103–109

[138] C. Moniquet, 'The Involvement Of Salafism/Wahhabism In The Support And Supply Of Arms To Rebel Groups Around The World', Policy Department DG External Policies, European Parliament, June 2013

[139] D. Blair, 'Qatar And Saudi Arabia 'Have Ignited Time Bomb By Funding Global Spread Of Radical Islam,'' *The Telegraph*, 4 October 2014

[140] Ibid

[141] D. Waxman, 'The Real Problem In U.S.-Israeli Relations', *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2012, p.71-87

[142] T. Parsi, 'Can Washington Separate Its Iran Policy From Israel?', *The National Interest*, 2 December 2015

have a working relationship with some of the Arab countries, especially Egypt and Jordan, for security reasons, as these countries borders Israel, and also because Israel did not have any promising relationship with its other neighbors - Hezbollah controlled southern Lebanon and Assad's Syria. When Egypt was under the dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak, it was possible for Israel to maintain dialogue and keep communication channels open with that country, to 'maintain security'. The Arab Spring had also improved Israel's relationship with el-Sisi's Egypt, and the Iran factor had helped Israel and Saudi Arabia find common grounds.[143] In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the rulers of the Middle East were concerned about appeasing their populace, and combating the extremists who challenged their authority. Therefore, to many Arab governments, the single biggest threat to their survival was not Israel, but their own citizenry and the rising fundamentalism in the region.

According to the ADL National Director Abraham Foxman, 'there are signs here as elsewhere that the American people want less U.S. involvement in the Middle East region, a position which has little to do with negative feelings toward Israel but that can have negative consequences for the Jewish state.'[144] At the same time Israeli public and the Netanyahu government were the most fervent supporters of starting a war with Iran.[145] According to former CIA analyst Ray McGovern, Israel's objective was to **'have Iran bloodied the same way we [the United States] did to Iraq'.** In doing so, Iran 'would no longer be able to support Hamas and Hezbollah in Gaza, Lebanon, and elsewhere.'[146] It is a matter of public record that Israel did not trust the Obama administration to deal with the Iranian nuclear issue. The mere possibility of the Obama administration looking at a containment policy toward Iran was sufficient to aggrieve the

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[143] I. Rabinivich, 'Israel And The Changing Middle East', The Brookings Institute, Middle East Memo, No.34, January 2015

[144] Press Release, ADL Survey of American Public Finds Strong Support for Israel, But Uncertainty Over Approach to Iran, New York: New York, 5 November 2013

http://www.adl.org/press-center/press-releases/israel-middle-east/adl-survey-of-american-public-finds-strong-support-for-israel.html

[145] R. Creamer, 'Netanyahu, Other Iraq Hawks, Try To Push U.S. Into War With Iran,' *The Huffington Post*, 2 March 2015; B. Ravid, 'Iraq 2002, Iran 2012: Compare And Contrast Netanyahu's Speeches', *Haaretz*, 4 October 2012; Times Of Israel Staff, 'Netanyahu 'Determined To Attack Iran' Before US Elections, Claims Israel's Channel 10', *The Times of Israel*, 20 August 2012

[146] M. Kelley, 'Ex-CIA Analyst Tells Us The 'Real' Reason Israel Wants To Strike Iran', *The Business Insider,* 14 August 2012

Netanyahu government. However, President Obama had reiterated that, 'I reserve all options, and my policy here is not going to be one of containment. My policy is prevention of Iran obtaining nuclear weapons.'[147] Israel and United States differed on the means to arrive at that goal. During this time period, war was not considered an alternative by the Obama administration. However, for the Israeli decision-makers, war was the preferred option, because

> '"since 1967 the Israelis have been able to pretty much do whatever they want in that area" and a nuclear Iran would bring a "different strategic situation because, for the first time, Israel would have to look over their shoulder."'[148]

Therefore, it was necessary for the Obama administration to pursue sanctions against Iran, so as to not appear to be not punishing Iran for its hostile activities toward American interests in the region, to address Israel's concerns regarding Iran's nuclear program without engaging in a war with Iran, and also to use sanctions to pressure Iran to mend its ways.

Syria: This section will analyse the impact of the 'Syrian conflict' on the Obama administration's Iran policy choice, during the time period discussed in this case study. The Syrian conflict was one of the most important events to have developed in the Middle East, since President Obama took office.[149] The main argument made in this section is that, the Syrian issue had impacted the relationship between Iran and the United States, and therefore impacted the Obama administration's Iran policy decision as well. The involvement of very many state and non-state actors in the Syrian conflict had complicated the regional dynamics and alliances, with the United States and Iran supporting opposing camps in that civil war. Even though, it is not within the scope of this thesis to do a detailed analysis of the Syrian conflict, the impact of that conflict on the Obama administration's Iran policy-making is integral to this case study.

Since March 2011, the 'situation' in Syria was a cause of concern for the United States and Iran, because Syria was an important ally of Iran, it was a powerful Arab country in the region, also

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[147] Remarks by President Obama, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 05 March 2012, retrieved on 20 March 2014,

http://www.uspolicy.be/headline/remarks-president-obama-and-prime-minister-netanyahu-israel-2012

[148] M. Kelley, 'Ex-CIA Analyst Tells Us The 'Real' Reason Israel Wants To Strike Iran', *Business Insider*, 14 August 2012

[149] Z. Laub, 'Syria's Crisis And The Global Response,' *Council on Foreign Relations*, 11 September 2013

the unrest in that country had seriously impacted the regional stability and security. The Syrian conflict was challenging for the United States, Iran, and the government of Syria. The United States did not want to see any increase in Iranian influence in the Levant, as the enduring relationship between Syria's Assad government and Iran had weakened the American influence in the Levant. Given the sectarian tensions in the region, any turmoil in Syria was bound to negatively impact the American interests in Iraq and the rest of the Middle East, and as the events unfolded in 2011, it was clear that the conflict in Syria had the potential to significantly impact the stability of the neighbouring countries, and alter the regional dynamics. The Iranian involvement in the Syrian conflict also made it necessary for the United States to get involved in that country.

The main regional players in the Syrian conflict included numerous non state actors - from Al-Qaeda to ISIS, also states such as Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Iran. The other players were Russia, China, United Nations, Arab League and United States. Initially, the American involvement in Syria was facilitated by Turkey. Turkey's involvement and interference in the Syrian conflict had changed Turkey's alliances in the region.[150] During the early days, in 2011 and 2012, Turkey's role in the uprising in Syria had turned both Iran and Syria against Turkey. The economic, political and diplomatic relationship between Syria and Turkey was compromised as a result of Turkey's involvement in the Syrian crisis. By 2012, the United Nations had asked President Assad to resign from office.[151] The Sunni Arab countries were also actively involved in supporting the Syrian opposition. This state of affairs had severely strained the relationship between Iran and the Arab countries of the region. The Arabs were opposed to any Iranian involvement in resolving the conflict in Syria.[152] Therefore, the United States (along with its allies), and Iran were in an open conflict concerning the future of Syria. The above mentioned aspects undoubtedly made the Syrian issue especially challenging, at a time when Tehran and Washington were looking to address the concerns regarding the Iranian nuclear issue.

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[150] R. Doherty and A. Bakr, 'Exclusive: Secret Turkish Nerve Center Leads Aid To Syria Rebels,' *Reuters*, 27 July 2012

[151] P. Spielmann, 'General Assembly To Ask Assad To Step Down', *USA Today*, 1 August 2012, retrieved on 29 January 2016, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/story/2012-08-01/syria-assad-un/56653770/1

[152] A. Wiersema, 'Everything You Need To Know About The Syrian Civil War', *ABC News*, 31 August 2013, retrieved on 31 March 2015,

http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/syrian-civil-war/story?id=20112311

Turkey's involvement in fuelling the conflict in Syria had also increased the terrorist activities in Syria.[153] Turkey and Qatar was supporting Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, during the early days of the conflict. Turkey's own anti-kurdish agenda was a reason to meddle and destroy the unity amongst the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change (NCC). According to Samir Aita, a member of the Syrian Democratic Forum, 'Erdogan and Davutoglu [Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu] acted in the interest of their own party, the AKP [Justice and Development Party], which is very close to the Muslim Brotherhood, instead of in the long-term interests of Turkey.'[154] The Turkish government also made its Syria policy decisions in the backdrop of its very tense relationship with the Kurds inside Turkey and in the region.[155] Moreover, Turkey was actively and directly involved in the Syrian conflict, and Turkish fighters were reportedly fighting in Syria.[156]

By 2013, several European countries, Turkey, Arab monarchies, and the United States had tried to delegitimise the Assad government and legitimise the opposition. However, the conflict in Syria had only worsened since the beginning of 2013. The Syrian government had survived those years, with the support of Iran, Russia and Hezbollah. At the same time Israel was also meddling in the Syrian crisis.[157] Israel had direct involvement inside Syria.[158] Israel had conducted

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[153] E. Schmitt, 'C.I.A. Said To Aid In Steering Arms To Syrian Opposition', *The New York Times*, 21 June 2012

[154] F. Tastekin, translator: T. Goksel, 'Syrian opposition figure: Turkey's 'many mistakes' in Syria', *Al-Monitor,* 30 January 2014, retrieved on 9 July 2014,

http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2014/01/interview-samir-aita-turkey-mistakes-syria.html#

[155] C. Phillips, 'Into the Quagmire: Turkey's Frustrated Syria Policy', Chatham house briefing paper, *Chatham House,* December 2012, MENAP BP 2012/04, retrieved on 9 July 2014,

http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Middle%20East/1212bp_phillips.pdf

[156] H. Ozay, '500 Turkish Fighters Are Among Syrian Opposition Ranks', *Al Monitor*, 29 September 2013, retrieved on 14 July 2014,

http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/fr/contents/articles/security/2013/09/turkish-fighters-syria-opposition.html#

[157] 'Syrian Crisis Caused By Foreign Intervention: Iran', *Press TV*, 24 September 2012, retrieved on 31 March 2015,

http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/09/24/263365/foreign-meddling-behind-syria-crisis/

[158] Iran/Middle East-Israel Meddling In Syria To Compensate For Fall Of Allies, *Wikileaks*, 17 October 2012, retrieved on 31 March 2015,

https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/25/2548547_iran-middle-east-israel-meddling-in-syria-to-compensate-for.html

missions to attack targets inside the Syrian territory. Israel was also responsible for the attack on the Syrian military's research centre near Damascus.[159] These were important events which added to the confusion in the Syrian conflict. These events also compromised America's role as a good faith mediator in resolving the conflict in Syria, and increased the tension between Iran and the United States.

In 2012 and 2013, the conflict was no longer about the body count or territorial gains. The use of chemical weapons in Syria was alarming to the international community. After the use of chemical weapons in that conflict, the situation had gotten particularly worse for the Syrian people, and was considered a threat to the security of the Levant. Everyone, from the US Congress to the United Nations, expected the United States to start an effective mission, to end the conflict in Syria. During the 2012 election campaign, President Obama's opponent Mitt Romney had argued that 'America should be arming the "responsible" rebels. "Syria is an opportunity for us. Syria is Iran's only ally in the Arab world ... so seeing Syria remove Assad is a very high priority for us ... We should have taken a leading role."'[160] The Iran issue and Syria issue were read together in the campaign trail and in American domestic politics, making it necessary for the Obama administration to consider the crisis in Syria, when making its Iran policy decision, vice versa.

President Obama was widely criticised for his handling of the Syrian crisis. President Obama had argued that if the Syrian government moved or used its chemical weapons, then the United States would possibly engage in direct intervention in Syria.[161] Much of the ridicule focused on 'the red line' issue, even though 'the red line' was very casually set by President Obama himself. The President's original statement was, 'we have been very clear to the Assad regime, but also to other players on the ground, that a red line for us is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized. That would change my calculus. That would change my equation.'[162] President Obama's decision on Syria was influenced by Denis Richard

[159] K. Laub and J. Federman, 'Damascus Shaken By Explosions; Syrian State TV Says Israel Hit Military Center', *The Huffington Post*, 4 May 2013

[160] E. MacAskill, 'Obama And Romney Clash Over Foreign Policy In Final Presidential Debate', *The Guardian,* 23 October 2012

[161] J. Ball, 'Obama issues Syria a 'red line' warning on chemical weapons', *The Washington Post*, 20 August 2012

[162] Remarks by the President to the White House Press Corps, The White House Office of the Press Secretary, August 20, 2012

McDonough who succeeded Jacob Lew as the 26th White House Chief of Staff. Perhaps, one of the greatest influence McDonough had was when he helped President Obama 'change his [President Obama's] mind' about a military strike in Syria without a congressional vote.[163] The White House was already under severe criticism from the Republican Party, and several members of the Congress were questioning the merit of the administration's Syria policy.[164] According to McDonough, 'we have to be very discerning about what's in our interest and what outcome is best for us, and the prices that we're willing to pay to get to that place.'[165] McDonough's experience in the National Security Council and his expertise in dealing with Washington politics, concerning America's recent wars, had made him a well-placed candidate to influence President Obama's Iran policy as well. According to James Mann, McDonough was a man of strong convictions, 'he was certainly a believer in the general value of democracy and human rights, but he was above all an organization man for Barack Obama'.[166] In the National Security Council, McDonough aligned himself with the realists and not the idealists.[167] Any military intervention in Syria at that time, by the United States, would have meant worsening America's relationship with Russia and Iran. America's relationship with Russia was not especially cordial during the Obama administration.[168] Also, the crisis in Syria was still developing, as well as worsening, and the Obama administration proceeded to work with Iran, Russia and the UN to deal with the chemical weapons use in Syria.[169] The tension surrounding the Syrian issue also meant that the United States could not ignore the impact that crisis had on Iran, and the Syrian crisis was also 'used' by the United States to punish Iran. In the words of one

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[163] C. Todd, 'The White House walk-and-talk that changed Obama's mind on Syria', *NBC News*, 1 September 2013, retrieved on 30 March 2014,

http://www.nbcnews.com/news/other/white-house-walk-talk-changed-obamas-mind-syria-f8C11051182

[164] S. Sullivan, 'Republicans Criticize Obama On Syria', *The Washington Post*, 16 June 2013

[165] D. McDonough on CBS' Face The Nation, quoted by D. Jackson, 'Obama Aide: No 'Rush To War' In Syria (As In Iraq), *USA Today*, 16 June 2013

[166] J. Mann, *The Obamians*, p.169

[167] Ibid

[168] D. Sanger and M. Landler, 'Myriad Pressures Hobble Obama's Strategic Shift To Asia', *International New York Times,* 23 April 2014

[169] Fact Sheets & Briefs, 'Timeline Of Syrian Chemical Weapons Activity, 2012-2015, *Arms Control Association*, 19 August 2014, retrieved on 1 February 2016,
https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Timeline-of-Syrian-Chemical-Weapons-Activity

academic, 'to put it bluntly, if Iran is a threat, then one way to weaken that threat would be to weaken Syria and to help the anti-Assad movement in Syria.'[170]

The Obama administration was already in negotiations with Iran, pertaining to the Iranian nuclear issue, when the conflict in Syria started. Seeking a regional solution to a regional problem was considered a matter of necessity, in order to establish sustainable peace in the region.[171] Many of the Syrian opposition groups, such as the Sunni extremists and Al-Qaeda, were fighting the United States, long before any tension started in Syria. For all those reasons, it was difficult for the Obama administration to navigate the Syrian crisis. For President Obama, the Syrian issue was also a test of his administration's ability to work with different negotiating partners, to resolve a major conflict in the Middle East.

It was also important for the Obama administration to keep the diplomatic channels with Iran open, because America did not have unrelenting support from all its allies, to deal with the Syrian issue, and shutting down the diplomatic option with Iran would have worsened the tensions between Iran and the United States at a time when the region was in turmoil. For example, the Jordanian ruling family was especially skeptical and critical of the US involvement in Syria. To get involved in Syria, and to support the Syrian opposition should have been the easiest alternative for the Jordanian government, because of its opposition to the Assad government. However, the complicated politics of the region made it a difficult decision, to choose 'whom to support' and 'how', because it was perilous for the Jordanian government to support the Sunni extremists who were part of the opposition group in Syria. For example, Jordanian forces had fought Abu Sayyaf, and seemed very concerned about the threat from his organisation. According to The Associated Press, 'Abu Sayyaf is the head of the Salafi Jihadi group, which produced several al-Qaeda linked militants who fought U.S. forces in Iraq and

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[170] Ali Banuazizi, a political science professor at Boston College and a co-director of its Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies Program, quoted in R. Gladstone, 'As Syria Wobbles Under Pressure, Iran Feels The Weight Of An Alliance', *The New York Times,* 31 January 2012

[171] J. Shenna, 'The Case Against the Case Against Iran: Regionalism as the West's Last Frontier', *Middle East Journal,* Vol. 64; Issue 3, 1 July 2010

Afghanistan over the past 10 years.'[172] The group's involvement in Syria was alarming to the Jordanians. It should have been in the interest of Jordan to resist the involvement of extremist organisations in Syria. However, an open conflict between the Jordanian security forces and the extremists in the Syria had the potential to further escalate the tension in the region. It was also possible that Jordan would have had to fight these extremists, inside Jordanian territory.[173] If the Jordanians were fighting the Sunni extremists, then they were effectively aiding the Iranian cause in the Levant. However, from the Jordanian perspective, the threat posed by Sunni extremists was just as bad as the threat posed by Shiite fundamentalists. Also, the United States had no means to resolve the crisis in Syria, without the Iranian support. Since the beginning of the unrest in Syria, Russia was not especially supportive of the idea of overthrowing President Assad. Iran's alliance with Bashar al-Assad gave Iran the opportunity, to influence the outcome of the Syrian conflict.[174] The Obama administration had maintained diplomatic contacts with the Syrian government, even though the United States was actively involved in arming the Syrian opposition.[175] At the same time, the United States was also involved in sanctioning Syria.[176] There was a concerted effort to pressure Syria through economic coercion. Nevertheless, the sanctions policy did not isolate the Syrian government, or force Bashar Al-Assad to abdicate power. According to Dobbins, 'coercion itself can produce results if one is prepared to pay the costs in blood and treasure of implementing threats, but the threats themselves, particularly if made publicly, usually cause the other side to harden its position' [177] That was one other reason why the United States had to work with Iran, to get the Assad government to enter into good

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[172] See in The Associated Press, 'Jordanian militants take aim at Syrian regime', *CBC News*, 09 September 2012, retrieved on 29 June 2014,

http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/jordanian-militants-take-aim-at-syrian-regime-1.1177907

[173] N. Khoury's statement from the edited transcript of the seventy-third (in a series) Capitol Hill conferences convened by the Middle East Policy Council. The meeting was held on 16 July 2013, in the Rayburn House Office Building, with T. Mattair moderating; S. Simon, M. Yacoubian, E. Cebeci, N. Khoury, 'The Crisis in Syria: What Are the Stakes for Its Neighbours?', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XX, No. 3, Fall 2013, pp. 1–26

[174] J. Stevenson, 'Working with Iran on Syria', *International New York Times*, 13 March 2014

[175] C. Addis, C. Blanchard, K. Katzman, J. Sharp, J. Zanotti, 'The Middle East: Selected Key Issues and Options for the 112th Congress', *Congressional Research Service Report*, R41556, 3 January 2011

[176] Presidential Documents, Executive Order 13608, Federal Register, Vol. 77, No. 86 ,1 May 2012
[177] J. Dobbins, 'Negotiating with Iran: Reflections from Personal Experience', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.33, Issue 1, January 2010

faith negotiations, because Iran was an important supporter of the Assad government. While sanctions were useful to pressure Iran and Syria, it was also necessary to allow room for diplomacy, so as to arrive at a solution, because sanctions alone were not the path to finding a solution in Syria or regarding the Iranian nuclear issue.

Some analysts saw the Syrian conflict as a war, where Iran, Syria, and Russia were fighting against 'the West' and its allies in the region.[178] By most accounts, the Israelis had also meddled in that conflict, in multiple ways. Hezbollah had to get involved because the Syrian government was Hezbollah's life line. The UAE allegedly was not especially keen on interfering in the Syrian unrest. The UAE had its own internal problems, and was overwhelmed by the impact of the Arab Spring, on their domestic politics. According to some scholars, the fear of Iran was a significant consideration for the smaller GCC countries, when making their foreign policy decisions. According to Amal Kandeel, it was the Iran factor which helped in determining the Syria policy of the GCC countries. For example, Kandeel argues that, 'Oman has a long-standing cooperative relationship with Iran, unique in the GCC, and has maintained an almost neutral approach, humanitarian issues aside. Bahrain, too, keeps a low profile, but for the opposite reason.'[179] Consequently, the GCC did not have an independent foreign policy. America's Middle Eastern allies had also criticised President Obama's reservation to use military force in Syria, and the rift in the Congress concerning the action to be taken on Syria. The American vacillation meant that the Iranians could also continue their meddling in Syria. Moreover, President Obama's reluctance to get the American military involved in Syria was seen by many as an example where the administration left bad behaviour left unpunished. The policies of the regional countries were determined by the American and Iranian policy in the region. In the case of Syria, the uncertainties in American policy had forced many of the regional actors to make their decisions based on the reactions of Iran. For Example, the Saudi opposition to the Assad government had more to do with the Saudi opposition to the Iran-Syria alliance. This policy, guided by animosity toward Iran, had resulted in a scenario where the Arab monarchies were

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[178] I. Black, 'How International Divisions Contributed To Syria's War Without End', *The Guardian*, 11 March 2015

[179] A. Kandeel, 'Regional Upheaval: The Stakes for the GCC', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XX, No. 4, Winter 2013, pp.59–67

funding the extremists/terrorists in the Syrian opposition, and thereby derailing the possibility of conflict resolution.[180]

In light of the above mentioned variables, by the end of the second stage of decision-making, it was clear that the United States had to keep the diplomatic channel open. Engagement with Iran was necessary, and was the most viable choice. In the light of America's wider interest in the Middle East, and relationship with its allies, it was also necessary to retain sanctions against Iran. Therefore, the final choice was to pursue a dual-track policy toward Iran.

Conclusion

> *'Iranians are not easy to negotiate with. This is a nation whose complex psyche is reflected in its art. Think of the dazzling detailed miniature paintings or the spectacularly ornate Persian carpets they have produced for centuries and you can grasp that Iranians are patient and fantastically sophisticated.'*
>
> **V. Nasr**[181]

> *'Major public policies are the outcome of a complex round of negotiation between interests, choices between values and competition between resources.'*
>
> **Glyn Davis et al.**[182]

This section will discuss two issues, to conclude the analysis made in this case study: (1) different aspects pertaining to the dual track policy; (2) Ph theory and its application in this case study. The difficulty in negotiating with Iran meant that the United States had to pressure Iran. However, the dual-track policy was not a sustainable option, because it had further escalated the tension between Washington and Tehran. Therefore the dual-track policy was only an interim policy choice. That is, the dual-track policy was an option before entering into serious

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[180] K. DeYoung, 'Kuwait, a U.S. ally on Syria, is also the leading funder of extremist rebels', The Washington Post, *The Washington Post*, 26 April 2014

[181] V. Nasr, *The Dispensable Nation*, p.111

[182] G. Davis, J. Wanna, J. Warhurst, and P. Weller, 'Public Policy In Australia', Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993

negotiations with the goal of resolving the nuclear issue, or it was a phase before the United States launched a military strike on Iran, because of the threats and heated rhetoric between Iran and the United States during this period. Diplomacy was pursued during the time period discussed in this case study, for strategic reasons as discussed above, and not because of any earnest desire to arrive at a diplomatic solution. According to a study by the *Rand Corporation*,

> 'negotiations with Iran and offers of positive inducements in return for Iranian concessions on their nuclear program have real value even if they fail to convince Iran to agree to concessions in the near term…Continued efforts to negotiate offer strategic benefits beyond the possibility of reaching a deal.'[183]

According to the same article, 'positive inducements' and dialogue/diplomacy

> 'helps build international support for U.S. non-proliferation efforts, undermines the position of the Iranian hardliners that currently dominate the regime while strengthening domestic political opponents, lowers Iran's incentives to weaponise, and helps to further isolate Iran.'[184]

The dual-track policy was evidently not helpful in reaching a 'deal', during this period. The reason why diplomacy never got a chance under the dual track policy was because: (a) the Iranian government was aggressive in its response to the economic coercion by the United States. This aggression was reflected in the Iranian nuclear policy, and in Iran's foreign policy; (b) The American Congress was particularly hostile to Iran, and was keen on putting an end to diplomacy between the two countries. For example, with H.RES 568,[185] the Congress pre-emptively opposed any policy of containment, if Iran were to become a nuclear power. Thus, 'a huge bipartisan majority of Congress has essentially told the president that nothing short of war

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[183] R. Reardon, 'Containing Iran: Strategies For Addressing The Iranian Nuclear Challenge', *RAND Corporation,* 2012, p.xvi

[184] Ibid

[185] H. RES. 568, 'Suspend the Rules And Agree to the Resolution, H.Res. 568 with an Amendment (The amendment consists of a new preamble and inserts a complete new text), 112th Congress, 2D Session, 1 March 2012, retrieved on 28 November 2014,

http://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20120514/BILLS-112hres568-SUS.pdf

or the threat of war is an acceptable policy.'[186] This threat of war was not well received by the Iranians, and limited their enthusiasm to commit to earnest negotiations with the United States. In the case of Iran, Washington could have looked at other alternatives beyond sanctions, sabotage and diplomacy, as recommended by Chistopher Bolan. According to him, the United States should be committed to preventing Iranian nuclear weapon. However, this commitment need not be absolute. Bolan argues that, 'containment and deterrence remain viable strategic options should prevention fail. Iranian leaders have proven themselves to be rational actors primarily concerned with securing their own physical and political survival.'[187] After all, Iran will not, for the foreseeable future, have offensive nuclear capabilities against the United States. Moreover, it was in the interest of all parties, to resolve the conflict between Iran and the United States. As Zartman argued, conflict resolution is only possible when the parties' interests are taken into account, and reconciliation is beneficial to all concerned. Also, 'the parties must understand that reconciliation is not surrender (otherwise, conflict resolution would have a deservingly bad name) and interests are not the same as needs. Peacemakers need to realise that parties do not negotiate to commit suicide.'[188]

The next issue to be discussed in this conclusion is the implications of applying Ph theory to this case study. Akin to the previous case study, political dimension was the only dimension considered in the first stage of this case study. Domestic politics was important in the decision-making in this case because President Obama was standing for re-election. The options which threatened the political survival of the Obama administration or carried high political risks were removed from the choice set. By the end of this case study, the priorities of the administration was already beginning to change, in the aftermath of winning the second presidential election, and dramatic change in the course of America's Iran policy happened after the election of Hassan Rouhani in Iran, as discussed in the next case study.

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[186] S. Zunes, 'Congress Pushes for War With Iran', *The Huffington Post*, 15 June 2012

[187] C. Bolan, 'Dealing With Iran', *Parameters*, Vol.43, No.2, Summer 2013

[188] W. Zartman, 'Toward the Resolution of International Conflicts', In *Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques*, (ed.), W. Zartman, revised edition, Washington DC.: Washington Institute of Peace, 2007, p.15

Chapter VI: The decision to pursue diplomacy with Iran during the Rouhani presidency

Time Frame: from President Rouhani's inauguration to the decision to extend nuclear talks in July 2014 (August 2013 to July 2014)

> '*A government's offer to negotiate is not only a step which may lead to a peace conference, but also an action which others- including the enemy, allies, and its own soldiers and citizens- may use as more general evidence of its intentions, plans, aspirations, and morale. The act of proposing talks, in other words, has implications and effects besides making negotiations possible.*'

Paul Pillar[1]

> '*The way we have been thinking about this region is out of date.*'

President Barak Obama[2]

This chapter will use the framework provided under the Ph approach, to analyse the decision by the United States, to pursue diplomacy with the Rouhani government. This chapter will argue that, during this period, both Iran and the United States had greater commitment to diplomacy. Since the election of President Rouhani, the Obama administration gave diplomacy a chance, by resisting pressure from domestic opponents and international allies who tried to derail diplomacy, because during this period the Obama administration had to deal with the security crisis in the Middle East, and cooperation with Iran was essential to cope with the turmoil in the region. Even though, the turmoil in the Middle East was a reason to continue diplomacy during the last case study, it was during this period that Iranian government was also willing to commit to diplomacy, and diplomacy between the two countries was finally given a chance to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue. This period is historic, for the reason that it was the first time both countries made a commitment to arrive at a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue, and

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[1] P. Pillar, *Negotiating Peace: War Termination as a Bargaining Process,* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983, p.67

[2] J. Mann, *The Obamians*, p.267

diplomacy was no longer a tactic for Iran to buy time, or for the United States to appease its European allies. Even though many in the US Congress were suspicious of the intent of the Iranian government,[3] and had tried to derail the negotiations, the pressure from the Congress did not negatively impact the negotiations during this period.

By the time Hassan Rouhani was elected as the President of Iran, that country was facing serious economic difficulties as a result of the economic sanctions imposed by the Obama administration: Iran's currency was falling, significant restrictions were placed on the Iranian banking sector, those financial restrictions also impacted the pharmaceutical companies in Iran and that resulted in a situation where the lives of Iranians suffering from serious illness were at risk without medication.[4] The newly elected Iranian government had the mandate to change the course of Iranian foreign policy, and in President Rouhani's words," your government … will follow up national goals … in the path of saving the country's economy, revive ethics and constructive interaction with the world through moderation."[5]

Not all the happenings in international politics are the result of meticulous statecraft. However, not all events were out of the decision maker's control. In this case study,the policy-makers on both sides were opportunistic, and took advantage of the openings that seemed possible, to pursue diplomacy to arrive at a solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. One important change in America's policy toward Iran, since President Rouhani took office, was the preference given to resolving the Iranian nuclear issue, as opposed to focusing on punishing Iran for its 'bad' behaviour.

In the first stage of decision-making, in this case study, the following variable was considered by the decision-makers: (1) security and stability of the Middle East. The variable 'security and stability of the Middle East' may, at the first glance, appear as though it is a substantive dimension in the second stage of decision-making; but because of the grave security crisis in the Middle East, that variable is concerned with the strategic political use of the concerns regarding

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[3] Z. Keck, 'Trust and US Foreign Policy', *The Diplomat*, 24 September 2013

[4] S. Dehghan, 'Iranian president-elect Rouhani promises better relations with west', *The Guardian*, 17 June 2013
[5] Ibid

the security threats emanating from the Middle East, and therefore is considered in the first stage of decision-making, on the political dimension.

By this point in the Obama presidency, the President was already into his second term in office. Therefore, the Obama administration was able to cope with the pressure from domestic 'opponents' such as the Republican Congress and interest groups such as AIPAC. However, during this time period, the Middle East was going through significant political changes, and dealing with new security threats, from insurgencies, political unrests, and terrorist entities such as ISIS. As this case study will argue, the volatility of the region, and the security crisis in that region had significant impact on Washington's Iran policy making. In the second stage of decision-making, the following dimension was considered by the decision-makers: (1) the diplomacy dimension: diplomacy with European allies. The options available at the first stage of decision-making was: (1) continue the dual track policy, with emphasis on sanctions as the primary Iran policy instrument; (2) pursue confrontational policies, such as sanctions and sabotage, escalating the hostilities between Iran and the United States; (3) pursue diplomacy as the primary Iran policy instrument, with a serious commitment to try and arrive at a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue.

The pursuit of the dual track policy, with emphasis on sanctions as the primary policy instrument was essentially a continuation of the Obama administration's policy toward Iran during the months preceding President Rouhani's election victory in Iran. That option was considered in the choice set because the Obama administration could not trust Iran based only on the public declarations made by President Rouhani, concerning his desire to pursue diplomacy with the United States. Also, the President of Iran could not single-handedly change the course of that country's relationship with the United States, because Iran had different centers of power and the Supreme Leader had the authority to determine the foreign policy of Iran. Consequently, reflecting the mistrust between the two countries for over three decades, the Obama administration had to be cautious in its approach toward Iran and had to include the dual-track policy in its choice set during this time period. The option to pursue confrontational policies such as sanctions and sabotage was also included in the choice set, because the Iranian nuclear issue was a serious and urgent concern of the United States and its allies, and confronting Iran was one way of dealing with the Iranian nuclear issue. The option to pursue diplomacy as the primary

Iran policy instrument was included in the choice set because of the Obama administration's willingness and desire to give diplomacy a chance after his own reelection and seeing the potential in President Rouhani's offer to engage in negotiations to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue. The Iranian establishment, including the Supreme Leader, was also, at least in public, more open to the idea of negotiating with Iran, and even though there was a lack of trust between the two countries, the Obama administration had to consider 'the diplomacy option' in the choice set, because of the potential risks associated with leaving the Iranian nuclear issue unresolved.

As pointed out in the literature review chapter, three decades of sanctions and confrontation had worsened the relationship between Iran and the United States. This case study points out that commitment to diplomacy was essential, to move toward a solution to the Iranian nuclear issue, but the punitive measures had also helped persuade Iran to negotiate in good-faith. With the reelection of President Obama in America, and the election of President Rouhani in Iran, it was possible for the governments of both countries to commit to diplomacy, because after his reelection President Obama could, more vigorously, resist pressure from his domestic opponents who did not support diplomacy with Iran, and the newly elected President Rouhani had the mandate from the Iranian people to pursue a moderate foreign policy. At this point, it was possible for both governments to look past their historical grievances, and give diplomacy a chance.

Stage One

The security and stability of the Middle East was the only variable considered on the political dimension, in the first stage by the decision-makers. After the re-election, the Obama administration had to address several security and foreign policy concerns. Given the alarming developments in the Middle East, such as ISIS and the violence following the Arab Spring, those issues had to be considered, when making any Iran policy decision, because the Obama administration needed Iran's cooperation to deal with the crisis in the Middle East. The stability and security of the region was important, because the countries of the region are interconnected. Therefore, before making major changes in the course of America's Iran policy, it was necessary to consider the state of affairs in the region.

Some of the most alarming issues during this period included: American citizens held hostage by ISIS;[6] American allies such as Egypt and Israel faced significant security threats from Sunni extremism in the region; Iran had significant influence in the region and regional conflicts; Syrian crisis had become more violent; Saudi Arabia and Israel were advocating for a military strike against Iran. For all those reasons, the security and stability of the Middle East was an important variable, which had the potential to threaten the political survival of the Obama administration, if it mishandled the issue. Therefore, the decision-makers in Washington had to be cautious, to not allow their Iran policy decisions to increase the tension in the region. That is, the United States could not afford to worsen the situation in the Middle East. Also, the United States had to work toward improving the situation in that region.

Variable: Security and stability of the Middle East

Israel:

'Israel doesn't know what its own best interests are.'

President Barack Obama[7]

As already pointed out in the last two case studies, Iran was one of the most important political issue, for the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. According to the US Department of State, 'regional and bilateral foreign assistance will support the U.S. strategy for the region, which includes sustaining the security of Israel; enhancing the defensive capabilities of our other partners in the region; countering the Iranian threat ..'[8] The United States was under tremendous pressure from the Israeli politicians and public, to deal with the Iranian nuclear issue, with great sense of urgency. However, military option against Iran was not considered an alternative in this

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[6] K. Yourish, 'The Fate Of 23 ISIS Hostages In Syria', *The New York Times*, 10 February 2015

[7] J. Goldberg, 'Obama: 'Israel Doesn't know what its Best Interests Are'', *Bloomberg*, 14 January 2013, retrieved on 18 March 2014,

http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-01-14/what-obama-thinks-israelis-don-t-understand-.html

[8] Congressional Budget Justification, Foreign Operations, Department of State, United States of America, Fiscal Year 2010, retrieved on 16 March 2014,

http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/123415.pdf

case study, by the Obama administration. Moreover, as pointed out by Congressman Earl Blumenauer, 'unless we are willing to invade and occupy Iran, even repeated bombing will delay the Iranian nuclear effort by, at best 4 or 5 years, maybe less.'[9] The multitude and magnitude of the Iranian nuclear project made it impossible to destroy it, with a military strike.[10] Israel's war advocacy was also counterproductive. According to President Obama, 'for the sake of Israel's security, America's security and the peace and security of the world, now is not the time for bluster.'[11]

Several high ranking officials of the State of Israel, had denounced the 'fear mongering' by Prime Minister Netanyahu. According to Brigadier General (res.) Uzi Eilam, the former head of the Israel Atomic Energy Commission, it would take at least 10 years, for Iran to develop its nuclear weapons capability. Eilam also argued that there was no proof, yet, that Iran had made the decision to pursue a 'bomb'.[12] According to Brigadier-General Itai Brun, the Israeli military intelligence's chief analyst, Iran was abiding by the Geneva agreement of 2013. Brun was also hopeful, that it was possible to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue, through diplomacy.[13] Also, several of the former and current members of Israeli security and intelligence agencies had criticised Prime Minister Netanyahu for abusing the 'Iranian issue', for petty political gains.[14] According to Mitchell Barak, 'the problem is now he's [Prime Minister Netanyahu has] lost momentum. His message is clear, his message is the same, the situation is the same, but everyone

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[9] Congressman E. Blumenauer, Proceedings and Debates of the 113th Congress, Second Session, Congressional Record, Vol.60, 9 January 2014

[10] S. Waterman, 'Military Alone Can't Stop Iran's Nuke Program, Gen. James Mattis Says', *The Washington Times*, 22 July 2013

[11] H. Cooper, ''Loose Talk Of War' Only Helps Iran, President Says', *The New York Times*, 4 March 2014

[12] T. Parsi, 'Former Israeli Nuclear Head: No Iran Bomb for Ten Years—If They Even Want It', *The National Interest*, 8 May 2014

[13] Staff writer, 'Israeli Spy General: Iran Serious About Nuclear Deal', *Al Arabiya News*, 9 June 2014, retrieved on 10 June 2014,

http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/06/09/Israeli-spy-general-Iran-serious-about-nuclear-deal.html

[14] P. Beaumont, 'Binyamin Netanyahu: Strong Man With Fearful Heart', *The Guardian*, 5 January 2013; see also P. Beaumont, 'Netanyahu Insists He Is 'Under Attack For Defending Israel' After Remarks From US Official', *The Guardian*, 29 October 2014

else's perspective has changed. It's like you're the only one in a dark room with a flashlight.'[15] However, Israeli politicians had to seem 'reasonable' in the eyes of the international community, because if Israel came across as the aggressor, then that would have benefited Iran, for the reason that the 'world' would have blamed Israel for the failure of diplomacy. 'Long-term, that would give Iran a freer hand to take its nuclear program in whatever direction it might wish.'[16] Major General (res.) Yaakov Amidror shared the concerns of some in the Israeli political apparatus, when he questioned the merit of President Obama's diplomacy with Iran. Referring to the negotiations, Amidror said that, 'from a thorough study of the ongoing chain of P5+1 concessions ever since the negotiations with Iran began 15 years ago, I fear, and am certain of, an erosion of P5+1 resolve.' This insecurity guided the Israeli policy toward Iran.[17]

The Obama administration did not concur with Prime Minister Netanyahu's risk assessment concerning Iran and its nuclear program. Prime Minster Netanyahu's relationship with the White House was also steadily declining. Moreover, Prime Minister Netanyahu had very publically challenged President Obama on the Iranian nuclear issue, and had 'tried to interfere in U.S. elections.'[18] According to David Remnick, 'Netanyahu seems determined, more than ever, to alienate the president of the United States and, as an ally of Mitt Romney's campaign, to make himself a factor in the 2012 election.'[19] By making the Iranian nuclear issue the most urgent crisis in the region, Prime Minister Netanyahu was also trying to shift the focus from the Israel-Palestine conflict.[20] While the Palestinian issue was also a matter that had to be resolved with much sense of urgency, Israel did not have any timeframe to deal with the Palestinians or the occupation. The Israeli security policy, as it was publically stated, seemed to center around the

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[15] M. Barak quoted by J. Rudoren, 'Netanyahu Takes A Lonely Stance Denouncing Iran', *The New York Times*, 12 October 2013

[16] M. Fisher, 'Would the world blame Israel if Iranian nuclear talks fail?', *The Washington Post*, 4 November 2013

[17] Y. Amidror, 'Israel Can't Accept The Emerging US-Iran Accord', *Jerusalem Post*, 24 April 2014

[18] A. Harel, 'E. Olmert: Netanyahu tried to interfere in U.S. Elections', *Haaretz*, 1 December 2013

[19] D. Remnick, 'Necon Gambits', *The New Yorker,* 12 September 2012

[20] S. Telhami, 'Netanyahu Steered U.S. Toward War With Iran – The Result Is A Deal He Hates', *Reuters*, 21 July 2015

Iranian nuclear issue, but that sense of urgency was not shared by the United States or the EU.[21] During his visits to the United States in 2013 and 2014, Prime Minister Netanyahu had managed to downplay the Palestinian issue, and keep alive the chatter about the Iranian nuclear issue. By focusing on the Iran issue, Israeli government was also trying to shift the focus of the international community, away from the crisis and abuse in the occupied territories. The situation in the occupied territories had deteriorated to a point where it was no longer possible for the international community to disregard the systematic mistreatment of Palestinians, at the hands of the Israeli government and military. Israel had to accept that its allies, such as the United States and the EU, had their own interests to protect. For example, the United States had no interest in escalating the violence in the region, or starting a war with Iran, and policy-makers in Washington were not going to launch a full scale military strike on Iran, for Israel's sake.[22] In light of all the above mentioned reasons, the United States had to reject the option to pursue confrontational policies, such as sanctions and sabotage, which had the potential to escalate the hostilities between Iran and the United States.

Saudi Arabia: As it was during the last two case studies, Riyadh had consistently opposed P5+1's diplomacy with Iran. Conflict resolution between Iran and the P5+1 was seen by the Saudi monarchy as a threat to the Kingdom's standing in the region.[23] Even though Saudi Arabia had the financial means and natural resources to challenge Iran, it appeared as though the decision-makers in Riyadh lacked a grand strategy to deal with Iran. Saudi Arabia also did not have a grand strategy to deal with the crisis in the region. This was the case when Saudi Arabia rejected its seat at the UN Security Council, after investing significant political capital to get elected. The American decision to not intervene militarily, in Syria, was reportedly one of the

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[21] L. Hadar, 'Misreading The Map: The Road To Jerusalem Does Not Lead Through Tehran', *Foreign Affairs*, May 2009

[22] National Iranian American Council Research Director R. Marashi, Interview, *BBC World News*, 25 November 2013, retrieved from *YouTube*, 9 June 2014,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6aWrXj6wlME

[23] A. Cordesman, 'Saudi Arabia, Iran, And The "Clash Within A Civilisation', *Center For Strategic & International Studies*, 3 February 2014

reasons why the Kingdom decided to give up its Security Council seat.[24] In the Kingdom's calculations, any policy option which ruled out military intervention in Syria was considered a compromise made in Iran's favor. It is possible that Saudi Arabia gave up its UNSC seat because: (a) even if the Kingdom was a temporary member of the UNSC, it could not have had the power to influence the policy of the UN, (b) the permanent members had the power to override the power of the temporary members. When the United States decided to cut back its aid to Egypt, that act was seen as a warning shot by many in Riyadh. According to S. Grewal, 'the administration halted cash assistance and 'large-scale military systems, including F-16 fighter jets, M1A1 Abrams tanks, Harpoon missiles and Apache helicopters, leaving all other aspects of the aid relationship — from counter terrorism to economic assistance — untouched.'[25] Financial and military aid was also used by the United States, as a tool to influence the foreign policy decisions of the receiver. Therefore the Kingdom's main approach was to not openly undermine President Obama's diplomatic pursuits in the region. The case of Egypt - cutback in the aid given to that country, was a cautionary tale for all regional actors. According to Tamara Cofman Wittes, 'it is an effort by the administration to say, "you did what you did, and we want to keep working with you, but there is some price to be paid for not listening to us."'[26] For Saudi Arabia, the seat in the Security Council was not worthy of the complications associated with it.[27] Moreover, the voting sessions at the UNSC had the potential to turn into a forum which highlighted the conflict of interest between the United States and Saudi Arabia.

The relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia was also not trouble free. American lawmakers had expressed concerns about Riyadh's human rights record, treatment of women and support for terrorism. Saudi Arabia also had several economic and security grievances against Iran and the United States. For example, the ruling family of the Kingdom was allegedly deeply concerned about the increasing possibility of American energy independence. According to Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, the kingdom does have to worry about the oil and gas production of

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[24] D. Usborne, 'Saudi Arabia Snubs Seat On UN Security Council - Hours After Winning Coveted Place', *The Independent*, 18 October 2013

[25] S. Grewal, 'The logic Of Partially Suspending Aid To Egypt', *The Washington Post*, 12 October 2013

[26] T. Wittes quoted by M. Gordon and M. Landler, 'In Crackdown Response, U.S. Temporarily Freezes Some Military Aid To Egypt', *The New York Times*, 9 October 2013

[27] E. Voeten, 'Why Did Saudi Arabia Reject A UN Security Council Seat?', *The Washington Post*, 18 October 2013

the United States.[28] Lesser dependence on the Kingdom's oil would have given the United States much more room for manoeuvre in the region. That is, the United States would have had more policy options in the region, if it did not have to address Riyadh's concerns. The Kingdom's ruling family was concerned about such an eventuality. Also, America's energy independence and cordial relationship with Iran were two variables which had the potential to tilt the balance of power in the region against Saudi interest. The insecurity of the Saudi government had to led to more contributions from them in supporting extremist movements in the region, such as the Sunni extremists in Iraq and Syria. These were alarming conditions, from the perspective of the decision-makers in the United States.

President Obama's negotiations with Iran had also persuaded some American allies to enter into new tactical alliances.[29] According to Ben Caspit, 'the princes of the Gulf, the insurgents in Syria (the few that are not affiliated with al-Qaeda) and even the Turks — each one of them awaits their turn for the American betrayal. And the problem with the Americans is that they indeed do deliver.'[30] The lack of trust in the Obama administration was also a reason why so many of the American allies were actively engaged in financing and supporting extremist groups in the region. Saudi Arabia had expressed its displeasure over almost every active and passive gesture which made room for diplomacy between Iran and the United States. One such instance was the

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[28] A. Farnham, 'U.S. Shale Oil: Saudi Prince's Fear Delights North Dakotan', *abc News*, 31 July 2013, retrieved on 16 April 2014,

http://abcnews.go.com/Business/saudis-fear-us-shale-oil-boom/story?id=19820719

[29] For example, Saudi Arabia was purported to have wanted an agreement with Pakistan, to 'deliver nuclear weapons on demand'; S. Henderson, 'The Nuclear Handshake: Is the Pakistan-Saudi Weapons Program For Real?' *Foreign Policy*, 8 November 2013, retrieved on 3 May 2014,

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/11/08/the_nuclear_handshake_saudi_arabia_pakistan;

It is necessary to point out this issue concerning 'Pakistan-Saudi weapons program', because it will have serious ramifications on the security and stability of the region, if it were true. However, this issue is not worth a detailed discussion here, because the original source of that information is unreliable, because it was first reported in a very speculative manner; M. Urban, 'Saudi nuclear weapons 'on order' from Pakistan', BBC News, 6 November 2013, retrieved on 3 May 2014,

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24823846

[30] B. Caspit, 'Israel, Egypt, Gulf Fear US Betrayal', *Al-Monitor*, 19 November 2013, retrieved on 16 April 2014,

http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/11/american-betrayal-israel-saudi-arabia-egypt-obama.html#

Saudi reaction to the telephone conversation between President Obama and President Rouhani. The incident had reportedly 'angered' Saudi Arabia.[31]

The United States could not completely ignore the concerns of Saudi Arabia, because that country had strategic and economic ties with the west. The Kingdom had enjoyed substantial economic prosperity, because of its oil trade with the West. According to reports, 'the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA), the Kingdom's central bank, is the world's third-largest holder of foreign-exchange reserves, managing just about $850 billion; holdings of $500 billion are in private hands...'[32] America's economic ties with Saudi Arabia had made it difficult for Washington to pursue hostile policies toward Saudi Arabia. Also, the Saudi and Iranian nuclear issues were treated very differently by 'the west'. Both Iran and Saudi Arabia had supported terrorist activities against the United States.[33] Saudi Arabia was an active supporter of the Taliban, Pakistani extremists,[34] and the Sunni fundamentalists in the region. For all these reasons, the United States had to be sensitive in dealing with Riyadh and Tehran. Given the turmoil in the region (and almost all the countries in the region were allies of Iran or Saudi Arabia), United States could not afford to further alienate Iran. Owing to the hostilities between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the United States had to play a role in containing the violence, the violence perpetuated by proxies of Iran and Saudi Arabia, in the region. Therefore, the United States could not afford to pursue a confrontational policy toward Iran, at a time when the region was already in turmoil.

Syria: The fate of Syria and the Assad government mattered to Iran, because of the strategic importance of that country.[35] The Syrian issue was also important to Arab governments and Arab streets. Public opinion in the Arab world had always mattered to Iran. Even during the reign of

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[31] A. McDowall, 'Saudi Arabia, Angered Over Mideast, Declines Security Council Seat', *Reuters*, 18 October 2013

[32] T. Al Saud, 'Saudi Arabia's Foreign Policy', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XX, No. 4, Winter 2013, pp.37–44

[33] However, Iran had cooperated with the United States in fighting Sunni extremism.

[34] Also, Pakistan had a long history of nuclear proliferation. See L. Weiss, 'Turning A Blind Eye Again? The Khan Network's History And Lessons For U.S. Policy', *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 35, March 2005

[35] K. Katzman, 'Iran: U.S. Concerns And Policy Responses' ,*Congressional Research Service Report*, RL32048, 5 March 2014

the Shah, 'the stronger Iran grew, and the more the Shah needed Arab acceptance of Iran's political aspirations, the more sensitive he became regarding Arab criticism'; that did not change in the 21st century.[36] The secular regime of the Alawites in Syria had close ties to the fundamentalist Iran, because of the strategic benefits that partnership offered.[37] Therefore, in order to influence the outcome of the Syrian civil war, the Obama administration had to cooperate with Iran.[38] However, it was a politically difficult decision for the Obama administration, because of domestic opposition in America.[39]

Responding to the crisis in Syria was a priority for the United States, and economic resources were also allocated for that purpose.[40] The United States had supported the Syrian opposition groups, by arming and financing them.[41] However, this was a risky venture, because, supporting an insurgency is often seen as an act of great desperation, pursued by the sponsor, often due to lack of alternatives. In the past, such acts had often turned out to be counterproductive. For example, the American support for Al-Qaeada operatives fighting the Soviet Union, in Afghanistan, during 1980s. The failure of the past, the strategy of supporting insurgency to resolve a conflict, was a reason why the United States had to have the support of Iran and Russia, to help negotiate a deal, for peace in Syria. In other words, it was not possible for the United States to get to peace, through violent means. In President Obama's words,

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[36] T. Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings Of Israel, Iran, And The United States*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007

[37] M. Young interviewed by B. Gwertzman, 'How Iran Gains From Assad Victory', *Council on Foreign Relations,* 5 June 2014, retrieved on 12 May 2015,

http://www.cfr.org/syria/iran-gains-assad-victory/p33064

[38] G. Dyer and N. Bozorgmehr, 'High-stakes Talks On Iran And Syria Put UN At Centre Stage', *The Financial Times,* 22 September 2013

[39] The text of the letter from Senators to President Obama, Washington D.C., 18 March 2014, retrieved on 9 June 2014,

http://www.aipac.org/~/media/Publications/Policy%20and%20Politics/Source%20Materials/Congressional%20Action/2014/SenateIranLetter.pdf

[40] Fiscal Year 2015, Budget of the U.S. Government, Office of Management and Budget, retrieved on 19 July 2014,

http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/budget/fy2015/assets/budget.pdf

[41] C. Blanchard, C. Humud, and M. Nikitin, 'Armed Conflict In Syria: Overview And U.S. Response', *Congressional Research Service Report*, 17 September 2014; D. Sanger, 'Rebel Arms Flow Is Said To Benefit Jihadists In Syria', *The New York Times,* 14 October 2012

'..our best chance of seeing a decent outcome at this point is to work the state actors who have invested so much in keeping Assad in power—mainly the Iranians and the Russians—as well as working with those who have been financing the opposition to make sure that they're not creating the kind of extremist force that we saw emerge out of Afghanistan when we were financing the mujahideen.'[42]

After the experiences in Afghanistan and Libya, the Obama administration had to be more cautious about transferring weapons to mercenaries.

The Syrian crisis had also exposed the difficulty faced by the United States, in containing the Saudi-Iran rivalry from escalating the violence in the region. The United States did get involved in supporting the Syrian opposition, without being pressured into that situation by its allies.[43] However, President Obama was not willing to commit American military to that conflict, at a time that conflict did not immediately or directly threaten American security interests. Moreover, a greater role in the Syrian conflict would have meant that the United States had to deal with the hostilities from Iran and Russia on that issue. America's relationship with Russia was not fruitful at this juncture, and the negotiations with Russia on most issues, from Ukraine to Syria, did not yield a diplomatic solution.[44] Also, the interim deal and the Iranian nuclear issue were too important, that it was not in the interest of the United States to complicate the relationship with Iran, by pursuing a more direct military role in Syria. During this period studied in this case study, the Syrian conflict was a threat to the stability of the Levant. Even though, in this case study, the instability across the Levant did not directly or immediately threaten the American energy interests or security concerns, the United States could not ignore the security threats faced by its allies, and the long term security threat America could directly face if the Middle East

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[42] President Obama quoted by D. Remnick, 'Going The Distance: On And Off The Road With Barack Obama', *The New Yorker*, 27 January 2014, retrieved on 18 April 2014,

http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2014/01/27/140127fa_fact_remnick?currentPage=all

[43] Editorial Opinion, 'Assad's New Swagger Requires A Stepped-up Response By US', *The Boston Globe,* 8 June 2014

[44] M. Fitzpatrick, 'Russia-U.S. Relations Are Chilly, But Is This Another Cold War?', *CBC News*, 31 July 2014, retrieved on 12 May 2015,

http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/russia-u-s-relations-are-chilly-but-is-this-another-cold-war-1.2723056

were to remain unstable. Therefore the Syrian issue, the diplomacy with Iran, the stability of the Middle East and American interests in the region was all entangled.

According to Trita Parsi, in the case of Syria, for the longest time, including the period considered in this case study, instead of committing to diplomacy, the Obama administration was seemingly attached to 'a false binary choice: taking military action or doing nothing'.[45] According to Trita Parsi,

> 'if the key concern is humanitarian – putting an end to the senseless slaughter of Syrian civilians – rather than U.S. credibility – ensuring the enforcement of the president's ''red line'' – much more should have been done earlier to press all sides of the conflict to agree to a cease-fire.'[46]

In Trita Parsi's assessment, the Obama administration's diplomatic efforts were mostly focused on securing the 'Russian support to rebuke Assad', instead of finding a lasting resolution to the crisis in Syria.[47] During this time period, the Obama administration had also invested in covert operations against the Syrian government, rather than getting involved in overt violence against Iran.[48] Also, according to Doran and Boot, President Obama wanted to disentangle America, from the chaos in the region. Therefore, the United States could not afford to openly confront Iran and Iranian influence in the region.[49] Doran and Boot's analysis also concluded that, Iran and its allies were America's partners in countering Al Qaeda and Sunni extremism.[50] Therefore, the option to pursue a confrontational policy, such as sanctions and sabotage against Iran, had to be rejected.

Turkey: As it was in the last case study, Turkey had played an important role in trying to influence the manner in which the Iranian nuclear issue was resolved. Turkey's political

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[45] T. Parsi, 'Syria: What Happened To Diplomacy?', *Reuters*, 3 September 2013

[46] Ibid

[47] Ibid

[48] D. Rohde, 'Does Syria Represent Obama's Final Pivot Away From The Middle East?', *The Atlantic*, 17 September 2013

[49] M. Doran and M. Boot, 'Obama's losing Bet On Iran', *The New York Times*, 15 January 2014

[50] Ibid

relationship with Iran was rather unsteady, during the course of the last 10 years. Even so, Turkey had worked with Iran, on very many issues, ranging from the Iranian nuclear issue to electricity production. Turkey was an active supporter of Iran's diplomacy with 'the West', but Turkey had also worked against the Iranian interest, in Syria and Lebanon.[51] Therefore, the relationship between Iran and Turkey was not without tension. Even so, economic necessities had forced Turkey to pursue closer ties with Iran.[52] For example, Iran and Turkey had cooperated in the production of electricity. Turkey had significant problems with their electricity production, because of the lack of water resources in that country. Iran and Turkey were in negotiation, to increase the electricity trade between the two countries. According to Iranian Students News Agency (ISNA), 'Iran has established two power transferring lines for eastern Turkey, whose capacity totals 400 MW. Turkey received 850 million KW/h electricity from Iran in 2013.'[53] Cooperation between Turkey and Iran was a mutually beneficial endeavour. Turkey was geographically well placed to influence Iran's Levant policy. Iran and Turkey did not have any territorial conflict with each other. Also, there was no significant conflict of interest between the two countries, other than the issues which had sprung from Turkey's interference in Syria.

Turkey was a NATO ally, and that country had smuggled mercenaries from Western countries, into Syria.[54] Turkey's activities supporting terrorists in the region, and helping extremists enter Syria had the potential to significantly harm Western interests and security.[55] For example, several of the extremists from the West, who had entered Syria, could possibly return to their home countries, after having training in using, manufacturing and transporting weapons.[56] After returning to their home country, these mercenaries could potentially threaten their home

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[51] AFP, 'Syria: Bashar al-Assad Tells Turkey To Stop Meddling', *The Telegraph*, 4 July 2012

[52] J. Parkinson, 'Iranian President Visits Turkey To Bolster Ties', *The Wall Street Journal*, 9 June 2014

[53] 'Turkey Mulling More Power Import From Iran, *Iranian Students News Agency*, 22 April 2014, retrieved on 22 April 2014,

http://isna.ir/en/news/93020201158/Turkey-mulling-more-power-import-from-Iran

[54] M. Nichols, 'Syria Wants U.N. Against Turkey Over Paris Attacks Suspect', *Reuters*, 21 January 2015

[55] R. Weitz, 'Turkey's New Regional Security Role: Implications For The United States', *Strategic Studies Institute And U.S. Army War College Press*, September 2014

[56] D.Wilber and T. Atlas, 'Intelligence Chief Says Syria Drawing In More Foreign Fighters', *Bloomberg*, 11 Feb 2015

countries. Because the Syrian government and Iran were fighting the Sunni extremists who were threatening Syria's territorial integrity, the United States had grounds to cooperate with Iran, due to the reason that Iran and the United States had common interests in fighting extremists, including ISIS. Therefore, the United States had to reject the option to pursue a confrontational policy toward Iran.

Iraq: Iraq was a breeding ground for extremism. President Rouhani had categorically denounced what he saw as some of the regional states, 'feeding terrorism using their petrodollars'.[57] In the case of Iraq and Syria, mercenaries from all over the world were present there.

Iran had interests in keeping Iraq from disintegration, because of the chaos and violence it could bring to the region. It was in the interest of the Islamic Republic, to maintain the stability and security of Iraq, alarmingly so after ISIS had made territorial gains in the region. Given ISIS's hostility to Shiite governments and peoples, ISIS was a grave threat to the Iranian influence in the region.[58] The breakup of Iraq was not particularly beneficial to the United States either. In the long run, these smaller states, if Iraq were divided, and their petroleum resources would have been particularly vulnerable, to extremist threats. It was also not in the interest of the United States to have the Shiite government in Iraq drifting toward the Iranian sphere of influence. For the United States, the main threats were the Sunni extremists and the growing Iranian influence in the region. Additionally, American allies, such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia, were also vulnerable to Sunni terrorism. Therefore, it was in the interest of the United States and its allies,[59] to work with Iran to maintain the peace in the region.[60] President Obama wanted the

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[57] The Associated Press, 'Ayatollah Of Iran Says U.S. Should Avoid Iraq', *The New York Times*, 22 June 2014

[58] D. Kaye, 'The Fallacy Of Iranian Leverage', *Foreign Affairs,* 26 June 2014, retrieved on 12 July 2014,

http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141605/dalia-dassa-kaye/the-fallacy-of-iranian-leverage

[59] The Foreign Policy 2010, The Foreign Policy Initiative, Washington D.C., 2010, retrieved on 27 May 2014,

http://www.foreignpolicyi.org/files/uploads/images/FPI%20Briefing%20Book%2010%2028%2010_0.pdf

[60] J. Stavridis, 'The Ghosts of Religious Wars Past Are Rattling in Iraq', *Foreign Policy*, 17 June 2014. retrieved on 24 June 2014,

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/06/17/the_ghosts_of_religious_wars_past_are_rattling_in_iraq_european_reformation

United Nations and the international community to play a more active role in securing international peace.

The violence in Iraq had continued, after the United States withdrew its forces from that country.[61] America's regional and European allies could not afford to ignore the threat posed by ISIS.[62] Therefore, there was an opportunity to get some of the regional actors to unify against the threat from ISIS.[63] However, Prime Minister Maliki's blatant disregard for Iraqi Sunnis had made the situation more difficult. The Maliki government had a turbulent relationship with the Sunnis in Iraq, and many even preferred being under the rule of the militants, rather than being ruled by a Shiite government.[64] The United States and Iran were also at odds with each other, on how to deal with the Iraq crisis. American involvement in Iraq was not welcomed by everyone in the Iranian ruling circle. All of this made it hard, if not impossible, for the United States to cope with the political turmoil in the Middle East.[65] Also, it seemed impossible for the United States to get the different ethnic groups in Iraq to work together.[66] The Iraqi Shiites had closer ties to the Iranians, than they did with the Iraqi Sunnis or Kurds.[67] The Kurds were fighting for their own cause and were generally resented by most Arabs in Iraq.[68] The Sunnis were fighting the Shiites and Kurds. The Iraqi Shiites and Sunnis were only unified in their objection to the

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[61] M. Nichols , M. Ryan , edited by J. Oatis, 'Iraq Tells U.N. 'Terrorist Groups' Seized Former Chemical Weapons Depot', *Reuters*, 8 July 2014, retrieved on 14 July 2014,

http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/08/us-iraq-security-chemicalweapons-idUSKBN0FD26K20140708

[62] P. Johnston and B. Bahney, 'Obama's Iraq Dilemma: Where Did ISIS Come From, And Can Anything Be Done About It?', *US News*, 17 June 2014, retrieved on 24 June 2014,

http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/world-report/2014/06/17/isis-in-iraq-creates-classic-foreign-policy-dilemma-for-obama

[63] M. Shabani, 'America And Iran Can Save Iraq', *The New York Times*, 26 June 2014

[64] A. Hauslohner, 'In Baghdad, Middle-class Sunnis Say They Prefer Militants To Maliki', *The Washington Post,* 12 July 2014

[65] D. Rothkopf, 'America Can't Fix The Middle East, But It Can Fix Its Middle East Policy', *Foreign Policy*, 23 June 2014, retrieved on 24 June 2014,

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/06/23/america_cant_fix_the_middle_east_but_it_can_fix_its_middle_east_policy_obama_bush_iraq

[66] M. Snyder, 'Post-War Iraq: The Triangle Of Ethnic Tensions', Vol.35, Issue 4, *Harvard International Review*, Spring 2014
[67] Ibid

establishment of an independent Kurdish state.[69] Given the sectarian violence in Iraq, it was nearly impossible for the United States to keep that country from breaking up.[70]

By 2014, the threat from ISIS had made it necessary for the United States to 'focus' on Iraq, in order to aid the Iraqi Security Forces.[71] Also, ISIS was able to occupy certain parts of Iraq because they were abandoned by the Iraqi army.[72] Therefore the Iraqi government had to seek the help of the Sunni leaders of that country, in order to fight ISIS.[73] By June 2014, President Obama decided to send 'up to 300 members of U.S. special-operations forces to Iraq'.[74] It was also necessary for the United States to work with Iran, in order to contain the violence in Iraq,[75] because the United States could not, for economic and military reasons, challenge Iran, in Iraq.[76]

At the end of Stage-one, the decision-makers had to reject the option of pursuing confrontational policies, such as sanctions and sabotage toward Iran, which had the potential to escalate the hostilities between Iran and the United States. Therefore, the options which survived to stage-

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[68] Ibid

[69] W. Hsieh, 'Time For America to Ally With The Kurds', *The National Interest*, 23 June 2014

[70] J. Goldberg, 'The New Map of the Middle East: Why should we fight the inevitable break-up of Iraq?', *The Atlantic,* 19 June 2014

[71] D. Kholaif, 'Kuwait On Alert Over ISIL Territorial Gains In Iraq', *Middle East Eye*, 25 June 2014, retrieved on 26 June 2014,

http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/kuwait-alert-over-isil-territorial-gains-iraq/1961622656

[72] P. Macleary, 'Why Are The Islamic State's Commanders So Much Better Than The Iraqi Army's?', *Foreign Policy*, 26 May 2015, retrieved on 4 February 2016,
http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/05/26/why-are-the-islamic-states-commanders-so-much-better-than-the-iraqi-army/

[73] Z. Keck, 'Will Iran Play The Crimea Card In Iraq?', *The Diplomat*, 19 June 2014, retrieved on 26 June 2014,

http://thediplomat.com/2014/06/will-iran-play-the-crimea-card-in-iraq/

[74] C. Lee, J. Solomon, and J. Barnes, 'Obama Sends Military Advisers To Iraq', *The Wall Street Journal*, 19 June 2014

[75] A. Cordesman, 'The President Has Taken the Right First Step on Iraq', *Center For Strategic and International Studies*, 19 June 2o14, retrieved on 23 June 2014,

http://csis.org/publication/president-has-taken-right-first-step-iraq

[76] Y. Dreazen and E. Groll, 'Iraq Is Burning, And Everyone Agrees Maliki Has To Go', *Foreign Policy*, 24 June 2014, retrieved on 26 June 2014,

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/06/24/who_should_replace_maliki_iraq_isis_john_kerry_kurdistan_chalabi_allawi?utm_content=bufferc3d34&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer

two were: (1) continue the dual track policy, with emphasis on sanctions as the primary Iran policy instrument; (2) pursue diplomacy as the primary Iran policy instrument (with a serious commitment to try and arrive at a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue.

Stage Two

In Stage Two, the dimension considered was: (1) the diplomacy dimension: diplomacy with European allies. This is the stage where the decision-makers had arrived at the final choice, after doing a cost-benefit analysis of the options which survived the first stage. The United States and its European allies were engaged in negotiations, often 'failed' negotiations with Iran, since the beginning of the Obama presidency. The United States needed the support of its European allies, whether to confront Iran or to resolve the nuclear issue, because the United States could not unilaterally make sanctions or diplomacy work. The diplomacy dimension was the single substantive dimension considered in this case study, for the reasons discussed in the section below.

The Diplomacy Dimension: Diplomacy with European Allies

For the EU, sanctions were only a means to get Iran to negotiate on the nuclear issue, because sanctions alone, without a commitment to diplomacy, had failed to pressure Iran into giving up its nuclear program. As already discussed, Iran had invented several ways to circumvent the sanctions regime. According to David Ignatius, 'one Iranian businessman explains that you can get under-the-table financing for almost anything if you pay an interest-rate premium of 12 to 15 percentage points.'[77] Sanctions had made it difficult for the Iranian public to economically thrive, and the sanctions imposed by the Obama administration during its second term were particularly harsh, but these sanctions alone were not sufficient to arrive at a solution to the Iranian nuclear issue.

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[77] D. Ignatius, 'Iran Copes With Sanctions But Wants To Bloom', *The Washington Post*, 20 December 2013

Within the EU, some were more suspicious than the others, concerning Iran and its nuclear program. For example, the French government had several concerns regarding the pursuit of diplomacy with Iran. France was concerned about Iran's Arak reactor, and Iran's Uranium enrichment.[78] France, along with Israel, wanted to deny Iran's rights under the NPT, to enrich Uranium.[79] France also had a difficult relationship with Iran, when it was under the leadership of Nicolas Sarkozy. According to Jonathan Steele, France's relationship with Saudi Arabia had made it difficult for France to objectively deal with the Iran issue, 'the lure of arms sales is one impulse, in particular the hope that angry Saudis (as well as other Gulf petro-emirs) will switch from US and British suppliers to Dassault and Thales.'[80] However, the French opposition was 'ignored' by the Obama administration. According to Rosenberg, 'the French opposed the Iraq war and they supported bombing Syria. They were simply ignored. No, France does not count for much in Washington.'[81]

This was an important period in the relationship between Iran and the West. According to Sadegh Zibakalam, for the first time since 1979,

> 'it seems Iran has trusted the US and Europe's words that they are not seeking regime change and that the sole issue here is the nuclear programme. The West, on the other hand, seems to have taken Iran's word that it will open the doors to IAEA inspectors and have nothing to hide.'[82]

President Rouhani and his government had wanted to pursue a foreign policy which was 'based on détente and trust-building with the world'.[83] The EU, with the exception of France, wanted President Obama to exhaust the diplomatic option, before confronting Iran, and the Obama

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[78] J. Rubin, 'On Iran, Congress Should Stand With France', *The Washington Post*, 11 November 2013

[79] Editorial board, 'An Enriching Dialogue With Iran–With Limits', *The Washington Post,* 18 October 2013

[80] J. Steele, 'Iran: Don't Let The Naysayers Prevail', *The Guardian*, 11 November 2013

[81] M. Rosenberg, 'The Iran Negotiations Must Not Fail', *The Huffington Post*, 15 November 2013

[82] S. Dehghan, 'Geneva Keeps Iran's Hardliners At Bay', *The Guardian*, 8 November 2013

[83] Source: Reuters, 'Rouhani To Generals: Let Diplomacy Prevail', *Al Jazeera,* 1 March 2014, retrieved on 21 April 2015,

http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/03/rouhani-generals-let-diplomacy-prevail-201431142134310355.html

administration needed to exhaust the diplomatic option, in order to save the sanctions regime from falling apart.[84]

By the end of this stage, it was clear that diplomacy had to be given a chance, because that was the most rewarding and effective foreign policy choice. The dual track policy, with the focus on sanctions was not in itself helpful in resolving the conflict between Iran and the United States. Sanctions were only a 'means' to get Iran to negotiate. Also, if sanctions were continued for long, without an end in sight, it had the potential to escalate the tension between Tehran and Washington. Worsening the relationship between Iran and United States could have only resulted in proxy wars or direct military confrontation between the two countries. Military confrontation between Iran and United States could not have helped in resolving the Iranian nuclear issue. Therefore, at the end of the second stage, the rational choice was to pursue diplomacy.

How did the negotiations and commitment to diplomacy come about?

> *'To seize this unique opportunity, we need to accept equal footing and choose a path, based on mutual respect and recognition of the dignity of all peoples, and more so on the recognition that no power, however strong, can determine the fate of others.'*

> **Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Zarif[85]**

Iranian politics, domestic and international, saw significant change, since President Rouhani took office.[86] The President of Iran did not have the authority to dictate the course of that country's foreign policy, because of the 'various centres of power' in Iranian politics. Even though the President had considerable power to handle the foreign policy issues of the country, he was still bound by the advice and recommendations of the clergy. Also, Rouhani's election victory was

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[84] Observer Editorial, 'Iran Deal: Salute The Power Of Patient Diplomacy', *The Guardian*, 30 November 2013

[85] M. Zarif, 'Iran's Message: There Is A Way Forward', *YouTube,* retrieved on 3 May 2015,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qyRtDkLvXdg ; M. Shabani, 'Iran's ''Dignity'' Dialogue', *Foreign Affairs*, 30 March 2015

[86] Z. Bar'el, 'A Year After His Election , Rouhani Is Changing Iran Without Shaking It Up', *Haaretz*, 14 June 2014

allegedly a surprise to the Iranian Supreme Leader. Even so, in that instance, the Supreme Leader was accepting of the people's mandate. The Iranian clergy was also willing to embrace the merit of 'heroic flexibility' in dealing with the United States.[87] In the assessment of Mahmood Monshipouri and Manochehr Dorraj, 'Rouhani not only has a popular mandate to become the agent of change he promised to be during his campaign; he also enjoys the conditional blessing of power brokers at the highest levels to restore the credibility of the regime.'[88] Rouhani seemed to have the will and influence to make that political change in Iran's relationship with the United States, and give diplomacy a chance to arrive at a solution.[89]

Merely three days into his presidency, on 5th August 2013, Hassan Rouhani expressed his desire to engage in serious diplomacy with the United States. Within a month, the Iranian Foreign Minister and US Secretary of State John Kerry met with each other, in the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting.[90] Following that, President Obama and President Rouhani had a 'historic' telephone conversation, reaffirming the commitment of both parties, to arrive at a diplomatic solution.

In October of 2013, Iran and the P5+1 engaged in a series of serious negotiations, to make progress in the negotiations pertaining to the Iranian nuclear program. By the end of November 2013, the Joint Plan of Action, also called the Geneva interim agreement, was signed by Iran and the P5+1. According to the EU,

'the Joint Plan of Action also includes elements for the final step – i.e. the common goal of reaching a final, comprehensive solution which would lead to the full resolution of the

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[87] T. Erdbrink, 'Enigmatic Leader Of Iran Backs Overture, For Now', *The New York Times*, 23 September 2013

[88] Mahmood Monshipouri and Manochehr Dorraj, 'Iran's Foreign Policy: A Shifting Strategic Landscape, *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XX, No. 4, Winter 2013, pp.133–147

[89] According to Trita Parsi, the final agreement probably would 'temper Tehran's appetite for regional conflicts.'; T. Parsi, 'Why the GCC should welcome Iran nuclear talks', *Gulf News*, 7 April 2014,retrieved on 16 April 2014,

http://gulfnews.com/opinions/columnists/why-the-gcc-should-welcome-iran-nuclear-talks-1.1316247

[90] A. Mohammed and M. Spetalnick, 'U.S., Iran Voice Optimism, Caution After Rare Encounter At U.N.', *Reuters*, 26 September 2013

international community's concerns about Iran's nuclear programme, along with UN Security Council resolutions.'[91]

According to the Geneva accord of 2013, 'the Iranian nuclear program will be treated in the same manner as that of any non-nuclear weapon state party to the non-proliferation treaty.'[92] The Geneva interim agreement was implemented, starting 20 January 2014.[93] Even so, by November 2013, Iran had already taken more proactive measures to address the concerns of the IAEA inspectors and the international community. For example, according to a November 2013 report by M. Landler and D. Sanger,

> 'inspectors, who completed their last visit to Iran just days ago, said that no more new, highly efficient centrifuges that the country has invested heavily in building were installed at its two main nuclear sites. Those centrifuges, called the IR-2, were particularly worrisome because they would shorten Iran's "breakout time" to build a weapon, if they were operating.'[94]

For the rest of the year in 2013, Iran, P5+1 and the IAEA officials, were engaged in negotiations, at the technical level. By the end of 2013, all parties, it seemed had wanted to arrive at a comprehensive diplomatic resolution to the Iranian nuclear issue. By the end of 2013, Iran had added two members of Parliament - 'legal and technical experts who will be able to prevent misunderstanding by the Americans', 'to a supervisory council responsible for monitoring the country's nuclear negotiating team'[95] After the failure of a decade of European diplomacy and three decades of America's confrontational policy to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue, the relationship between Iran and the United States was finally evolving from its competitive element, and into a phase of cooperation.

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[91] Fact Sheet, 'E3/EU +3 nuclear negotiations with Iran: Terms of the agreement on a Joint Plan of Action, including measures to be undertaken by the European Union ',Brussels, 17 January 2014, 131219/02 , retrieved on 21 February 2014,

http://eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2013/131219_02_en.pdf,

[92] H. Mousavian, 'A nuclear deal requires compromise from Iran and the west', *The Financial Times*, 16 February 2014

[93] J. Hersh, 'Iran Nuclear Deal To Take Effect Jan.20, White House Says, *The Huffington Post*, 12 January 2014

[94] M. Landler and D. Sanger, 'Obama calls for patience in Iran talks', *The New York Times*, 14 November 2013

[95] T. Erdbrink, '2 Conservatives Join Iran Nuclear Panel', *The New York Times,* 1 January 2014

The Geneva agreement was endorsed by the International community. That endorsement placed additional responsibility on the negotiating parties. For example, any additional sanctions by the US Congress could have negatively impacted the negotiations. If the American disregard for diplomacy had led to the breakdown of the Geneva agreement, then that could have necessitated a response from Iran. Such a situation could have also jeopardised the support from America's European allies, for American sanctions already in place. As President Obama had argued, 'now is not the time to move forward on new sanctions — because doing so would derail this promising first step, alienate us from our allies and risk unravelling the coalition that enabled our sanctions to be enforced in the first place.'[96] Therefore, the support for diplomacy, from America's European partners and the IAEA, was helpful in overcoming the domestic opposition to diplomacy. In the following months, several delegations were involved in the negotiations. The negotiations were based on mutual interest. In President Obama's words,

> 'we're clear about the mistrust between our nations, mistrust that cannot be wished away. But these negotiations don't rely on trust. Any long-term deal we agree to must be based on verifiable action that convinces us and the international community that Iran is not building a nuclear bomb.'[97]

The agreements of 2013 imposed several restrictions on Iran's uranium enrichment levels. Iran was also subjected to extensive and unprecedented inspections by the IAEA.[98] According to President Obama,

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[96] President Obama, Statement By The President On First Step Agreement On Iran's Nuclear Program, The White House, 23 November 2013, retrieved on 22 February 2014,

http://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2013/11/24/president-obama-makes-statement-iran#transcript

[97] Remarks of President Barack Obama, State of the Union Address, 28 January 2014, retrieved on 09 February 2014,

http://london.usembassy.gov/obama392.html

[98] Statement by President Obama on First Step Agreement On Iran's Nuclear Program, The White House, 24 November 2013, retrieved on 20 March 2014,

http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign-policy/iran-negotiations

'Iran cannot install or start up new centrifuges, and its production of centrifuges will be limited. Iran will halt work at its plutonium reactor. And new inspections will provide extensive access to Iran's nuclear facilities and allow the international community to verify whether Iran is keeping its commitments.'

This is another instance where President Obama relied on international institutions and the international community, to help resolve a conflict in the Middle East. During this period, Iran had tried to strengthen its relationship with Russia. For example, Moscow and Tehran were in negotiations, 'regarding an oil-for-goods barter deal that could bring Iran as much as $20 billion in exchange for about 500,000 barrels of oil per day'[99]

By the end of January 2014, in the assessment of the American intelligence community, 'Iran is trying to balance conflicting objectives. It wants to improve its nuclear and missile capabilities while avoiding severe repercussions—such as a military strike or regime-threatening sanctions.'[100] The same report also went on to acknowledge the lack of certainty regarding any future weapons program that Iran may choose to have or not have. There were accusations that the interim agreement was just a pretext for politicians to 'buy more time.' While examining the interim deal which was negotiated in Vienna, in February 2014, the NIAC President Trita Parsi argued that, 'halting the expansion of the enrichment program and ending the enrichment of uranium at 20 percent have also eliminated the West's sense of urgency.'[101] According to Parsi, 'the West' could afford to use diplomacy to 'buy time'. However, the Rouhani government had to see results, in order to garner domestic political support, for Iran's diplomacy with the United States. Also, not everyone in Washington had faith in diplomacy.[102] For example, Hillary Clinton

[99] K. Johnson, 'Crude Business', *Foreign Policy*, 11 April 2014, retrieved on 17 April 2014,

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/04/11/crude_business

[100] J. Clapper, Director of National Intelligence, 'Statement for the Record :Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community', Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 29 January 2014

[101] T. Parsi, US-Iran deal: Compromise is key', *Al Jazeera*, 18 Feb 2014 , retrieved on 21 February 2014,

http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/02/us-iran-deal-compromise-key-201421845935181913.html

[102] G. Gambill, 'A Limited Disclosure Nuclear Agreement With Iran: Promise or Peril?', *Foreign Policy Research Institute,* E-Notes, June 2014, retrieved on 24 June 2014,

http://www.fpri.org/docs/gambill_-_iran_nuc_nondisclosure_0.pdf

was vocal about her pessimism, concerning the possibility of reaching a comprehensive deal with Iran. According to Secretary Clinton, she was sceptical and did not trust Iran to 'follow through and deliver.'[103] During her time as the Secretary of State, Clinton had 'staked out a position on Iran somewhere between loyalist and wary skeptic'.[104] This is especially important because of the influence the State Department has on foreign relations, at the very least in advisory capacity. Although Clinton's work as the Secretary of State had substantially improved her own standing in the Democratic Party, her appointment to that post had come as a surprise to many observers.[105] Before taking office, Hillary Clinton did considerably differ from President Obama, in her views on foreign policy and especially concerning Iran. For instance, President Obama was always vocal about his support for engagement with Iran. Hillary Clinton however, had expressed concerns and skepticism regarding the matter. It was also an important issue of difference between him and Hillary Clinton during their Presidential campaign.[106] The disagreements between Senator Obama and Senator Clinton, concerning foreign policy, was so severe during the primary campaign that many in administration were apprehensive about Hillary Clinton's appointment to the office of Secretary of State.[107] However, despite her pessimism, Secretary Clinton went on to support the developments in Geneva and the Joint Plan of Action as worthy endeavours.

During this period, the Obama administration was also involved in secretive negotiations with Iran. So secretive that information regarding the meetings was not known to America's allies in Europe and the Middle East.[108] Israel and the EU were not the only reason why the Obama administration had to negotiate in secrecy. The Obama White House had a very difficult

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[103] H. Clinton quoted by R. Kaplan, 'Hillary Clinton says she's ''sceptical'' of Iran nuclear deal', *CBS News*, 20 March 2014, retrieved on 20 March 2014,

http://www.cbsnews.com/news/hillary-clinton-says-shes-skeptical-of-iran-nuclear-deal/

[104] J. Traub, 'The Hillary Clinton Doctrine', *Foreign Policy*, 06 November 2015, retrieved on 23 March 2016, http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/11/06/hillary-clinton-doctrine-obama-interventionist-tough-minded-president/
[105] Ibid
[106] J. Mann, *The Obamians*, p.194

[107] B. Smith, 'Cabinet post for Clinton roils Obamaland', *Politico*, 18 November 2008

[108] B. Klapper, M. Lee and J. Pace, 'Secret US-Iran talks set stage for nuke deal', *Associated Press*, 24 November 2013, retrieved on 18 April 2014,

http://bigstory.ap.org/article/secret-us-iran-talks-set-stage-nuke-deal

relationship with the Congress, and that relationship deteriorated throughout the presidency. The White House and the Congress had disagreed on nearly every issue at hand.[109] The President's relationship with the Republican Congress was so poor that the Speaker of the House, John Boehner had threatened to pursue legal action against the White House. In Speaker Boehner's words, 'the Constitution makes it clear that a president's job is to faithfully execute the laws. In my view, the president has not faithfully executed the laws.'[110] The Congress had alleged that the President had encroached upon the powers of the Legislature. However, Congress's threat of legal action against the President, and the very public brawl between the Executive Branch and the Republican Congress were seen by America's allies and foes as a reflection of a very broken system of governance. The White House had to also worry about the CIA's chief of Iran operations. Reportedly, there was an 'open rebellion' at the Iran operations division.[111] Several of the staff had difficulty in working with Jonathan Bank, who was the CIA's chief of Iran operations.[112] Given all these challenges, and the tension between the Executive Branch and the Congress, the American negotiators had to be more concerned about 'selling' a deal to the American Congress, before getting the Iranian negotiators to make concessions. As Costello argued, this tension between the Congress and the Executive Branch had further complicated the negotiations between Iran and the P5+1. That is,

> 'if Iran concedes and accepts the P5+1′s proposal, the U.S. could notch a win on centrifuges and likely have an easier time selling the deal to a recalcitrant Congress. But if that happens, Rouhani would likely have a more difficult, if not impossible, time selling the deal to the Supreme Leader and hardliners in Iran's political system.'[113]

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[109] R. Cornwell, 'Is Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl's release a success story – or a scandal?', *The Independent*, 8 June 2014

[110] S. Davis, 'Boehner to sue Obama in executive authority dispute', *USA Today*, 25 June 2014

[111] K. Dilanian, 'CIA Suspends Chief Of Iran Operations Over Workplace Issues', *The LA Times*, 16 March 2014

[112] Ibid

[113] R. Costello, 'Iran Nuclear Gridlock Is Political, Not Technical', *National Iranian American Council*, 23 June 2014, retrieved on 26 June 2014,

http://www.niacouncil.org/iran-nuclear-gridlock-political-technical/

By July 2014, both Iran and the United States had come to recognise the benefits of pursuing diplomacy. According to the White House,

> 'Iran has defied the expectations of some by actually fulfilling the obligations under the Joint Plan of Action…The Iranians have also engaged in the comprehensive negotiations in a serious way and demonstrated some flexibility in the context of that [Joint Plan of Action] negotiations.'[114]

Opposition from the Congress and AIPAC, did not impact the Obama administration's Iran policy choice in this case

> *'What's preventing us from getting things done right now is you've got a faction within the Republican Party that thinks solely in terms of their own ideological purposes and solely in terms of how they hang on to power. And that's a problem. And that's why I need a Democratic Senate.'*

President Barack Obama[115]

The Obama administration had to face significant resistance from the Congress and AIPAC, during this period, opposing the alternative to pursue diplomacy with the Rouhani government.[116] For the Obama administration, its conflict with the Capitol Hill was strenuous.[117] The Congress and AIPAC were supporters of sanctions, and had pressured the administration to

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[114] J. Brady, Daily Briefing by the Press Secretary, White House Press Briefing, James S. Brady Press Briefing Room, 14 July 2014, retrieved on 2 August 2014,

http://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2014/07/14/press-briefing#transcript

[115] President Obama, Speaking at a fundraiser for Senate Democrats while vacationing on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, quoted by D. Boyer, *The Washington Times*, 11 August 2014

[116] T. Cullis, 'The National Interest: Will Sanctions Hawks' Kill An Iran Nuclear Deal?', *The National Interest,* 6 June 2014

[117] C. Lee, 'White House Fights Against New Iran Sanctions; Obama Hopes To Safeguard Victory, Mounts Campaign To Deter Congress', *The Wall Street Journal* , 25 November 2013

impose additional sanctions on Iran, while negotiations were ongoing.[118] According to the administration, additional sanctions, as well as any threat of additional sanctions, had the potential to jeopardise the negotiations.[119] However, according to AIPAC Executive Director Howard Kohr, the pressure of additional sanctions had the potential to 'aid' the diplomatic efforts of the P5+1.

The P5 + 1's negotiation with Iran was based on 'the dual principles of proportionality and reciprocity: limits to Iran's nuclear program would be balanced out by what the US offered in return. In other words, the US could not ask for more while giving less.'[120] Therefore, if the Obama administration offered limited or reversible sanctions relief, then the Iranians did not have to offer unlimited or irreversible concessions. According to Jacob Lew, the 76th United States Secretary of Treasury, sanctions and diplomacy could work together, to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue. In Lew's words, 'even as we [the United States] pursue diplomacy, and even as we deliver on our commitments to provide limited sanctions relief, the vast majority of our sanctions remain firmly in place. Right now, these sanctions are imposing the kind of intense economic pressure that continues to provide a powerful incentive for Iran to negotiate.'[121]

AIPAC: During the period discussed in this case study, AIPAC had fought the White House on several issues, such as: (1) military intervention in Syria; (2) additional sanctions on Iran, in the midst of diplomatic pursuits; (3) adding Israel to the visa waiver programme. AIPAC 'lost' on all three issues, because it failed to impact the Obama administration's decisions on all these issues, in Israel's favor as advocated by AIPAC.[122] AIPAC was one of the most influential pro-Israel

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[118] C. Bruck, 'Friends Of Israel', *The New Yorker,* 1 September 2014

[119] T. Parsi, 'The Illusion Of AIPAC's Invincibility', *The Huffington Post*, 8 February 2014

[120] T. Parsi and T. Cullis, 'Will US sanctions Scuttle A Nuclear Deal With Iran?', *Belfer Center, Harvard University*, 24 March 2014, retrieved on 7 June 2014,

http://iranmatters.belfercenter.org/blog/will-us-sanctions-scuttle-nuclear-deal-iran

[121] Secretary S. Lew quoted by M. Nosanchuk, 'President Obama, Secretary Kerry and Secretary Lew Underscore And Reaffirm The Strength Of The U.S. –Israel Relationship', 03, June 2014, retrieved on 25 January 2015,

http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/03/06/president-obama-secretary-kerry-and-secretary-lew-underscore-and-reaffirm-strength-u

[122] J. Zogby, 'AIPAC And CPAC Come To Town', *Gulf Daily News*, 10 March 2014

lobbies in the United States. The Obama administration and AIPAC had 'fought' each other on various issues,[123] concerning the Iranian nuclear negotiations. 'The last time America's most potent pro-Israel lobbying group lost a major showdown with the White House was when President Ronald Reagan agreed to sell Awacs surveillance planes to Saudi Arabia over the group's bitter objections,'[124] AIPAC's failure was that rare. AIPAC had wanted the White House to pursue a 'more restrictive approach', when dealing with Iran. That hawkish approach of AIPAC was supported by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, US Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Menendez, and several Republicans in the US Congress. For Prime Minister Netanyahu, military attack on Iran was the only solution, to deal with the Iranian nuclear issue.[125] AIPAC's failure also reflected poorly on the US-Israel relationship.[126] The hawks in the Congress, and AIPAC, were still, in 2014, arguing that Iran had 'no inherent right to uranium enrichment'.[127] According to the critics of AIPAC, by this point, it was clear that AIPAC's mission and policies were against the interest of the United States.[128] AIPAC was also denounced by the Jewish community, because that organisation did not represent the views of the American Jewish community or the Israeli Jewish community. According to Bloomfield, 'AIPAC'S bipartisan reputation is in tatters and it sounds increasingly like a mouthpiece for Netanyahu and for hyper-partisan Republicans rather than the voice of the American Jewish community.'[129]

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[123] G. Rachman, 'Obama Needs To Take On The Israel lobby Over Iran', *Financial Times*, 26 November 2013

[124] M. Landler, 'Iran Is Rare Setback For Israel lobby; Failure To Win Sanctions Calls Dominant Position Of Aipac Into Question', *International New York Times,* 5 February 2014

[125] Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Speech , AIPAC Conference, Washington D.C., 2012, retrieved on 06 June 2014,

http://www.aipac.org/act/attend-events/policy-conference/videos/2012/monday-gala-plenary/prime-minister-benjamin-netanyahu

[126] J. Rubin, 'AIPAC: A New Era Of Confrontation?', *The Washington Post*, 27 February 2014

[127] By Haaretz, 'AIPAC Presses Obama: Stay Firm On Iran', *Haaretz*, 2 March 2014, retrieved on 5 June 2014,

http://www.haaretz.com/news/israel-s-eye-on-iran/.premium-1.577489

[128] S. Rosner, 'Aipac Is Good for America', *The New York Times,* 5 March 2014

[129] D. Bloomfield, 'Washington Watch: AIPAC – Whose lobby Is It?', *The Jerusalem Post*, 26 February 2014

In this case study, the White House had resisted the pressure from AIPAC, and had resisted AIPAC's efforts to impose more sanctions on Iran, while diplomacy was being pursued. However, the United States could not ignore AIPAC or its influence in Washington. Therefore, the United States had to change the course of America's relationship with Iran. For that (in order to change the course of America's relationship with Iran), the Obama administration had to produce results, in its negotiations with Iran.[130] Therefore, diplomacy had to be given a chance. There was tremendous pressure on the administration, to make diplomacy work, or pursue an aggressive (including military strike by US or Israel) policy toward Iran. Given the fact that the region was already in turmoil, the United States had to give diplomacy a chance, before Israel and AIPAC ventured into a military campaign against Iran.

Congress: To begin with, President Obama did not have the legal authority to unilaterally lift all the sanctions imposed on Iran. Because several of the sanctions on Iran were imposed by the Congress, the UN and the EU, it was necessary to have the cooperation of all these parties, to have the sanctions lifted. However, the White House had a difficult time 'negotiating', with the Congress, regarding the Iranian nuclear issue.

When American diplomats were negotiating with Iran and America's European partners, even during this period, especially the last months of 2013, the US Congress had tried to derail the talks.[131] The US Treasury Department's sanctions, blacklisting additional Iranian companies, on 12 December 2013, and the threat of additional sanctions by the Congress, were examples of inopportune policy making that had inflicted needless strain on the negotiations. The rift between the Congress and the Executive Branch became severe since the Joint Plan of Action was signed between the P5+1 and Iran, in November of 2013; since then, the Executive Branch was focused on the negotiations with Iran. The Congress was focused on further 'punishing' Iran.[132] This in turn had resulted in a situation where the Congress was working against the pursuits by the

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[130] E. Luce, 'Iran Will Test Obama's Diplomatic Game Plan', *The Financial Times*, 10 November 2013

[131] B. Stephens, 'How Not To Negotiate With Iran', *The Wall Street Journal,* 8 October 2013

[132] Eighty–three senators outline core principles of a final agreement with Iran in Letter to President Obama- Senate Foreign Relations Committee News Release, U.S. Senate Documents, Congressional Documents and Publications, 18 March 2014

Executive Branch.[133] In December 2013, the House Republicans pushed for more sanctions on Iran. The bill introduced by Senator Bob Menendez and Mark Kirk was flawed in principle, and in content.[134] The sanctions proposed by Senator Menendez and Kirk had the potential to derail diplomacy, because, imposing additional sanctions, during that time while negotiations were ongoing, would have been in violation of the 2013 Geneva agreement between Iran and the United States.[135] The zeal to impose additional sanctions appeared to have stemmed from the miscalculations of a certain section of the American Congress.[136] Iranian Foreign Minister responded by saying, 'some people are wedded to the idea that pressure will produce results. They are wrong. Pressure has produced 18,000 centrifuges in Iran. So if they want to continue that road – it is open to them, but it doesn't produce any results'[137] Also, the lack of harmony in the relationship between the Executive Branch and the Congress had complicated President Obama's foreign policy decision-making.[138] That is, the Executive Branch had to consider accommodating the Congress, and at the same time resist Congress's attempts to sabotage[139] the nuclear negotiations. According the National Security spokeswomen, Bernadette Meehan, the bill to impose additional sanctions on Iran had the potential to thrust the United States into a war with Iran, and set in motion a nuclear weapons program in Iran.[140] Also, within the Congress,[141]

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[133] B. Klapper, 'Obama Seeks Time From Congress On Iran Diplomacy', *The Huffington Post*, 13 November 2013

[134] R. Kampeas, 'Will AIPAC-Obama Sanctions Clash Dent Pro-Israel lobby's Clout?', *Jewish Telegraph Agency*, 21 January 2014

[135] P. Beinart, 'The Hawks' Hypocrisy On The Iran Sanctions Bill', *The Atlantic*, 23 January, 2014

[136] P. Weiss, 'AIPAC Fail: Goldberg leads, And Sen. Blumenthal Climbs Off The War Bus', *Mendoweiss*, 16 January 2014

[137] 'FM: Pressure leads To Production Of 18,000 Centrifuges', *Islamic Republic News Agency*, 17 December 2013, retrieved on 22 February 2014,

http://www.irna.ir/en/News/80955795/Politic/FM__Pressures_lead_to_production_of_18,000_centrifuges

[138] Statement by the President, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 27 September 2007, retrieved on 2 August 2014,

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/27/statement-president

[139] Editorial-Opinion, 'Pre-authorizing A War With Iran', *The Washington Post*, 29 May 2014

[140] JTA and Haaretz, 'Iran Sanctions Have Majority Backing In Senate, But Is It Enough To Override A Veto?', *Haaretz*, January 10, 2014

[141] R. Grim, '10 Democratic Committee Chairs Warn Menendez's Iran Sanctions Bill Could Blow Up Negotiations', *The Huffington Post*, 19 December 2013

there were supporters of the sanctions regime who had questioned the wisdom in imposing sanctions while negotiations were underway.[142] In a missive send by Hillary Clinton to Carl Levin, Clinton argued that,

> 'the U.S. intelligence community has assessed that imposing new unilateral sanctions now "would undermine the prospects for a successful comprehensive nuclear agreement with Iran". I share that view. It could rob us of the diplomatic high ground we worked so hard to reach, break the united international front we constructed and in the long run weaken the pressure on Iran by opening the door for other countries to chart a different course.'[143]

According to Delaware Democratic Sen. Chris Coons, 'now is not the time for a vote on the Iran sanctions bill.'[144] The said bill targeted Iranian ballistic missile programs, 'act of terrorism' by Iran or Iranian allies, Iran's 'illicit' nuclear infrastructure and so forth.[145] The Executive Branch's fight against the bill helped stall it. During this time period, the president was willing to take tougher stance, when dealing with the Republicans in the House of Representatives. This aggressiveness, in dealing with domestic opponents, was a feature of the President's second term.[146] President Obama and Secretary Kerry had resisted the pressure from the Republican Congress, and pursued diplomacy with Iran.[147] In Secretary Kerry's words,

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[142] NIAC Staff, '72 Organisations Warn Senate Against New Iran Sanctions', *NIAC*, 14 January 2014, retrieved on 24 April 2015,

http://www.niacouncil.org/72-organizations-warn-senate-against-new-iran-sanctions/#.UtVnbA0NuXU.twitter

[143] Hillary Rodham Clinton, missive send to Carl Levin, January 26, 2014,

http://images.politico.com/global/2014/02/02/1_26_14_hrc_to_levin_2.html,

[144] Coons said during POLITICO's post-State of the Union event held at the Capital Hilton Hotel in Washington., 1 January 2014,

http://www.politico.com//story/2014/01/chris-coons-iran-sanctions-bill-102821.html

[145] E. Levine, 'Analysis Of Faults In The Menendez-Kirk Iran Sanctions Bill (S. 1881)', *The Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation,* retrieved on 2 August 2014,

http://armscontrolcenter.org/issues/iran/articles/analysis_of_faults_in_the_menendezkirk_iran_sanctions_bill_s_1881/

[146] P. Bacon Jr., ''So Sue Me': Why President Obama Is Embracing A Fight With Congress', *NBC News*, 6 July 2014, retrieved on 19 May 2015,

'I'm very blessed to be in a position where I can work on these issues full-time without having to go out and raise money and without having to worry about, you know, the sort of domestic politics of it..I can just focus on the substance, focus on the challenge, focus on the facts, and try to get something done. And I like that. I find it very rewarding and a lot of fun.'[148]

According to the White House, the President was not going to allow domestic infighting to strangle his foreign policy objectives.[149] For example, when the Congress and the White House had disagreements concerning the Iran policy of the United States, the Obama administration threatened to veto any bill passed by the Congress, which imposed sanctions on Iran, in the midst of the nuclear negotiations. According to the White House spokesperson Jay Carney, 'we don't think it [the bill introduced by Sen. Menendez and Sen. Kirk] will be enacted. If it were enacted the President would veto it. The fact of the matter is this is not a debate about being for or against sanctions.'[150] However, the US president needed the support of the Congress,[151] to guarantee long term success in maintaining peace with Iran. For example, the sanctions on Iran's petroleum industry and financial institutions were imposed by the US Congress. Therefore, in the future, the Executive Branch could face significant legal challenges, if it tried to roll back these sanctions, without the consent of the Congress. Also,

'because a final comprehensive nuclear deal is unlikely to address the topics of terrorism or Iran's ballistic missile program, presidential certification triggering CISADA's sunset

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http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/so-sue-me-why-president-obama-embracing-fight-congress-n147871

[147] F. James, '5 Ways The Iran Nuclear Deal Collides With U.S. Politics', *NPR*, 25 November 2013, retrieved on 25 January 2015,

http://www.npr.org/blogs/itsallpolitics/2013/11/25/247191207/5-ways-the-iran-nuclear-deal-collides-with-u-s-politics

[148] D. Rohde, 'How John Kerry Could End Up Outdoing Hillary Clinton', *The Atlantic*, 20 November 2013

[149] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jay Carney, White House Press Briefing, 19 December 2013

[150] Ibid
[151] E. Edelman, D. Ross and R. Takeyh, 'Bringing In Congress On An Iran Deal', *The Washington Post*, 25 May 2014

provision [which is a *de facto* termination provision] is highly improbable. The President is thus limited to time-limited waiver of the trade ban'[152]

According to Trita Parsi, 'sanctions waivers are fundamentally reversible. They usually last only six months and have to be actively renewed by the president - including by whoever occupies the White House after 2016.'[153]

The members of Congress were working to derail the efforts by the Obama administration to pursue diplomacy with Iran, also the Republican Congress was extremely hostile to President Obama and the White House.[154] According to President Obama,

> 'even in the old Westerns or gangster movies, right, everyone puts their gun down just for a second. You sit down, you have a conversation; if the conversation doesn't go well, you leave the room and everybody knows what's going to happen and everybody gets ready. But you don't start shooting in the middle of the room during the course of negotiations.'[155]

The White House had its own way of circumventing the Congress, when dealing with Iran.[156] According to Dan Pfeiffer, President Obama's senior adviser, 'our focus this year has been on using the president's pen and phone to advance our agenda...Ultimately, the Republicans have to decide whether they want to abandon their obstructionist ways. If they do, there are ample opportunities to make progress.'[157] This friction between the White House and the Congress was

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[152] J. Abdi and T. Cullis, 'Policy Memo: Barriers To Lifting US Sanctions In A Final Deal With Iran', *National Iranian American Council*, 17 March 2014

[153] T. Parsi, 'US-Iran Deal: Compromise Is key', *Al Jazeera*, 18 February 2014, retrieved on 07 June 2014,

http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/02/us-iran-deal-compromise-key-201421845935181913.html

[154] S. Kinzer, 'Invading Iraq Was Dumb Enough. Now Congress Wants To Derail The Iran Deal', *The Guardian,* 14 January 2014

[155] President Obama interviewed by J. Goldberg, 'Obama To Israel -- Time Is Running Out', *Bloomberg*, 2 March 2014, retrieved on 18 April 2014,

http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2014-03-02/obama-to-israel-time-is-running-out

[156]; S. Sorcher, 'How The White House Can Get Around Congress On Iran', *National Journal*, 2 November 2013

[157] P. Baker, 'Obama's Odds With Congress: Bad To Worse', *The New York Times*, 12 June 2014

damaging, because the Iranian nuclear deal depended on the 'compromise' between all parties, from the US Congress to the Iranian Majils.[158] Also, Congress's aggressiveness was counterproductive. As Charles Grey argued, 'if the US expects Iran to comply with its demands, then it must convince Iran that the relaxation of US sanctions will be dependent upon real progress, not the whims of Congress. Any other path will undoubtedly lead to failure.'[159] The Republicans in the Congress had political reasons, for opposing the Obama administration's diplomacy with Iran. According to M. Fisher, voting against new sanctions was a 'big political risk', also because if the Obama administration was successful in reaching a deal with Iran, then all the credit would have gone to the White House.[160] Therefore, the Congress had no 'political incentive' to support President Obama's diplomacy with Iran.[161]

There were also many in the Congress who continued to insist that Iran had 'zero enrichment' rights.[162] That argument was also supported by scholars such as M. Singh, who argued that 'there was no tactical need for the P5+1 to walk away from zero enrichment.'[163] However, that argument neglected that it was in the interest of the United States to enter into fruitful negotiations with Iran, also the enforceability[164] of any agreement would also depend on the 'fairness' of the document in accommodating the core interests of all parties negotiating, and

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[158] T. Parsi, 'US-Iran Deal: Compromise Is key', *Al Jazeera*, 18 February 2014, retrieved on 17 April 2014,

http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/02/us-iran-deal-compromise-key-201421845935181913.html

[159] C. Gray, 'Congressional Whims May Derail Iran Deal', *Global Times*, 20 November 2013

[160] M. Fisher, 'Americans Support An Iran Nuclear Deal 2 To 1. That's A Big Deal.; Getting Congress To Support A Nuclear Deal With Iran Just Got A Lot Easier.', *The Washington Post*, 20 November 2013

[161] M. Fisher, 'Jon Stewart Explains What's Weird About Congress's Iran Sanctions Push; What The "Daily Show" Host Gets Right And Wrong About The Sanctions Bill.', *The Washington Post* , 16 January 2014

[162] M. Makovsky and B. Misztal, 'Iran Has No 'Right' To Enrich Uranium', *The Wall Street Journal*, 8 July 2012

[163] M. Singh, 'The Case For Zero Enrichment In Iran', *Arms Control Today*, March 2014, retrieved on 19 April 2014,

http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2013_03/The-Case-for-Zero-Enrichment-in-Iran

[164] R. Marashi and T. Parsi, 'How To Strike A Win-Win Deal With Iran', *CNN World*, 13 May 2014, retrieved on 7 June 2014,

http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2014/05/13/how-to-strike-a-win-win-deal-with-iran/

Iran's rights under the NPT was a core interest that country was not willing to abdicate.[165] Considering that many nuclear states and non-nuclear states are not signatories to the NPT, the non-proliferation regime is not in itself sufficient to prevent nuclear proliferation. Some have even suggested that trade in nuclear materials should be tracked down the same way drug trading is tracked down. The program 'muddies the waters' and the unsuspecting buyer would be led to buy unusable nuclear material.[166] Despite all the tension in the west regarding the negotiations with Iran, in Iran 'the government on the whole' was still committed to the nuclear negotiations with the P5+1,[167] and in the case of Iran it was possible to use diplomacy to deal with that country's nuclear program, it was not necessary to track down trade in nuclear materials akin to the manner in which 'drug trading is tracked down'.

The Obama administration wanted to impede any violation of the sanctions regime, while the negotiations were being pursued. Therefore, even during the course of the negotiations, all efforts were made to enforce the existing sanctions; that policy also helped in pressuring the Iranians.[168] The Executive Branch had to enforce the existing sanctions, in order to restrain Iran from abusing the negotiation process to buy time.[169] Also, the White House had to enforce the

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[165] L. Davis, 'The Days After A Deal With Iran: US Policies Of Hedging And Engaging', *Rand Corporation*, 2014, retrieved on 24 June 2014,

http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE125/RAND_PE125.pdf

[166] G. Allison, Book Review of M. Levi, *On Nuclear Terrorism*, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009, book reviewed in *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 9, Issue 01, March 2011, pp.226-228

[167] A. Milani and I. Waismel – Manor, 'Are Iran And Israel Trading Places?', *International New York Times*, 12 April 2014

[168] K. Rawlinson, 'Iran Says US Sanctions Will Hinder Nuclear Talks', *The Guardian*, 30 August 2014

[169] B. Klapper, 'US Weighs Easing Penalties Against Iran, But Sceptical Congress Demands Big Concessions First', *The Associated Press,* 18 October 2013

sanctions, because there were many in the Congress who did not trust President Rouhani,[170] and Iran's commitment to diplomacy.[171]

> 'To sceptical members of Congress, Mr Rouhani is a card-carrying member of the establishment that has pushed the country close to the threshold of being a nuclear power. His more moderate guise is but a tactic to fend off new sanctions and to buy some space for Iran to continue to develop its nuclear programme.'[172]

However, opposition, from the Congress and AIPAC, did not impact the Obama administration's Iran policy choice in this case, because the administration was committed to diplomacy and was aggressive in defending foreign policy choices against the opposition from Congress and AIPAC.

Conclusion

By the end of the time period discussed in this case study, President Obama did not have a harmonious working relationship with the Republican Congress.[173] This period also saw some 'progress' in the relationship between Iran and the United States. According to Grunwald, 'Obama wanted iconic programs that would create a legacy of change, an updated version of the New Deal. And he urged his advisers to channel FDR's spirit of experimentation.'[174] For example, this was one of the rare times in the history of the Islamic Republic, where one could

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[170] U.S. negotiator with Iran, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs W. Sherman, quoted in 'Iran Nuclear Deal Not Perfect: Sherman', *Mehr News Agency*, 5 February 2014, retrieved on 8 June 2014,

http://en.mehrnews.com/detail/News/101950

[171] M. Fisher, 'Obama's Approaching An Iran Deal. Here's Why Congress Might Stop It. ; Congress Is Facing A Real Dilemma Over Iran Talks.', *The Washington Post*, 15 November 2013

[172] G. Dyer, 'Iran's 'Good Cop, Bad Cop' Breeds Divided Feelings In Washington', *The Financial Times*, 12 December 2013

[173] President Obama, Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 1 December 2009, retrieved on 11 May 2014,

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan

[174] M. Grunwald, *The New New Deal: The Hidden Story Of Change In The Obama Era'*, New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2012, p. 121

'see the American flag in public when it was not on fire'.[175] Even though President Obama was committed to diplomacy with Iran, there were many in Washington, who did not trust Iran,[176] and wanted to pressure Iran, to 'change its behaviour'. There were also scholars, like R. Takeyh, who had advocated the use of sanctions to pressure Iran, to improve the human rights record of that country.[177] Iran's human rights record was dire, but the, 'capitulation approach' was not the most effective in producing results, when dealing with Iran. For example, President Rouhani was Iran's nuclear negotiator when America invaded Iraq. At that time, out of fear or because of political considerations, the Iranian government offered to negotiate with the United States. As already discussed, the bush administration did not consider that offer. In less than a decade, Iran had more than 19000 centrifuges.[178] According to Vali Nasr, 'Iran is at a crossroads. It is weighing the relative benefits of deal-making and economic reform, and is experimenting with both.'[179] Even so, the Iranian government under President Rouhani had demonstrated its willingness to cooperate with the P5+1. Even though the Iranian government was not trying to be an American ally, they were 'trying to deescalate the tension and make it manageable'.[180]

President Rouhani was a catalyst in starting a result oriented negotiation process between Iran and the P5+1. According to M. Khalaji, until Rouhani became the President of Iran, the Supreme Leader of Iran had used his powers

> 'to keep a president in power while simultaneously weakening him by allowing the country's judiciary and intelligence apparatus to accuse members of the president's circle

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[175] F. Stockman, 'Tehran Calculations: Do US House Members Want A Deal With Iran-Or War?', *The Boston Globe*, 06 August 2013

[176] J. Rubin, 'Iran Isn't Complying With The Interim Deal', *The Washington Post* , 14 May 2014

[177] R. Takeyh, 'Moving Human Rights Front And Center With Iran; A Consistent Campaign Will Help With The Arms-control Agenda', *The Washington Post*, 7 September 2013

[178] D. Ignatius, 'Will history repeat In Iran Nuclear Negotiations?', *The Washington Post,* 18 November 2013

[179] V. Nasr, 'Iran's Economic Crossroads', *International New York Times*, 5 December 2013

[180] National Iranian American Council Research Director, Reza Marashi, interview on CNN, 9 June 2014, retrieved on 9 June 2014,

http://edition.cnn.com/video/data/2.0/video/world/2014/06/09/ctw-iran-diplomacy-reza-marashi.cnn.html

of either economic or moral corruption, or of connection with opposition movements or Western powers.'[181]

President Rouhani's election victory, and the popular support he enjoyed in Iran, had given Rouhani the 'mandate of the people' to challenge the more Anti-American elements in the Iranian ruling circle. However, any compromise between Iran and the P5+1 was often misinterpreted or discredited as weakness, by the hawks in Iran and the United States. President Rouhani also had to face significant pressure from his domestic opponents. Decision-making in Iran was a complicated affair, because, in Iran,

> 'the process of decision-making is shaped by ongoing consultations in various councils [mainly the SNSC, but also in other formal and informal interactions with state officials, the Expediency Council, the clergy and military commanders] until a policy is formulated through a decree or a stated policy.'[182]

The second case study had demonstrated how domestic politics had greatly impacted America's Iran policy. However, this case study calls attention to other variables, such as the security and stability of the Middle East, which were influential in directing the course of America's Iran policy. This case study also reveals how international relations and alliances were important variables in the calculations of foreign policy-makers. Above all, this case study points out that 'peace' between Iran and the United States will be beneficial for the entire region. As Peter Beinart argued, cold war is ugly, 'ending America's cold war with Iran would deny Iran's regime a key pretext it uses to repress domestic dissent. And it would increase the chances of ending a war in Syria that should shame the world.'[183]

There are also certain issues pertaining to Ph theory that has to be addressed here. To begin with, Ph theory highlights the role of domestic political constraints and the rejection of options in the

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[181] M. Khalaji, 'Tightening The Reins: How Khamenei Makes Decisions', *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, Policy Focus 126, March 2014, retrieved on 19 April 2014,

http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/PolicyFocus126_Khalaji.pdf

[182] B. Khajehpour, R. Marashi and T. Parsi, 'Extending Hands And Unclenching Fists: Reorienting Iran's Outlook Beyond The Nuclear Deal', *National Iranian American Council*, December 2013

[183] P. Beinart, 'The Moral Case For Ending America's Cold War With Iran', *The Atlantic*, 6 January 2014

first stage of decision-making based on the noncompensatory principle.[184] That assumption proved accurate in the last two case studies. However, in this case study, domestic politics was not a consideration when eliminating any option from the choice set or while doing a cost-benefit analysis of the options which survived to the second stage. In the first stage, the Obama administration was concerned about the stability and security of the Middle East. As already established in this case study, the Obama administration was willing to take more political risks following his re-election. In this case study, the Obama administration was willing to challenge its domestic opponents, and pursue diplomacy with Iran. This case demonstrates how the Obama administration's Iran policy and Middle East policy were closely linked, and also how the Iran policy of the United States had evolved, during the Obama presidency. This case also draws attention to the role of the Executive Branch as an important entity in America's foreign policy decision-making. Even though the Congress has constitutional powers to influence the foreign policy of the United States, the White House and the President were better placed to determine the course of America's Iran policy after President Obama's reelection.

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[184] A. Mintz, N. Geva, S. Redd and A. Carnes, 'The Effect Of Dynamic And Static Choice Sets On Political Decision Making: An Analysis Using The Decision Board Platform'

Chapter VII: Conclusion

'But understand where the vision for change comes from, first and foremost. It comes from me'-

President Barack Obama[1]

'Well, I think one of the things about the Obama doctrine is it's not going to be as doctrinaire as the Bush doctrine, because the world is complicated. And I think part of the problem we've had is that ideology has overridden facts and reality.'

President Barack Obama[2]

The case studies in this thesis covered the period from the inauguration of President Obama in January 2009 to the decision to extend 'the talks' in July 2014. The case studies also revealed how different variables were influential, during different points in time. The case studies also draw attention to how the Obama administration's choices were influenced by domestic and international political considerations. Analysing the Obama presidency from its very beginning, and having the case studies considered chronologically was helpful in analysing how the White House tried to achieve its foreign policy objectives, and how the Iran policy of the United States 'evolved' during that time period. As pointed out in the introductory chapter to this thesis, President Obama had 'inherited' a world that was in crisis. The Obama administration had only limited resources and means to manage that crisis.[3] All three case studies call attention to that issue.

Contributions to the literature:

The objective of this thesis is to contribute to the literature on President Obama, US foreign policy and Ph theory. As the literature review chapter revealed, the scholarship on the Obama

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[1] President Obama quoted in N. Chomsky, *Hopes And Prospects*, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010, p.225

[2] President Obama on Democratic Presidential Debate On NPR, *The New York Times*, 4 December 2007

[3] President Obama Quoted in B. Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, p.11

presidency is not fully developed. The case studies in this thesis have filled some of the gaps in the literature, by making use of the theoretical framework provided under the Ph approach. Also, all the case studies are original contribution to the literature on the Ph approach. It is evident from the case studies that, the use of the Ph framework was helpful in systematically analysing different variables and dimensions which shaped the decision-making process.

A rational choice with the goal of utility maximisation was often difficult to make, because decision-making was complicated by the limitations placed on the Obama administration. Often, decisions made were not optimal, such as the decision to abandon diplomacy as the official Iran policy, in spite of the risks involved in pursuing a sanctions first policy, after only officially pursuing diplomacy for the first nine months of the Obama presidency. These less than optimum decisions were not always because of the incompetence of the decision-makers.[4] Various pressures, domestic and external, had forced the decision-makers to abandon certain policy options for the sake of appeasement or political survival. Therefore, the policies made were not always a reflection of the personal preferences of those at the helm of decision-making. Also, every so often, the decision-makers had to make policy choices in a very limited amount of time, under extreme political pressure, with not enough time to verify the information at hand or seek better information, as it was during the midst of the Arab Spring. As argued in the case studies of this thesis, the Obama administration also had to deal with these limitations, and was forced to choose between options, choose between opportunities and choose between alliances. As Renshon and Renshon argues, decision-maker 'will continue to have to balance security, liberty, morality, free-market capitalism, national sovereignty, fairness, and many other "sacred" or protected values.'[5] In Baldwin's words, 'no matter how much one detests swimming, it may seem quite appealing if the only alternative is sinking'.[6] This perhaps is one way to describe America's Iran policy. The United States had limited policy options when dealing with Iran, due

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[4] European Foreign Policy Scorecard 2010, European Council On Foreign Relations, retrieved on 18 September 2014,

http://www.ecfr.eu/scorecard/methodology

[5] J. Renshon and S. Renshon, 'The Theory and Practise of Foreign Policy Decision Making', *Political Psychology,* Vol. 29, No 4, 2008, p.518

[6] D. Baldwin, 'Success and Failure in Foreign Policy', *Annual Review of Political Science,* Vol. 3, June 2000, p.177

to domestic political constraints, the turmoil in the Middle East and pressure from allies. The findings of the case studies reinforces the importance of domestic politics in foreign policy decision-making, at the same time also points out how during the second term President Obama had managed to overcome the pressure from his domestic political opponents, as well as highlights the link between domestic and international politics.

In the first two case studies, America's Iran policy was not conducive to diplomacy. However, the period studied in the third case study was the first time in the history of the relationship between the United States and the Islamic Republic when diplomacy was given a chance, to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue. In all three case studies, America's foreign policy was White House centered. The Obama administration was often criticised for not having its 'own brand of foreign policy'.[7] The Obama White House was also criticised for having a brand of foreign policy which is similar to the one which existed during the Bush era.[8] During a casual observation, America's Iran policy, during the early years of the Obama presidency, might seem like a continuation of the Bush administration's policy. However, that observation is not entirely accurate. Both the Bush administration and the Obama administration had waged a campaign of sanctions and sabotage, against Iran. However, both Bush and Obama administration had different reasons for doing so. That is, the Bush administration pursued a campaign of sanctions and sabotage against Iran, because America's foreign policy during the Bush era was aggressive. The Bush administration was also hegemonic.[9] Moreover, the Bush White House relied on hard power and coercion, to deal with foes.[10] The Obama administration's reason was that, the White House wanted to pressure Iran, to negotiate in good faith. Since the beginning of the presidency, the Obama administration was 'open' (but did not commit to diplomacy until Hassan Rouhani was elected as the Iranian President) to the notion of pursuing diplomacy with Iran. President Obama was criticised for being an indecisive liberal, for hesitating to use military action against

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[7] A. Ward, 'There's No Obama Doctrine. Period', *The Diplomat*, 2 June 2014

[8] A. Miller, 'Is Obama Really George W. Bush?' *The Huffington Post,* 4 June 2011

[9] D. Grondin, 'Mistaking Hegemony For Empire', *International Journal*, Vol. 61, No.1, Winter 2005/2006, pp.227-241

[10] M. Griffiths, 'Beyond The Bush Doctrine: American Hegemony And World Order', *Australian Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 23, No.1, July 2004, pp.63-75

Iran and Syria. However, it was not just President Obama, even President Bush had apprehensions about pursuing military action against Iran. According to J. Goldberg, President Bush had also objected to Israel's demands, to engage in a military confrontation with Iran. Even though the Bush administration had maintained that 'all options were on the table', military option against Iran was not considered a pragmatic choice by President Bush.[11] President Obama was also called a realist, because in his first term in office the Obama administration's foreign policy had 'owed far more to conservative realpolitik than to any left-wing vision of international affairs'.[12] The case studies shed light on the Obama administration's non-ideological approach to foreign policy decision-making. Even though the Obama White House did continue to use some of the policy choices which were used by the Bush White House, the Obama administration had different foreign policy objectives, compared to his predecessor. Also the Bush administration was notorious for its disregard for international institutions.[13] However, in all three cases, the Obama administration had tried to work with international institutions.

In all three cases, the negotiators, from Iran and the United States, had to face several challenges, especially domestic opposition from hawks who were opposed to diplomacy. All three cases also reveal how domestic politics and the crisis in the Middle East such as the Arab Spring, ISIS and terrorism, had limited the Obama administration's Iran policy options. That is, even when 'all options were on the table', there were not many options 'on the table'. The case studies demonstrate how the Obama administration was under tremendous pressure, to get more 'involved' in the Middle East. In all three cases, the Obama administration had to cope with the rapidly changing political landscape of the Middle East. In some situations, such as in Syria, Palestine and Egypt, the United States had 'failed' the international community and the people of the region, because of America's inability to help contain the violence in the region. However, it is also clear that, Iran and the United States had the influence to impact almost all the major

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[11] J. Goldberg, 'The Point Of No Return', *The Atlantic*, 11 August 2010, retrieved on 18 April 2014,

http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/09/the-point-of-no-return/308186/2/

[12] R. Douthat, 'Obama The Realist', *The New York Times*, 6 February 2011

[13] C. Bradley, 'The Bush Administration And International Law: Too Much Lawyering And Too Little Diplomacy', essay based on talk given at *Duke Law School*, 19 November 2008, retrieved on 11 May 2015,

http://scholarship.law.duke.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1035&context=djclpp

conflicts in the Middle East. Even so, America's influence in the Middle East was declining. The regional dynamics had dramatically changed in the last decade, and the United States was no longer in a position to dictate terms to the regional powers. Cooperation and alliance-making had become more important than ever before, to achieve foreign policy goals. Also, the case studies draw attention to how the 'cold war' between Iran and the United States had negatively impacted and destabilised the regional politics.

The United States considered 'engagement' to be a tactic, during the early years of the Obama presidency. In the first case study, the decision-makers were primarily concerned about dignity, economy, and not about reaching a deal with Iran. That is, the focus was mainly on the political dimension. In stage-two of the first case study, the decision-makers had to consider the diplomacy dimension: diplomacy with Europeans, Arabs, Afghans and Israel. During the period considered in the first case study, the mistrust between Tehran and Washington was high. The lack of trust and the lack of commitment to diplomacy had made it difficult for both parties, to arrive at a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. American allies, such as Arab monarchies and Israel, had also negatively influenced the decision-making process. The half-hearted experiment with diplomacy collapsed and led to the next phase. In the next phase, which is the second case study of this thesis, the Obama administration pursued the dual-track policy toward Iran. This period was a phase to 'prepare' for the future. That is, diplomacy was not given a chance, to arrive at a solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. However, the sanctions regime made it difficult for Iran to dismiss diplomacy. Therefore, the second phase was helpful for the Obama administration, to pressure Iran into negotiating with the P5+1. The second phase had the potential to bring both parties to the negotiating table, or escalate the tension between them, because the sanctions regime had placed enormous pressure on Iran and the United States. Political considerations, especially domestic politics, were very important to the decision-makers in Washington.[14] Also, as Valerie Hudson argued, 'what is happening in international politics cannot fail to have an effect on domestic politics. And the exigencies and outputs of domestic politics will certainly have an effect on international politics.' Because President Obama was looking for re-election, the White House was especially sensitive to domestic politics. Even so,

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[14] V. Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, p.145

in stage-two of decision-making, the decision-makers had considered the strategic interests of the United States, before arriving at the final policy choice.

The Obama administration was also accused of being indecisive, stubborn, weak and reactionary in its foreign policy making.[15] In the first two case studies, not enough time had lapsed, to make an informed judgement concerning the Obama administration's foreign policy making. However, the third case study, after the reelection, portrays a President who had a proactive foreign policy, resisted pressure from domestic opponents, committed to diplomacy and worked with international partners to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue. During the course of all three cases considered in this thesis, the Obama administration had pursued a generally cautious approach in its foreign policy decision-making. According to one analysis, 'beyond criticizing his supposedly cautious personality, commentators have repeatedly focused on Obama's failure to perform what one Senate aide called a "major sales job." Other Washingtonians have yearned for "more toughness" and the ability to "dominat[e] the room."'[16] However, there were also many who had criticised the President for being dictatorial and polarising. The Obama administration had a difficult relationship with the Republicans in the Congress, since the beginning of the the Presidency. However, when the President took office, he was working with a Democratic majority in the Congress, and the support of the Democrats in the Congress meant that the President did not have to heavily rely on executive powers, to make policy changes. After the Republicans won the majority in Congress, the President had to resort to using executive powers, as is pointed out in the third case study, because of the rift between the White House and the Congress, making the President appear rather dictatorial. According to S. A. Renshon, 'Obama is a president of enormous intelligence and considerable political skill, but his presidency has faltered in part because of the mismatch between his redemptive and transformational ambitions and the public's willingness and readiness to support them.'[17] Renshon's observation is not

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[15] To be fair, it is not easy to assess the merit of a President and his foreign policy.; see S. Walt, 'Evaluating Foreign Policy is Hard', *Foreign Policy*, 20 June 2011, retrieved on 18 September 2014,

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/06/20/evaluating_foreign_policy_is_hard

[16] L. Jacobs and D. King, 'Varieties of Obamaism: Structure, Agency, and the Obama Presidency', *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 8, No. 3, September 2010, pp.793-802

[17] S. Renshon, 'Redemption, Fairness, and the Politics of Transformation in the Obama Presidency', *Political Psychology*, Special Issue: The Obama Presidency, Vol. 32, Issue 6, December 2011, pp.1035–1057

entirely accurate. President Obama had faltered in doing a "major sales job" of his policy choices. During the first case study, the President had enjoyed a great deal of public support, to pursue a transformational policy to bring about 'change', in America's domestic and foreign policy. However, because the expectations from the Obama presidency were exceptionally high, the Obama administration's decisions were judged harshly, and the public approval ratings were not always flattering.[18] The second case study was also the period which saw President Obama's reelection, and the President had enjoyed enough public support to win the reelection. President was not successful in reaching out to the American public, particularly during the third case study. During the third case study, the Obama administration was committed in its pursuit of diplomacy with Iran. Also, the President was a 'pragmatist' and 'problem solver', according to those who had known him, even before he entered Washington politics. According to F. I. Greenstein, 'at Harvard Law School, for example, he [President Obama] was conspicuous for his ability to work with students and faculty across the ideological spectrum.'[19]

Even though throughout history, bureaucratic infighting had generally remained an unavoidable component of the relationship between civilian officials, military officers and political appointees in any given administration,[20] in the case of the Obama administration, in all three case studies, minor disagreements within the bureaucracy did not impact the Iran policy choices or choice set, because it was President Obama who made the ultimate decisions pertaining to Iran. Also, in the case of the Obama administration, the tension between the advisers was generally of very low intensity, when compared to the hostilities that persisted within the Bush administration.[21] According to S. Sarkesian, J. Williams and S. Cimbala, the disagreements within the bureaucracy could have an impact on the national security decisions of the country, but the degree of impact depends on the manner in which an administration make decisions.[22]

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[18] Barack Obama Presidential Job Approval, Gallup, retrieved on 8 March 2016, http://www.gallup.com/poll/116479/barack-obama-presidential-job-approval.aspx

[19] D. Remnick, *The Bridge: The Life and Rise of Barack Obama*, p.196; F. Greenstein, 'Barack Obama: The Man and His Presidency at the Midterm', *Political Science & Politics*, Vol. 44, Issue 01, January 2011, pp.7-11

[20] D. Cohen, *Amateur Government: When Political Appointees Manage the Federal Bureaucracy*, CPM Working Paper 96-1, Washington DC.: The Brookings Institution, 1996

[21] J. Mann, *The Obamians*

[22] S. Sarkesian, J. Williams and S. Cimbala, *US National Security: Policymakers, Processes & Politics,* Fourth Edition, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008

President's options and choices are shaped by his advisers. They furnish the President with information, regarding the outside world. Also, these advisers and bureaucrats interpret that information for the President.[23] The powers of the Executive Branch are conferred on the American President.[24] 'Including members of the armed forces, the Executive Branch employs more than 4 million Americans.'[25] There are different factors which determine the influence and importance of a bureaucrat or an adviser. However, according to Halperin, 'the single most important determinant of the influence of any senior official is his relationship with the President. Indeed, a main topic of conversation in Washington is who is "in" with the President now?'[26] It is for that reason "the Obamians" are important. In the case of the Obama administration, the discipline within the bureaucracies allowed the President and his cabinet to function without much infighting. Traditionally, there are several issues faced by a single decision-maker who takes advice from the bureaucracy.[27] This is different from bureaucratic politics, and also not the same as group decision-making. Bureaucracy itself faces several challenges in the form of bureaucratic politics. For example, the President's orders could become hostage to bureaucratic politics, information could get leaked, bureaucracies may try to persuade the President to pursue a certain course of action preferred by them, or perhaps the cabinet members may even try to avoid effectively implementing the orders from the White House. Also, according to Halperin, the bureaucracies could also become hostage to its members.[28] For example, the cabinet level officials are always concerned about information being leaked to the media or public. When dealing with issues which are of high importance, with reference to domestic politics, as was the case with the Iranian nuclear issue, it is assumed that information will be made available to the public, by an unsatisfied participant.[29] However, in the case of the Obama administration, in all three case studies considered in this thesis, the relationship between

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[23] R. Barnet, *The Roots of War*, Baltimore: Penguin 1973

[24] The Executive Branch, 'Our Government', retrieved on 30 March 2014,

http://www.whitehouse.gov/our-government/executive-branch

[25] Ibid

[26] M. Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, p.219

[27] S. Redd, 'The Influence of Advisers on Foreign Policy Decision Making: An Experimental Study'

[28] M. Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, p.192-193

[29] Ibid

the White House, bureaucratic advisers and the bureaucracies were generally harmonious, and without much publicly known friction.

The relationship between Iran and the United States had dramatically changed, with the election of President Rouhani. In the third case study of this thesis, the decision-makers were committed to diplomacy. Whether diplomacy resulted in a 'deal' or not, is a separate issue. The important issue in the third case study is that, it was a period which saw both Iran and the United States give diplomacy a chance, to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue. The White House had to deal with a very hostile Congress. The Obama administration was 'fighting' the Congress, in the third case study. 'Security and stability of the Middle East', was the only variable considered by the decision-makers, during the first stage of the third case study. The diplomacy dimension: diplomacy with the European allies was considered in the second stage of decision-making. The third case study is different from the first two cases. In the third case study it was the period after President Obama won his re-election, the President was willing to confront the Congress and was willing to take more political risks.

Under Ph theory, decision-makers usually focus on 'a narrow set of policy alternatives'.[30] As already demonstrated, the Obama administration had a very constricted set of policy options, when dealing with Iran. Also, under the Ph model, decision-makers arrive at their decisions by using cognitive shortcuts in the first stage, and the rational choice approach in the second stage.[31] In all three case studies, the decision-makers had to eliminate certain options at the very first stage of decision-making, because they were politically risky. The Ph approach stresses on the domestic political constraints and the elimination process in decision-making, and presents decision-making as reactive.[32] In the second case study, domestic politics was an important consideration to the decision-makers. However, in the third case study, security of the Middle East was more important than domestic politics. After the re-election, the Obama White House was on collision course with the Republican Congress.[33] In the third case study, America's allies

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[30] A. Mintz et al., 1997

[31] Ibid

[32] Ibid

[33] B. Wolfgang, 'Obama's Grim Warning To Congress: New Iran Sanctions Could Lead To War', *The Washington Times,* 16 January 2015

such as Israel and Arab monarchies did not negatively influence the decision-making and diplomacy with America's European allies were only considered in the second stage of decision-making. In the third case study, international politics and stability of the Middle East were clearly more important. Also, decision-making 'involves multiple heuristics [shortcuts]',[34] and in all three cases, the decision-makers had to 'filter' the set of options available in the first stage. However, in all three cases, more than one option had survived the 'filtration' process of the first stage. Therefore, in all three cases Ph theory served as a bridge between cognitive approach and rational choice theory.

Future research and building on this thesis

This thesis aimed to contribute to the literature on Ph theory, US foreign policy and particularly the Obama administration. All these areas have avenues for further research, and can build on the analysis done in this thesis. To begin with, Ph theory has aided this research, by providing a theoretical model to analyse foreign policy decision-making. Ph theory has provided a two stage means to explain 'why' the Obama administration made the decisions it did, and has provided explanations which would not have been possible by relying only on the rational choice theory and utility maximisation principle. One significant flaw of the Ph approach that presented itself as a challenge during the case study analysis of this thesis is that Ph theory does not concern itself with 'how' the options were included in the choice set. It is the responsibility of the researcher to make judgments concerning that issue, based on the facts and analysis of those facts/data. That is an area where the Ph approach could be further developed to provide a systematic theoretical foundation, so that the researcher has a definite 'criteria' to follow, while determining the contents of the choice set, so as to bring more order into that selection process. As chapter III on FPA and Ph theory had pointed out, there are significant issues concerning the central characteristics of the Ph approach which needs development. For example, because the Ph approach is still rather young, there are not many cases addressing decisions where no change in policy occurs, decisions where only the political dimension is relevant, decisions where only one option survives the first stage of decision-making and decisions where culture or religion

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[34] A. Mintz, N. Geva, S. Redd and A. Carnes, 'The Effect of Dynamic and Static Choice Sets on Political Decision Making: An Analysis Using the Decision Board Platform'

plays a role in determining the foreign policy choice. However, these are issues which can be address in due course of time as new case studies are build based on the Ph framework.

As regard the Obama administration's Iran policy decision-making, there is great potential and need for improved research in that area of study. As more information is made available with the declassification of official documents, it would be possible to do more informed analysis of the inner workings of the Obama administration. As transcripts of official communications are made public, it would aid the researcher in making more detailed analysis concerning the bargaining process and bureaucratic politics within the Obama administration. At the moment, because the topic and issues are contemporary, the researcher has to rely mostly on secondary sources to assess the personal involvement of different members of the Obama administration and the step-by-step process through which governmental organisations participated in the decision-making process. Also, because most officials involved in the decision-making process are still in office, it is difficult to attain direct access to them. However, the real world importance of the issues discussed in this thesis, such as the Obama administration's Iran policy decision-making, the Iranian nuclear issue, the security of the Middle East and the US-Iran rapprochement, makes this thesis valuable during this time period. Because the Obama administration has managed to now secure a nuclear deal with Iran, this thesis is ever more important, because it highlights the importance of domestic politics, the political constraints placed on the decision-makers involved in negotiations, and the relevance of the government's commitment to diplomacy. All of those factors had helped determine the course of America's Iran policy during the period considered in this thesis. The value of the nuclear deal will also greatly depend on the next President of the United States, who will be involved in enforcing that agreement. The decision-making process which led to *the decision to enter into a nuclear deal with Iran* and the negotiation process behind the nuclear deal will make a useful case study, in contributing to the discussions on that topic, because the nuclear deal with Iran has not been universally welcomed, and further research into the negotiation process will perhaps aid in highlighting the merits and demerits of that deal. However, because the nuclear deal and the decision-making process behind that deal is too recent, the researcher at the moment will face significant challenges when making analysis based on very limited reliable information and extremely deficient primary sources. However, these are issues of great importance to global security and the field of foreign policy study, and consequently worthy of the effort.

What does the future hold for the United States, Iran and the Middle East?

> *'This is a daunting task. Expectations should be tempered. There are no quick fixes. But at least one major obstacle appears to have been overcome: The US and Iran can now talk to each other, consult with each other and even quietly coordinate their policies as the region confronts the chaos burning the Middle East. That's nothing short of a game changer.'*

Trita Parsi[35]

Foreign policy decisions are like moves in a chess game, and several years of playing the game with the same challenger forces both players to take lessons from previous moves.[36] The moves of over three decades of sanctions and confrontation had failed to produce any results. However, the moves of the previous three decades are important in understanding the Obama administration's moves toward Iran. Decades of hostility between the United States and the Islamic Republic did influence the policy choices, policy making and policy-makers.

Prior to the Obama presidency, particularly during the Bush presidency, based on the instability in the Middle East following America's war on terror, it seemed as though the United States had not focused on its long-term relationships and security interests, when dealing with the Middle East. This had led to a situation where means became the ends, 'and process more important than the results.'[37] However, America's relationship with the Middle East changed, during the Obama era.[38] Historically, democratic movements in the Middle East had often brought anti-American

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[35] T. Parsi, 'Nuclear Deal Or Not, Dark Years Await The Middle East, *The Huffington Post*, 8 May 2015

[36] A. Mintz and K. DeRouen Jr., *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*, p.4

[37] R. Lawrence, 'Arab Perceptions Of U.S. Security Policy In Southwest Asia', *American-Arab Affairs*, No.5, 1983, p.27-38; Also, *US Policy In Southwest Asia: A Failure In Perspective*, Washington: National Defense University Press, National Security Essays, Series 84-1, 1984

[38] F. Gerges, 'The ''Obama Doctrine'' In The Middle East', *A Joint Publication From The Institute For Social Policy And Understanding, The Duke Islamic Studies Center, And ISLAMiCommentary'*, Policy Brief, October 2012, retrieved on 11 May 2015,

elements into power. This was the case when the elections in Gaza brought Hamas into power. The Arab spring had also displayed fundamentalist tendencies. 'And once more we heard talk of "one man, one vote, one time"—the idea that Islamist parties would happily make instrumental use of the ballot box to capture the state, only to dismantle the democratic process when in power.'[39] During the course of the Arab Spring, the Obama administration was severely criticised for its incompetence in handling the Middle East policy of the United States. The sources of criticism were very divergent. John Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt were some of the prominent scholars who had criticised the foreign policy making of the administration. M. Hirsh summed up the frustration shared by many experts in the political community. According to him, 'the real Obama doctrine is to have no doctrine at all. And that's the way it's likely to remain'.[40] President Obama's 'uncommitted thinking' was not well received by the grand strategists of foreign policy.[41] The Obama administration was unable to help stabilise the Middle East, in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. The political developments in the Middle East during the Arab spring, Iraq War, Syrian crisis and Afghan War had also increased the tension between Iran and the United States. According to Malcom Kerr, 'all over the Middle East, signs point both to dangerous situations and to the inability of the United States government to control events or perhaps even to understand them.' That was Kerr's observation in 1980, and that description is accurate in this new century.[42] One of the most difficult tasks for President Obama was to convince the American citizenry that he was not a president who was overseeing the decline of America. The Obama administration was under pressure from the electorate and allies to pursue a foreign policy that was in line with America's traditional role as the 'leader' of the free world. According to James Lindsay, 'unless Obama finds a way to align his foreign policy

http://www.ispu.org/pdfs/ISPU_Brief_Duke_1017_%281%29.pdf

[39] P. Mandaville, 'Islam and Exceptionalism in American Political Discourse', *Political Science & Politics,* Vol. 46, Issue 02, April 2013, pp. 235-239. The article makes reference to M. Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World*, Michigan: University of Michigan Press 2007

[40] see M. Hirsh, 'Obama: The No-Doctrine President', National Journal, 29 March 2011, retrieved on 11 May 2014,

http://www.nationaljournal.com/nationalsecurity/obama-the-no-doctrine-president-20110329

[41] A. Rudalevige, 'Narrowcasting the Obama Presidency', *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 4, December 2013, pp.1126-1134

[42] M. Kerr, 'America's Middle East Policy: Kissinger, Carter and the Future', *Institute for Palestine Studies*, No.14 (E), 1980

prescriptions with evolving global trends, the gap between American aspirations and accomplishments will grow, and the prospects for successful US global leadership will dim further.'[43]

One potential change in the future could be reduced dependence on the Middle East oil routes and Middle Eastern oil.[44] According to the 2025 Risk Forecast by the intelligence community, 'cash-flush exporters' of oil and gas will see an increase in their power and influence. According to the said report, 'a plunge in prices may trigger a long-term decline for producers as global and regional players...'[45] Also, America's own resources could allow that country to be energy independent. For example, according to Trita Parsi, 'driven by a boom in shale oil production, America's crude output has surged at record speeds in recent years.'[46] North America reportedly has significant oil and natural gas reserves, perhaps sufficient to reduce the world's dependence on Middle Eastern oil; if the Canadian oil sands are finally connected to American refineries, then the energy production in North America will be significantly high.[47] It will be a huge challenge, to circumvent the environment protection laws to make that happen. The United States also has the resources, alternate energy sources and natural resources to gradually help its allies reduce their dependence on Middle East, for energy security.[48]

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[43] J. Lindsay, 'George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the future of US global leadership', *International Affairs*, Vol.87, Issue 4, 1 July 2011

[44] C. Mann, 'What If We Never Run Out of Oil?', *The Atlantic*, 24 April 2013, retrieved on 17 April 2014,

http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2013/05/what-if-we-never-run-out-of-oil/309294/

[45] 'Intel Community Prepares 2025 Risk Forecast For New Administration', *Inside Missile Defense*, Vol. 14, No. 25, 3 December 2008

[46] T. Parsi, 'Why The Saudis Are Panicking', *The National Interest*, 3 April 2014

[47] C. Krauss, 'Energy map tilts in favor of U.S. and its neighbours; But challenges remain in cutting reliance on oil and gas from crisis zones', *International New York Times*, 23 April 2014

[48] P. Clawson and S. Henderson, 'Reducing Vulnerability To Middle East Energy Shocks: A Key Element in Strengthening U.S. Energy Security', *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, Policy Focus #49, November 2005

According to D. Fromkin, the Middle East is in so much trouble that 'the Middle East has no future.'[49] The future does not appear promising for the Middle East, because of the collapse of the Arab-Israeli peace process, crisis in Syria, extremism in Lebanon, threat from ISIS, human rights abuse in Saudi Arabia and the growth of fundamentalism in the region.[50] As already discussed, the power struggle between Iran and the United States was the root cause which escalated several conflicts and proxy wars[51] in the region. Therefore, resolving the conflict between Iran and the United States will be a positive development for the region.[52] Iran and the United States will have to use 'strategic creativity' in their negotiations. The goal should be to find common grounds where both parties could benefit, and accommodate the needs of the other. As Stephen Walt observed, 'the only lesson the U.S. foreign-policy establishment seems to have drawn from the past 20 years is "no boots on the ground" (or at least no more than a handful).'[53] That lesson alone is not adequate to shape the future of American foreign policy. Even so, it is worth acknowledging that, the Obama administration has so far been successful in sticking to that lesson, when dealing with Iran.

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[49] D. Fromkin, author of 'A Peace to End all Peace', quoted by J. Goldberg, 'The New Map Of The Middle East', *The Atlantic*, 19 June 2014, retrieved on 14 July 2014,

http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/06/the-new-map-of-the-middle-east/373080/

[50] M. Landler, 'On Iran And Syria, Tests Of Diplomacy Intertwine, *The New York Times*, 20 December 2013

[51] M. Milani, 'Iran's Post - Cold War Policy In The Persian Gulf', *International Journal*, 49(2), 1994, pp.328-354

[52] D. Patrikarakos, 'Iran, From Enemy To Ally', *International New York Times,* 10 December 2013

[53] S. Walt, 'The Way We Were', *Foreign Policy*, 12 September 2014, retrieved on 19 October 2014,

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